

## ABSTRACT

Between Isolation and Engagement: The History of the Dutch Calvinist School Movement in the Netherlands, the United States, and Canada

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Over 200,000 Dutch immigrants have settled in Canada since the end of World War II. The Dutch Calvinists within this larger body have largely maintained their distinct religious and ethnic identities through the establishment and maintenance of separate civic institutions. The purpose of this thesis is to trace the historic development of one institution in particular, the separate school. The underlying motivations behind the creation of separate schools in Canada are rooted in a century long struggle in the Netherlands known in Dutch parlance as the *schoolstrijd* where the Dutch fought to set up their own educational institutions and won financial equality with their secular counterparts. This thesis will also discuss two strains of Calvinism that emerged within the Reformed body, each having a significant impact on the schools' identity in the Netherlands, the United States, and Canada. Finally, the thesis will offer a case study of one particular school in Southern Ontario, Canada. As this school emerged from a schism within the church, it provides an opportunity to explore another stage in the development of Dutch Calvinist education.

Between Isolation and Engagement: The History of the Dutch Calvinist School  
Movement in the Netherlands, the United States, and Canada

by

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of History

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Over 200,000 Dutch immigrants have established roots in Canada since the end of the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> Their seemingly rapid assimilation into Canada's social, economic, and political order has earned them the label of an invisible minority by both historians and sociologists.<sup>2</sup> While this perception of ethnic invisibility explains the paucity of material on the history of the Dutch in Canada, it belies the reality of their distinctiveness. This distinctiveness is most apparent in certain cohesive sub-communities within the larger Dutch immigrant body. This thesis will focus on one particular sub-community that defies the label of invisibility, the Dutch Calvinists.<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, Dutch Calvinists composed over half of the 50,000 Dutch immigrants who arrived to Canada between 1946 and 1958, despite the fact that they never exceeded ten percent of the Netherlands' total population. These Dutch Calvinists set themselves apart from other Dutch immigrants by establishing a number of institutions such as credit unions, churches, schools, nursing homes, printing presses,

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<sup>1</sup> Frans Schryer, *The Netherlandic Presence in Ontario: Pillars, Class and Dutch Ethnicity* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Schryer argues that rapid assimilation is attributed to the fact that the Dutch were highly educated and "had been exposed to a highly urbanized, industrial society" in comparison to other European immigrants to Canada. Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The label of Dutch Calvinist is not limited to one denomination. Rather, Dutch Calvinist, or orthodox Dutch Calvinist, is a label which applies to members of diverse Dutch Reformed denominations. The nuances of this label will be discussed in more detail in the thesis, as different educational visions were forged along intra-ethnic lines. For now it is enough to note that the label of Dutch Calvinist is not to presuppose religious or ethnic homogeneity. See, Gijsbert Gerrit Jacob Den Boggende, "Dutch Calvinist Immigrants in Hamilton and the Hamilton Christian School, 1937 – 1960" (M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1991), 11.



universities, and agricultural co-operatives rather than participating in their mainstream counterparts. Frans Schryer writes, "...the orthodox Calvinists are characterized by social cohesion and institutional completeness going well beyond the second generation."<sup>4</sup> Such "institutional completeness" is particularly evident in the unique networks of separate Dutch Calvinist schools throughout Canada.

The Dutch Calvinist school movement in North America is rooted in a Netherlandic controversy known in Dutch parlance as the *schoolstrijd*, or "school struggle." The *schoolstrijd* dominated confessional and political discourse in the Netherlands for over a century and is perhaps best described as a conflict between advocates for a centralized and religiously "neutral" system of public education and the advocates (primarily orthodox Dutch Calvinists and Dutch Roman Catholics) of parental choice in determining the ideological direction of such education. The central debate in the Netherlands throughout the nineteenth century concerned the place of religion within the nation's public schools and the place of separate religious schools within the nation.

John Valk summarizes the century long struggle in these words:

Concerning no other issue was the fight over religious faith, identity, and tradition more pronounced, the battle more ardently waged, and the controversy more drawn out. No other single issue involved more individuals, stirred more resentment, and created more factions than the struggle to determine, control, and define the direction, philosophy, and structure of education and the educational system.<sup>5</sup>

The outcome of this educational struggle was the implementation of a "pillarized"<sup>6</sup> social order. Pillarization is defined by Johan Sturm as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> Schryer, 2.

<sup>5</sup> John Valk, "Religion in the Schools: The Case of Utrecht," *History of Education Quarterly* 35 no. 2 (1995): 160-161.

<sup>6</sup> The word "pillar" is the translated form of the Dutch *zuilen*.

Pillarization in general is the institutional arrangement which enables mutually interdependent social and political groups to maintain their autonomy to a perceived optimum, without a distinct geographical basis and within the frame of national sovereignty, ensuring the integration of these groups to a minimal degree while preventing the national identity or the social order from being jeopardized.<sup>7</sup>

Essentially, the Dutch state recognized a plurality of religious and a-religious institutions as the “pillars” upon which to construct a healthy multi-confessional social order.

With respect to educational institutions, the post-1917 Dutch state regarded Dutch Calvinist schools, neutral public schools, and Roman Catholic parochial schools with equality. That is, legislation mandated state-funding for all Dutch elementary schools regardless of their confessional directions. One cannot begin to understand the motivations underlying Dutch Calvinist schools in both the United States and Canada without understanding the importance of pillarization. The author of one lengthy dissertation on the history of Alberta’s Calvinist schools asserts, “The *schoolstrijd* and the resultant pillarization of Dutch society gave the minority orthodox Calvinist community in the Netherlands an identity and a defining myth.”<sup>8</sup>

Dutch pillars were also internally stratified along religious, social, and economic lines.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, a recurring theme in the narrative of Dutch Calvinism is a tendency towards schism. While these schisms are first realized in the ecclesiastical arena, their impact always resonates in the educational arena. In a comprehensive survey of religion

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<sup>7</sup> Johan Sturm, Leendert Groenendijk, Bernard Kruithof, and Julialet Rens, “Educational Pluralism-A Historical Study of So-Called “Pillarization” in the Netherlands, Including a Comparison with Some Developments in South African Education,” *Comparative Education* 34 no. 3 (1998): 283.

<sup>8</sup> Peter C. Prinsen, “That Old Dutch Disease: The Roots of Dutch Calvinist Education in Alberta” (Ph. D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 91. Also see Adriaan Peetoom, “From Mythology to Mythology: Dutch-Canadian Orthodox-Calvinist Immigrants and their Schools” (M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> Frans Schryer’s aforementioned research provides the most extensive account of the internal stratification of Dutch immigrants in Ontario, Canada.

in the Netherlands during the nineteenth century, Michael Wintle writes, “Wherever there was a confessional debate there was an educational debate, and theological issues became political ones through the medium of educational policy.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in relation to these ecclesiastical divisions, *internal* tensions within the Dutch Calvinist community also exist over the direction of their schools, particularly when it concerns developing a relationship with the *external* world. The conclusion of Willem Prinsen’s dissertation on Dutch Calvinist schools in Alberta offers the following argument:

Although orthodox Calvinists seem to represent a homogenous group, they are in fact a complex religiously based ethnic group: Kuypersians, or “Dutch activists”, who believe in social action; children of the *Afscheiding* who tend towards isolation from society; and mixed through both groups are those whose main concern is with purity of church (Calvinist) doctrine. These competing ideologies are currently writing the next chapter in the history of Dutch Calvinist schools in Alberta.<sup>11</sup>

This argument applies equally to the Dutch Calvinist community in Ontario as it also continues to accommodate these competing educational visions, particularly in the aftermath of the schism in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).<sup>12</sup>

In the early 1990s a large segment left the CRC due to a concern that the church’s adherence to Scriptural authority was weakening in regards to its stance on theistic evolution, women in church offices, and the place of homosexual members in the church. Those who left the CRC during these years formed the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). Interestingly, nearly all URCNA communities throughout North America maintained support for local CRC schools in the aftermath of the schism.

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Wintle, *Pillars of Piety: Religion in the Netherlands in the Nineteenth Century, 1813-190* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1987), 62.

<sup>11</sup> Prinsen, 242-243.

<sup>12</sup> The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) began in 1857 in the United States when a segment of Dutch Calvinists separated from the Reformed Church of America (RCA).

However, one community in Jordan Station, Ontario severed its loyalty to the local CRC school and established a separate school, Heritage Christian School (HCS).

While confining historic movements within the parameters of specific dates presents difficulties in that no movement originates *ex nihilo*, for the purposes of this study, the Dutch *schoolstrijd* will be divided into two chronological periods, each forming the content of the first two chapters. Chapter two will cover the first phase of the Dutch *schoolstrijd* between 1795 and 1848, wherein the Netherlands experienced a period of French control known as the Batavian Republic (1795 -1813) followed by a return to power known as the “Orange Restoration” (1813-1848). This period is characterized by the rise of a centralized state which exercised authority over the Reformed Church and established a new national public school system. Orthodox Calvinists, fearing the political and cultural marginalization of their pre-Batavian dominance opposed these developments as the poisonous fruits of the French Revolution and Enlightenment. This opposition solidified along socio-economic and religious lines and this chapter will focus primarily on two reactionary groups: the aristocratic religious *Reveil* (Awakening or Revival) and the largely rural Calvinist *Afscheiding* (Secession). These religious movements offer parallel, yet distinct, Dutch Calvinist reactions to the ideological and institutional changes in the Netherlands during the first half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, both the *Afscheiding* and the *Reveil* provide distinct educational visions.

Followers of the *Afscheiding* left the National Church in 1834 and created separate schools to preserve and perpetuate a “pure” Calvinist orthodoxy. Separate schools, they argued, involved isolation from the world. Followers of the *Reveil*

remained with the National Church and many members of this group envisioned a Christianized public school system that would revive the position of Calvinism in the Netherlands. The key figure in this chapter is Groen van Prinsterer, leader of the *Reveil* and political voice of the disenfranchised supporters of the *Afschieding*. I will examine his role in the School Struggle as he worked to balance the competing educational visions of both Dutch Calvinist bodies into practical policy. Groen maintained that the strength of Dutch Calvinist schools lay in their isolation (*Afscheiding*) but their function was to revitalize a marginalized Calvinist religion.

Chapter three covers the second phase of the Dutch *schoolstrijd* between 1848 and 1917. The period begins with the drafting of a new constitution aimed at limiting the monarch's power and extending the power of the people and ends with the aforementioned pacification legislation which implemented *pillarization*. While the 1848 constitution contained educational provisions allowing religious schools the right to exist separate from the state, this right existed more in theory than in practice. A majority of Dutch Calvinist schools lacked adequate capital and resources to survive, let alone compete with the state-funded public system. However, the constitution, in extending the franchise, provided political power to a large demographic of lower-class Dutch citizens, many who were discontented orthodox Calvinists and Roman Catholics with interests in the question of separate religious schools. The central figure in this chapter is Abraham Kuyper, the father of neo-Calvinism, which can be briefly defined as the modern application of Calvinist principles (i.e. the overarching sovereignty of God and the absolute authority of God's Word) to all areas of life, not just the church. As such, the neo-Calvinists abandoned the pietistic isolation of *Afschieding* schools and emphasized

the need to engage culture through the establishment of a plurality of institutions that corresponded to their religious principles. This chapter will look at the role of Abraham Kuyper in the *schoolstrijd* as well as his doctrines of “sphere sovereignty,” “common grace,” and “antithesis.” The purpose will be to show that Kuyper did not necessarily champion “engagement” over “isolation” but rather, like Groen, struck a balance between the competing visions.

Chapter four considers the Dutch Calvinist school movement in North America. While the focus will be primarily on the post-War Dutch neo-Calvinist Canadian schools, the chapter will begin by tracing the Dutch Calvinist movement in the United States. Certain segments within the *Afscheiding* (of chapter two) settled in Michigan and Iowa during the mid-nineteenth century and set up a Reformed Church of America (RCA), as well as a number of separate Christian schools. In 1856 the RCA underwent a schism which led to a Christian Reformed Church (CRC). In this chapter I will explore the influence of American Dutch Calvinists on the Canadian Dutch Calvinist community and their respective school movements. Further, this chapter will examine the role of Dr. H. Evan Runner, a professor of philosophy at Calvin College from 1951 -1981, who emerged in this period as the key figure of educational leadership for the Dutch in Canada. Runner, born into American Presbyterianism and a product of Scotch-Irish and Welsh lineage, absorbed Dutch neo-Calvinism as an undergraduate and saw the Dutch Calvinists in Canada as a source of hope for the re-Christianization of North American culture.

Finally, chapter five concludes this thesis with the case study of HCS. In addition to the uniqueness of HCS within the context of the nascent URC, the decision to study

the foundation of HCS is shaped by the author's personal relationship with the educational institution. As a student who was taken out of the local CRC school in the second grade in order to attend the new educational institution, my interest in the school is certainly personal. However, such an intimate relationship with the school and surrounding community provides advantages to the current scholarship on Dutch Calvinist education. By approaching this community as both an insider and an outsider, the narrative offered in the final chapter will communicate to audiences on the peripheries of this local Dutch Calvinist community as well as to the Dutch Calvinist audience within the community. The objective of this chapter is to illuminate historical continuities that exist concerning the community's different conceptions of the educational institution. By exploring the conceptualization of the school's identity by its founders, its teachers, and its students it is evident that the strains of pietistic "isolation" and cultural "engagement" persist to this day. The decision to create HCS was certainly unique in relation to the educational decisions made by the majority of URC churches in North America during these years, and thus a study that illuminates the foundation of HCS serves to advance the historical narrative of the Dutch Calvinist school movement as it progresses into the twenty first century.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Netherlands *Schoolstrijd*: Phase One 1795-1848

#### *Introduction*

Guillaume Groen Van Prinsterer (1801-1876), the Cabinet Secretary and Royal Archivist for the ruling House of Orange as well a leading figure of the evangelical *Reveil* (Awakening or Revival) in the Netherlands, delivered a series of lectures in 1847 entitled *Unbelief and Revolution*.<sup>1</sup> In the lectures Groen criticized the impact of the French Revolution in the Netherlands, arguing that its rallying cry “No God, No Master” produced a culture of “unbelief” which replaced the sovereignty of God for the sovereignty of man.<sup>2</sup> Groen traced the *zeitgeist* of unbelief in the Netherlands to the Batavian period (1795-1813) when the French took control of the Dutch state, severed its relationship with the Reformed Church and seized control of the nation’s educational institutions. Describing the lingering effects of the Batavian reforms in the Netherlands, Groen argued:

The Church has been torn from the State only to be turned over to the State....The Government holds itself entitled to hamper Christian education if not to prevent it outright by controlling the public school and obstructing private initiatives towards an alternative.<sup>3</sup>

To be sure, the ruling elite of the increasingly centralized and sovereign Dutch state, now

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete English translation of the lectures, see Harry Van Dyke, *Groen van Prinsterer’s Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Frank Vandenberg, *Abraham Kuyper: A Biography* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1978), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Groen, *Unbelief and Revolution*, 13.



separate from the Reformed Church, threatened to marginalize (and eventually abolish) the Reformed faith within the Netherlands.

This objective was evident with the establishment of a network of state-controlled common schools increasingly committed to non-sectarian Enlightenment principles in order to foster national unity. As Stephen Monsma and Christopher Soper write, “On this course a homogeneous Dutch nation would come into being, and would naturally take on a liberal coloration. The liberal goal was a society marked by consensus of values that were common and nonsectarian.”<sup>4</sup> Groen argued that the *locus of educational authority* (i.e., Church or state control) and the “*religious orientation of education*” (i.e. Reformed belief or revolutionary “unbelief”) were inseparable.<sup>5</sup> In this context the lectures offer a warning to a complacent body of Dutch Calvinists that the permeation of a secular *zeitgeist* begins with the loss of control of their historic institutions and is followed with a shift in the religious orientation of these institutions.

These two issues (i.e., the control of educational institutions and their religious direction) provide the foundation for the historical Dutch school struggle which dominated social and political discourse in the Netherlands for nearly a century. This struggle is both a story of *external* social, religious and political pressures shaping Dutch Calvinist motivations for separate schools, as well as a story of *internal* divisions within the body of Dutch Calvinists concerning the purpose of education. In the first phase of the school struggle such internal divisions were evident in the emergence of two parallel

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen V. Monsma and J. Christopher Soper, *Church and State in Five Democracies: The Challenge of Pluralism* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 55.

<sup>5</sup> John Valk, “Religion and the Schools: The Case of Utrecht,” *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1995): 163.

yet distinct strains of Dutch Calvinist educational thought found in the evangelical *Reveil* (Revival) and the *Afscheiding* (Secession). This chapter will trace the educational ideology and institutions of each movement in both the Netherlands and North America as they expose the Dutch Calvinist propensity to establish schools which directly correlate (and propagate) their particular confessional loyalties.<sup>6</sup> In short, this is a story of the Dutch Calvinist struggle to obtain constitutional freedom to control and to direct the religious nature of their separate schools. However, before an understanding of the school struggle in the post-Batavian Netherlands is possible, it is first necessary to explore the movement's historical antecedents.

### *The Dutch Republic: Historical Antecedents*

Prior to the Batavian period of French control (1795-1813) the Netherlands was a republic of loosely united and religiously diverse provinces. Education during this period was primarily the responsibility of the Reformed Church. In his survey of Reformed education Stefan Ehrenpreis argues, “[T]he local parish was the basic instrument for financing and controlling the local instruction of reading and writing.”<sup>7</sup> Although the United Provinces did not establish an official religion, most of the provincial authorities,

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<sup>6</sup> The intimate relationship between ecclesiastical and educational thought continues to direct the nature of Dutch Calvinist separate schools, albeit in different denominational manifestations, as will be apparent in the final chapter which offers a case study of a Dutch Calvinist school in Southern Ontario.

<sup>7</sup> A survey of Reformed education revealing how the Dutch Reformed Church's focus on public piety and institutional control coupled with its close relationship to the provincial governments resulted in an ability to shape the nature of education in the Netherlands is found in Stefan Ehrenpreis, “Reformed Education in Early Modern Europe: A Survey” in *The Formation of Confessional and Clerical Identities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wim Janse and Barbara Pitkin (Leiden and Boston, Massachusetts: Brill, 2005), 39-51.

after the 1618 Synod of Dort<sup>8</sup> supported Calvinism as outlined by the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (i.e., the Reformed Church).<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the Reformed Church exercised control over the national system of education, utilizing these institutions for molding the confessional loyalties of the citizenry.<sup>10</sup> Article 21 of the Synod of Dort states:

Schools in which the young shall be properly instructed in piety and fundamentals of Christian doctrine shall be instituted not only in cities, but also in towns and country places....The Christian magistracy shall be requested that honorable stipends be provided for teachers, and that well-qualified persons may be employed and enabled to devote themselves to that function; and especially that the children of the poor may be gratuitously instructed by them and not be excluded from the benefits of the schools.<sup>11</sup>

In order to direct the confessional loyalties of the citizenry the Reformed Church commissioned inspectors throughout the provinces to evaluate the doctrinal purity of schoolteachers and the curriculum.<sup>12</sup> All teachers were expected to ascribe to the doctrines contained in the Three Forms of Unity (i.e. the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Belgic Confession) and to instill orthodox Reformed doctrine in their students.<sup>13</sup> Simon Schama neatly summarizes the essence of Dutch education

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<sup>8</sup> The Synod of Dort (1618-1619) met in order to resolve a conflict between Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641) concerning the doctrine of Predestination. Arminius, and his "Arminian" followers argued that individuals could fall from grace despite being divinely elected. Gomarus, and his "Gomarist" followers argued that grace was synonymous with salvation. The Synod of Dort found Arminians guilty of heresy and removed them from public offices and educational institutions.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Myer, "Calvinism and the Rise of the Protestant Political Movement in the Netherlands" (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1976), 40-43.

<sup>10</sup> Leedert F. Groenendijk, "The Reformed Church and Education During the golden Age of the Dutch Republic" in *The Formation of Confessional and Clerical Identities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wim Janse and Barbara Pitkin (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 56-57.

<sup>11</sup> Synod of Dort, Article 21, in Peter C. Prinsen, "That Old Dutch Disease: The Roots of Dutch Calvinist Education in Alberta" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 69-73.

<sup>12</sup> Peter De Boer and Donald Oppewal "American Calvinist Day Schools," in *Voices from the Past: Reformed Educators*, ed. Donald Oppewal (Lanham, New York: University Press of America, 1997), 266.

