A HISTORY OF THE REFORMATIONAL MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN: THE PRE-WORLD WAR II YEARS

This paper looks at the development of neo-Calvinism in Britain during the period up to World War II (WWII). Though the term neo-Calvinism is broad, the focus here will be on the Reformational strand associated with the approach of Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven.

Keywords: neo-Calvinism, Reformational philosophy, Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, Sovereign Grace Union, Henry Atherton, Britain

1 INTRODUCTION

Neo-Calvinism is often used as a synonym of Kuyperian. It would include Vantillians, i.e. followers of Van Til’s presuppositionalism, Reconstructionists, such as R.J. Rushdoony, Greg Bahnsen and Gary North and those in Reformational circles who associate themselves with the approach of Dutch philosophers Herman Dooyeweerd and D.H.Th Vollenhoven.

Some of the distinctive characteristics of the Kuyperian neo-Calvinist standpoint would include the following (Bishop 2012):

1. The emphasis that Jesus is lord over all of creation hence the idea that all of life is to be redeemed
2. The importance of the cultural mandate (Genesis 1:26ff)
3. The biblical framework of Creation, fall and redemption
4. Sphere sovereignty
5. A rejection of dualism
6. Common grace
7. The antithesis
8. The role and influence of worldviews
9. The role of God’s laws or creational ordinances
10. The rejection of the concept of religious neutrality

To the list of distinctives that make up neo-Calvinism for those Reformational circles we could add:

11. The distinction between structure and direction
12. The rejection of the autonomy of theoretical thought
13. The idea that reality has different modal aspects
The Dutch group were later hosted by Kuyper in August 1875 in his home. This magazine from De Witte Godslaghij [The Road to Godliness] with the aim of spreading the holiness idea of ‘sanctification by faith’. It ran for twelve issues from October 1875 until 1877. Kuyper contributed only one piece to this magazine (Kuyper 1875.09). In it he takes to task Gunning’s view of a second conversion which neglected baptism.

Kuyper also presented a paper at the third Southern Missionary Festival at ‘s Heer-Arendskerkze on 23 June of the holiness movement in Britain. This was reported in Het derde Zuiden Zendingfestival (Kuyper 1875.07).1

De Bruijn (2014:103) notes that Kuyper was impressed by these meetings. He compiled a report in the 6 and 7 June 1875 issues of De Standaard. He described it as a ‘Bethel experience’. However, Kuyper soon after the visit had a breakdown. This was attributed to overwork. At the time, he suffered from insomnia and was taking the sedative chloral hydrate, which was popular at the time.

It is not clear why Kuyper found the Brighton meetings so enthralling. The holiness approach was theologically far from his Reformed theology. It may be the discrepancy between holiness teaching and Kuyper’s experience and theology that contributed to his breakdown. His fluctuation with the holiness movement seemed to dissipate after his breakdown. The Keenstone meeting with its emphasis on personal holiness service was to his private/public dualism something that was at odds with Kuyper’s approach.

Kuyper changed from being an Anglophile to an Anglicophile largely due to the British approach in South Africa. The South African issue marked a sea change in Kuyper’s view of the British. Kuyper produced a paper on the South African Crisis for a French journal Revue des Deux Mondes at the request of its editor Charles Benoît. The paper was subsequently translated into Dutch, German, Swedish and English. The English translator was A.E. Fletcher. It was published in England by The Stop the War Committee (Kuyper 1900.12).

Kuyper came on a diplomatic mission to London in November 1873 and then again in 1893 as prime minister he came to London on a state visit to offer himself as an intermediary between the British and the Boers. Unfortunately, the offer was rejected.

Kuyper also visited England en route from his way back to the Netherlands from the States when he delivered his Stone lectures in 1889.

The other major figure associated with neo-Calvinism at the time was Herman Ravnick. The only time he visited Britain was for the 400th Calvin Centenary held in 1909 at Marylebone Presbyterian Church, London. Bavinck delivered a paper on ‘The leading ideas of Calvin’s “Institutes”’ (Bavinck 1909).

