

By no means have I had a dull life¹

Interview with Bob Goudzwaard
Sander Griffioen and Herman Noordegraaf

Tell us something about the environment from which you came?

I was born in Delft in 1934, and I grew up in a reformed, church-going milieu. The house in which I was born² was on the Grote Markt, a short distance from Hugo de Groot's statue. I have come to consider the proximity of both the Town Hall and the New Church a symbol of the space between 'church and state' in which I have lived out the rest of my life. That is how I have come to feel about it ...³

I was the third child. My two brothers were both older than me, one was seven and the other nine. Father and mother were both active socially. My father contributed within the church and in the CNV⁴; in the CNV Delft Branch he was vice-chairman.

Socially, it is noteworthy that my father had come from a needy family, living on the Buitenwatersloot⁵ in Delft. In his youth, he had been offered a place in a secondary school by the head teacher. But very much to the disappointment of my grandparents, they had to decline the offer by telling the head teacher that they could not spare him from the workforce, such was their household income. So my father had no more than primary schooling.

He did, however, very much desire his own children to have the opportunity to study. I always felt supported in my studies by the support given to me by both my father and mother.⁶

I have vivid memories of what life was like during wartime: for instance, there were parachutes descending from the skies, and at the end of the street

¹ Translation by Bruce Wearne (with Google Translation Robot) of Interview "Ik heb bepaald geen saai leven gehad" Herman Noordegraaf en Sander Griffioen (eds) **Bewogen Realisme: Economie, cultuur, oecumene. Bij het afscheid Bob Goudzwaard** Kok, Kampen 1999 pp. 28-43.

² *mijn geboortehuis*

³ *zo voelde ik het wel ...*

⁴ CNV: Christelijke Nationaal Vaakverbond - Christian workers association founded 1909

⁵ A canal between [Delft](#) and [Den Hoorn](#)

⁶ This is significant because it locates Bob's own involvement in secondary education and then in University in an emerging public context in which education has been deemed an important part of the training of the 20th century industrial work-force. The details here, in their own way, confirm that Goudzwaard's magnum opus **Kapitalisme en Vooruitgang** (initially published 1976 with later editions in 1979 and 2024) were also intensely personal reflections by which the author gave expression to his insight about the structure and direction of his own education. His study of economics was also part of the disclosure of personal understanding about the culture in which he lived. Hence the subtitle of the English translation: "a diagnosis of western society" (1979), "western society and the faith it professes" (1997).

a cannon had been set up for the defence of Ypenburg. Mother fully devoted herself to meeting the needs of her children during the 'hunger winter';⁷ when we depended on the soup kitchen and there was not much more than one sandwich a day, she clearly put the children first.

My mother also went out regularly with a cart. On one of those trips, she ended up in Bergschenhoek and from H. J. Schilder, (1916-1984) - who was to become known from the Vrijmaking secession, Klaas Schilder being his uncle⁸ - she was directed to addresses where she could obtain provisions.⁹

Father had started out as a printer's apprentice and remained faithful to the printing trade; upon retirement, he had risen to the position of company manager at his printing firm in The Hague. In Delft, he was responsible for printing the Delft newspaper.

During the war, he printed the illegal magazine ***Houdt Stand*** (*Hold Your Ground*).¹⁰ I regularly went out to deliver this magazine. I will never forget the time when, with my '***Houdt Standjes***', I had to cross a small bridge and squeeze around a stout German soldier who was standing there in the middle of it. Having passed, I did not dare to turn around to look back. On another occasion, my eldest brother narrowly avoided being caught: he had to run down the street's embankment to disappear down a side street.

And then there were the ecclesiastical tensions ...

Indeed. My father was suspended as an elder in 1944. Almost automatically, the family became members of a congregation of the Liberated Reformed Churches,¹¹ which had emerged locally. My parents felt that Klaas Schilder (1890-1952) had been treated unfairly by the Synod.¹² They considered that a church elite had sidelined him. I also suspect that their support for Schilder had much to do with the fact that he had served in Delft. My eldest brother had been baptised by him, and so he was no stranger to our house.

⁷ The Dutch famine of 1944-1945.

⁸ The reference here is to a serious split in the Dutch Reformed churches during wartime that resulted in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt) from 1944, the so-called Article 31 churches.

⁹ From this we can infer that this time was of danger nearby. Klaas Schilder was hunted by the Germans.