<sup>13</sup> Groenendijk, 58.

during this period by arguing:

[T]he Reformed Church, in the spirit of the Synod of Dort, continued to regard schools as it had once regarded the universities – as instruments for the suppression of heterodoxy. The young were to be cleansed of improper doctrine by daily doses of the Heidelberg catechism and an otherwise unrelieved diet of scriptural texts.<sup>14</sup>

Despite this educational monopoly, the position of the Reformed Church in controlling the content of Dutch education always depended upon its relationship with the provincial governments.<sup>15</sup> When the Dutch Republic fell to French revolutionary forces in 1795, this relationship ended as the nation experienced a re-orientation of the political, social, and religious order. In short, the Reformed Church gradually lost control over the Dutch system of education.

#### *The Batavian Republic: Church, State, and Education*

The Napoleonic takeover of the Netherlands in 1795 brought to power individuals working to unify and transform the loose federation of Dutch provinces into a modern liberal nation-state through a centralized government.<sup>16</sup> The new ruling elite upheld the liberal belief that human reason could direct men towards a common civic morality that transcended sectarian divisions. While this ideology contradicted the orthodox Calvinist belief in man's total depravity it undergirded the institutional reforms of the newly named Batavian Republic (1795 – 1813), both ecclesiastical and educational.

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<sup>14</sup> Simon Schama, "Schools and Politics in the Netherlands, 1796-1814," *The Historical Journal* 13 no. 4 (1970): 593.

<sup>15</sup> Groenendijk cites a number of cases where provincial authorities in "multi-confessional" jurisdictions turned a blind eye to the establishment of non-Reformed schools. Groenendijk, 59.

<sup>16</sup> Johan Sturm et al., "Educational Pluralism: A Historical Study of So-Called 'Pillarization' in the Netherlands Including a Comparison with Some Developments in South African Education," *Comparative Education* 34 no. 3 (1998): 284.

Ecclesiastically, the political leadership separated church from state, thereby equalizing the social status of *Gereformeerde Kerk* among its Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Mennonite counterparts. Gerrit ten Zythoff argues, “To achieve the fullest measure of liberty, equality, and brotherhood, the state needed to reduce the Reformed Church to a status similar to that of other religious bodies.”<sup>17</sup> Educationally, the political leadership assumed state control of the network of public schools and, similar to the Reformed Church in the pre-Batavian period, utilized these institutions as vehicles for inculcating civic virtue and promoting national unity which did not rest upon a doctrinally Reformed foundation. In short, the ideological direction of education was no longer the responsibility of the Reformed Church but rather of the state which employed the “enlightened” educational model of the *Maatschappij Tot Nut van’t Algemeen*, (Society for the Public Good).

The Society for Public Good began in 1784 as one of multiple voluntary evangelical movements in the Netherlands working to reform society by providing education to the lower-class demographic and thus it set up a number of schools. The members of the Society opposed doctrinal divisiveness and hoped to instill in their pupils a common religion of tolerance.<sup>18</sup> The Society published numerous tracts on uniform pedagogical models and set up various colleges for the training of teachers and in time it pushed for, and attained, comprehensive surveillance of elementary schools.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Gerrit J. ten Zythoff, *Sources of Secession: The Netherlands Hervormde Kerke on the Eve of the Dutch Immigration to the Midwest* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), 27.

<sup>18</sup> Harro W. Van Brummelen, *Telling the Next Generation: Educational development in North American Calvinist Christian Schools* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1986), 19.

<sup>19</sup> With a centralized government that could adequately finance such an inspectorate, the attainability of this goal was certainly more realistic now than when attempted in the past by the Reformed Church. While the Reformed Church controlled the system of Dutch education during the Republic, there is

Gradually, a reciprocal relationship between the Society, which provided the necessary teachers and teaching materials, and the state, which provided the necessary capital, developed, and in 1798 the government established an Agency for National Education.<sup>20</sup> J.H. van der Palm, the second “Agent of Public Instruction,” who exercised authority over all primary and secondary schools in the Netherlands, successfully garnered support from the government to implement two important School Acts.<sup>21</sup> The first act of 1801 divided the nation into a number of school districts, each with its own inspector who examined the quality of schools in his jurisdiction and reported his findings to a central education commission.<sup>22</sup> The second act of 1803 expanded the definition of “public” to include schools which were operated by the Reformed Church, thus extending the jurisdiction of the state inspectorate over Reformed schools.

The backlash these laws engendered among those concerned with the encroachment of a central state into local and clerical affairs resulted in a third education law, the School Act of 1806.<sup>23</sup> This act established a mandatory public school system and provided the federal government with comprehensive control over the educational

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evidence that such control was neither uniform nor strictly enforced given the autonomy of provincial authorities whose economic or social interests often trumped the confessional interests of the Church. Schama, “Schools and Politics in the Netherlands, 1796-1814,” 593.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780-1813* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 534.

<sup>21</sup> Since the Netherlands was divided into numerous school districts, an inspectorate effectively monitored both the quantity and the quality of the new public schools. Van Brummelen, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 430.

<sup>23</sup> The “General Considerations on National Education” drafted by the Society heavily influenced the 1806 School Act. It stated, “Every well-ordered society constitutes the unity of its citizens for the ordering of the general happiness. This happiness is the highest law for all....Society has the right to demand from each of its citizens full and unstinting collaboration in the achievement of this goal. Society is especially obliged to its young citizens to provide them with the necessary knowledge for their future participation in the national commonwealth.” As quoted in Schama, “Schools and Politics in the Netherlands, 1796-1814,” 609.

standards of public schools. Article 22 of the 1806 School Act defined the purpose of these schools with these words:

All school instruction must be organized in such a way that, while learning suitable and useful skills, the rational abilities of children shall be developed, and they shall be trained in *all social and Christian virtues* [emphasis mine].<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the 1806 School Act did not remove all vestiges of Christianity from the common schools, but rather eliminated all doctrinal elements considered socially divisive in order to “enhance a religiously tolerant and unified nation,” favored by the Society.<sup>25</sup> Under this law, devotions and the singing of hymns were permitted during the public school day, but primary school teachers were to make Christianity acceptable to a diversity of Protestant denominations as well as to Roman Catholics by avoiding any overt doctrine in their lessons.

The establishment of mandatory state-controlled common schools aroused opposition among religious communities who did not agree with the presupposition that their doctrinal tenets could be relegated to the private sphere. Dutch Calvinists regarded this law as veering from a proper educational commitment to their historic doctrines found in the Three Forms of Unity and thus branded the new public schools “instruments of a false religion.”<sup>26</sup>

### *The Orange Restoration: Church and School Developments*

Political control of the Netherlands returned to the Dutch in 1813 following the decisions for peace made at the Congress of Vienna. During this Orange Restoration

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<sup>24</sup> 1806 School Act, Article 22, quoted in Peetoom, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Valk, 161.

<sup>26</sup> Peetoom, 21.

(1813-1848) the Dutch set up a constitutional monarchy under William I who, perhaps to the dismay of orthodox Calvinists, proved equally committed to the reforms of his Batavian predecessors. James Bratt, a historian of the Dutch Calvinist movement in the United States, describes the Orange Restoration as a time which,

...brought no relief, only further decline, tinged with betrayal. For now Orange itself seemed to be furthering Revolutionary tendencies, as William I (he was now king, no longer stadtholder of a republic) cast himself as an enlightened autocrat and pushed forward the process of political centralization.<sup>27</sup>

William's administration exercised central control over the Reformed Church and the public schools, exacerbating the religious tensions in both arenas.

In 1816 William re-established the state's relationship with the Dutch Reformed Church. Michael Wintle's work on religion in the Netherlands during the nineteenth century notes that this was accomplished by claiming that the state was concerned only with "the external forms of the church (*jus circa sacra*) rather than its essence and doctrine (*jus in sacra*)."<sup>28</sup> However, the boundaries between these two positions were not necessarily distinct as evident in the subsequent move to restructure the admittance forms for prospective Reformed ministers on the grounds that such forms were external matters of polity. The new form professed a more liberal position concerning the authority of the Three Forms of Unity in relation to the Scriptures, sparking a large debate over the

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<sup>27</sup> James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Wintle, *Pillars of Piety: Religion in the Netherlands in the Nineteenth Century, 1813-1901* (Hull, England: Hull University Press, 1987), 18-19.



essence of church doctrine.<sup>29</sup> The Reformed Church of the Restoration period became, to use the words of Bratt, little more than a “State Department of Religion.”<sup>30</sup>

In the educational arena, William maintained the legacy of centralized control over primary education set forth by the 1806 School Act and continued to allow devotions and hymn singing in the daily routine of public schools. He also granted the inspectorate greater responsibility in establishing and upholding educational standards. However, the orthodox Dutch Calvinists opposed this development because the educational philosophy of the inspectorate was increasingly shaped by the theologically liberal *Groninger Richting* (Groninger School). This school resurrected an evangelical strain within Dutch history in order to promote a non-denominational and unified Church body. Wintle describes the Groningen Movement as that which,

...preached a new kind of Christian humanism in a theology based on the life of Christ, strongly emphasizing religious feeling and conviction in direct reaction to what they saw as the arid, cerebral intellectual textual criticism of the rationalist supranaturalist who had dominated the theology of the [Reformed Church] since its inception.<sup>31</sup>

Followers of this school championed such maxims as “no creed but Christ” and “any doctrine but life.”<sup>32</sup> Since the educational institutions after 1806 inculcated a Protestantism of the lowest common denominator, the Groninger emphasis on ecumenism made them attractive for inspectorate positions. While their emphasis on emotion differed from the Society’s emphasis on rationalism, it became clear to orthodox

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<sup>29</sup> The debate concerned Article 28 (the new form) and its phrasing “according to God’s Holy Word.” The doctrinal split resulted from dual interpretations of this phrase, either inasmuch or insofar as the doctrine of the forms coincided with the Bible. Ten Zythoff, 43- 48.

<sup>30</sup> Bratt, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Wintle, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Vandyke, 19-20.

Calvinists that both movements opposed doctrine as divisive and unnecessary in Dutch education.

To summarize, the political and social changes implemented during the Batavian Republic and the Orange Restoration altered the nature and place of Calvinism in the nation and its schools. While resistance to these developments remained minimal, Elton Bruins and Robert Swierenga note that “a few orthodox local congregations and a small group of intellectuals” questioned the reduction of Christianity to mere civic virtue and criticized what they perceived to be the deleterious impact of Enlightenment rationalism and Christian humanism in both the Reformed church and the public schools.<sup>33</sup> Foremost among the dissenting voices were two parallel yet distinct Dutch Calvinist movements, the Dutch *Reveil* and the *Afscheiding*. The existence of both movements reveals that the Dutch Calvinist community was by no means homogenous. Further, both movements held different positions regarding the revival of Calvinism which directed their unique approach to education. Therefore it is necessary to examine each one as they illuminate recurring, and often divisive, tensions within the Dutch Calvinist community which are still evident in North America.

### *Afschieding and Reveil*

The roots of the Dutch *Reveil* and the *Afscheiding* are located in the larger tradition of pietism prevalent throughout Europe during this period. According to Harry Van Dyke, it was not uncommon for European Protestants to organize private worship

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<sup>33</sup> The National synod of 1816 mandated that the Reformed Church incorporate new gospel songs into its worship services in addition to the Genevan Psalters. Many orthodox Calvinists argued that these new hymns were Arminian in content and refused to participate. Elton J. Bruins and Robert P. Swierenga, *Family Quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Churches in the Nineteenth Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1999), 12.

services in pietistic conventicles in order to supplement, as well as to protest, the “cold and dry orthodoxy or (increasingly after 1750) optimistic and superficial rationalism” of the established Churches throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>34</sup> Despite the similarity of historic roots, it is clear that both movements differed in their approach to reviving the Calvinist faith in the Netherlands; that is, the *Afscheiding*, which amassed a predominantly rural following of Dutch “laborers, tradesmen, farmers and hired hands,” advocated separation from the Reformed Church whereas the *Reveil*, which attracted Dutch aristocrats and urban intellectuals, sought to curb secession through the internal renewal of the Reformed Church.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Afscheiding and Education*

The *Afscheiding* occurred in 1834 at the parish of Hendrick de Cock in Ulrum, Groningen. Upset with the aforementioned liberal direction of the Reformed Church during the Restoration, de Cock used his pulpit as a platform for vitriolic attacks aimed at the Church’s gradual abandonment of Calvinist confessions, as well as its introduction of hymns into the worship services.<sup>36</sup> The Reformed Church suspended de Cock, who retaliated by drawing up an Act of Secession. Other Dutch Reformed pastors such as Albertus Van Raalte and Hendrik Scholte, the two men who set up Dutch Calvinist colonies in the United States, offered their support for the *Afscheiding*, and in 1834 these

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<sup>34</sup> Van Dyke, 22. See also Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 47-49.

<sup>35</sup> An 1836 Report issued by the Reformed Church on the issue of the Seceders wrote, “...that the bulk of the group are people of the lowest class and that most belong to the least knowledgeable and least significant of those classes; that only here and there are a few that are more or less well-to-do; that many are far from irreproachable in their moral and social behavior, and that the Seceders until now cannot boast of any person of note - that is, of acknowledged knowledge and excellent respectability.” Van Brummelen, 23.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

congregations seceded from the Reformed Church. Within two years the movement included six pastors and an estimated 20,000 *Afgescheidenen*.<sup>37</sup>

Alongside doctrinal purity, the Seceders also emphasized the need to purify the religious content of public education. According to Donald Oppewal the Seceders were more suspicious of the religious “neutrality” shaping the nature of public education than they were of the state’s control over education.<sup>38</sup> One preacher of the Secession noted a connection between the establishment of a separate Reformed Church and the necessity for separate reformed schools, arguing in 1835, “The schools are just as corrupt as the churches. And shall we stay out of them, but send our children there?”<sup>39</sup> A number of Seceder parents answered this question in the negative, opting to home school their children. Others shouldered the economic burden of establishing their own “alternative” Christian schools despite the government’s refusal to permit such endeavors.

King William did not wish to see the fragmentation of national unity along sectarian lines and thus opposed the separate schools of the Seceders. Sturm writes, “The illegal schools and churches were seen as expressions of a reactionary attempt to benight the minds of the population and to frustrate national efforts towards a modern Christian society not divided by dogmatic differences.”<sup>40</sup> William employed military force to break up *Afschieding* assemblies and prohibited the Seceders from taking teaching positions in the public schools. In certain provinces he went so far as to ban their

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<sup>37</sup> Wintle, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Donald Oppewal, *The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Calvin College Monograph Series, 1963), 11.

<sup>39</sup> Van Brummelen, 26.

<sup>40</sup> Sturm et al., 285.

children from attending the public schools. Seceders failed to obtain the right to establish their own institutions and boycotted the public schools. Others left for the United States, thereby exporting their particular brand of Dutch Calvinist education to North America.

### *The Afscheiding in North America*

By the mid-nineteenth century 1.3 percent of the Dutch population, roughly 40,000 individuals attended Seceder Churches.<sup>41</sup> While official oppression ended under William II, by 1840 the pejorative stigma attached to this schismatic body of Dutch Calvinists led to employment discrimination that continued to impede any meaningful integration into Dutch society. Further, a potato blight in 1845 and 1846 added an additional economic burden on the lower-class Dutch citizens, many of whom were Seceders, resulting in a large scale emigration to North America. While the underlying impetus for emigration during this period was a fusion of socio-economic and politico-religious concerns it is clear that religious freedom, particularly the freedom to worship and educate in accordance with the orthodox Calvinist confessions, provided the primary motivation for the Seceders to move to the United States. Between 1844 and 1857, ten percent of the Dutch Calvinist Seceders left the Netherlands for the United States.<sup>42</sup>

The primary Seceder settlements in America were in Pella, Iowa and in Holland, Michigan. The leaders of these two *Afscheiding* enclaves stressed the importance of education. For example, the leader of the Pella community, Hendrick Scholte, argued in 1846:

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<sup>41</sup> Bruins and Swierenga, 27.

<sup>42</sup> Bratt, 8. See also Cornelis Smits "Secession, Quarrels, Emigration and Personalities" in *Dutch Immigration to North America* eds. Herman Ganzevoort, Herman and Mark Boekelman (Toronto, Ontario: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1983), 97-107.

The stubborn opposition of the [Dutch] government against freedom of religion and education promotes the desire to emigrate....In North America the land is empty, there is complete freedom of religion and education. When the number of those leaving is somewhat large and they stay together with the purchase of some extensive...land, then the local government remains in the hand of the colonists. Here during the last weeks we saw the pronouncement of illegal sentences by which the freedom of education and divine service is being suppressed in extreme ways.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the freedom to set up both churches and schools in the United States, relatively few were established in the first decades of settlement. Oppewal refers to the Calvinist day school as “a tender plant” which “grew very slowly and made very little progress for almost forty years.”<sup>44</sup> To be sure, the cost of settling the rugged frontier often left little resources for creating and operating schools.<sup>45</sup> More importantly, many Dutch Calvinist immigrants quickly turned to existing institutions within the United States for worship as well as for the education of their children.

The Reformed Church of America (RCA) offered an American counterpart to the *Hervormde Kerk* for the new Dutch immigrants. The RCA originated in New Amsterdam in 1628 and operated under the auspices of the *Hervormde Kerk* in the Netherlands until 1771 after which it gained independence.<sup>46</sup> Bruins and Swierenga describe the RCA as “conservative, orthodox and Americanized” by 1847 when the Seceders under Van Raalte united with this denomination. The similarities between the RCA and the NHK sparked opposition within the Dutch Calvinist community,

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<sup>43</sup> Letter from Hendricke Scholte to Groen Van Prinsterer, 15 May 1846, as quoted in Van Brummelen, 34.

<sup>44</sup> Oppewal, *The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Van Brummelen, 43.

<sup>46</sup> Karel Blei, *The Netherlands Reformed Church, 1571-2005* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), x.

particularly among those rooted in the *Afscheiding* with separatist tendencies.<sup>47</sup>

Consequently, in 1857 a number of families left the RCA to form the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Similar to the schism of 1834, this ecclesiastical break breathed new life into the issue of separate Christian schools, which was perhaps necessary as many Dutch Calvinists became complacent regarding their support for separate schools.

Despite their experience with state-controlled education in the Netherlands, the early *Afscheiding* communities preferred to send their children to the American common schools. Unlike the increasingly secular public schools in the Netherlands, the state-operated common schools in the United States still retained a broad Protestant character as well as a high level of local autonomy in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, a majority of these immigrants argued that they could work within the American common schools and uphold the Christian character of public education.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps this stance seems paradoxical given the insistence for separate schools in the Netherlands, but it is important to note that the Seceders, for the most part, emphasized doctrinal purity as the fruit of education, thus leaving unresolved the issue of whether such responsibility fell under the jurisdiction of either the church or the state. Nevertheless, Van Raalte, the leader of the Dutch Calvinist community in Michigan, managed to begin a small network

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<sup>47</sup> The RCA placed a similar emphasis on individual moral reform than on collective doctrinal purity, embraced a similar ecumenism as the Dutch Reformed Church, and also worshipped with hymns rather than traditional psalters.<sup>47</sup> Bratt "American Culture and Society: A Century of Dutch-American Assessments," 369-275.

<sup>48</sup> For a detailed history of the development of the American common school system, see James W. Fraser, *Between Church and State: Religion and Public Education in a Multi-Cultural America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> VanBrummelen, 47.

of separate *Afscheiding* schools, backed (and operated) by the newly formed CRC.<sup>50</sup>

These parochial schools, similar to the communities in which they were built, remained isolated from American society and culture and in turn promoted social and cultural isolation in order to maintain doctrinal (and arguably ethnic) purity.