He concludes with our debt to Calvin:

We are indebted to him for the independence of the Church and the free exercise of its discipline; the emancipation of the congregation and its presbyterian government; the limitation of the power of the State and the people’s consciousness of liberty; the budding of home virtues and faithfulness in an earthly calling; the restoration to honour of the natural life and the increase of care for the common welfare the close connection between earthly and the heavenly callings, and the opening of the eyes to the divine glory, which is spread forth over the whole creation.

3 THE INTER-WAR YEARS

3.1 The Role of the Sovereign Grace Union

In May 1932, an important conference took place in London with the title: ‘The Reformed Faith: commonly called Calvinism’. This international conference was the eighteenth conference organised by the Sovereign Grace Union (SGU). It was held at Grove Chapel, Camberwell, London and at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London (SGU 1932).

The secretary of the SGU and pastor of Grove Chapel was Henry Atherton (1875-1933). Unfortunately, Atherton was unable to attend because of illness. The conference was the result of the desire to form an international connection between Calvinists. It was the forerunner of what was to become IARFA (International Association for Reformed Faith and Action).

The Sovereign Grace Union’s origins go back to May 1875 in Brighton. Several meetings saw the birth of the ‘Bible Women’s Mission’ (Tait 1985). The aim was the ‘assimilation of the principles of Sovereign grace in Brighton’. This led to the Sovereign Grace Mission (SGM). The president was Revd Thomas Lawson (1828-1904) (Hyde 2014:2).

By 1902, there were three key people involved: Thomas Lawson (Brighton), Andrew Joseph Baxter (of Cavendish Chapel, Eastbourne [1872-1908]) and Thomas Bradbury (Grove Chapel, Camberwell). Lawson died in 1904 and the SGM ceased functioning.

In 1904, one of Thomas Bradbury’s friends, William Sykes, started what he called Sovereign Grace Union meetings. There is an early report of these in the English Churchman.

Sovereign Grace Union

Sir, - Will you kindly allow me once more to express my gratitude to the readers of your valuable paper for sending me their copies, and also for the parcels of literature, during the last twelve months? The time is fast approaching when we recommence our open-air campaign. Last year, from May to September, we held 150 meetings, gave 333 addresses, distributed 20,000 tracts, 8c., and 15,000 people were reached. We shall be very thankful for any literature of a distinctively Protestant, Free Grace nature for circulation. We purport exposing the awful heresies of Romanism, Ritualism, Mormonism, spiritualism, and the recent American importations. We shall specially deal with the Higher Criticism and the New Theology. The remedy — the Grace of the Gospel — will of course be put in the forefront.

William Sykes, Hillsborough Vicarage, Sheffield, May 9th.

Sykes (1861-1930) was a headmaster at Bewcastle, Cumberland, before becoming ordained in 1889. He trained for ordination at St Aidan’s Theological College, Birehhead. He married Anne Jane Dodgson in 1885. His first curacy was in Manchester, then he moved to Tunbridge Wells and then to St Bartholomew’s, Carbrook, Sheffield. He then moved to the parish of Hillsborough and Wadsley Bridge - where he remained for fourteen years (Anonymous, 1930). There he became police chaplain and was on the Sheffield Board of Education. He became the first president of the Sovereign Grace Union.

Sykes moved to Audley, Staffordshire in 1919 until ill health resulted in his retirement in 1927. He joined the ‘Motherland’ Lodge of Freemasons in London, he was a prominent Orangeman and was senior deputy grand chaplain of the Grand Lodge of England.

Thomas Bradbury’s successor at Grove Chapel, after being without a pastor for seven years (Loch 1909), was Henry Atherton (1875-1933). Atherton was born ‘of pious parents’ in Wigan where Brady’s father had been a doctor.

Atherton came under conviction of sin after a chain of events triggered by discovering a tract on the mantelpiece at home which had read ‘Where will you spend eternity?’ Atherton threw it in the fire, but the next day a man fainted and died at Atherton’s feet and Atherton heard a voice: ‘If that had been you where would you spend eternity?’ Atherton thinking it was someone speaking behind him responded ‘In hell’, but he was alone. For months Atherton struggled with the conviction of sin, he read the Bible and realised he needed Jesus as his Saviour.