¹⁰ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/23/PDF_of_De_Ondergrondse_Pers_1940-1945_-_derde_druk_-_1989.pdf . Reference to **Houdt Stand** says this: (trans) ***Houdt Stand; Dagblad voor Zuid-Holland*** was a World War II resistance newspaper published in Delft from 3 February 1945 to 5 May 1945. The magazine was published daily in a circulation of 500 copies. It was printed and its content consisted mainly of news items and opinion articles. Bob was 11 at the time.

¹¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_Churches_in_the_Netherlands_\(Liberated\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_Churches_in_the_Netherlands_(Liberated)) that came about in 1944 out of the so-called Liberation (*Vrijmaking*).

¹² This was the Dutch Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland or GKN, the denomination from which the *Vrijgemaakt* had seceded.

Especially for my mother, the *Vrijgemaakt* liberation had a profound impact: her circle of acquaintances and friends simply evaporated. My father also had problems with the one-sided church perspective of many of the *Vrijgemaakt* members. That meant that when, in 1957, the General Synod¹³ declared the suspensions of 1944 were to be lifted, they ‘returned’ to the GKN. That is how they would refer to it.

What were important elements in your further education?

In 1946, we moved to The Hague, where I was a student at the Hogere Burgerschool¹⁴ on Populierstraat. I look back upon it as a good school in terms of academic education, but it was not so good in the way its students were treated: we were called by our surnames!

But some teachers made a big impact: I think of Mr Vlaskamp the English teacher: he was strict but generous. I took my HBS-A¹⁵ final exams, and so economics became an obvious choice for my studies thereafter because I was rather reluctant to study mathematics and physics.

And that is how I ended up in Rotterdam, as a commuting student.¹⁶ In my circles, the Vrije Universiteit was talked about a lot,¹⁷ but my parents evidently thought I was still a bit too young to become independent. So I stayed in Rotterdam and that also had to do with the advice given to me by the well-known professor of Calvinist philosophy, Johan Mekkes (1898-1987).¹⁸ In my second year, I even asked him whether I would not be better off going to the VU. With conviction, he advised me to stay in Rotterdam; he felt I could better arm myself spiritually by staying put in Rotterdam, rather than by enrolling at the VU.

Among the Liberated ‘Vrijgemaakt’ student members of the VSGR (the Rotterdam Association of Reformed Students), attendance at the lectures of

¹³ Presumably, that was the Synod of the GKN.

¹⁴ Hogere Burgerschool - the “public high school”. This school existed across The Netherlands from 1863 until 1974. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hogere_Burgerschool. In this context it is notable to have been the legislated creation of the parliamentarian Johan Thorbecke (1798-1872) and was not intended as preparation for university. Thorbecke was liberal opponent of Mr G Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876).

¹⁵ HBS-A. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_the_Netherlands for an overview of the Dutch public education system.

¹⁶ Dutch: *spoorstudent*

¹⁷ As an interview coinciding with his interview, Goudzwaard is addressing the fact that his under-graduate studies (1951-1957) and graduate education were as a student of the University of Rotterdam.

¹⁸ From 1947 Mekkes had been appointed to a Chair in Calvinist Philosophy at Rotterdam University, established by a special foundation that had been set up to establish such chairs across the country. See relevant paragraphs https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformational_philosophy

Professor Mekkes was considered vital for our growth.¹⁹ I slid into the couch,²⁰ not knowing what to expect at first. But, right from the outset, the man in charge fascinated me. To me, he was the intellectual who took the scientific tradition seriously and he wanted to impress upon us students the need to take our religious position seriously within it. Mekkes has ever since remained important for me. The same can also be said of one of his students, Hans Rookmaaker (1922-1977), who would later become the Vrije Universiteit art historian. He had become a Christian in captivity under Mekkes' influence.²¹ Rookmaaker would also become a good friend.

Mekkes made an impression upon me. He was fully and personally at home in the tradition of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea (PCI), but took distance from any overly academic elaboration of it. The motif of 'opening up'²² was particularly strong in his teaching. It actually runs through to today in my own work.

What I learned was that science, as one of the dimensions of our human reality, had, as it were, its own distinctive colour, is always in the force-field between tendencies to either open it up, on the one hand or, keeping it strictly within bounds, on the other.²³ An example may help: when a 'restrictive' vision²⁴ is held it implies viewing an enterprise as merely a place where

¹⁹ The VGSR was the Christian student association of Rotterdam founded 1950 as the Vereniging van Gereformeerde Studenten te Rotterdam.

²⁰ "Sliding into the couch" (*Ik schoof in de bank*) seems to suggest an initial passivity, "going with the flow"?