### *CRC Schools in America: Fortresses of Isolation*

The Americanization of the RCA repelled many within the CRC because, as James Bratt aptly puts it, the “world” for these Dutch Calvinists “remained insolubly problematic; to be avoided when possible, to be endured when not, and then by standards private or ecclesiastical.”<sup>51</sup> The curricular survey of these early schools offered by Van Brummelen reveals that the CRC controlled system of education placed the religious views of the teacher in higher regard than his or her academic credentials.<sup>52</sup> In fact, these schools taught in Dutch well into the nineteenth century, believing that the Dutch language was essential in upholding pure Calvinist orthodoxy as opposed to “shallow American Protestantism.”<sup>53</sup> For early CRC Dutch Calvinists in America, separate education meant separation from the “world,” for only in such cultural and social

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<sup>50</sup> Donald Oppewal relates that the CRC grounded its support for the parochial schools of the *Afscheiding* in Article 21 of the Synod of Dort: “Consistories shall see to it everywhere that there are good school-masters who shall not only teach the children reading, writing, languages and art, but also instruct them in godliness and in Catechism.” He argues that this article emerged in a completely different political and religious climate than nineteenth century America, where church and state were separate as opposed to united in their Calvinist support as in the Netherlands. Despite the differences, there remains a strain in the Dutch Calvinist community which desires to have the Church direct the school in typical Dortian fashion. Oppewal, *The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement*, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Bratt, “American Culture and Society: A Century of Dutch-American Assessments,” 372.

<sup>52</sup> Van Brummelen cites one extreme case where a school employed a fruit tree seller as a teacher on the grounds that his piety enabled him to offer solid Christian instruction. Van Brummelen, 51.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.



isolation could they preserve both the doctrinal purity and ethnic identity of the community.<sup>54</sup>

This pietistic strain remains visible in North American Dutch Calvinist schools, but it did not dominate the school movement. Rather, an alternative strain of *separate* Christian schooling emerged out of the Dutch *Reveil*. Thus, it is necessary to return to the Netherlands and explore the role of this revival movement, particularly under the leadership of Guillaume Groen Van Prinsterer, in the Dutch *schoolstrijd*.

### *The Reveil and Education: Groen Van Prinsterer*

In 1837, Guillaume Groen Van Prinsterer stepped forward to defend the cause of the *Afschieding* regarding the state suppression of their separate Christian churches and schools. Born in 1801 in the small village of Voorburg, Groen moved among the Dutch aristocracy at an early age due to his mother's familial connections in Dutch banking and his father's position as a medical doctor in the royal court. Prior to obtaining a dual degree in law and the classics at the University of Leyden, Van Prinsterer attended a Latin school in The Hague and supplemented his studies with Reformed catechism lessons.<sup>55</sup> At Leyden he encountered the private seminars of William Bilderdijk (1756-1831), an eccentric Dutch poet who lambasted the Enlightenment "spirit of the age" and called for a Calvinist revival in the Netherlands.<sup>56</sup> Bilderdijk, known as the father of the

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<sup>54</sup> Oppewal, *The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement*, 18. Oppewal argues, "The plea that the church should control the school has sometimes been made in the name of cultural separation and sometimes in the name of the need for continued doctrinal purity."

<sup>55</sup> Groen defended two dissertations, one on Justinian and the other on Plato, on the same day. David W. Hall, *Groen Van Prinsterer: Political Paradigm from the Past* (Theological Society Papers, 1996), 65.

<sup>56</sup> Bilderdijk is attributed as being the father of the Dutch *Reveil*, and Van Prinsterer later revealed in his *Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution*, that it was this man who "first made [him] doubt the things [he]

Dutch *Reveil*, challenged the beliefs of Groen and led him to the religious conviction that the sovereignty of reason promoted by the Enlightenment and French Revolution contradicted and threatened to undermine a proper submission to the sovereignty of God.<sup>57</sup> At an evangelical revival, Groen experienced conversion, joined the *Reveil*, and became active in the revival of Calvinism within the Netherlands, particularly in the arena of education.<sup>58</sup>

The Dutch *Reveil* was a part of the cultural and religious revivals occurring in England, Switzerland, and France during the nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Similar to the *Afscheiding*, members of the *Reveil* met in private house meetings where leaders stressed personal piety and repentance. They sought direction in the Word of God and challenged Enlightenment as well as Christian humanist (i.e., the Groningen School) principles on the grounds that human perfectibility, both rational and emotional, contradicted the Calvinist doctrine of man's total depravity.<sup>60</sup> Van Brummelen notes:

[The *Reveil*] was a relatively small group of people who fought what they perceived to be the superficiality, rigidity and deadness of an unenlightened and enslaved age and sought revival within the national church through personal conversion, warm faith and religious fervor.<sup>61</sup>

The *Reveil* was largely an urban and aristocratic religious movement which worked

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had hitherto accepted without questioning.” Van Dyke, 41.

<sup>57</sup> James W. Skillen and Stanely W. Carlson-Thies “Religion and Political Development in Nineteenth Century Holland,” *Publius* 12 no. 3 (1982): 50.

<sup>58</sup> John L. Hiemstra, *Worldviews on the Air: The Struggle to Create a Pluralist Broadcasting System in the Netherlands* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1997), 12.

<sup>59</sup> Blei, 66.

<sup>60</sup> The message they inculcated in their followers was that the Word of God, not human reason, led to “true enlightenment.” Van dyke, 24.

<sup>61</sup> Van Brummelen, 22.

within the Reformed Church as well as within Dutch society. While such upper-class status and aversion to schism from the Reformed Church put many at odds with the rural *Afscheiding*, they fought for their fellow Calvinists' educational and religious rights.

In defense of the *Afscheiding*, Groen produced a tract in 1837 entitled *The Measures Against the Seceders Tested With Respect to Constitutional Law* which not only challenged the oppressive measures taken by the King, but also addressed the issue of public education in the Netherlands. Groen argued that the imposition of a rationalistic Christianity in either the Church or the schools violated the historic religious freedoms guaranteed to Dutch citizens.<sup>62</sup> The centerpiece of his argument hinged on the assertion, "Freedom of conscience, freedom of worship, freedom of education: among these there is an unbreakable link."<sup>63</sup> He argued that the disestablishment of the Reformed Church from both the state and the schools was a lingering effect of the French Revolution in the Netherlands and consequently the schools, like the Reformed churches, were in danger of being controlled by a state no longer committed to the Reformed worldview.

Groen urged the state to restore the responsibility for education in the Netherlands to parents, as their educational rights were violated by a school system whose curricular ideology was dictated by the state. Three years later, Groen took the cause of the *Afschieding* before Parliament, arguing before a joint session, saying:

Parents who, with or without adequate grounds, are honestly convinced that the character of the instruction in the existing schools is non-Christian, must not, directly or indirectly, be prevented from providing for their children the kind of education for which they believe they can be responsible before God. That

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<sup>62</sup> Hiemstra, 33.

<sup>63</sup> Van Brummelen, 26.

compulsion, to put it bluntly, is intolerable and ought to stop. It is a presumption springing from the Revolution doctrine which, disregarding the rights of parents, considers children the property of the state.<sup>64</sup>

In 1844, the first *Reveil* influenced separate Christian school, operated solely by an association of parents, was established in the Netherlands.<sup>65</sup> A lawyer and member of the *Reveil* by the name of J. L. van der Brugghen organized this school to provide teachers and students with the freedom to profess their faith as well as to provide an alternative education to that offered in the public schools.<sup>66</sup> The locus of control in this school existed in a parental body rather than in the church or the state.

In contradistinction to the *Afscheiding* schools, the schools of the *Reveil* stressed the power of the Christian faith in developing and renewing a fallen culture and society. Unlike the “narrow moralism” and indoctrination of doctrines taught in the parochial schools of the *Afscheiding*, the *Reveil* conception of religious education centered on the “spheres of Christian action” which Christians were called to engage rather than exclude.

In 1845 van der Brugghen wrote:

Our school continually gives us much difficulty and anxiety...it is so difficult in our nation, in all spheres of Christian action, to find suitable and usable people, because there is much orthodoxy and mysticism present, but little, relentlessly little, living faith and true desire to serve the Lord.<sup>67</sup>

Chapter two will discuss the development of these schools as well as this educational

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<sup>64</sup> VanDyke, 63.

<sup>65</sup> Van Brummelen provides three reasons for the parental control of van der Brugghen’s school. First, the belief that a school must be interdenominational meant that “small doctrinal differences should not affect curriculum.” Second, the involvement of parents could positively “benefit their children’s attitude and achievement.” And third, “he was convinced that a church operating a school would tend to reduce religious education to the indoctrination of written dogmas.”Van Brummelen, 11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

philosophy in more detail. By 1848, however, only three such schools, controlled by an association of parents and committed to cultural engagement rather than withdrawal, existed in the Netherlands.<sup>68</sup>

### *The 1848 Constitution*

In 1848 a liberal faction took power in the Netherlands and restructured the Dutch social and political order through yet another constitution. Among other provisions, this constitution contained a “freedom of education” clause allowing private (religious) schools the right of existence.<sup>69</sup> However, the constitution altered (arguably secularized) the 1806 education policy that stipulated the state would determine the “social and Christian virtues” necessary in the public schools. In this new climate, any Calvinist vestiges still lingering in the public schools were systematically replaced by the doctrine of strict religious neutrality. Unable to please Roman Catholics and Protestants alike in the religious content of the public curriculum, the state removed confessional creeds such as the Heidelberg Catechism from the schools altogether. Further, simple classroom devotions which arguably promoted one denominational interpretation of the Scriptures over another were also removed from the classroom.<sup>70</sup> The inspectorate pushed religious instruction to the peripheries of an official, religiously neutral, school day. One nineteenth century Dutch Calvinist immigrant in the United States who was active in creating separate Christian schools in the Netherlands recalled:

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Sturm argues, “The core of this constitution was the recognition of the civil rights and liberties, of which freedom of association, religion and education are particularly relevant to the history of the School War.” Sturm et al., 285.

<sup>70</sup> Peter de Boer and Donald Opewal “American Calvinist Day Schools,” 267.

Education had to be neutral in order not to offend dissentients. We surely still had one of the best teachers, but the poor man was bound hands and feet. We still read from the Bible every Friday, but that had to happen secretly. As soon as the reading was done, the Bible was put away in the drawer of the school desk.<sup>71</sup>

Teachers who refused to comply with these regulations restricting religion in the schools faced immediate dismissal. Groen opposed the educational clause of the 1848 constitution on the grounds that the state, shaped by the spirit of the French Revolution, which continued to substitute rational Enlightenment thought for orthodox Calvinism in the schools erred in its refusal to “subordinate to the divine will.”<sup>72</sup> According to Hiemstra, Groen employed the notion of “sphere sovereignty” to argue that authority of the state was limited to its particular sphere, rather than absolute over all societal “spheres,” such as the church and the school.<sup>73</sup> Groen became the leader of an anti-revolutionary movement as well as the leader of the Association of Christian National School Education, advocating that the strength of Dutch Calvinists lay solely in their isolation.<sup>74</sup>

### *Conclusion*

By the middle of the nineteenth century, state control over Dutch schools increasingly resulted in the removal of sectarian dogmas from primary and secondary curriculum. The rationale behind this move rested on a belief by liberal thinkers that a common civic morality would solidify national unity. Ironically the implementation of religiously neutral education proved only to produce disunity as Dutch Calvinists at both

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<sup>71</sup> Van Brummelen, 19-20.

<sup>72</sup> Hiemstra, 12.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Vanden Berg, 65.

ends of the socio-economic ladder challenged state control over the nation's historic institutions. The ensuing struggle over educational control and its religious orientation, outlined in this chapter, concluded with the new constitution of 1848 which appeared to have diffused these social tensions by providing Dutch Calvinist parents, as well as other religious minorities, the constitutional freedom to establish and maintain their own separate Christian schools in line with their particular doctrinal beliefs.

However, the "freedom of education" clause in the 1848 constitution remained conditional as private schools which offered religious instruction were expected to meet the standards of state-controlled public schools.<sup>75</sup> Article 194 of the new constitution stated: "The giving of education is free, upon investigation of the quality and morality of the instructors and the supervision of the government, both to be regulated by law."<sup>76</sup> In this respect, the private religious schools were still expected to obtain permission from local government authorities, perhaps explaining why so few Christian schools were set up in the decades following the 1848 constitution. Michael Wintle notes that out of the 3800 primary schools in the Netherlands by 1870, only 200 were definitively "orthodox Protestant."<sup>77</sup>

The constitution also prohibited government subsidies for any privately operated religious school. To be sure, these provisions were not met with resistance for over a decade largely due to the fact that the majority of Dutch Calvinists retained a suspicion of governmental intervention in their educational institutions. Sturm argues:

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<sup>75</sup> Justus M. van der Kroef, "Abraham Kuyper and the Rise of Neo-Calvinism in the Netherlands," *Church History* 17, no. 4 (1948): 330.

<sup>76</sup>Valk, 171.

<sup>77</sup> Wintle, 65.

The denominational schools had been apprehensive of government involvement in their educational freedom as a side effect of possible government subsidy. Not wishing 'to be bound by silver cords', they would rather work with thrifty, donations, and, with a view to the poor, the lowest tuition.<sup>78</sup>

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, the Dutch government passed a number of new school laws, imposing higher standards of education upon private and public schools and enforcing stricter religious neutrality in their curriculum. A liberal school bill in 1878 created standards concerning the quality of educational facilities, as well as stipulations for proper curricular materials and standardized teacher qualifications.<sup>79</sup> The regulations proved costly for Dutch Calvinist school supporters who involuntarily financed public schools through taxes and who voluntarily financed their separate schools through personal savings. The survival of many nascent Christian schools required state subsidization and this awareness brought the *schoolstrijd* once again to the forefront of social and political discourse in the Netherlands. The story of this second phase of the school struggle is the focus of the Chapter two.

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<sup>78</sup> Sturm et al., 287.

<sup>79</sup> Van der Kroef, 331.



## CHAPTER THREE

### The Netherlands *Schoolstrijd*: Phase Two 1848-1917

#### *Introduction*

Despite the religious freedoms guaranteed in the 1848 constitution which had allowed for the existence of separate religious schools, the fate of the Dutch Calvinist school movement remained precarious in the latter half of the nineteenth century for a number of reasons. First, the Dutch state imposed a number of educational standards on all schools, both private and public, pertaining to the quality of educational facilities, curricular materials as well as educators. These standards were costly, yet the state offered no subsidization for separate religious schools, thereby threatening the survival of the nascent Christian schools which obtained their funding primarily out of the rather empty pockets of its supporters. Second, the majority of these Dutch Calvinist school supporters were not only poor, but they remained disenfranchised *klein luyden*, or common people, despite the gains made in the liberal Constitution.<sup>1</sup> In fact, this reality earned Groen Van Prinsterer the title “The General without an Army” during his years of involvement in the school struggle.<sup>2</sup> Third, Groen himself was reaching the end of his years, which, ironically, threatened to leave this Calvinist army without a General. In short, the Dutch Calvinist school movement required both a base of support with real

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<sup>1</sup> James Bratt defines the *klein luyden* as “the largely rural mass caught between the paupers and the prosperous and forming the stronghold of Reformed conviction.” James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Johan Sturm et al., “Educational Pluralism: A Historical Study of So-Called ‘Pillarization’ in the Netherlands Including a Comparison with Some Developments in South African Education,” *Comparative Education* 34 no. 3 (1998): 287.

political power, as well as an effective leader to direct this power at the state level in order to break up the liberal monopoly on education and attain equitable government subsidies.

In 1869, the aging Groen attended a convention for the Society for Christian National Education where he encountered a young minister of the *Hervormde Kerk* who echoed his antirevolutionary principles in a lecture entitled *An Appeal to the Conscience of the People*.<sup>3</sup> The minister, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1917), offered a critique of the public educational institutions in the Netherlands, which he believed imposed a religion of secular Enlightenment rationalism, thereby failing to respect the diversity of religious communities in the Netherlands.<sup>4</sup> He argued that the proper development of religious plurality provided the only viable solution to pacify the emerging religious discontent in the educational arena, stating:

Every historically developed element in our people's life must, according to our loud demand, be rediscoverable in the regenerated national life, however modified and limited. Our Reformed people in front, but equally our Catholic countrymen, the men of the old [Society for the General Good] as well as the young Holland, call it modern or radical, in short every group and every direction, must be able to build along on the new house in which the Dutch people will live.<sup>5</sup>

Similar to Groen, Kuyper maintained that Dutch society consisted of religious (as well as a-religious) communities whose worldviews must not (nor could not) be pushed outside

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<sup>3</sup> Louis Praamsma, *Let Christ be King: Reflections on the Life and Times of Abraham Kuyper* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1985), 54-56.

<sup>4</sup> R.E.L. Rodgers, *The Incarnation of the Antithesis: An Introduction to the Educational Thought and Practice of Abraham Kuyper* (Cambridge, England: The Pentland Press Ltd., 1992), 47.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Kuyper, "An Appeal to the Conscience of the People," (1869); trans. John L. Hiemstra in *Worldviews on the Air: The Struggle to Create a Pluralist Broadcasting System in the Netherlands* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1997), 34.

of the public square and into the private arena.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the state existed to nurture, not stifle, the organic development of such “worldview communities” by allowing them to develop cultural institutions, including those for education in order to preserve and perpetuate their beliefs.

One cannot understand the Dutch Calvinist school movement throughout the twentieth century apart from the political, social, and educational philosophy developed by Kuyper, who, in the words of one historian “placed a stamp upon the civilization of the Netherlands which it never was to lose.”<sup>7</sup> In 1876, Kuyper succeeded Groen as the head of the Antirevolutionary Party (hereafter ARP) and advanced the Calvinist revival in the Netherlands by tirelessly pushing his Reformed countrymen to see the implications of God’s sovereignty over all “spheres” of life. The “neo-Calvinist”<sup>8</sup> thought of Kuyper, as it was labeled, challenged the strain of isolationist pietism within the Dutch Calvinist ranks and offered a theological framework for cultural engagement. Thus, Kuyper managed at once to unite elements, as well as individuals, of both the *Afscheiding* and the *Reveil*, under his neo-Calvinist banner.

The mobilization of the Dutch Calvinists under the leadership of Kuyper revitalized the Dutch Calvinist school movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century as they fought for equitable state subsidies. Victory was attained with the Dutch “pacification” legislation of 1917 which provided funding for all Dutch schools

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<sup>6</sup> Hiemstra, 35.

<sup>7</sup> Justus M. Van der Kroef, “Abraham Kuyper and the Rise of Neo-Calvinism in the Netherlands,” *Church History* 17 no. 4 (1948): 316.

<sup>8</sup> The term “neo-Calvinist” was given to Kuyperian thought by his opponents. However, as Hiemstra notes, Kuyper accepted this label on the grounds that he wanted to redefine Calvinism as a “world formative Christianity.” Hiemstra, 14.

regardless of religious affiliation. This legislation promoted the division of the Dutch social order along denominational lines, and although this has recently experienced internal and external criticisms, it certainly bears the marks of neo-Calvinist thought and importantly shaped the contours of the Dutch Calvinist school movement in both the Netherlands and North America.

In this light, the third chapter offers an historical narrative of the second phase of the Dutch school struggle that can be chronologically confined between the year of the new constitution in 1848 and the aforementioned legislation of 1917 which granted equitable funding for all Dutch schools, regardless of their religious affiliation. However, these political events will offer merely the contextual framework in which to examine the “neo-Calvinist” thought of Abraham Kuyper. Particularly, his doctrines of sphere sovereignty, antithesis, and common grace, have had lasting educational implications in both the Netherlands and North America.

#### *There and Back Again: Abraham Kuyper’s Conversion to Calvinism*

Abraham Kuyper was born on October 29, 1837 in the small Dutch fishing village of Maasluis. Despite early dreams of a career in sailing, it appears that his father’s position as a pastor in the *Hervormde Kerk* influenced his course of study in “literature and theology” at the University of Leyden.<sup>9</sup> At Leyden, Kuyper embraced the modernist school of thought under the tutelage of J.H. Scholten (1811-1885) who encouraged students to analyze the Word of God through a lens of empirical rationalism and question it as any other “unreliable historical document.”<sup>10</sup> Michael Wintle describes the

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<sup>9</sup> Praamsma, 40-41.

<sup>10</sup> Rodgers, 2.

“modern” Christian as one who “no longer had any need for a dualistic belief in miracles, hell, original sin, and the like.”<sup>11</sup> In a personal conversion narrative Kuyper relates that his embrace of modernism led him to applaud a lecturer who denied the resurrection of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

After Leyden, Kuyper took up his first pastorate in the rural village of Beesd where he encountered the rigid Calvinist orthodoxy of the *kleine luyden* whose vigilant commitment to the Reformed doctrines and stubborn faithfulness to the literal Word of God left little room for his modernist sympathies.<sup>13</sup> The ensuing clash of worldviews between himself and his congregants forged his concept of antithesis in which he realized that an irreconcilable conflict of principles existed between Modernism and Christianity as each developed from different starting points. In reference to these rural orthodox Calvinists, Kuyper later wrote:

Their unremitting perseverance has become the blessing of my heart, the rise of the morning star for my life. I had been convicted but had not yet found the word of reconciliation. That they brought me, with their imperfect language, in that absolute form which alone can give rest to my soul: in the worship and adoration of a God who works all things, both the willing and the working, according to His good pleasure!<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Wintle, *Pillars of Piety: Religion in the Netherlands in the Nineteenth Century, 1813-1901* (Hull, England: Hull University Press, 1987), 42.