He began to tell his colliers friend of his faith and became a Sunday School teacher in St George’s, Bolton. With the support of the Evangelical bishops in the Church of England Atherton undertook mission work with Duckham and then Carlisle (Charmley 2014:11). Atherton had an intense dislike of the Romanising influences in the Church of England. Atherton resigned his role as church missionary and returned to Wigan and became secretary of the Wigan branch of the National Protestant League.

In 1897, he married Ellen Hilton and then in 1899 he became a travelling evangelist for the Church Association (Charmley 2014:14). This led to his becoming the Pastor of the Church of England Protestant Mission in Halifax, Yorkshire, and then from 1908-1910 the Pastor of the Church of England Evangelical and Protestant Mission, Oxford, which he left...
He was involved for fourteen years with the Church Association. The Church Association was later to be amalgamated with a number of organisations to form the Church Union. Atherton eventually accepted the call to be the pastor of Grove Chapel in 1913 after preaching there as a supply. He remained there until his death in 1939.

Sykes's example had prompted Atherton to form the Sovereign Grace Union out of the Brighton Mission. William Sykes became the president - he remained so until his death in 1930 - Atherton became its secretary. The newly revived SGU under Sykes and Atherton started to publish literature in association with C.J. Francombe & Sons of Ludgate Circus, London. They also held regular conferences. The publication of literature and the organisation of conferences were two key aims of the SGU.

The SGU was a pan-denominational Calvinist organisation based on free grace doctrines. In each of their publications this 'vision statement' was printed:

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THE Sovereign Grace Union is ONLY
Interdenominational Society standing or a
PROTESTANTISM

The basis of faith was:
1. The Absolute Sufficiency of Holy Scriptures for all matters of Faith and Practice
2. The Triune Jehovah
   a. The Sovereignty of God
   b. The Deity and perfect Harmony of the Lord Jesus Christ
   c. The Personality of the Holy Spirit.
3. The Fall of Man
4. Unconditional Election.
5. Particular Redemption.
6. Effectual Calling.
7. Justification by imputing the Obedience and Satisfaction of Christ.
8. Final Preservation.
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The first SGU conference was held in 1915 in Grove Chapel, Camberwell with the topic. Our benefits in Christ. The speakers included Atherton, Thomas Houghton (1879-1951) and William Sykes (1881-1930). Subsequent held included topics on Grace (1916), Covenant (1917), Redemption (1918), Some foundational truths (1919), The Lord Jesus Christ (1922), The atonement (1921), The Holy Ghost (1924), the church and Calvinism (1926), Doctrinal principles (1927). All were typical traditional Calvinistic concerns. A brief change came in 1928.

In 1928 Revd Dr Jan van Lunkhuyzen (1879-1942) addressed the 15th Annual SGU Conference expressing a desire for international cooperation between Calvinists. Van Lunkhuyzen was born in the Netherlands and had pastored churches in Grand Rapids (1918-1928) and the First Christian Reformed Church of Chicago (1918-1928). In 1928, he took up a call to Zierikze, the Netherlands. It seems that he came from the Netherlands to deliver his address. The only details given in the published proceedings were 'Representative from Holland'.

He addressed starting by stressing the need for unity: 'the more unity there is the more cordial and the more complete the cooperation can be'. Unity is found in 'God who elected us' and 'there is unity in the Holy Spirit'. This is the same for all Christians, but Calvinists 'are also united in one Confession of Faith'. He quotes B.B. Warfield's definition of Calvinism with approval: Calvinism is 'the purest form of Christianity'. He then reminds his hearers that Calvin was an 'emblem of International Christianity'. Christians from all over Europe flocked to his theological school in Geneva. He goes on to stress the great need for a united effort among Calvinists:

First, there is the task for the Calvinists of each country to perform for and in their own country. They should band together and form one national Calvinistic league, in order that it may be seen that God has still in that country His people who stand for the old truth. This is indeed giving honour and glory to God for His faithfulness.

He mentions the need to hold to the five points of Calvinism: 'as you have heard'. 'To leave one of these is to embark on the slow slide downwards into Arminianism. He goes on to emphasise the need to be involved in education: '... Christian instruction not only in the home and in the Sunday School, but also in the Weekday School, in the Grammar School.' Then:

'Christian parents should not rest before they have Christian schools for their children! You can never make up for or counteract in one or two hours what is not taught, or wrongly taught on five days of the week.'