²¹ Linette Martin **Hans Rookmaaker** Hodder & Stoughton 1979.

²² For Goudzwaard, "disclosure" "unlocking" are key Dutch concepts - "openbaring", "ontsluiting", - and have a very important place in Goudzwaard's lingual armory.

²³ Dutch: *altijd in het spanningsveld staat van ontsluitende en restrictieve tendensen*. This is Goudzwaard's view of Mekkes' view of the resistance of the cosmic law-order to the effort to abstractively identify the meaning of one aspect within the coherence of meaning of all modal aspects. Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique requires ongoing exposition and explanation of this point. We read here Goudzwaard's view, derived from Mekkes, of the same crucial philosophical-critical point (i.e. basic to **A New Critique of Theoretical Thought**, "taking distance from an overly academic exposition" (Dutch: *al te schoolse*). The particular modal aspect is never separated from the other modal aspects and yet it is in the investigation and "opening up" of this non-separability that the scientific question arises about the empirical reality under examination.

In answer to the question: *By what characteristics is scientific thought distinguished from prescientific thought?* Dooyeweerd gives the following answer:

*Without doubt it is characterized by a specific attitude in which we create a theoretic distance between the logical aspect of our thought and the non-logical aspect of our field of study. This attitude produces an antithetical relation in which the logical aspect of our thought is opposed to non-logical aspects of reality. In this antithetical relation the non-logical aspect opposes a resistance to every effort of our understanding to comprehend it in a logical concept. From this theoretic antithesis arises the scientific problem. See **Transcendental Problems of Philosophical Thought** Eerdmans 1948 p.19. The key phrase is "opposes a resistance".*

The question asked by Griffioen and NoordeGraaf is a crucial one for discerning the contribution of Bob Goudzwaard's economics to reformational scholarship.

²⁴ Dutch: *restriktief denken en handelen*

certain goods and services are produced at a specific price, and so everything normative is to such an extent 'flattened' because everything revolves around making a profit and earning money.²⁵

Is it true that the term 'flattened', which often comes to mind, is a translation for what Mekkes and Dooyeweerd called 'restrictive'?²⁶

Certainly. Something is 'flattened' when it does not open up to the other dimensions of reality:²⁷ politics in a flattened sense is power play, just as sexuality is flattened when the response of love is lacking. Both examples show a failure in opening up to reach their respective destinations.

These were things that strongly fascinated me.

Later, Bernard Zylstra, my Canadian friend, would refer to the 'answer structure of reality.'²⁸

Therefore, in the long run, the way the mainstream academic visions characterised the economic aspect of reality, could not satisfy me and I had to return to the original meaning of *oikonomia*: what I later called 'caring management'.²⁹ I think that is a better term than Dooyeweerd's resolution of this concept as 'value-conscious frugality'.³⁰

²⁵ Goudzwaard is referring to Dooyeweerd's 'theory of social individuality structures' and his use of the term 'within bounds' (*restrictieve tendensen*), would seem to suggest a view in which the full empirical reality of an individuality structure is reduced by an 'over scholarly elaboration' (see comments on the Mekkes approach above) of a structure that is analyzed in an over-rigorous manner so that its 'leading function', abstractly conceived, is presumed to cover the entire meaning of the entire structure, rather than being an important concept for 'opening up' that structure's meaning in a theoretical or philosophical sense.

²⁶ For a discussion of 'restrictive' (Dutch: *restriktief*) see the section "Wat is Normaal in het Sociaal-Economische leven?" from H. Algra et.al. **Wat is Normaal?** Bosch & Keuning N.V. Baarn 1974 pp.20-33, at page 27: *The second form of abnormality that I wish to discuss - and it will often arise from an 'ism' - is a restrictive way of thinking and acting. By restrictive thinking and acting I mean that thinking and acting, in which any disclosure falls away, in which our doings (ons doen) in social relations - e.g. in the enterprise - are reduced, folded back to a number of 'lower' characteristics or aspects.*

²⁷ Implicit is the Mekkes/Goudzwaard avoidance of a reductionistic application of Dooyeweerd's 'general theory of modal aspects'. 'Flattened' (*afgeplat*) is what happens when abstract conceptualisation of an aspect fails **as an abstract concept** to function as part of the 'opening up' of meaning of the other aspects and of their concepts related to these other modal aspects.