<sup>12</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Confidentially* (Amsterdam, 1873) in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 46-61.

<sup>13</sup> While working on an historical research project on John a Lasco, a Polish reformer, Kuyper nearly gave up due to the lack of resources when he encountered a man in Haarlem who happened to own the complete works of a Lasco, which formed the material for his doctoral dissertation. Kuyper later recalled that this event moved him to a realization of “the living, acting, sovereign God on life’s way,” thus altering his modernist denial of miracles. Shortly after this realization Kuyper, mentally exhausted after writing both his comprehensive exams alongside his dissertation, experienced his first of two nervous breakdowns. During his recovery he read a novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe*, which overwhelmed him with its calling to a life of humility and service. Further, the novel revealed to him that the peace derived from humility must be nurtured by the institutional Church. Kuyper, *Confidentially*, 50-51.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

In the *kleine luyden*, Kuyper observed a unity of thought and action in their submission to the sovereignty of God that challenged his modernist assumptions concerning the dualities between the sacred and the secular.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, he returned to the Reformed faith of his youth. After Beesd, however, Kuyper did not settle into inactive complacency but worked tirelessly to revive Calvinism in the Netherlands as an all-encompassing *weltanschauung* view in order to “stir the orthodox from their passive isolation and to direct the ensuing passion against liberalism’s political and cultural hegemony.”<sup>16</sup>

*Kuyper Fights for a Free Church, a Free University, and Free Christian Schools*

In Utrecht, Kuyper encountered the Calvinist *Reveil* which offered “the ideological vanguard of those increasingly dissatisfied with modernism not only in theology and religion but in civilization as a whole.”<sup>17</sup> Although his sympathies rested with the common man, Kuyper found an ally and mentor in the aristocratic Groen. Both men shared the conviction that the family, not the state, was a sacred institution at the heart of the social order, and as such the state existed to ensure the family’s right to educate children in accordance with the religious (or a-religious) commitments of parents.<sup>18</sup> In 1872, Kuyper joined the Antirevolutionary movement and established and edited *De Standaard* (The Standard), a newspaper dedicated to their political agenda. Kuyper used this medium to expose the antithesis in society and mobilize the Calvinists

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<sup>15</sup> Van Brummelen, 77.

<sup>16</sup> Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Vander Kroef, 320.

<sup>18</sup> Hiemstra, 34-35.

in the Netherlands.<sup>19</sup> He fulfilled this role in addition to his editorship of the devotional newspaper *De Heraut* (The Herald).<sup>20</sup> By 1874 Kuyper was elected to the National Assembly and when Groen passed away in 1876 Kuyper succeeded him as the head of the predominantly Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Party.<sup>21</sup>

Kuyper championed educational reform before the Second Chamber, where he continually pleaded the case for “free” schools. In a speech delivered to the Second Chamber of the States General, Kuyper argued, “It should be possible to give our country a school system in which party politics need not play any part whatsoever. Education, in my view, is not first of all a political but a social question...”<sup>22</sup> Throughout the early 1870s Kuyper developed and defended educational policies to obtain subsidies for individual parents to be used for the schools of their choice and refunds for parents whose tax dollars were spent to support the public schools which their children did not attend.<sup>23</sup> The continual rejection of his proposals contributed to Kuyper’s resignation from the Second Chamber. However, he returned within sixteen months to mobilize opposition against the aforementioned 1878 education bill.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Wintle, 55.

<sup>20</sup> Kuyper wrote voluminously for 50 years in both newspapers. *The Standard* presented his political program for the Anti-Revolutionary party, while *The Herald* offered weekly devotionals and meditations. It is estimated that Kuyper published over 2,000 articles in both papers over the course of his life. Rodgers, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Dirk Jellema, “Abraham Kuyper’s Attack on Liberalism,” *The Review of Politics* 19 no. 4 (1957): 475.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Vanden Berg, *Abraham Kuyper: A Biography* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1978), 69.

<sup>23</sup> Hiemstra, 37.

<sup>24</sup> These developments contributed to a second nervous breakdown in 1876, the very year of Groen’s death. Kuyper left the Netherlands for 16 months to recuperate.

The education bill of 1878 imposed costly educational standards upon all schools while providing government subsidization only to state-controlled public schools.<sup>25</sup> Non-public religious schools that could not afford to keep their institutions in line with these standards were forced to close. In *De Standaard* Kuyper wrote, “The law is as liberal as can be. You may certainly have a school with God’s Word, if you pay for that school, but – listen well – only after you have paid for your neighbor’s school.”<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the Dutch school struggle, thought to have been diffused by the 1848 Constitution, returned to the forefront of political discourse in the Netherlands.<sup>27</sup>

In an attempt to prevent the passage of the 1878 bill, Kuyper managed to obtain over 305,000 signatures in five days on a petition requesting the royal veto of the King.<sup>28</sup> This number is significant when one considers that the number of registered voters in the Netherlands during these years barely exceeded 122,000 citizens.<sup>29</sup> The majority of these signatories were Dutch Calvinist *kleine luyden*, but the Dutch Catholics mirrored their opposition when over 160,000 who were opposed to the 1878 education bill signed a similar petition.<sup>30</sup> While both petitions did not prevent the passage of the 1878 school law, they successfully exposed a large anti-Liberal faction composed of Dutch Reformed and Dutch Catholic citizens, powerful enough to overthrow the Liberal government.<sup>31</sup> In

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<sup>25</sup> Jellema, 475.

<sup>26</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *De Standaard*, (Netherlands), 23 July, 1878 as quoted in Praamsma, 73.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen V. Monsma and Christopher J. Soper, eds., *Church and State in Five Democracies: The Challenge of Pluralism* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 57.

<sup>28</sup> Vanden Berg, 84.

<sup>29</sup> Hiemstra, 38.

<sup>30</sup> Monsma and Soper, 57.

<sup>31</sup> Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 12.



1879 the ARP gained nine seats in Parliament. To be sure, this confessional alliance of Dutch Catholics and Dutch Calvinists marked the beginning of the end for the liberal establishment.

Although Kuyper left the ministry for politics, he worked vigorously to prevent modernism from infiltrating the pulpits of the Reformed Church. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the General Synod of the Reformed Church selected ministers who were primarily educated in national institutions which taught *Groninger* or modernist theology. The inability to elect orthodox pastors became an increasing concern of congregants in the Reformed Church. Wintle writes:

It was often the appointment of the church minister which led to dispute: the congregations tended to be considerably less progressive than most of the young ministers coming out of the universities dominated by the teachings of the *Groningers*, and increasingly by the Modernists.<sup>32</sup>

When the government enabled certain religious denominations to establish their own universities, Kuyper, along with two other professors of theology, established a private Calvinist university named the *Vrije Universiteit* (Free University) in Amsterdam.<sup>33</sup> The name of the University certainly resounded the central conviction of Groen and Kuyper, that education must remain free from either church or state control. Yet, while the educational and ecclesiastical spheres are theoretically distinct, in the Dutch Calvinist community there is commonly a large degree of overlap between the two institutions. While the Free University was not controlled by the Reformed Church, it certainly

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<sup>32</sup> Wintle, 54.

<sup>33</sup> Rodgers, 57-65.

submitted to Reformed doctrine.<sup>34</sup> The second article of the Free University's statutes stated:

For all the instruction that is given in its schools, the Society stands wholly and exclusively on the foundation of the Reformed principles and therefore recognizes as basis for its instruction in theology the Three Forms of Unity as they were definitively adopted in 1619 by the National Synod of Dordrecht for the Netherlands Reformed Churches, attaching them to such authority as the aforesaid Synod – witness its own Acts and official documents – has ascribed to the confessional standards of the Netherlands Reformed Churches.<sup>35</sup>

Despite this Reformed foundation, the move to establish a separate university for the education of Reformed ministers created tensions between the Synod of the *Hervormde Kerk* which refused to recognize the Free University graduates as candidates for its churches, and a large number of its congregants who desired their orthodox leadership.<sup>36</sup> Tensions between Kuyper and the General Synod mounted until he and a handful of ministers were suspended in 1886 from preaching in the NHK.

The move to suspend Kuyper and these ministers who were attempting to weed modernism out of the *Hervormde Kerk* resulted in a second schism within the church, known in Dutch history as the *Doleantie*, or the Mourning. Concerning its numerical impact, Wintle notes that the *Doleantie* involved “about 76 ministers, 200 congregations and 180,000 members within a short time.”<sup>37</sup> *De Doleerende Kerk*, (The Suffering

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>35</sup> Vanden Berg, 96.

<sup>36</sup> Van der Kroef writes, “Not the slightest discipline was to be found in the Church, according to Kuyper. This was largely the work of the state which, because of its worldly control over the Church, had diluted, if not effaced all religious standards. “Liberate the Church,” became his slogan.” Van der Kroef, 318.

<sup>37</sup> Wintle also makes mention that this schism, while national, did not successfully garner a similar united body of Dutch Calvinists like the previous *Afscheiding*. Rather, Kuyper did not appeal to these “ultra-orthodox” seceders who opposed “all that was modern, progressive and new in religion and society.” Further, Wintle notes that Kuyper failed to attract the aristocrats with *Reveil* sympathies who continued to

Church) lasted six years before it merged with the church of the 1834 *Afschieding*. By siding with the common man, Kuyper now distanced himself from his aristocratic base of support in the *Reveil*, which remained committed to reforming the church from within and opposed ecclesiastical schism. The schism impacted the Dutch Calvinist school movement in the Netherlands.

The *Doleantie* led to the establishment of the *Gereformeerde Kerk*, which was the third Reformed denomination in the Netherlands in addition to the *Hervormde Kerk* and the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* of the *Afscheiding*.<sup>38</sup> The Reformed were now divided into three separate churches, but they continued to send their children to the *diakoniescholen*, schools controlled and operated by the national Reformed Church. The Reformed Church however, refused to admit students and teachers with *Doleantie* leanings. The members of the *Doleantie*, opposed to secular public education, but now rejected from the Christian schools of the Reformed Church, resolved to set up their own separate Reformed schools. In his account of the school struggle in Utrecht, John Valk argues that these developments signaled an important, and one might add lasting, division within the Dutch Calvinist school movement between “Christian education and Reformed education.” Valk writes:

Those who supported Christian education were Orthodox members from the *Hervormde Kerk*. Unhappy with the public school, they supported Christian education, but one less doctrinally and confessionally oriented. They sent their children to the *burgerscholen* and *diakoniescholen* of the *Hervormde Kerk*. Those who supported a Reformed Christian education were Orthodox Reformed

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uphold their position that that the Reformed Church was God-given and, therefore, schism could not be a viable Calvinist option. Wintle, 56.

<sup>38</sup>John Valk, “Religion in the Schools: The Case of Utrecht,” *History of Education Quarterly* 35 no. 2 (1995): 175.

members who had left the *Hervormde Kerk*. The schools they established adhered to the confessions of the Reformed faith, as traditionally defined.<sup>39</sup>

Despite a continuity of internal Dutch Calvinist tensions, this body of Dutch Reformed managed to unite under the Antirevolutionary political movement led by Kuyper, particularly in the fight for equal public funding for their respective schools.

### *The End of the Dutch Schoolstrijd*

The confessional alliance in the Netherlands influenced a constitutional amendment in 1887 that extended the franchise to a variety of Dutch minorities by dropping previous property qualifications.<sup>40</sup> This measure, though born of good intentions, certainly hastened the demise of the liberal party. Sturm and colleagues note that the “unintentional side effect [of this legislation] was that the different denominational streams in the Netherlands were becoming more aware of their interests and quantitative might....”<sup>41</sup> In one year, the ARP gained twenty-eight seats in the lower house, which in addition to the twenty-six seats attained by the Catholic party, provided the “confessional” parties with a majority of seats in the Lower House.<sup>42</sup> The Anti-Revolutionary Party defeated the Liberals in 1889, allowing them to pass legislation that granted minimal state subsidies to religious schools.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> This theme finds continuity in the schism within the Christian Reformed Church in North America in the 1990’s and its impact on education which will be outlined in the final chapter. *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>40</sup> Jellema, 476.

<sup>41</sup> Sturm et al, 288.

<sup>42</sup> Monsma and Soper, 57.

<sup>43</sup> The “Christian Coalition” led by A. MacKay offered “free” schools one-third of the costs to meet state standards. Hiemstra, 39.

In 1901, Kuyper attained the office of Prime Minister of the Netherlands which he held for the first five years of the twentieth century.<sup>44</sup> During his tenure as Prime Minister, Kuyper attempted to further break up the state monopoly on education, by offering economic relief to unsubsidized separate religious schools. Furthermore, he hoped to implement a constitutional revision “to realize full educational equality between secular and Christian schools.”<sup>45</sup> However, due to the time constraints in dealing with the Boer War (1899 – 1902) abroad and a railroad strike (1903) at home Kuyper proved unable to revise the constitution and ensure equitable funding for private religious schools. Nevertheless, he did increase funds for “free” schools as well as provide the teachers of these schools with a government pension.<sup>46</sup> It was not until subsequent Antirevolutionary leaders garnered the necessary two-thirds majority to amend the constitution that public and non-public schools received equitable state subsidies in the Netherlands. In 1917, a constitutional amendment was approved which guaranteed state subsidization for all Dutch schools, regardless of their religious orientation.<sup>47</sup> This legislation concluded the Dutch *schoolstrijd* by alleviating nearly a century of tensions between “free” and “state” school supporters. State schools remained available to all citizens while separate religious schools were offered both constitutional and financial equality.

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<sup>44</sup> James W. Skillen and Rockne M. McCarthy, eds., *Political Order and the Plural Structure of Society* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1991), 235.

<sup>45</sup> McKendree R. Langley, *The Practice of Political Spirituality: Episodes from the Public Career of Abraham Kuyper, 1879-1918* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1984), 86.

<sup>46</sup> Hiemstra, 41.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

The Netherlands now offered a space for the organic development of a plurality of religious institutions, championed by Kuyper. One result of this development was the segmentation of the Dutch landscape along denominational or ideological lines. Historians and sociologists have employed the term *verzuiling*, (pillarization) to describe the variety of Dutch *zuilen* (pillars) developing in freedom in the aftermath of the *schoolstrijd*.<sup>48</sup> Initially, the major pillars were the Calvinist, Catholic, and Social-Democratic. Alongside the development of schools, these worldview communities established a number of civic institutions such as banks, political parties, labor unions, and newspapers. Gradually, contact among the pillars only involved the leaders, whereas the rank and file members within pillars rarely experienced dialogue with differing ideologies. This development is vital to the study of the Dutch Calvinist school movement, for as one scholar has noted, “The *schoolstrijd* and the resultant pillarization of Dutch society gave the minority orthodox Calvinist community in the Netherlands an identity and a defining myth.”<sup>49</sup>

In summary, Kuyper successfully won the battle for equitable funding and overturned the liberal monopoly over national education. To do so, he maintained a firm conviction that Calvinism offered the strongest lens through which this created and fallen

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<sup>48</sup>Johan Sturm offers a concise definition of pillarization, writing, “Pillarization in general is the institutional arrangement which enables mutually interdependent social and political groups to maintain their autonomy to a perceived optimum, without a distinct geographical basis and within the frame of national sovereignty, ensuring the integration of these groups to a minimal degree while preventing national identity or the social order from being jeopardized.” Johan Sturm, Leendert Groenendijk, Bernard Kurithof, and Julialet Rens, “Educational Pluralism – A Historical Study of So-Called ‘Pillarization’ in the Netherlands, Including a Comparison with some Developments in South African Education,” *Comparative Education* 34 no. 3 (1998): 283.

<sup>49</sup> Peter C. Prinsen, “That Old Dutch Disease: The Roots of Dutch Calvinist Education in Alberta” (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 91. See also Adriaan Peetoom, “From Mythology to Mythology: Dutch-Canadian Orthodox- Calvinist Immigrants and Their Schools” (M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1983).

reality could be perceived and properly (re-)ordered in submission to the sovereign Kingship of Christ, *Pro Rege*.<sup>50</sup> James Bratt writes:

[Kuyper's reforms] required a Calvinistic concept of liberty, defined not as individuals' freedom to do as they pleased but as a community's commitment to do what was right, to readily acknowledge the sovereignty of God and closely follow its mandates.

Thus, in order to grasp the educational impact of Kuyperian thought in North America it is first necessary to examine the tenets of this "neo-Calvinist" worldview, particularly those relevant to the Dutch Calvinist school movement in the Netherlands.

### *Kuyperian Neo-Calvinism and Education*

It has been noted that Kuyper approached the Reformed faith not merely as a set of ecclesiastical principles to be professed in private, but rather as an all-embracing world-and-life-view. When Kuyper delivered Princeton's Stone Lectures in the United States in 1898, he chose to outline his vision of the Calvinist worldview in six lectures, arguing, "[The] dominating principle [of Calvin] was not, soteriologically, justification by faith, but, in the widest sense, cosmologically, the sovereignty of the Triune God over the whole Cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible."<sup>51</sup> Kuyper defined a world-and-life-view as the foundational principles that ordered a man's relationship with God, with his fellow man, and with the creation.<sup>52</sup> The beauty of the

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<sup>50</sup> Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, 15.

<sup>51</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1931), 79.

<sup>52</sup> Kuyper states, "For our relation to God: an immediate fellowship of man with the Eternal, independent of priest or church. For the relation of man to man: the recognition in each person of human worth, which is his by virtue of his creation after the Divine likeness, and therefore of the equality of all men before God and his magistrate. And for our relationship to the world: the recognition that in the whole world the curse is restrained by grace, that the life of the world is to be honored in its independence,

Calvinist worldview for Kuyper was that each of these relationships, though fallen and fragmented due to sin, could find unity and renewal in submission to God's overarching sovereignty.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the best indication of Kuyper's stress on the importance of God's sovereignty is found in his inaugural address to the Free University, where he declared, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine.'"<sup>54</sup>

Similar to his predecessor Groen, Kuyper argued that created reality contained a multiplicity of societal "spheres" including, but not limited to, the state, the family, the church, and the school, each sovereign in its own arena. In the Princeton lectures he stated, "Family, business, science, art, and so forth are all social spheres which do not owe their existence to the State, and do not derive the law of their life from the superiority of the State, but obey a higher authority within their own bosom, an authority which rules by the grace of God, just as the sovereignty of the State does."<sup>55</sup> However, unlike Groen, Kuyper expanded the number of spheres to include areas such as science, art, agriculture, and navigation to name but a few. In this respect, his definition of "spheres" remained ambiguous. Richard Mouw explains this ambiguity by emphasizing

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and that we must, in every domain, discover the treasures and develop the potencies hidden by God in nature and in human life." Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Bolt argues that Calvinism is often associated with this emphasis on the sovereignty of God, despite the fact that other faith traditions such as Judaism and Islam place a similar importance on this principle. However, Bolt differentiates the Reformed notion of God's sovereignty by arguing its Trinitarian structure. He writes, "Sovereignty must always be understood in a Trinitarian, kingdom, covenantal, gracious, and eschatological framework. It is the sovereignty of the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier – that is being affirmed." Bolt, 21.

<sup>54</sup> Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998).

<sup>55</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 90.



the central concern of Kuyper in the doctrine of “sphere sovereignty” was to expose the diversity of methods in which God allows his people to “actualize the cultural mandate” implicit in creation.<sup>56</sup> To be sure, Kuyper repeatedly defined the Calvinist worldview in reference to the cultural mandate. In the *Lectures on Calvinism*, he stated, “The world-order remains just what it was from the beginning. It lays full claim, not only to the believer (as though less were required from the un-believer,) but to every human being and to all human relationships.”<sup>57</sup> Kuyper therefore calls Calvinists to the task of restoring these created, yet fallen, spheres. Mouw writes, “The fulfillment of the cultural mandate therefore requires the discovery and implementation of God’s complex ordering design, both among and within the spheres.”<sup>58</sup>

Kuyperian sphere sovereignty effectively laid a theological foundation for the aforementioned pacification legislation of 1917 and the subsequent pillarization of the Netherlands. The Dutch Calvinist *zuilen* consisted of a free Reformed Church, a Free University, independent reformed newspaper presses, labor unions, a Calvinist political party, as well as a vast network of free primary and secondary reformed schools.<sup>59</sup> Dutch Calvinists of both the *Afscheiding* and the *Reveil* existed together in this pillar under the

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<sup>56</sup>Richard Mouw argues, “Without paying attention to [Kuyper’s strong emphasis on culture] it is impossible to understand his views about how the spheres relate to each other....In the Kuyperian scheme, God invested the original creation with complex cultural potential, which human beings were expected to actualize....As a result of the Fall, cultural obedience was replaced by cultural disobedience, resulting in a distortion of the cultural activity for which we were created.” Richard J. Mouw, “Some Reflections on Sphere Sovereignty” in *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper’s Legacy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Luis E. Lugo (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 91.