In good Kuyperian style, he goes on to stress the sovereignty of God over all:

'God is sovereign, the King of our children. We may not do with them what we like to do; we must acknowledge His sovereignty over them also.

Then we, as Calvinists, have a task to apply these principles to politics, to science, etc., in a word, to every sphere of life. God is sovereign not only in religion, but in every department of human life. This is what Calvinism is for, and for which we have to work together. A mighty task! "Crown Him Lord of all!"'

He concludes with a rallying call:

For that purpose it will be advisable for Calvinists of all nations to band together, and to show to the whole world that there is still, through the Lord's grace, a people left that has not bowed the knee before the Baals of our times! Indeed, such an international league of Calvinists of all countries will give honour to God and His truth over the whole world. And these national leagues of Calvinists, united in one international league, can greatly help, guide, teach and support one another. We have many enemies over against us - Rationalism, indifference, superstition, etc. We have a tremendous struggle.

It's not clear what the SGU made of his Kuyperian call. One thing is certain that is that it was a stepping-stone towards an exploratory visit by the SGU to the Netherlands and to the 1932 International Conference in London.

In the 1928 proceedings van Lunkhuyzen's paper is followed by 'an appeal' by Revd E.C. Unnuck. He responded with: 'I believe his meeting to be of God. Our brother has struck a note identical with my own soul.' His appeal is:

Are there fifty people who will write to the secretary [Atherton] and say, 'Realising that we are face to face with a critically urgent situation, and in imitation of the faithful men at the Diet of Spiers, who were faced with ruin but were true to God, we are prepared to go where you send us, to preach, or do anything on behalf of the cause of sovereign grace in all its glory and beauty?'

I ask, Are there fifty men that will give themselves to that holy purpose?

Atherton, in his General Secretary Address, sends greetings to 'our brethren scattered abroad in various parts of the world'. There is an increasing widening of the scope of the SGU. Greetings are sent to those in the British Empire.

... that Empire was built upon Calvinistic principles by Calvinists, who gave us Calvinistic laws and a Calvinistic throne.

He does lament the fact that no one from Scotland had come and participated. He also sends greeting to Holland. Noting that:

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One year after van Lunkhuyzen's rallying call a number of SGU delegates visited the Netherlands. The 1929 October issue Peace and Truth contained a report, newspaper articles and photographs of the delegation.

Cole, H. B. 1929. ‘The S.G.U. tour in Holland’ 73-75

Unattributed - these were taken from reports in the newspapers

English Calvinists in Holland 77-78

Delft - Rotterdam - Dordrecht

'A trip to Utrecht and its surroundings' 81-82

An impression of Holland 83-85

The SGU delegation visited included The Hague, Delft, Rotterdam, Dordrecht, Leiden, Amsterdam, Volendam, Mersen and Utrecht. The sixteen SGU delegates included: Henry Atherton and his wife, Revd C. D. Pool, Revd Charles Breed, the father of Dr David Hanson.

They were impressed by the ‘vigorous life of the Calvinistic faith’. They attended a Sunday morning service at The Hague, where Revd Barkey Wolf preached from Isa 67:15 Cole notes ‘Of course we were unable to follow his discourse, but our ignorance of the Dutch language did not prevent us from recognising the preacher’s lips … this one brief and typical sentence ‘God is Sovereign,’ and we felt at home.

After the service, they were addressed by Wolf in English. Atherton responded to Wolf by saying that he was sorry he could not speak Dutch. As he would like ‘to read the works of Kuyper in their original language’.

That evening at the Wolfs' home they were introduced to the ‘Misses Kuyper’. Kuyper's daughters both read papers to them one [F. H.] on some important charitable institutions in connection with the Free Reformed Church, and the other [H. S.S.] on the work of the Calvinistic Girls’ Union.

They met with Kuyper’s successor H. Colijn at Kuyper's House in The Hague on 15 August. The meeting was facilitated by van Lunkhuyzen. The SGU members were keen for international collaboration or federation. Their aims were:

1. To bring Calvinists of all countries into closer contact with each other.
2. The propagation of these basic principles by publishing Calvinistic materials.
3. The organization of national and international conferences.
4. Its own publications.