<sup>57</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 71-72.

<sup>58</sup> Mouw, 95.

<sup>59</sup>John Bolt writes, “It is because Christ is King and demands our all, that education at all levels be self-consciously, confessionally Christian. True knowledge of reality cannot be obtained apart from the revealing and regenerating work of God’s Spirit....The kingship of Christ demands Christian education.” Bolt, *Christian and Reformed Today*, 104.

banner of Kuyper's neo-Calvinist social philosophy. The success of Kuyperian "neo-Calvinism" in holding both strains of Dutch Calvinists together perhaps rested in Kuyper's ability to balance two seemingly contradictory, but nevertheless fundamental, principles in unified tension; that is, the doctrines of "antithesis" and "common grace." John Bolt argues, "Kuyper's vision of Christian life in the world ... rests on the twin foundations of the doctrines of creation (common grace) and regeneration (antithesis)."<sup>60</sup> Tensions between these "twin foundations" continue to alter the structural soundness of Reformed pillar and its educational institutions as the followers of Kuyper have failed to balance both doctrines with the ease of their leader. Rather, there has been a tendency among the neo-Calvinist followers of Kuyper to emphasize one doctrine over the other which shapes, among other things, their view of education. For instance, school leaders who stress antithesis thinking tend to limit school membership to Reformed congregants, place the Three Forms of Unity at the foundation of their educational philosophy, and effectively create isolationist schools similar to those of the *Afscheiding*. Conversely, school leaders who stress common grace often promote an overly naïve belief in the transformation of all culture, are not adamant that the Three Forms of Unity deserve any place in defining education, and tend to take an inclusive approach to school membership. In this respect, it would be inaccurate to present the "Kuyperian" Dutch Calvinist pillar as one homogenous movement. Despite unification in the *schoolstrijd*, the Dutch Reformed pillar remained (and continues to remain) internally stratified.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 142.

*The Educational Implications of the Antithesis and Common Grace*

The Reformed congregants at Beesd challenged the modernist sympathies Kuyper held early in his career and effectively shaped his mature understanding of the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian principles underlying modern life. Kuyper expanded rather than replicated the idea of the antithesis to criticize the entirety of modern life.<sup>61</sup> Bratt argues that Kuyper's strategy in emphasizing the antithesis was to effectively "fortify group identity" during the latter half of the nineteenth century in order to overthrow the liberal monopoly on Dutch life.<sup>62</sup> In fact, Kuyper's opponents on the Left saw him as "the incarnation of the antithesis."<sup>63</sup> McKendree Langley relates the centrality of the antithesis to Kuyper's work, writing, "[Kuyper] related all the controversial issues of the day to certain basic principles to make visible the religious antithesis between truth and falsehood, devotion and idolatry, belief and unbelief, commitment and indifference."<sup>64</sup> Kuyper therefore opposed the increasingly dominant position of "religiously neutral" or "value free" education on the basis that all education expressed some form of religious or a-religious commitments.<sup>65</sup> The antithesis motivated Kuyper constantly to expose the principles at the heart of modern life. Further, it led

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<sup>61</sup> Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, 20-21.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Vanden Berg writes, "The entire Left viewed Kuyper as the incarnation of the antithesis: God or man the Absolute Sovereign, the Christian versus the humanistic life philosophy. What Kuyper's enemies especially held against him was that he made this antithesis the basis for his political action." Vanden Berg, 230.

<sup>64</sup> Langley, 167.

<sup>65</sup> Van Brummelen, 78.

Kuyper to see the necessity of separate cultural institutions predicated on Reformed principles.<sup>66</sup>

The focus on the antithesis resonated with the predominantly rural Dutch Calvinists of the *Afscheiding* whose educational institutions, as previously outlined, protected the tenets of the Dutch Reformed faith while simultaneously resisting external cultural developments.<sup>67</sup> Although Kuyper shared this group's conviction that establishment of separate Reformed institutions was necessary to combat the antithesis, he did not conclude that this doctrine justified socio-cultural withdrawal. Rather, Kuyper buttressed this vigilant awareness of total depravity with the doctrine of common grace, which allowed his followers to see the good and the beautiful in a fallen world, thereby legitimating cultural engagement.<sup>68</sup>

Kuyper argued that God, by His grace common to all individuals, temporarily restrained the ultimate destruction of His creation after the Fall. The doctrine of common grace meant that one did not necessarily need to know God in order to uncover His hidden truth(s) in the created order.<sup>69</sup> Max Stackhouse writes, “[W]hat keeps society

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<sup>66</sup>Bratt writes, The Reformed applied themselves to [the task of establishing separate institutions] with a vengeance, establishing within twenty years a Calvinistic university and elementary schools, Calvinistic newspapers, a Calvinistic political party and labor union, Calvinistic hospitals, social welfare agencies, trade associations, study groups, and a “purified” Reformed Church. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, 19.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Rodgers, 21.

<sup>69</sup> Kuyper argued, “[T]he doctrine of common grace proceeds directly from the Sovereignty of the Lord which is ever the root conviction of all Reformed thinking. If God is sovereign, then his Lordship *must* remain over *all* life and cannot be closed up within church walls or Christian circles. The extra-Christian world has not been given over to Satan or to fallen humanity or to chance. God's Sovereignty is great and all-ruling also in un-baptized realms, and therefore neither Christ's work in the world nor that of God's child can be pulled back out of life. If his God works in the world, then there he must put his hand to the plow so that there too the Name of the Lord is glorified.” Kuyper, *Common Grace*, 166.

from fragmenting into totally autonomous realms where each sphere becomes its own principality or power, is the recognition of a deep moral and spiritual fabric-constituted by a God-given common grace-that undergirds all that is.”<sup>70</sup> Kuyper understood the mitigation of creation’s ultimate destruction as the basis for a seemingly paradoxical presence of goodness, beauty, and truth in a totally depraved world.

Common grace provided Kuyper with the theological framework necessary to revitalize Calvinism in the Netherlands by responding to the Calvinists of the *Afscheiding* who stressed a personal rather than cultural Christianity. In his seminal work on the subject, *De Gemeen Gratie* (Common Grace), Kuyper wrote:

Consider carefully: by taking this tack [of refusing to embrace the Christ of culture] you run the danger of isolating Christ for your soul and you view life in and for the world as something that exists *alongside* your Christian religion, not controlled by it. Then the word “Christian” seems appropriate to you only when it concerns certain matters of faith or things directly connected with the faith—your church, your school, missions and the like—but all the remaining spheres of life fall for you *outside the Christ*.<sup>71</sup>

This stance allowed Kuyper to justify (and mandate) political alliances with religious associations he principally opposed on the ground they shared an interest in the common good. Clearly this undergirded his own alliance with the Dutch Roman Catholics in the school struggle.

Common grace impacted the Dutch Calvinist school movement by claiming that God’s truth existed outside the borders of Dutch Calvinist communities, including their system of education. Therefore, Christian schools were encouraged not to avoid secular

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<sup>70</sup> Max Stackhouse, preface to *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper’s Legacy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Luis E. Lugo (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000)

<sup>71</sup> Kuyper, *Common Grace*, in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 165-200.

developments in scholarship, but rather seek to uncover their truths in order to redirect such truths into a Christ-centered framework for art, science, politics, or business programs. In his *Stone Lectures* Kuyper questioned this presence of truth found in non-Christian thought, saying:

Are all unbelievers then wicked and repulsive men? Not at all. In our experience the unbelieving world excels in many things. Precious treasures have come down to us from the old heathen civilization....Who of us has not been put to the blush by the virtues of the heathen? It is thus a fact that your dogma of total depravity of sin does not always tally with your experience in life.<sup>72</sup>

Christian scholarship for Kuyper offered more than an inculcation of Reformed principles. Rather, separate Christian schools provided the means by which one could thoughtfully apply such principles to all domains, or spheres of the created order for their intended cultural functions. This entailed the thoughtful development of one's particular field as a Christian calling. While not denying the reality of a fallen world, Kuyper employed common grace to propose that Calvinists could (in fact, they must) educate individuals to engage rather than withdraw from cultural life.

#### *Criticisms of Kuyperian Thought*

In his sixth and final lecture, Kuyper encouraged his Dutch Calvinist brothers in America to apply their Reformed principles to issues facing their generation. He argued,

[W]hat the descendants of the old Dutch Calvinists have to do, is not to copy the past, as if Calvinism were a petrification, but to go back to the living root of the Calvinist plant, to clean and to water it, and so to cause it to bud and to blossom once more, not fully in accordance with our actual life in these modern times, and with the demands of the times to come.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 159-160.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

However, the followers of Kuyper often proved unable to balance the twin pillars of common grace and the antithesis simultaneously. The stress of one doctrine over the other impacted their institutional development. Concerning this internal stratification

Van Brummelen notes:

Tipping the balance towards the antithesis resulted in an avoidance of society and “worldly pursuits,” a position close to the individualistic moralism of American fundamentalism. Common grace, on the other hand, bestowed God’s blessing to persons without necessarily “saving” them. Its forceful emphasis easily produced social gospel thinking. Therefore, the two conceptions were difficult to harmonize.<sup>74</sup>

To be sure, the followers who primarily stressed the dangers of the antithesis adopted the Kuyperian method of “principlial analysis” through which all ideas were traced back to their foundational principles. Once exposed, these Calvinists could weigh these principles in the balance and, more often than not, find them wanting. Gradually, any system of thought considered anthropocentric, and therefore antithetical to true Christian thought, was discarded as irrelevant. In this respect, the followers of Kuyper were often guilty of substituting “principlial analysis” for thought, disregarding the presence of truth in any system of thought once they determined its foundational principles were tainted by the antithesis.<sup>75</sup> The neo-Calvinist school supporters undergirded by such a mentality paralleled the narrow mindedness of the aforementioned *Afscheiding* in their failure (or fear) to embrace any thought outside of their rigid doctrinal borders.

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<sup>74</sup> Van Brummelen ,78.

<sup>75</sup> Bratt notes that such intellectual shortsightedness paralleled a spiritual arrogance in such Calvinists. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*,19.

The segment of neo-Calvinists who elevated common grace over the antithesis encountered criticism for secularizing the Christian faith.<sup>76</sup> John Bolt argues that for such Calvinists, “the doctrine of common grace obscured and obliterated the antithesis between the people of God and the ‘world.’”<sup>77</sup> To be sure, Kuyper needed this doctrine to redirect the self-righteousness and isolationism perpetuated by the doctrine of the antithesis and principial thinking, but as James Bratt argues, common grace “served to catalyze the opponents of cultural engagement just as much as the proponents.”<sup>78</sup> Herman Bavinck, a successor of Kuyper who developed a more systematic understanding of common grace, argued against the narrow pietism of those whose thought rested solely on the antithesis. He wrote, “the love of the separated, closed community; the avoidance of art, science, culture and all good things of the earthly life and the denial of the calling which we have in home, society, and state; these are always fruits, not of the healthy Reformation but of the sickly Anabaptist plant.”<sup>79</sup> The schools set up by individuals emphasizing common grace were more open to the truths found in competing ideologies. The next chapter will show that such a stance often led to accusations of acculturation by the Dutch in North America who worked actively to retain their ethnic and religious distinctiveness.

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<sup>76</sup> Kuyper underwent criticisms for the length that common grace took the Christian doctrine into secular arenas. Rodgers notes that some labeled his “neo-Calvinism” a “deceptive synthesis.” Rodgers, 67.

<sup>77</sup> John Bolt, *Christian and Reformed Today* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1984), 108.

<sup>78</sup> Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, 20.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.



## Conclusion

Recent scholarship reveals that the Dutch system of pillarization continues to exist in the Netherlands. However the strength of the pillars is gradually eroding with the growing secularization of Europe, coupled with the large influx of Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands.<sup>80</sup> According to Stephen Monsma and J. Christopher Soper, seventy percent of students in the Netherlands currently attend nonpublic schools.<sup>81</sup> However, they note that a shift has occurred in the Netherlands in the perception of structural pluralism as religiously divisive rather than respectfully inclusive. Monsma and Soper argue that the once-distinct pillars are gradually uniting with one another allowing individuals to approach each with a more modern consumerist mentality, “picking and choosing” those institutions that fit their particular lifestyle, as opposed to those which align with their particular denomination.<sup>82</sup>

The one aspect of pillarization which remains vibrant is the understanding that religious or a-religious ideology undergirds the public square, therefore negating the establishment of religiously neutral civic institutions. Stanley Carlson Thies argues, “Yet despite the crumbling of the old pillars, the twin ideas that citizens’ inner convictions

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<sup>80</sup> Monsma and Soper, 61-62. The authors note that over five percent of the Netherlands population is Muslim. After various terrorist attacks as well as two terrorist led political assassinations in the Netherlands, the idea of pillarization is under sharp scrutiny concerning the limits on religious toleration. Despite growing criticisms of tolerance for Islamic institutions, the Netherlands currently offers state subsidies for over forty-five Muslim schools, thus revealing the extent to which pillarization remains the framework for public policy.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 69. They write, “As of 2002, there were almost 8,000 primary schools, and of these 33 percent were public schools, 30 percent were Catholic schools, 30 percent were Protestant schools, and 7 percent were other private schools. There were 650 secondary schools, and of these 29 percent were public, 25 percent Catholic, 22 percent Protestant, 13 percent were secular, and 11 percent were interdenominational. There are about forty-six Muslim primary schools and two Muslim secondary schools, as well as three Jewish schools (one of which is strictly orthodox) and four Hindu schools. All of these schools are funded by the government.”

<sup>82</sup> Ibid 61.

legitimately may organize their actions in the public square and that public policy should accommodate such expression retain a strong hold in the Netherlands.”<sup>83</sup> To be sure, the Dutch Calvinists under the neo-Calvinist banner of Kuyper shared these convictions, yet their differing theological and cultural positions lingered, resulting in an internally stratified *zuilen*.

The years of Kuyper’s involvement in the Dutch *schoolstrijd* were also the years of heavy Dutch emigration to North America. Through this emigration the Dutch Calvinist “pillar” was established in both America and Canada. The next chapter will outline this movement, focusing primarily on the Canadian situation, where the internal stratification of the Dutch Calvinist *zuilen* continues to impact the identity of their schools.

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<sup>83</sup> Stanley Carlson Theis “The Meaning of Dutch Segmentation in Modern America” in *Sharing the Reformed Tradition: The Dutch-American Exchange*, eds., Johannes Krabbendam and George Harinck (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1996), 162.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Dutch Calvinist School Movement in Canada

#### *Introduction*

In the aftermath of World War II, over 350,000 Dutch citizens left the Netherlands. Roughly 40 percent of this number settled in Canada, half of which settled in Southern Ontario.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the Dutch immigrants to the United States throughout the nineteenth century, particularly those associated with the *Afscheiding*, these immigrants were noted for a seemingly rapid assimilation into the social and cultural life of Canada as many abandoned their native tongue and participated eagerly in the Canadian economy. Yet such linguistic assimilation belies the reality that a large number of the Dutch in Canada managed to retain their ethnic and religious identity by maintaining a high degree of what Aileen Van Ginkel labels, “institutional self-sufficiency.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Dutch Calvinist immigrants, or *Gereformeerden*, reared in the pillarized Netherlands developed their own labor unions, printing presses, churches, and, as is the focus of this chapter, their own network of Christian schools once in Canada.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aileen Van Ginkel “The Place of the Church in Society: Views of Dutch and American Ministers in Canada in the 1950s” in *Sharing the Reformed Tradition: The Dutch-American Exchange*, eds., Johannes Krabbendam and George Harinck (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1996), 139.

<sup>2</sup> Van Ginkel, who traces the religious contours of the Dutch immigration to Canada between 1946 and 1960, asserts that full assimilation into the Canadian social and cultural fabric was not realized by the Dutch Reformed who preserved their distinctiveness through separate institutions. Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> For the most detailed account of the institutions set up by the Dutch in Canada, particularly in the province of Ontario, see Frans J. Schryer, *The Netherlandic Presence in Ontario: Pillars, Class and Dutch Ethnicity*. (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1998), 129, 248-267. He writes, “[W]ithin a decade, orthodox Calvinist immigrants had not only established their own schools, but their own newspapers, high schools, a labor organization (CLAC), a research institute for Reformed studies, a farmers’ association, old

In the previous chapters it has been evident that the Dutch Calvinist school movement required organizational and intellectual leadership. Such leadership came through individuals such as Groen Van Prinsterer or Abraham Kuyper who provided a reformed foundation for the establishment of a distinctly reformed *zuilen*, including separate schools. When the Dutch arrived in Canada after the war, American ministers of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) provided assistance in their settlement. The CRC operated immigration societies that sent out missionaries to recruit large numbers of the orthodox Dutch Canadians to the denomination. Various CRC ministers also encouraged the establishment of separate schools in Canada. To be sure, the organizational leadership offered by the CRC proved beneficial in setting up churches and schools throughout Canada. Yet, Dutch Canadians and Dutch Americans approached Kuyperian neo-Calvinism in different ways which produced tenuous debates concerning the identity of their respective educational institutions.

The Dutch Calvinist school leaders in America embraced Kuyper's positive view of culture to the extent that many stripped their schools of a more narrowly ethnic isolationism rooted in the *Afscheiding*, abandoning the Dutch language for English in their schools. While the CRC supporters for Christian schools in America remained committed to schools that isolated children from the secularism in society, they increasingly promoted American patriotism on the grounds that American culture was rooted in Calvinist principles. In Canada, the Dutch neo-Calvinist immigrants differed from their American brothers in the CRC regarding the function of separate schools. In opposition to the Americanization promoted by the CRC schools in America, the Dutch

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age homes, a professional and business association, their own health and psychological counseling services and a myriad of smaller organizations.”

neo-Calvinists in Canada argued that the mandate of educational institutions was to create students committed to the radical transformation of culture in its totality. The divisions within the neo-Calvinist school arena surfaced in postwar Canada, illuminating the Dutch Canadian need for educational leadership.

The Dutch Calvinist school movement in Canada received intellectual leadership through an American philosophy professor at Calvin College named H. Evan Runner. Runner did not produce the type of cultural movement in Canada that Kuyper effected in the Netherlands, but he successfully offered a rationale for separate Reformed institutions in Canada to maintain a distinct culture-transforming worldview. This chapter will trace the historical development of the Reformed pillar in Ontario, Canada. While the emphasis will be placed on the Dutch who arrived in Canada after World War II, it is necessary to continue the narrative of the Dutch Calvinist school movement in the United States, prior to the war.

#### *Neo-Calvinist Impact on Christian Reformed Schools in America*

Between 1880 and 1920, before the conclusion of the *schoolstrijd* in the Netherlands, a second wave of Dutch left for America. The majority of these immigrants were from the Dutch working classes, opting to leave their homeland in search of economic prosperity. Included in this body of immigrants were also a number of Dutch Calvinists who, influenced by the neo-Calvinist philosophy of Abraham Kuyper, desired to transport their Reformed *zuilen* overseas by establishing separate civic institutions including “non-public Christian schools that would transmit the religious traditions and ideals and enable youngsters to function in American society.”<sup>4</sup> By the end

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<sup>4</sup> Harro W. Van Brummelen, *Telling the Next Generation: Educational development in North*

of World War I, there were over five hundred Dutch Calvinist congregations in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Despite this large influx of Dutch Reformed who had fought for their separate educational institutions in the Netherlands, support for separate Christian schools remained minimal among a majority of immigrants who perceived “Americanization” as a necessary requirement in the attainment of the American Dream. Stanley Carlson Thies argues, “Far from dividing into Dutch style subcultures, American society has been preeminently the home of strong individualists who, perhaps paradoxically, have adopted the melting pot as their cultural ideal.”<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), the Reformed Church of America (RCA) nurtured such a melting pot mentality by regarding Dutch Calvinist separate schools as insufficiently “American” and, conversely, American public schools as sufficiently Christian.

For those Dutch Calvinist immigrants hoping to resist cultural assimilation and maintain their particular ethnic and religious subculture, the CRC provided an answer as its worship services as well as its education were still offered in the Dutch language.<sup>7</sup>

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*American Calvinist Christian Schools* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1986), 78.

<sup>5</sup>The majority of these Calvinists bonded around their confessional loyalties. Robert Swierenga notes, “Religious affiliation significantly influenced the entire resettlement process- the decision to leave in the first place, the choice of destination, and the subsequent adjustment and adaptation in the new homeland.” Robert P. Swierenga “Pioneers for Jesus”: Dutch Protestant Colonization in North America as an Act of Faith” in *Sharing the Reformed Tradition: The Dutch-American Exchange*, eds., Johannes Krabbendam and George Harinck (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1996), 46.

<sup>6</sup> Thies notes that the segmentation of America does exist, but unlike the thoroughly religious dimensions of Dutch segmentation, in America it is race, region, or class which separates people. Stanley Carlson Thies, “The Meaning of Dutch Segmentation in Modern America” in *Sharing the Reformed Tradition: The Dutch-American Exchange*, eds., Johannes Krabbendam and George Harinck (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1996), 163.

<sup>7</sup> The CRC quadrupled in these years. Bratt notes that the growing popularity during this period is also due to a schism in the RCA during the 1880’s over the issue of Freemasonry. The General Synod did not see membership in both the RCA and the lodges as contradictory. Those who opposed this decision

Consequently, both the churches and the schools of the CRC grew in number during these years. At this time the Dutch Calvinist schools in America were essentially parochial schools of the CRC, noted for inculcating a pietistic isolation and cultural separation rooted as they were in the tradition of the *Afscheiding*. The large influx of Dutch Reformed to America in the late nineteenth century, however, not only filled up these schools with more students, but brought educational leadership with the neo-Calvinist philosophy of Abraham Kuyper, promoting the Dutch theologian's mantra that Calvinism was not only personally relevant, but also socially and culturally relevant. Gradually, the neo-Calvinist educational leaders shifted the rationale for Christian schools in America from isolation to engagement of American culture.

The first notable impact of neo-Calvinism on Christian education in America was evident in a move to reassert Kuyper's principle of sphere-sovereignty in the CRC school communities by freeing the Christian Reformed schools from the overarching control of the Christian Reformed Church. The reason for placing educational control in the hands of parental associations was to allow different ethnic groups membership into the predominantly Dutch schools.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the neo-Calvinist educators also argued for an understanding of education which did not merely react against cultural developments but sought to understand them in the positive light of God's common grace. In 1914 the Synod asked, "How many Christian Reformed parents don't send their children to the public school...[T]here are still broad multitudes in our circles who do not have

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turned to the CRC churches which Bratt argues, "prided themselves on strictness of creed and code." James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 39.

<sup>8</sup> Van Brummelen notes, "[B]etween 1891 and 1911 all but one [CRC school] changed from being church schools to ones operated by independent associations of parents." Van Brummelen, 79.

sufficient understanding of *positive* Christian elementary education and even less of secondary and higher education [emphasis mine].”<sup>9</sup> In time, the majority of the CRC schools in America were operated by associations of parents, yet, as is common in Dutch Reformed circles, such freedom existed more in principle than in practice, as the Dutch Calvinist bonds between home, church and school were not easily broken.<sup>10</sup>

The CRC continued to ensure that the curricular content of the schools aligned with the historic doctrines of the denomination (i.e. The Three Forms of Unity) and the composition of the school board often included a large number of church elders with the local minister as its head. Furthermore, it was (and in many current schools, continues to be) a rare occasion when an applicant outside the denomination would be considered for a teaching position in a Dutch Reformed school. In short, the CRC schools in America were nominally separate from their respective ecclesiastical institutions, but in reality they were not independent of the churches’ doctrinal direction.<sup>11</sup>

The neo-Calvinist educators from the Netherlands embraced America as a Christian nation founded upon Calvinist principles. They encouraged those with *Afscheiding* leanings to resist a pejorative view of American society and to embrace distinct Christian schools which promoted American identity. In this respect, they encouraged an abandonment of the Dutch language in both the church and the schools. In addition, external pressures to assimilate into American culture accelerated in the divisive

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 80.



atmosphere of World War I which fueled American patriotism.<sup>12</sup> CRC ministers were increasingly pressured to place the American flag in their churches, and one band of non-Dutch American “patriots” went so far as to incinerate a Dutch Calvinist church and its associated school in Peoria, Iowa.<sup>13</sup> Despite the pro-American stance of neo-Calvinist leaders within the CRC, such Americans perceived the separate schools as unpatriotic.

Both internal and external pressures to promote American identity effectively contributed to the Americanization of the CRC educational mandate after World War I. Yet this shift in the rationale for CRC schools did not necessarily entail the abandonment of the isolationist strain of Calvinism rooted in the *Afscheiding*. Throughout the next decades, the educational leadership in Christian Reformed community argued that the Christian Reformed Church could safely abandon certain elements of its ethnic identity, and so appear patriotic, while maintaining elements of religious orthodoxy, and so continue to require separate schools. This argument gained acceptance and led to the gradual replacement of the Dutch language with English in the schools.<sup>14</sup> To be sure, fears grew within the CRC community that this linguistic shift, representative of a higher degree of cultural assimilation, would only undermine orthodox Dutch Calvinist identity and effectively erode the strength of the *zuilen*, precisely what they perceived to be the fault of their brothers in the RCA. This emerging conservative body of members within the CRC considered a commitment to both Americanization and separate Calvinist

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<sup>12</sup> Swierenga writes, “The United States government strongly pushed Americanization as patriotic, punished pro-German sentiments held by some orthodox Dutch Reformed leaders, and enacted an immigration quota law.” Swierenga, 50.

<sup>13</sup> Bratt , *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, 181-190.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

schools as contradictory in that the students' loyalties would be pulled in different directions. The CRC attempted to take a middle road, promoting patriotism in its schools while similarly maintaining the isolation necessary to preserve the Dutch Calvinist subculture. Describing CRC education in America, one historian notes, "In a protected environment, [Dutch Calvinists] were taught to be orthodox and obedient members of the church and patriotic citizens of America. Moreover, they learned that to be the one implied the other."<sup>15</sup>

In sum, Kuyperian neo-Calvinism impacted the Dutch Reformed pillar in America primarily by tempering the cultural narrow mindedness of CRC school supporters and leaders with a move towards Americanization. By the mid-twentieth century, the majority of Dutch Calvinists in America, both in the RCA and the CRC, embraced the American civil religion, defined by Van Brummelen as "a faith in the equality of men, in the entrepreneurial spirit and continued progress, in individualism and pragmatism."<sup>16</sup> The notable difference between the two Dutch Calvinist denominations, however, concerned their support of separate institutions. In this respect, the CRC Calvinists did not abandon a protectionist and isolationist *Afscheiding* mindset completely. They continued to support Dutch Calvinist institutions that were separate from mainstream American culture both to produce Dutch Calvinist American citizens and to protect children from the dangers of secular culture. Conversely, the RCA continued to assimilate into mainstream American institutions, and supported sending their children to public schools.

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<sup>15</sup> Van Brummenlen, 156.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 7.

This state of the CRC and its schools in America provides the context in which to approach the postwar influx of Dutch immigrants entering Canada after World War II. The majority of Dutch immigrants to Canada were orthodox Calvinists reared in the pillarized Netherlands. The American CRC played a fundamental role in the settlement of these Dutch immigrants through immigration societies that sent home missionaries to recruit members into the denomination. Nevertheless, tensions between American and Canadian understandings of neo-Calvinism surfaced as Canadian neo-Calvinists argued that Kuyper's educational vision mandated the transformation of culture, not to blend their Calvinist principles with patriotism as evident in America. The remainder of the chapter will outline the Dutch emigration to Canada, the role of the CRC in providing a foundation for the Dutch Calvinist pillar as well as the educational leadership of H. Evan Runner and his impact in exposing the differences between Canadian and American neo-Calvinist approaches to education.

#### *Economic, Political, and Religious Determinants of Dutch Migration to Canada*

Conditions in both the Netherlands and Canada in the aftermath of World War II facilitated large scale immigration between the two countries. When Nazi troops fled the Netherlands in retreat, they destroyed the vast networks of dikes in the Dutch countryside. The resultant flooding rendered over 10 percent of the fertile polder lands useless, thereby creating massive unemployment in the agricultural sector.<sup>17</sup> To compound these problems of reconstruction, the Dutch government faced an additional demographic flood when 120,000 repatriated Dutch colonists entered the Netherlands

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<sup>17</sup> William Petersen, *Planned Migration: The Social Determinants of the Dutch-Canadian Movement* (Los Angeles, California: 1955), 144-148. See also, Herman Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land: The Dutch Experience in Canada, 1890-1980* (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart, 1988).

following the loss of the Dutch colonies in the East Indies in 1950.<sup>18</sup> The shortage of adequate housing and available farmland meant that the relocation of many rural Dutch citizens became a necessity after World War II.<sup>19</sup>

In Canada, the government restricted large-scale immigration from European countries after World War II in order to protect the employment of the country's returning war veterans.<sup>20</sup> However, postwar industrialization and the subsequent urbanization of many Canadian war veterans produced a notable deficit in agricultural labor. In order to supply the agricultural sector with the required labor, the Canadian government relaxed its stringent immigration laws and set up the Netherlands-Canadian Settlement Scheme.<sup>21</sup> This sponsorship program between Canadian farmers and Dutch agriculturalists granted the latter group entry into Canada provided the former could supply a year of work and accommodations.<sup>22</sup> To be sure, economic motives largely dictated the Dutch emigration to North America. Yet the high percentage of *Gereformeerden* arriving to Canada during these years expressed both political and religious motives.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Schryer, 44.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>20</sup> To be sure, the United States also regulated immigrant numbers through an even more restrictive quota system. Thies, 50.

<sup>21</sup> The reason that the Canadian government looked to the Netherlands over other European countries is perhaps due to the strength of Dutch-Canadian relationship during World War II when the Canadian government protected the Dutch Queen and her children in Ottawa.

<sup>22</sup> Van Ginkel writes, "Under the auspices of the "Netherlands Farm Families Movement," as the program was called by the Immigration Branch, about 15,000 Dutch people immigrated to Canada between 1947 and 1950." Aileen Van Ginkel, "Ethnicity in the Reformed Tradition: Dutch Calvinist Immigrants in Canada, 1946-1960" (M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1982), 27.

<sup>23</sup> Petersen, 186-193.

After World War II, the *Gereformeerden* comprised just under 10 percent of the Netherlands population yet they formed anywhere between 30 to 40 percent of the Dutch body coming to Canada between 1949 and 1955.<sup>24</sup> One explanation for this disproportionate number of *Gereformeerden* is that many Dutch agriculturalists were orthodox Calvinists. A second explanation is that another schism in the Dutch Reformed Church in 1944, initiated by a decision of the Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* to depose a minister for his beliefs concerning the proper time of baptism, motivated a number of congregants to emigrate. The grounds whereby the Synod could depose its ministers fueled the split and led to the establishment of “The Made Free,” or “Liberated” Reformed Church.<sup>25</sup> For the generation of Dutch Calvinists witnessing the devastation of the war, such theological in-fighting hardened disillusionment over Reformed priorities and hastened a resolve to move to North America.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to these religious motives, a large number of Dutch Calvinists were prompted to move to Canada due to political unrest in the Netherlands. Swierenga writes of the “socialistic policies” in the postwar Netherlands, which underwent sharp criticism for “encroaching on parental authority...which was a violation of the “sphere sovereignty” principle that each social institution had its own God-given domain.”<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>24</sup> Using statistics found from the Netherlands Emigration Service, Schryer writes, “People of Reformed affiliation (*hervormden*) constituted anywhere from 23.6 percent (in 1948) to 30 percent (1949), while orthodox Calvinists (*gereformeerden*) represented anywhere from 26.4 percent (in 1954) to 45.4 percent (in 1951).” Schryer 95.

<sup>25</sup> In Canada this denomination is labeled the Canadian Reformed Church. Peter C. Prinsen, “That Old Dutch Disease: The Roots of Dutch Calvinist Education in Alberta” (Ph. D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 173.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Swierenga, 47.

orthodox Calvinists, therefore, opposed such an increase in state power as it threatened to dissolve the distinct differences of social pillars. Harry Van Belle argues:

People of every religious and ideological stripe were thrown together indiscriminately and found themselves forced to live tighter and to work alongside one another to resist a common enemy. Jews hid in Christian households. Protestant children were protected by Roman Catholic neighbors. Reformed resistance fighters found they had to trust Communists with their lives and to their surprise discovered that this was possible.<sup>28</sup>

In sum, dissatisfaction with the ecclesiastical narrow-mindedness on the part of the Dutch Reformed church, coupled with the postwar secularization of the Dutch social order, motivated a large number of Dutch Calvinists to settle in Canada, where they hoped to establish their own orthodox pillar, including separate schools. Over half of these immigrants settled in Ontario, Canada.

### *The Role of the CRC in Canada*

Prior to World War II, the quantity of Dutch immigrants entering Canada remained low and the quality consisted of rural farmers who largely held an *Afscheiding* worldview. After the war, few firmly rooted Dutch Calvinist communities existed in Canada, and the communities which did exist are defined by Prinsen as “small, often poor and with little by way of any Calvinist infrastructure.”<sup>29</sup> The Dutch immigrants entering Canada after the war were predominantly Kuypertian neo-Calvinists, reared in a pluralistic political climate where separate Reformed institutions were understood as the means whereby one could effectively exercise religious principles in order to transform

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<sup>28</sup> Gijbert Gerrit Jacob Den Boggende “Dutch Calvinist Immigrants in Hamilton and the Hamilton Christian School, 1937-1960” (M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1991), 61 quoting Harry A. Van Belle, “The Impact of World War II on the Reformed Dutch in the Netherlands and Canada: A Comparison,” *Pro Rege* 1 no. 4 (June 1991): 29.

<sup>29</sup> Prinsen, 164.

society and culture.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the attempt made by American pastors to integrate the new body of Calvinists into the CRC and its network of Christian schools fostered tensions with the Dutch neo-Calvinists in Canada who did not support the CRC schools which inculcated an American civil religion.

In order to ease the settlement of the large body of Dutch immigrants in Canada, the Christian Reformed Church set up an immigration society called the *Christelijke Emigratie Centrale*.<sup>31</sup> This organization sent its own “home missionaries” into heavily populated Dutch communities throughout Canada for the primary purpose of setting up a church. In 1953 the CRC Home Missions Committee wrote to Synod, “The Church extension task in Canada continues to be a major assignment. Shall we regard it as an opportunity? If so, it is a kingdom opportunity such as our Church has never had before in its history. We must make the best of it and not let it slip...Indeed, our task in Canada is both great and glorious.”<sup>32</sup> Their efforts proved fruitful in Canada. The number of Christian Reformed churches grew to 138 from 14 by 1968 and by the mid-1980s the denomination boasted over 50,000 Canadian members.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, 195.

<sup>31</sup> To be sure, both the Dutch Reformed Church of America (RCA) and the Dutch Catholic Church set up immigration societies. However, only the CRC promoted the establishment of separate civic institutions. Consequently, the members of the Dutch RCA and Dutch Catholic churches rapidly entered into mainstream Canadian institutions. Furthermore, the CRC often convinced *Hervormde* Calvinists to enter their denomination which Herman Ganzevoort, in his narrative of Dutch immigration in Canada, argues led to “charges of raiding” by the RCA. Herman Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land: The Dutch Experience in Canada, 1890-1980* (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 71.

<sup>32</sup> Van Ginkel, “The Place of the Church in Society,” 140.

<sup>33</sup> The Dutch and American pastors encouraged the immigrants not to attend the United Church of Canada or the Presbyterian Church in Canada since they had confessional differences from the Dutch Reformed Church. Van Ginkel, “Ethnicity in the Reformed Tradition,” 30, 118.

The American ministers of the CRC were instrumental in helping the newly arrived Dutch immigrants settle in Canada, providing them with the ecclesiastical institutions and leadership necessary to preserve their Dutch Calvinist identity. Yet, American ministers of the CRC tended to fuse their Dutch Calvinist identity with their national identity, thereby creating tensions with the Dutch pastors in Canada who sought the establishment of separate Christian organizations, including Christian schools, for the transformation of society.

### *Dutch Calvinist Education in Canada*

To be sure, the important place of Christian education also influenced the Dutch neo-Calvinist move to Canada. Bradley Breems, in his thesis on Dutch Calvinist ethnicity in British Columbia argues, “When Dutch Calvinists came to Canada...they took it as their task to duplicate this effort [pillarization]...In keeping with *Gereformeerde* suspicions of the power of the state, many felt that it was their duty to set up parent controlled religious schools.”<sup>34</sup> Despite the fact that only two “free schools” existed in Canada by 1950, schools became the most visible institutions of the Dutch Calvinist community in Canada in the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup> The initial paucity of Christian schools is largely due to the high cost of their establishment as well

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<sup>34</sup> The first Christian school in Canada was set up by the Dutch in Holland Marsh, Ontario in 1943. The second school was set up in Lacombe, Alberta in 1947. Bradley G. Breems, “I Tell Them We Are a Blessed People: An Analysis of “Ethnicity” by Way of a Canadian Dutch-Calvinist Community” (Ph.D. diss., University of British Columbia, 1991), 218.

<sup>35</sup> Such schools were not out of place in Canada where “there has never been one unified system” as religious pluralism has permeated the relationship between the educational and the civic spheres.” Den Boggende, 1.



as the generally Christian ethos of Canadian public education at this time which made the public schools a viable alternative for many immigrants.

Similar to the *Afscheiding* arriving in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, the predominantly rural Dutch reformed immigrants in Canada realized that setting up and operating a school was costly as neither the federal nor the provincial governments provided financial aid for private religious educational institutions.<sup>36</sup> The public schools in Canada also appeared attractive to many Dutch since they still permitted the reading of Scripture and many teachers were Christians.<sup>37</sup> The increase of skilled Dutch immigrants with capital, allowed the Christian school movement to gain momentum in the next few decades.<sup>38</sup> Whether one hoped to shelter their children from, or encourage their children to interact with, Canadian society and culture, the new Christian schools offered a means whereby religious, as well as ethnic, identity remained distinct.

The schools that were established in Canada were all “free” schools, which, although primarily set up by leaders in the CRC, were not under its control. Rather, the schools fell under the umbrella of the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS), which coordinated the efforts of Christian school societies throughout the United States and Canada.<sup>39</sup> The biggest influence of the NUCS on the Canadian Christian school

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<sup>36</sup> Albert VanderMey, *To All Our Children: The Story of the Postwar Dutch Immigration to Canada* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1983).

<sup>37</sup> Den Boggende, 76.

<sup>38</sup> In 1956 the Association for Reformed Scientific Studies was set up promote a Reformed worldview in education.

<sup>39</sup> Gradually, the organization incorporated the fledgling Christian Reformed (as well as Canadian Reformed) schools in Canada. By 1969, over 80 percent of CRC membership in North America sent their

movement was through its textbook publications, which were adopted by most Christian schools in North America. However, it was soon argued that the NUCS curricular material reflected the aforementioned theological bent of the American CRC (i.e. a mixture of cultural assimilation with pietism), thereby contradicting the Dutch Canadian neo-Calvinist stress on cultural transformation through distinctly reformed institutions.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) was set up in Ontario in 1956 both to coordinate the province's Christian schools and to effectively resist the ideology of the NUCS. During this period, the Dutch Calvinist school movement in Canada also gained momentum largely because its supporters were reinvigorated by a leader who reinforced a reformed educational vision in line with their neo-Calvinist commitments.