The following were suggested could be involved:

Netherlands: Prof Hepp, Scotland: Prof Maclean, American J. van Lunkhuyzen, Prof Kuizenga, M. Brookstra, Prof L. Berkhoof, H. Beets, Prof S. Volbeda

Professor Kovats from Hungary, Mr Eerdmans, the publisher, are all mentioned by name. There is thus an increasing international focus/ awareness for the SGU. Lecerf certainly had Dooyeweerdian sympathies (he was born in London).
It was hoped to organise a conference in London in mid-September. But this was considered too far too soon. Colijn was keen to broaden the scope of the aims. He suggested:

1. The acceptance of the obviousness of the dangers of Christian faith and practice arising from the growing denial of God's sovereignty.
2. The confession of the full sovereignty of God in every sphere of life and of His Word as a rule of faith and practice.
3. Propaganda principles mentioned in point 2 to combat the dangers mentioned under 1.

The outcome of the meeting was that:

1. one should begin with the formation of national committees;
2. which would be available on the common principles and more clarity be sought by private correspondence;
3. the work of the national committees would be different in different countries;
4. in connection with the still weak expressions of Calvinism in countries like Germany, France, Switzerland, Hungary it should be possible have contact between Britain, the United States and the Netherlands and others for the time being;
5. international cooperation would initially mainly consist in exchanging speakers and holding conferences.

In a letter dated 21 August 1928 Colijn wrote of the meeting: 4

Gentlemen,

I met with Messrs Atherton, Talbot, Wakeley, and Falkner on 15th August.

The result of this discussion will be evident from the

Minutes presented herewith. The Sovereign Grace Union was held at Grove Chapel, Camberwell, London and at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London.

In the Preface to the Conference Proceedings the author(s) write:

For some years past there has been a growing desire on the part of many brethren for some form of international connection for mutual benefit between Calvinists throughout the world. Since 1928, when the Rev. Dr. J. van Lonkhuyzen first addressed a meeting on the subject in London, an extensive correspondence has been conducted by the Sovereign Grace Union with Calvinists in other countries, and thus was prepared the way for the First International Conference of Calvinists, when representatives from eight different countries met and exchanged views.

Delegates from different countries met to consider the possibility of 'formulating a scheme for the ultimate formation of an International Federation of Calvinists'. Those that attended included:

- Prof. G. Besselaar, Ph.D., representing the Calvinistic Bond of South Africa;
- Dr C. Beekenkamp, representing His Excellency, Dr J. Colijn, of the Kuyper School, The Hague, Holland;
- Prof Dr F. W. Grosheide and Prof Dr V. Hopp of the Free University, Amsterdam;
- Pastor W. A. Langenohel, of Dusseldorf, representing the Jung-Reformierte in Germany;
- Prof A. Lecerf, B.D., President of the Société Calviniste de France;
- M. le Pasteur H. Migot, of the French Reformed Church, Brighton;
- Rev. J. Tolland, of the Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church, Belfast, N. Ireland, and the Rev. W. Davye, Secretary, Trinitarian Bible Society, London.

The Sovereign Grace Union was represented by:

- Rev. E. C. Unmack, B.D. (London), D.D. (Donx) who chaired the meeting in the stead of Prof Donald Maclean, and Pastor S. W. White, Vice-President; Mr P. Wakeley, Chairman; Mr E. J. Peacock, Treasurer, and Mr W. B. Burbridge, Secretary.

Numerous others couldn't attend and several sent messages, these included Henry Atherton, Donald Maclean (Scotland), van Lonkhuyzen, (Holland), J. Sebestyen (Budapest), and J. Warren (Ireland).

The following resolution was submitted by the SGU:

The Committee of the Sovereign Grace Union, whilst emphasising its insistence upon a sound doctrinal basis as fundamental to any truly Calvinistic Federation, is of opinion that practical co-operation is immediately possible, and ultimate Federation may be eventually achieved by (i) Official correspondence between Societies of each country; (ii.) The publication annually, by each Society in its own magazine, of a “letter” or report from each of the other Societies co-operating; (iii.) Possible arrangements for further International Conferences in other centres.