#### *H. Evan Runner: Neo-Calvinist Leadership*

The leader who emerged onto the Canadian scene was not of Dutch Reformed heritage, but rather an American Presbyterian of Scotch-Irish-Welsh descent named H. Evan Runner. In the 1930s Runner had studied at Wheaton College to explore “the relation of faith and reason, Biblical worldview and modern science, theology and philosophy.”<sup>41</sup> After Wheaton, Runner studied under Cornelius Van Til at Westminster

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children to NUCS schools. By the mid-1970s the NUCS changed its name to Christian Schools International (CSI). Prinsen, 218-220. Also see Van Brummelen, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Van Ginkel argues, “While the denomination was increasingly exposed to dispensationalism and fundamentalism on the one hand and higher criticism on the other, it was most heavily influenced by mainstream American evangelicalism. Thus the sermons preached by the American ministers focused primarily on moral applications of scriptural passages and were aimed at building up the listeners’ personal relationships to Jesus Christ.” Van Ginkel, “The Place of the Church in Society,” 142.

<sup>41</sup> Bernard Zylstra, “Runner: An Assessment” in *Life is Religion: Essays in Honor of H. Evan Runner*, ed. Henry Vander Goot. (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1981), 5.

Seminary where he was introduced to the writings of Groen Van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper. The pillarized Netherlands provided Runner with the model of a religiously plural society where the faith commitments of citizens were not implicitly privatized by the state but explicitly realized through the allowance of diverse cultural institutions. Thus, Runner's objective was to mobilize the Dutch towards an effective reformed pillar in North America but his efforts in America were largely thwarted by the aforementioned Americanization and pietistic isolation of the Christian Reformed Calvinists and their institutions. Runner took up a position as a professor of philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids.<sup>42</sup>

At Calvin, Runner, following in the footsteps of Groen and Kuyper, worked to expose the deleterious consequences of the antithesis undergirding modern life and modern humanist thought, particularly in the dogma of religious neutrality. According to one scholar on Dutch Calvinist education in Canada, Runner "suggested that the Word of God called men to a much more radical rejection of contemporary culture."<sup>43</sup> Runner hoped to implement a reformation of Biblical religion in the United States and Canada, where the Word of God would not be privatized but understood as an absolute, culture-transforming *weltanschauung*. Given his criticisms of the Dutch Calvinists in America, the arrival of the Dutch immigrants in Canada captured the attention of Runner.

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<sup>42</sup> In the preface to Runner's published lectures, Bernard Zylstra defines Calvin College as a "small evangelical college owned and operated by a largely ethnically introverted denomination with then just over a hundred thousand members," arguing that this prevented Runner from initiating a grand scale revival in North America. Zylstra later writes, "But Runner's base of operation within the Christian Reformed Church was outside of the mainstream of American Christendom, in its liberal Protestant, evangelical Protestant, or Roman Catholic forms.. His base of operation was located at the periphery of American society." Ibid., 9.

<sup>43</sup> Peetoom, 153.

In 1959 and again in 1960, Runner, delivered a series of lectures to the Dutch Canadians in Unionville, Toronto.<sup>44</sup> The objective of the lectures was to offer a Reformed vision whereby the new generation of Dutch immigrants could direct their cultural and social activities, particularly in respect to education. Runner stressed the ever present antithesis in modern life which, he argued, offered only two paths for the newly arrived Dutch in Canada; namely one of synthesis which accommodated secular thought to Christian principles or antithesis which called for distinctly Reformed institutions.<sup>45</sup> His lectures captured the hearts and minds of the new immigrants who wanted to resist the path of assimilation evident in America. Zylstra argues that the importance of Runner is found in his “[articulation of the] *raison d’être* for distinct Christian communal action among the Calvinist immigrants in Canada.”<sup>46</sup>

While Runner’s call to maintain a distinct reformed identity, predicated upon the reality of the antithesis, did not produce a political transformation in Canada such as the one influenced by Kuyper in the Netherlands, the American philosophy professor did expose the divergent paths between the American and Canadian implementation of Kuyperian neo-Calvinism. Furthermore, he offered spiritual direction to future generations of Dutch Calvinist leaders in Canada through summer academic programs as

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<sup>44</sup> The lectures are compiled as a whole in, H. Evan Runner, *The Relation of the Bible to Learning*, (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1982).

<sup>45</sup> Runner stated, “Let us make no bones about it: before us, as before Herakles, two ways lie and we must decide which one we will take, the way of accommodation to the present patterns of our world, i.e. the Way of Synthesis, or the Way of Antithesis. Again, let me remind you of what I said about Groen van Prinsterer’s “In our isolation lies our strength.” The Antithesis is not to be taken in a subjectivistic sense, as though I am different from him; it is not some static division of society into Christian and anti-Christian groups or segments of the populace. Rather the Antithesis is the difference of response to the Word of God, which, coming into the world as a *revealing light* for our life, effectuates with the sovereignty of its Divine Author an abiding line of division between ways obedient and disobedient. Runner, *The Relation of the Bible to Learning*, 43.

<sup>46</sup> Zylstra, *Life is Religion*, 13.

well as through the “Groen Club,” a group of students (primarily Canadian) who met to discuss the implementation of neo-Calvinist philosophy on cultural life.<sup>47</sup> Within three years of Runner’s lectures, the province of Ontario claimed twenty Christian schools and by the early 1980s this number grew to well over one hundred.<sup>48</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the settlement of the Dutch in Canada resulted in the establishment of a variety of civic institutions, including schools. The identities of these schools were colored by different strains of Calvinist thought which were at once present in the new Canadian context.<sup>49</sup> The Christian Reformed Church in America effectively set up a foundation for the new Dutch Calvinist pillar in postwar Canada. To be sure, these efforts were not in vain as evident in the increase of distinctly Dutch Calvinist social and cultural institutions in Canada. Yet Canadian educational leaders throughout the latter half of the twentieth century differed from their American counterparts in that their understanding of neo-Calvinism centered on applying Calvinist principles for the transformation of culture. Thus, efforts were made to end the common practice among American Christian schools of adopting, or Christianizing, a public school curriculum. Instead, the Dutch Reformed in Canada sought to create schools which were distinctly Reformed.

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<sup>47</sup> Peetoom, 150.

<sup>48</sup> Prinsen, 218.

<sup>49</sup> Prinsen argues, “The lack of a Calvinist infrastructure in Canada and differing traditions placed a burden on the two groups as they tried to accommodate each other.” See also, Van Brummelen, 248-250. Van Brummelen reveals that the first Dutch Calvinist school was in fact a local district school which a number of the Dutch families in the area tried to “Christianize” by hiring a Reformed teacher from the Netherlands. However, the postwar immigrants did not consider such a school “free” as the locus of control still rested with the provincial authorities. *Ibid.*, 164-165.

In 1972, a group of seven Canadian neo-Calvinist educational thinkers published essays hoping to “prod the slumbering giant” of Dutch Calvinist education.<sup>50</sup> Echoing Kuyper as well as Runner, the essays offered a call for culturally transformative educational institutions. For example, in *No Neutral Ground: Why I’m Committed to Christian Education*, John Vriend argued:

Christians do not isolate themselves from Canadian or American society in ethnic ghettos of their own. Nor do they immerse themselves in their national society as if it were already sanctified. But they work at the renewal of culture, its use of natural resources, its literature and art, its politics and economics, in the spirit of *anticipation, not negativism* – the spirit of those who anticipate a new heaven and a new earth...*this* is the purpose of our Christian school.<sup>51</sup>

However, not all Dutch Calvinists in Canada shared the vision that the function of Christian schools was to produce students for the transformation of society. Those who resisted the transformative model formed a more conservative segment within the CRC in both Canada and the United States, arguing that such *transformationalism* dangerously disregarded the antithesis and overlooked the importance of a personal relationship with Christ. Again, the historic divisions between a neo-Calvinists emphasis on the “social relevance” of religion and Calvinists rooted in the Seceder tradition who emphasized the “personal relevance” of religion surfaced in the Canadian educational arena.

Interestingly, the internal tensions within the CRC proved to be an obstacle to religious cohesion in both Canada and the United States, culminating in the 1990s with a schism in the denomination. The recent split in the CRC provides the opportunity to advance the discussion of Christian education. The educational consequences of the

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<sup>50</sup> John Vriend, James H. Olthius, John C. Vanderstelt, Harro Van Brummelen, John Van Dyk, Adriaan Peetoom, and John A. Olthuis, *To Prod the “Slumbering Giant:” Crisis, Commitment, and Christian Education* (Toronto, Canada: Wedge Publishing, 1972).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

schism were apparent in the creation of new schools, one of which is Heritage Christian School in Jordan Station, a small town in Southern Ontario, Canada. The final chapter will explore the split within the CRC, present a case study of Heritage Christian School, and focus on the divisions within the local CRC school community which paralleled the ecclesiastical divisions in the denomination.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Schism in the Christian Reformed Church and the Birth of Heritage Christian School

#### *Introduction*

The previous chapters have outlined the historic contours of the Dutch Calvinist school movement in the Netherlands, the United States, and Canada. One theme woven throughout this narrative is that the seemingly homogenous identity of Dutch Calvinists belies the reality of an internally diverse body of believers, often at odds over the appropriate relationship between the Scriptures, Reformed doctrine (i.e. the Three Forms of Unity), and its application to personal as well as socio-cultural life. These internal tensions are often evident in the churches and schools operated by the Dutch Reformed. A second theme in this historical narrative is that ecclesiastical schism often directs, or redirects, the nature of Dutch Calvinist education. For instance, the *Afscheiding* of 1834, the 1857 birth of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) from the Reformed Church of America (RCA), or the 1886 *Doleantie*, each resulted in the establishment of new separate Christian schools.

Dutch Calvinists of the *Afscheiding* promoted a pietistic withdrawal from the world which effectively shaped the identity of the Christian Reformed Church and its schools in America throughout the nineteenth century. Conversely, *Reveil* Calvinists and Kuyparian neo-Calvinists who emphasized cultural engagement, or transformation, as the mandate of their faith, moderated these pietistic strains in both institutions, particularly in



the Canadian context.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, divergent strains of thought concerning the appropriate doctrinal and cultural emphases in the church continue to direct the rationale undergirding Dutch Calvinist schools today.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the position of the CRC on cultural issues concerning evolution, feminism, and homosexuality exposed these aforementioned internal tensions in the denomination. A number of conservative members, upset with the CRC response to these issues, left the denomination and formed their own federation, the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). Again, this schism in the CRC impacted the schools supported by the denomination. A recent article in a Reformed newspaper noted that “the weakening of the CRC has often been accompanied by the weakening of the Christian schools established and governed by CRC parents.”<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of this schism, members of the newly formed URCNA took different (although historically familiar) educational paths. While some opted to home school their children and others continued to send their children to their respective CRC schools, one community in Southern Ontario separated from the local CRC school and effectively set up its own Christian school.

In September 1992, Heritage Christian School (HCS) was established in Jordan Station, Ontario. The founders consisted of concerned parents within the local CRC community who were increasingly dissatisfied with the educational direction of the local

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<sup>1</sup> Peter C. Prinsen, “That Old Dutch Disease: The Roots of Dutch Calvinist Education in Alberta” (Ph. D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 249.

<sup>2</sup> Frans J. Schryer, *The Netherlandic Presence in Ontario: Pillars, Class and Dutch Ethnicity* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1998), 136.

<sup>3</sup> Nelson D. Kloosterman, “Mandate or Millstone: The United Reformed Churches and Christian Education I,” *Christian Renewal*, 11 March 2009, 24-27.

CRC schools, Beacon Christian High School and its elementary wing Calvin Memorial Christian School. Interestingly, the points of opposition paralleled the points of opposition occurring within the denomination; namely, evolution, feminism, and homosexuality. The parents who established HCS were concerned that the constitution of Beacon did not explicitly include the Three Forms of Unity, and they therefore desired a school which centered its educational vision on the Word of God as perceived through the lens of the Church's historic doctrines. Thus, a desire to protect children from the dangers of secularism, certainly resonant with the nineteenth century *Afscheiding*, colored the foundations of HCS. This chapter will explore the foundational discussions of HCS within the larger context of the schism in the CRC.<sup>4</sup>

*Theistic Evolution, Women in Office, and Homosexuality Divide a Church*

In 1959, the same year Runner delivered his Toronto lectures on education to the young generation of Dutch Calvinists in Canada, R.B. Kuiper, a professor at Calvin College and an advocate in the CRC for the maintenance of doctrinal orthodoxy argued, "When a denominational college [seminary] gets caught in the tide of unbelief, it is more likely that the college will drag the church down with it than that the church will rescue the college."<sup>5</sup> In hindsight, such words appear prophetic as theological liberalism, at least as defined by conservatives within the CRC, permeated both Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church in the 1970s and 1980s, dividing the church and resulting in an eventual schism. At the heart of the break was the question of Scriptural infallibility

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<sup>4</sup> The author attended HCS from 1992 to 2002. See p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> R.B. Kuiper, *To Be or Not to Be Reformed* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1959), 98.

in regards to three current issues; namely, theistic evolution, feminism, and homosexuality.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the 1980s tensions mounted within the CRC concerning the rising popularity of theistic evolution in Calvin College. The controversy came to the forefront of ecclesiastical (and educational) discourse in the aftermath of a 1986 book titled *The Fourth Day* by Howard Van Till, a professor of science at Calvin.<sup>7</sup> Van Till's work amounted to a defense of theistic evolution premised on a metaphorical rather than a literal understanding of Genesis. Van Till argued in his work:

The status of the Bible, then, is properly identified by the phrase "Word of God." This clearly indicates that it occupies an elevated position relative to other human literature. And if we understand the term "word" is being used in a metaphorical sense to acknowledge divine revelation, rather than in the restricted literal sense to indicate mere words, then we can also avoid the error denying the form in which God has chose to reveal Himself to us.<sup>8</sup>

Van Till's contention that both the scriptural and the scientific understanding of the cosmos were incomplete and therefore complemented one another led the delegates of the disaffected churches in the CRC to claim he (and by extension the CRC which did little

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<sup>6</sup> In October of 1991 Classis Niagara commissioned a panel of delegates from local churches in Southern Ontario to prepare a report that outlined Biblical and confessional reasons for withdrawal from the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The issues stated in the report resonate with previous schisms in the Dutch Calvinist churches, primarily in the central argumentation that a liberal (i.e. antithetical) interpretation of God's Word had permeated the denomination and manifest itself in a number of now controversial ideas. In a recent article on the United Reformed Churches and Christian education, Nelson Kloosterman aptly summarizes the situation in the early 1990s by stating, "Although different local choices and decisions led to the departure from the CRC of members or entire congregations, the formal reasons involved the authority of Scripture as that had come to be compromised in terms of the issues of women's ordination, evolution, and homosexuality." Kloosterman, "Mandate or Millstone I," 24-27.

<sup>7</sup> Van Till, Howard *The Fourth Day: What the Bible and the Heavens are Telling Us About the Creation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Van Till wrote, "The truth of a concrete story in ancient Hebrew literature does not necessarily lie in its specific details but rather in the eternal verities it illustrates. When we modern westerners read a story, we expect it to be written as an answer to the question, "what happened?" But the stories of the primeval history are much more like parables than journalistic reports of events." *Ibid.*, 5, 88-89.

to curb his ideas) dangerously undermined the infallibility of the Scriptures by erroneously equating the Lord's "general revelation" (i.e. His attributes revealed in the cosmos/nature) with His "special revelation" (i.e. His revealed and infallible Word necessary for our salvation).<sup>9</sup> The controversy, therefore, centered on the doctrine of Biblical infallibility as expressed in the words of Article 7 of the Belgic Confession, which states that the church is to, "condemn any human writings...as equal to divine writings [and to] reject with all our heart everything that does not agree with this infallible rule."<sup>10</sup>

A second controversy within the CRC concerned the issue of gender roles in CRC offices. In response to growing claims for gender equality throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, many within the CRC called for an overturn of the Synod's restriction of women in office. Historically, the CRC allowed only men to attain the office of elder or be ordained as minister, grounding this position in Bible passages such as I Timothy 2: 12: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, she must be silent." After a decision of Synod in 1975 to ban women from church offices, the CRC experienced decades of internal opposition. One vocal group, the Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church (CW-CRC), lambasted the current church order as "patriarchal" and "oppressive."<sup>11</sup> On the CW-CRC magazine *Partnership* their stated purpose read:

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<sup>9</sup> Theodore Plantinga, "What Man Sees – Or What God Says?" in *Separate and Equal?: A Critique of the Report to Synod of 1991 on Creation and Science* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformed Fellowship, [1992]), 13-17.

<sup>10</sup> Belgic Confession, Article 7.

<sup>11</sup> Darrell Todd Maurina, "The Committee for Women in the CRC," *The Reformed Witness*, June 1992, 22-25.

The Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church is an independent group of persons concerned with the role of women in the church. We believe that the ordination of women to ecclesiastical office is the Spirit directed outcome of the teachings of Scripture. Therefore, our ultimate objective is the equal participation of both women and men in the life of the church.<sup>12</sup>

The exact contours of the debate are less important than the effectiveness of this movement in the CRC. By the 1990s, the Synod “[permitted] churches to use their discretion in utilizing the gifts of women members in all the offices of the church.”<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the opening of all church offices in the CRC to both men and women fractured denominational unity.

The drive to eliminate gender barriers within the church paralleled a drive to overturn certain sexual barriers. Thus, a third issue confronting the CRC during this period concerned its position on homosexuality as a product of total depravity. In 1973, the Synod “declared that homosexual orientation is a distortion of sexuality resulting from sin in the world and that any homosexual activity is sinful.”<sup>14</sup> When Rev. Jim Lucas, a pastor of Christ Community CRC in Grand Rapids, revealed his homosexuality he challenged the denomination to find Scriptural and confessional grounds against his lifestyle, arguing that the Church only perpetuated sexual discrimination and oppression. He subsequently challenged interpretations of the Mosaic laws on homosexuality and their New Testament counterparts in Romans, I Corinthians, and I Timothy.<sup>15</sup> In

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Rev. Darryl Kats, “Did God Really Say? Genesis 3:1 and Women in Office Debates,” *The Reformed Witness*, June 1992, 20-21.

<sup>14</sup> Darrel Todd Maurina, “Gay Christian Reformed Minister “Comes Out” in Calvin Speech,” *Reformed Witness* June 1992, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Lucas argued that the Old Testament laws against homosexuality were irrelevant in light of the fulfillment of the law through Jesus Christ. Further he argued that Romans 1 referred to male prostitution with younger boys rather than adult relationships. Ibid., 1, 4-6.

collaboration with Dr. Hendrick Hart, a member of Toronto First CRC and professor at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Canada, Rev. Lucas organized a group known as AWARE (As We Are) in order to support gay and lesbian rights within the CRC in both the United States and Canada.<sup>16</sup> The CRC did not change its 1973 position regarding the incompatibility of the homosexual lifestyle with proper obedience to the will of God. However, the Synod buttressed this earlier position with a call for homosexual reception in the church. The current statement reads, “The church affirms that it must exercise the same compassion for homosexuals in their sins as it exercises over all other sinners. The church should do everything in its power to help persons with homosexual orientation and give them support toward healing and wholeness.”<sup>17</sup>

In short, the perceived tolerance for homosexual members in the CRC coupled with the push for gender equality and the allowance of theistic evolution solidified conservative and liberal divisions within the church. The ecclesiastical controversies trickled down into the arena of primary and secondary education. Theistic evolution taught in the setting of a college soon entered the primary and secondary day schools supported by the denomination. One article in the *Reformed Witness*, a newspaper created in 1992 “by believers in the Christian Reformed Church who see doctrinal error entering her precious walls,” entitled *Passed On To Your Children* warned, “Hundreds of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> The CRC position on homosexuality developed in response to a report delivered by a committee which was set up for the study of homosexuality within the church. The full report considered the theological positions of homosexuality in both the Old and New Testaments, concluding that it is indeed considered a sinful lifestyle. The report concluded however with advice for the CRC concerning its pastoral care, as opposed to discipline, for homosexual members. “CRC Position on Homosexuality,” Christian Reformed Church of North America, [http://www.crcna.org/pages/positions\\_homosexuality.cfm](http://www.crcna.org/pages/positions_homosexuality.cfm) [accessed Feb 18, 2010].

students taught by [Howard] Van Till have gone out into the Christian school classrooms and have passed on those views to thousands of students.”<sup>18</sup> The article goes on to relate which schools have changed their constitutions to accommodate the views of theistic evolution.<sup>19</sup> A number of conservative parents in Lethbridge, Alberta who voiced concern over the issue of evolution in their local CRC school opted to establish their own Christian school which aligned with their theological direction.<sup>20</sup>

The more militant feminist movement within the CRC challenged the gender language with which educators in the CRC schools should refer to God. Prior to the split, critics within the CRC schools increasingly voiced concerns over the abandonment of male gender language used in reference to God in place of gender neutral language. This issue was seen to parallel the rising tide of feminism within the denomination. The 1990 edition of *Partnership* ran an article by Annelies Knoppers entitled “Is the Bible a Hindrance to Women?” The conclusion to her argument reveals its overarching theme. She wrote, “Biblical religion is patriarchal religion, a religion that holds women in perpetual subordination to men....I do not leave the church because I see its sexism as an issue of injustice....The overriding theme and belief that keeps me going is: God is the God of Liberation, not oppression. Trust in God. *She* will provide! [emphasis mine]”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Myron Rau, “Secession from the CRC Has Begun,” *The Reformed Witness* June 1992, 19.

<sup>19</sup> One school in Hudsonville, Michigan changed its constitution to read, “When the theologians and scientists within the community of Reformed Christians present various interpretations (of either special or general revelation), the integrity of each interpretation will be respected.” Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Prinsen, 255.

<sup>21</sup> Annelies Knoppers, quoted in Maurina, “The Committee for Women in the CRC,” 22.

A growing fear concerned the adoption of such gender neutral language in the Christian schools supported by the CRC, and its consequences on the meaning of headship. In regards to the issue of homosexuality, people were increasingly concerned that sexual toleration would permeate the curriculum of CRC schools through sexual education courses.

In the early 1990s a conservative segment within the CRC, concerned about the spiritual direction of the church in light of the Synod's perceived liberal handling of these contentious issues, broke away from the denomination and started the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (ORC).<sup>22</sup> By 1995 a number of these newly separated churches banded together in a federation labeled the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA).<sup>23</sup> By 1998 the URCNA contained "over 16,000 members, 96 ministers, and about 700 office bearers."<sup>24</sup> It is important to note that this ecclesiastical schism did not occur over the CRC's commitment to Christian education, which remained strong throughout these years. Nevertheless, a consequence of the schism was the weakening of support for the CRC's schools by members of the URC federation. The discussions leading to the creation of HCS illuminate this reality.

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<sup>22</sup> By June of 1992, the CRC had already experienced the withdrawal of 670 families (nearly 2700 members) who set up their own congregations. During the previous decade 15 Orthodox Reformed Churches were set up citing similar reasons of opposition to the liberal theology evident in the CRC and Calvin College. Myron Rau, "Secession from the CRC Has Begun," *The Reformed Witness* June 1992, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Schryer, 137, 367.

<sup>24</sup> "The United Reformed Churches: The Reformation Continues," <http://www.reformedtoronto.org/urcna.htm> [accessed February 17, 2010].



## *The URCNA and Education*

A recent article in *Christian Renewal*, a Reformed newspaper that circulates primarily within the URCNA orbit, examined the issue of URC identity with regard to Christian education. The author, Nelson Kloosterman who was involved in articulating the URCNA Church Order asserts “that disagreement with the historic denominational support among the CRC for Christian education was not one of the reasons involved in the formation of the URC.”<sup>25</sup> He argues that through the schism such support remained, and continues to remain, a central tenet of the denomination, citing Article 71 of the CRC Church Order which states: “The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools, and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant.”<sup>26</sup> While the URC maintained a similar emphasis on the covenant responsibility for “God-centered” education, parents within the URC took a variety of educational positions in the aftermath of the CRC split.<sup>27</sup> Some opted to home school their children, while others continued to send their children to the CRC Christian schools in their respective localities. A third group of disaffected parents, however, opted to set up their own schools, arguing that the local schools backed by the CRC had adopted a

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<sup>25</sup> This article is part of a series in which the author is challenging an emerging “two-kingdoms” view of the world which he argues undermines the Reformed (read, Calvinist) position which asserts that all of life, including scholarship is directed by a religious worldview, thereby making our Christian faith relevant in our scholarship. He argues that this view threatens to erode the historical foundation of Reformed education. Kloosterman, “Mandate or Millstone I,” 24-27.

<sup>26</sup> CRC Church Order, article 71, quoted in Kloosterman, “Mandate or Millstone I,” 11 March 2009, 24-27.

<sup>27</sup> Article 14 of the URC Church Order states that the elder’s responsibilities include “assisting in catechizing the youth, [and] promoting God-centered schooling.” URC Church Order, article 14, Ibid.

curriculum as liberal as the theology within the church.<sup>28</sup> Heritage Christian School provides an excellent case study illuminating this third position.

*Theistic Evolution, Women in Office, and Homosexuality Divide a School Community*

Thirty years prior to the CRC schism, a number of CRC congregations in St. Catharines, Ontario and its surrounding areas established and actively supported Beacon Christian High School and its elementary wing, Calvin Memorial Christian School, under the auspices of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS). A 1988 Evaluation Report compiled by the OACS on the effectiveness of Beacon as a Christian school in St. Catharines provides evidence that the turbulence dividing the denomination had similarly divided the local school community.<sup>29</sup> The evaluators of Beacon recognized a growing division within the greater community concerning the Reformed identity of the school.

They stated:

[T]he greatest need is to deal with the division in the community which has entered the school society and, particularly, it seems, the high school. There is a wide divergence of opinion about what a Reformed Christian high school education should be like today. The existence of such differences is not surprising, but unfortunately, it has become a matter of conflict, mistrust and suspicion. This conflict seems to have infected the student body and to be the real cause of the damaging interpersonal relationships which exist in the student body.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Prinsen notes in his thesis that the CSI schools in Alberta had begun to place women on their boards, and in their school offices. Prinsen, 254.

<sup>29</sup> The evaluators assessed questionnaires returned by parents, nonparent members, teachers and board members and examined the schools General and Staff handbooks, newsletters, promotional pamphlets, school premises (including visits to all grads and teachers), policies and course materials. The expressed purpose of the evaluation was "...to help the OACS schools assess the effectiveness of the program and operation of their schools and societies." Herman Proper, Carl Mulder, and Henry Kooy, *Evaluation Report for Beacon Christian High School* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Ontario Alliance for Christian Schools, 1988), Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 16 – 19.

The report concluded with a series of solutions including a request that the Board of Beacon Christian High School set up a public forum in order to reconcile the voices of dissent within the community. The objective of such a forum was to “articulate a clear vision for the school and chart a firm direction which [was to be] sensitive and responsive to the community.”<sup>31</sup> To be sure, a body of disaffected parents had leveled charges against the school throughout the 1980s and early 1990s paralleling the theological concerns simultaneously fracturing the CRC.

The correspondence between the Board of Beacon, chaired by Albert Bakker, and the disaffected parents, whose concerns were voiced by a local businessman and church elder, Dave Bakker, offer insights into the reasons for dissent.<sup>32</sup> A letter from Dave Bakker, backed with over sixty signatures, to the Board of Beacon dated April 6, 1992, laid out the list of concerns parents expressed concerning the Reformed identity of the school. Bakker asserts that the concerned parents “have no desire to be confrontational, unkind or even uncharitable. [They] recognize that different people have different visions of Christian education; however, [they] are also convinced that there are indeed foundational principles which must come to expression in the life of a Reformed Christian school.”<sup>33</sup>

The central concern voiced by the parents represented by Bakker was that the educational foundation of Beacon, expressed in its constitution, did not include the historic doctrines of the CRC as the framework in which to understand the Scriptures.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Dave Bakker is the cousin of Albert Bakker.

<sup>33</sup> David Bakker Sr. to Albert Bakker, 6 April 1992, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

The letter noted: “[The Three Forms of Unity] are foundational and mandatory for the association’s constitution, to teaching, education committee work, board duties, the hiring of teachers and to the development and basis of curriculum.”<sup>34</sup> Without maintaining the creeds of the church, the association of parents who would eventually set up Heritage questioned the spiritual direction of Beacon and argued that it was in danger of opening its doors to a similar liberalism evident in the CRC; that is, theistic evolution, gender inclusive language, and sexual tolerance.<sup>35</sup> The charges brought against Beacon regarding these issues as well as the responses issued by the Board of Beacon illuminate the intimate relationship between ecclesiastical and educational spheres within the Dutch Calvinist community.

In reference to evolution, the orthodox parents rejected any plausibility of theistic evolution, arguing that science cannot be neutral. Therefore, theistic evolution is opposed on the grounds that it is principally antithetical to Christian Scripture, and “undermines the creation account of Genesis [and] the sovereignty of God.”<sup>36</sup> Utilizing familiar doctrinal rhetoric, Bakker wrote to the Board: “Where science and the Bible seem to disagree, the Bible has the final authority.”

In response to these charges, a “Statement on the Teaching of Creation/Evolution at Calvin Memorial and Beacon High” was presented to the parental opposition within the school by the Board of Beacon. Interestingly, the statement employed similar doctrinal language to refute the charges that the schools promoted theistic evolution. The

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 2-5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 4.

preamble to this statement read, “That the curriculum [of Beacon and Calvin] remains faithful to the Biblical truth in every regard and more specifically with regard to the creation history as confessed in the Three forms of Unity which underlie the Association’s Constitution.”<sup>37</sup> The statement continued by expressing the school’s commitment to the creation account, however with flexibility in teacher’s positions in determining the length of days in Genesis, as well as to micro-evolution within species. Albert Bakker argued that the position of Beacon on the authority of Scripture agreed with the claim that God’s truth is revealed both through His Word and His world. However, he noted that the school has “always maintained a strong emphasis in general revelation because it justifies Christian scholarship in areas such as math, philosophy, astronomy, history, etc.”<sup>38</sup> In short, the Board argued that students at Beacon would be taught different theories of creation, including evolution, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of both positions in order to instill “a Biblical understanding of creation as it is found in Genesis 1-3 [as] integral to a world view that is rooted in Creation, Fall and Redemption.”<sup>39</sup>

Dave Bakker, in his letter to the Board of Beacon, also questioned the synthesis of feminism with Christianity in Beacon. He stated that the parents he represented were opposed the school’s allowing gender inclusive language within the curriculum. He argued “The present policy on inclusive language is to be removed from the school

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<sup>37</sup> This statement was originally set forth in 1987. “Statement on the Teaching of Creation/Evolution at Calvin Memorial and Beacon High,” Board of the Association for Christian Education, 19 February 1991, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>38</sup> Albert Bakker questioned the usage of “inerrant” as a descriptor of the Bible, arguing that such a word does not appear in any of the Reformed doctrines. Albert Bakker to Dave Bakker Sr., 20 May 1992, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

curriculum until Biblical grounds can be presented for reinstatement.”<sup>40</sup> However, in 1990 Beacon submitted a set of “Guidelines for the Use of Gender Language” which seemed to contradict the charges of secularism being leveled against the school. These guidelines noted that gender inclusive language at Beacon involved “the use of nouns and pronouns in written and oral expression which acknowledges the reader or hearer of the communication to be male and female.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the statement stressed that such gender inclusive language did “not imply an endorsement of a gender inclusive God, a subtle attempt to undermine male headship, or the need to alter Biblical texts.”<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the letter of Dave Bakker took issue with Beacon’s approach to sexual education being taught at Beacon, stating that such material fell within the familial, rather than the educational, sphere of responsibility.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, he emphasized the need to teach sexuality with a clear understanding of those practices deemed antithetical to the Christian worldview, including homosexuality. Bakker wrote:

The Biblical view of headship and authority must permeate this curriculum program in terms of the roles of mother/father, husband/wife, [and] parents/children. God’s design for family is clear in Scripture....Students must be taught Biblical normative family development....Students must be taught that divorce, homosexuality, homosexual “marriages,” adultery are not normative or God’s design; they are in fact, sinful.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Dave Bakker Sr., to Albert Bakker, 6 April 1992, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>41</sup> “Guidelines for the Use of Gender Inclusive Language at Beacon,” Board of the Association for Christian Education, 22 May 1990, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Minutes of the Lifestyle Committee, 24 October 1991, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>44</sup> David Bakker to Albert Bakker, 6 April 1992, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

In 1991, a meeting at Beacon was held by the Lifestyle Committee, to discuss the schools educational positions concerning marriage and sexuality. The meeting resolved that marriage, in line with the position of the CRC, would be taught as being between a man and a woman as “the foundation for a Christian society,” and that homosexuality presented a perversion of this ideal.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the apparent similarities in educational positions between the conservative parents within Beacon and the Board of Beacon, the former group in St. Catharines pressured the Board to rewrite the school’s constitution to include the Three Forms of Unity. A membership meeting was held in May of 1992 to determine whether or not a new doctrinal education constitution would be written for Beacon and Calvin Memorial. The majority of the membership, however, voted to uphold the constitution in force at the time which did not explicitly mention the doctrines of the church.<sup>46</sup> As a result, the concerned parents in Beacon concluded that they could no longer remain faithful supporters of the school. Reverend Raymond Sikkema<sup>47</sup> summed up the sentiments of the reformed parents now opting to leave Beacon, arguing, “The fundamental problem is that there is a big difference in how we view Christian education. Calvin [including Beacon] is a Christian school, but not a Reformed one.”<sup>48</sup> By the end of the 1992 school year, thirty families had decided to pull their children out of Beacon.

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<sup>45</sup> Minutes of the Lifestyle Committee, 18 December 1991, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>46</sup> Minutes of the Membership Meeting, Association for Christian Education of St. Catharines, 5 May 1992, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>47</sup> Raymond Sikkema is the grandfather of the author.

<sup>48</sup> Raymond Sikkema, Minutes of meeting called for the names of parents signed under the letter sent to the Board of Beacon. 11 May 1992, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

### *The Establishment of Heritage Christian School*

Within a week, these concerned members met in private to form a number of steering committees which would oversee the various steps necessary in establishing a new school separate from Beacon and its primary wing, Calvin Memorial. In order to gain charitable status as a separate school they also set up an independent Reformed (Orthodox) Christian School Association, which they called The Niagara Reformed Christian School Association.<sup>49</sup> Now, two separate Christian School Associations operated within the Niagara region for the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools. A committee was given one month to draft a constitution for the new school. On June 8, 1992 the draft was presented to the families. Article 2 of the draft revealed the Reformed identity of the school based on the inerrancy as well the infallibility of Scripture, coupled with the addition of the Three Forms of Unity.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, the staff committee provided contracts for new teachers that stated the grounds for dismissal with the words, “The teacher’s conduct being in conflict with the Scriptures, in our confessions; the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, the Belgic Confession and the Westminster Standards.”<sup>51</sup> The presence of the Three Forms of Unity at the heart of the new schools identity reveal the understanding of the parents that a

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<sup>49</sup> A committee of Finance, Education, Curriculum, Staff, Fundraising, Building, Constitution, Promotion, Transportation and Parent Teacher Associations were effectively put in place over the weeks following the May 5 meeting. Minutes of the Steering Committee, Vineland Free Reformed Church, 11 and 26 May 1992, Papers of Heritage Christian School, Jordan Station, Ontario.

<sup>50</sup> Article 2 states, “The basis of this association is the infallible and inerrant Word of God as interpreted by the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, the Belgic Confession and the Westminster Standards.” Interestingly, the word “inerrant” was originally not included in the Draft Constitution, but added on June 4, 1992. Agenda, “Draft Constitution of the Niagara Reformed Christian Education Association,” 8 June 1992, Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>51</sup> Minutes of the Steering Committee, 15 June 1992, Papers of Heritage Christian School, Jordan Station, Ontario.



Dutch Calvinist school which is reformed must approach the Word of God and God's world through the lenses of church doctrine.

Throughout the summer of 1992 this reformed foundation was set down for Heritage Christian School.<sup>52</sup> The school opened its doors in the fall of 1992 to 158 students from over sixty-five families in the Niagara Region. Membership in the school was open to “any communicant member of Reformed Churches in the Niagara Peninsula.”<sup>53</sup> The purpose of Heritage was articulated with an emphasis on both the Scriptural and doctrinal foundation for its educational mandate. The Statement of Purpose read:

The home, the church, and the school each have a God-given responsibility to bring up our children “in nurture and the admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). While none is able to properly do this of themselves, we must pray and strive to place God and His infallible Word at the centre of all subjects studied, instruction given and policies developed.... We aim to base religious instruction on the Bible and to present it from a truly Reformed perspective in accordance with our Doctrinal Standards: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession of Faith, and the Canons of Dort. On this foundation, instruction must be given in all subjects needed for daily life.<sup>54</sup>

The dissenting families within the CRC, in cooperation with families of the local Free Reformed churches had effectively restructured their particular Dutch Calvinist pillar to include both churches and schools that aligned with their religious commitments. To be sure, such restructuring required the coordination and cooperation of family, church, and school spheres to agree on the necessity of Christ-centered education. By 1997, the HCS

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<sup>52</sup> The name Heritage was chosen in reference to Psalm 127: 3 where the psalmist writes, “Lo, children are a heritage from the Lord.”

<sup>53</sup> “Introduction to Heritage Christian School,” [1992], Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

<sup>54</sup> “What is Heritage Christian School?” [1992], Papers of Joyce DeHaan, St. Catharines, Ontario.

had acquired enough capital to construct its own building in Jordan Station, Ontario. Today the school contains nearly 560 students from kindergarten through grade twelve and is currently in the process of building an addition, with talks of constructing a separate high school facility in the future.

### *Conclusion*

When Kuyper encouraged Calvinists to embrace God’s sovereignty over all of creation he legitimated Christian engagement with culture in contradistinction from the isolationist pietism and cultural withdrawal promoted through the *Afscheiding*. In fact, such an emphasis on cultural reformation at the heart of Reformed schools is what makes them distinct from their evangelical counterparts. Mark Noll, quoting historian David Bebbington, outlines the tenets of Evangelicalism:

[T]he British historian David Bebbington has identified the key ingredients of Evangelicalism as conversionism (an emphasis of the “new birth” as a life changing experience), Biblicism (a reliance on the Bible as ultimate religious authority), activism (a concern for sharing faith), and crucicentrism ( a focus on Christ’s redeeming word on the cross).<sup>55</sup>

To be sure, these theological principles are not denied by Calvinists, but institutionally, the Reformed relegate the emphasis on “conversion” to the ecclesiastical sphere, rather than perceiving it as a mandate within the educational sphere. Furthermore, Prinsen argues that “pietism – a rather strict moral and legalistic code of conduct and dress – often part of the evangelical Christian schools, would not usually be part of Calvinist school culture.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 8.

<sup>56</sup> Prinsen, 10.

Kuyper argued that the world of culture could reveal the truth and goodness of God only because God's common grace withheld the full consequences of total depravity. However, the successors of Kuyper have, at times, failed to temper the doctrine of common grace with an understanding of the antithesis. Chapter three noted that the successors of Kuyper in Canada wanted to avoid the cultural assimilation evident in America by promoting cultural transformation. Schools were the means for such transformational ends, creating students with a Reformed world and life view that would be used for the re-formation of culture.

One of the dangers of this position, noted by its critics, is that its advocates naively believe human efforts can usher in the kingdom of God by transforming their surroundings. In this respect, the parents who set up Heritage Christian School perceived Beacon's failure, or in their eyes refusal, to buttress their school's constitution with the Three Forms of Unity. Without the Three Forms there was, in these parents' view, no effective bulwark against secular ideologies such as theistic evolution, feminism and homosexuality. Each of these three issues plaguing the CRC at this time represented, in the view of the founders of Heritage, the ill fruits of culturally transformative synthesis thinking.

From the perspective of an outsider to the Dutch Calvinist community, the grounds for the school split may appear specious at best. The correspondence between the orthodox families and the Board of Beacon reveal a strikingly high degree of commonality. For instance, both agreed that education must be centered on an understanding of the Word of God as infallible. Although the majority of members at Beacon saw no need to include the Three Forms of Unity into the school's constitution, it

is interesting that the chairman repeatedly appealed to the truths of these historic doctrines to undergird the school's position on evolution, gender inclusive language, and homosexuality.

In light of the controversy within the CRC during these years, it is clear that ecclesiastical positions solidified educational visions in St. Catharines, Ontario. The foundational discussions culminating in the creation of HCS illuminate the aforementioned tensions that continue to divide the reformed pillar. Moreover, the reasons underlying the withdrawal of support for the local CRC school, Beacon, paralleled reasons for the withdrawal from the denomination, thereby revealing the degree to which the ecclesiastical and educational spheres continue to be intimately linked within the pillarized Dutch Calvinist mindset. To be sure, isolation is still considered to be the source of strength for this body of believers. But whether or not such isolation refers to a separation from the world on the peripheries of their communities or to a necessary separation from the worldliness infiltrating such communities remains a matter of debate.

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