The Committee further maintains that each Society shall retain its own individuality and jurisdiction in its own affairs, and shall not be bound by any acts on the part of any other Society.

It was thought that ‘a more definite statement as to the Doctrinal Basis was desirable’. It was agreed unanimously that only those Calvinistic bodies that adhered to the Synod of Dort, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the 39 Articles of the Church of England, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Confession of La Rochelle, or ‘any other recognised National Confession of the Protestant Reformed faith’ could be invited to federate.

It was also suggested that the newly-formed (1929) Evangelical Quarterly could serve the interest of Calvinists throughout the world. Maclean - who was unable to attend as his wife was suddenly taken ill - to chair the meeting - was one of the editors of the Evangelical Quarterly.

The Evangelical Quarterly did in part fulfil the interest of Calvinists. It was the first UK journal to publish a paper on Abraham Kuyper and it published articles by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Articles with a broadly neo-Calvinist approach published before WWII include (these include Waterink 1929, Kolhaus 1920, Kuyper 1921, Vollenhoven 1931, 1922a, b, Stoeker 1932a, b, 1934a, b, 1935, Lecerf 1932, 1933, 1935; Anema 1935).

The South African Reformational philosopher H. G. Stoeker (born Johannesburg) contributed three papers to the Evangelical
Quarterly (EQ) (Stoker, 1932, 1933, 1935). He taught at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Education from 1932 to 1970 and served on the board of the journal Philosophia Reformata from its inception in 1935. Stoker described his brand of Reformational philosophy as the ‘Philosophy of the Creation Idea’ as well as drawing on Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. He was also influenced by Herman Bavinck and V. Hepp. As N.T. Van der Merwe (1993) notes, Stoker’s contribution in South Africa was highly regarded: he was awarded two honorary doctorates, had a full membership on the South African Academy of Science and art and bestowed the Stals Prize for philosophy. He visited the States in 1946 and Canada in 1973.

In ‘The possibility of a Calvinistic philosophy’ (Stoker, 1935) he starts by bemoaning that the ‘philosophical contributions of Calvinists betray that they often — too often — confuse theology and philosophy’ (Stoker 1935:17). He is clear philosophy is not theology and theology is not philosophy: a Christian philosophy must be definitely distinguishable from a Calvinist theology: it should have a ‘domain and task of its own’ (Stoker 1935:17).

That domain according to Stoker is ‘the cosmos as a unique whole and the relation of any particular being to the whole’ (Stoker 1935:19). He identifies questions such as ‘What is the nature of God, what are his attributes? belong to (Stoker 1935:19). He identifies questions such as ‘What is the nature of God, what are his attributes?’ belong to theology (Stoker 1935:19). Though theology and philosophy are distinct they are related. Both ‘accept nature (as far revealed to us in our consciousness) and the Scriptures (as the divine revelation of God) as sources of knowledge’ (Stoker 1935:19-20).

For philosophy to grasp the cosmos as a whole it must do so transcendently (from the outside): As a member of a mob you cannot command a view of it, but the outsider, the bystander, can; human personality is unintelligible from the “view-point” of a blood corpuscle, however much this corpuscle may have travelled through all parts of the human body; the beauty of a painting can never be “enjoyed” by one of its paint-patches. Likewise the ultimate meaning, significance and unity of cosmic reality can never be understood from a mere human viewpoint, i.e. as long as man (as a part of it) views it “from the inside”, from a cosimically immanent standpoint.’ (Stoker, 1935: 20).

This rejection of a transcendent revelation means that an immanent position must be found from within the cosmos. This would then result in an — “cosmically immanent standpoint.” (Stoker, 1935: 20). Consequently, numerous doctoral projects have been published on both Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd’s work, but only one, a critical one, by Malen (1956 in Afrikaans) on Stoker. It is for the above reasons that Stoker’s contribution had little impact in the UK despite the EQ papers.

Calvinistic.

The ‘cosms’ of all immanent philosophies promote some particular principle of reality to the status of a unifying universal principle with the result that the mass as well import of such a principle is unlimitedly exaggerated and even “divinely” idolized, and with a further result that the other and essentially different principles of immanent reality are seen in the light of this mass as well principle, i.e. idolized principle, thus giving a forced and an artificial view of these other principles. This means that all immanent philosophy is in one way or other guilty of subjectifying and falsifying reality (Stoker, 1935:21).

A Calvinistic philosophy is thus possible, Stoker concludes. But not only that it can be genuinely objective in a way in which immanent philosophy can never be. A Calvinistic philosophy will be a transcendent philosophy, and only a transcendent philosophy is able to see the whole of cosmic reality. Sadly, it seems this pre-WWII world II plea for a Calvinistic philosophy went largely unheeded in the UK.

The EQ editor, Maclean had a number of Dutch connections. His opening address at the Free Church College, Edinburgh was on ‘The Influence of Calvin on Scottish Politics’ was translated into Dutch and published in Antirevolutionaire Staatskunde. Igan van de Dr Abraham Kuyerstichting. He also lectured at the VU University, Amsterdam and his lectures were later published as Aspects of Scottish Church History.

Prior to the First International Conference the SGU had been involved with the publication of Kuyper’s Stone Lectures on Calvinism with an introduction by Henry Beets - it was co-published with Eerdmans in April 1932. F.W. Grosheide makes mention of it in his presentation at the First Conference. Following on from the impetus of the First Calvinistic Conference several other International conferences followed. The Second International Conference of Calvinists took place in Amsterdam 29-26 October 1933. The third took place in Geneva (1936) and the fourth in Edinburgh (1938) another in 1948 in Amsterdam and in 1953 at Montpelier that marked the beginning of the International Association for Reformed Faith and Action (IARFA). IARFA was the precursor to WYSOCS (West Yorkshire School of Christian Studies).

Van Lonkhuyzen’s call at the 1938 SGU conference provided the catalyst for the SGU to be involved in pursuing international connections. As we have seen Atherton and others from the SGU visited the Netherlands and the SGU hosted and organised the First International Conference. However, there were other individuals and organisations that were involved in forming international Calvinistic connections. One of the key individuals was Valentin Hepp. Key organisations were the French La Société Calviniste de France (founded 1926), the South African Kerkunie-Nasionale Bond van Kerkunie in South Africa (National Christian Society of Calvinists) (founded in 1929) and the Dutch De Bond van Gereformeerden (Calvinisten) (founded in 1929) and the Dutch De Bond van Gereformeerden (Calvinisten) in Nederland (founded in 1929).

In 1932, Hepp wrote a number of series of articles ‘Cooperation of all Calvinists’ and then in 1935 he proposed an international collaboration of all Calvinistic churches. He suggested that the basis of this cooperation should be Kuyper’s Calvinistic philosophy (de Vries 1976, 407) Unfortunately, because of ecclesiastical problems in the Gereformeerde Kerken Hepp had to delay his proposals and plans. In the meantime van Lonkuyzen in Chicago was also desiring international cooperation. As we have seen it was his visit to the SGU conference that precipitated the First International Conference in London.

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3.3 The Second International Conference of Calvinism (1934), Amsterdam

Tweede Internationale Congres van Gereformeerden (Calvinisten) was held in Amsterdam 23-26 October 1936. Before the conference took place there was controversy. One influential Dutch theologian Klaas Schilder (1900-1952) took exception to the inclusion of Theo Haitjema (1888-1972) as a speaker. Schilder considered him not to be a Calvinist but, by his own admission a sympathiser of Barth (de Vries 1976:413). Schilder wrote to Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, they had been involved in the initial discussions regarding the conference, as a result they both withdrew from involvement, partly because Reformational philosophy would have no place at the conference and partly in solidarity with Schilder over Haitjema’s inclusion (Verburg 2015:179-182).

The subsequent proceedings were published in 1935 by Marinthus Nijhoff. The conference was international and made use of four languages. The papers were published with abstracts in English, Dutch, French and German.

The conference opened in a prayer meeting on the evening of Tuesday 23 October and closed the following Friday. The key theme was the sovereignty of God. Six sessions took this as their title.

PROGRAMME.

TUESDAY OCT. 23RD 1934.
19.30 Prayer Meeting.
21.30 Reception by the Dutch Organization Committee.

WEDNESDAY OCT. 24TH
10.00 First Session. 1. President’s Address. 2. ‘The Sovereignty of God’. Speakers: Prof Dv V. Hepp, Amsterdam, and Prof A. Leeroy, Paris
20.00 Third Session. Communications from various countries on the present situation of Calvinism.

THURSDAY OCT. 25TH
10.00 Fourth Session. ‘The Sovereignty of God and political life’. Speakers: Prof Dr A. Anema, Amsterdam, and Prof Dr I. Bohacec Vienna.

FRIDAY OCT. 26TH
14.00 Closure of the Conference.

By this time the British contingent was reduced, although Maclean was still very much involved. British interest waned until the fourth conference, where the Sets predominated.

3.4 The Third International Conference of Calvinists (1936) Geneva

The Third International Calvinistic Conference (1936) was held in Geneva 15-18 June. Schilder’s fears of an increased Barthian influence in these conferences were confirmed at Geneva.

3.5 The Fourth International Conference of Calvinists (1938) Edinburgh

The fourth International Conference returned to Britain in 1938.

This conference was held in Edinburgh (6-11 July). The proceedings were published by the Congress Executive in 1938. The editorial committee comprised: J. H. S. Burleigh (Edinburgh), W. H. Hamilton (Edinburgh), S. Leigh Hunt (London) and W. Rounsevell (Edinburgh).

The conference was organised by Revd Professor Donald Maclean DD, of the Free Church College, Edinburgh. The Honorary President of the Conference was Revd Daniel Lamont (1869-1950), a professor at New College, Edinburgh from 1927 to 1945 and a Moderator of the Church of Scotland (1936-1937). He was the author of Christ and the World of Thought (Lamont, 1935). (Oliver Barclay - a major protagonist of the Dooyeweerdian perspective in Britain - cites this book as having an initial influence on him (Barclay, 1997:29). Thomas Terrance was likewise influenced by Lamont.)
It is worth examining the aims outlined in the SGU trip to the for Reformed Faith and Action.

perspective in the international conferences continued to but the World War II prevented it happening. The Reformational philosophy tends, particularly by Barthians, to be seen as was antagonistic towards a distinctively Christian philosophy it is more Knox than Kuyper that is the prevalent approach. The movement away from a neo-Calvinist Reformational this country perhaps to an even greater degree, Emil Karl Barth without being labelled Barthian. He, and, in generation provided by the dynamic theology of the life (W. Vischer, Basel)
The inclusion of economics and art at least suggests that a wider consequences to:

To the individual (E. Sebestyen, Budapest; and W. Childs Robinson, USA)

The movement away from a neo-Calvinist Reformational perspective is noticeable. The Barthian influence was less here than at Geneva, nevertheless, in his paper of ‘The Reformed faith and the younger generation’ the Revd David Read remarks: (...) there has been the immense stimulus to our generation provided by the dynamic theology of the Word. I hope I may be allowed to mention the name of Karl Barth without being labelled Barthian. He, and, in this country perhaps to an even greater degree, Emil Brunner, has been a mighty formative - or rather - reformative - influence on the theology of the new age. It is this continuing welcome of the influence of Barth and it is more Knox than Kuyper that is the prevalent approach. The The significance of the Old Testament for the Christian life (W. Vischer, Basel)

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COMPETING INTERESTS

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4 CONCLUSION

It is worth examining the aims outlined in the SGU trip to the Netherlands:

1. To bring Calvinists of all countries into closer contact with each other.
2. The propagation of these basic principles by publishing Calvinist materials.
3. The organization of national and international conferences.
4. Its own publications.

These were in part met: 1 and 4 through the international conferences; the Evangelical Quarterly at least, at first under, went some way to meet aims 2 and 3. However, with perhaps the exception of articles in the Evangelical Quarterly, the influence of neo-Calvinism was slowly waning. The onset of World War II put paid to any more international initiatives. The Barthian turn in some British Reformed circles also did much to tam the views of British Calvinists against neo-Calvinism. Barth had a strong antipathy to Christian scholarship.

It is the post-World War II and post-Barthian period I hope to look at in a subsequent paper.

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