²⁸ This is perhaps related to the quote from the Harvard philosopher Susan K Langer concerning the way a philosophical movement is characterised by the questions it asks rather than the answers that it gives. This is in the opening paragraphs of the published lecture of Zylstra's Calvin College philosophy professor H Evan Runner, "Scientific and Pre-Scientific" Lecture IV, **The Relation of the Bible to Learning** 3rd edn 1970 pp.87-129 at p.94. This also indicates the close relationship between the scholarly movement in The Netherlands and North America which would later be expressed with Goudzwaard's contribution.

²⁹ *zorgzaam beheer*

³⁰ *waarden afwegende besparing* - 'frugal distribution attentive to scarcity.' The discussion here is dense, in need of further elaboration. Goudzwaard is concerned that his contribution to 'caring management economics', by means of its philosophical relationship with Dooyeweerd's philosophy, is going to make sense to those schooled within mainstream economics, even if he is in dissent from their basic 'flattening' ideas. See his 1971 article "Economie Tussen Afbraak en Doorbraak: Verleden en Toekomst van een Gesloten Wereldbeeld" *Philosophia Reformata* 36e 1971 pp.43-54.

Tell us something about your time as a student?

The years I studied economics were possibly the best years of the economics faculty in Rotterdam. There was H.W. Lambers,³¹ with his sparkling lectures; he was an economist who felt most at home within institutional economics.³² We had H.J. Witteveen,³³ who would later be Minister of Finance, who paced back and forth on the lecture podium, totally forgetting us, but not his subject matter; he was a teacher of high quality. And I shouldn't forget L.M. Koyck,³⁴ who died early.

I started taking the econometrics lectures of Jan Tinbergen,³⁵ having come to believe that econometrics was on the front line, and so I just had to face up to my lack of training in mathematics.³⁶ I never regretted it, because Tinbergen was a committed economist! His lectures were not that sparkling, but they were nevertheless challenging; he always gave a constructive and systematic argument for what he was setting forth.

Tinbergen was also always keen on dialogue with students. He was used to us asking questions during his lectures. When I said to him, on one such occasion, that things were getting too difficult for me, he said he had noticed this in others as well, as he encouraged me to come to him with questions. He took an hour to answer them, scribbling his answers in the margin of my questions. I have rarely seen a less vain man.

When Tinbergen was awarded the Golden Quill³⁷ in the late 1980s (1985), I was privileged to give the keynote presentation speech in the ceremony at the Peace Palace. It occurred to me then, that he considered me his disciple. And from this relationship,³⁸ my kinship developed with Harry de

³¹ <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/about/history-and-academic-heritage/honorary-doctorates/henk-lambers> Lambers was editor of *Economisch-Statistische Beried* (E-S.B) which published Goudzwaard's articles.

³² https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Institutional_economics Institutionalism is concerned with how social institutions and social systems constrain economic behaviour.

³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johan_Witteveen

³⁴ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46434128_On_the_econometrics_of_the_Koyck_model

³⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Tinbergen Goudzwaard is here reckoning with the fact that his standing within the discipline of economics had much to do with his Rotterdam teachers. He does not deny that he is Tinbergen's student, with an emphasis upon the development of scholarship, the disclosure of science as our understanding of God's world, tied to the relationship of teacher to student.

³⁶ See above where he says he took economics rather than mathematics. "*I was rather reluctant to study mathematics and physics, so economics was the obvious choice study.*" His irony shines through here, and he is not afraid of mentioning that he had discovered that his outlook needed correction.

³⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gouden_Ganzenveer

³⁸ Dutch: *lijn* - in the sense of personal connection.

Lange³⁹ who, from the very beginning of our friendship was Tinbergen's secretary at the Central Planning Bureau.

In 1957, I completed my studies with a doctoral thesis on causality.⁴⁰ The investigation was inspired by Mekkes; I believed that here was a topic to 'open up' investigation. It was about normative-economic causality vis-à-vis the common mechanistic views of 'calculating'. Even then, I was wondering where the human beings are when the statistical averages are calculated: I had an suspicion that they were to be hidden somewhere in the "margins for error".⁴¹ The averages can hide human choices and decisions. The actual question, I felt, is that of the 'who': who is it that decides economically? In mainstream thinking, this 'who' becomes something of a ghost.

As an example of such thinking, the philosopher J. A. de Sopper,⁴² in **Dwaalwegen** (*Wandering Ways*), uses as an example, the view of an egg that has been reduced to all kinds of building materials, so that what makes the egg a living egg is reduced to being a kind of ghost. But, of course, the question is whether that is the appropriate way to look at an egg.⁴³

I was interested in how, for example, a stimulus⁴⁴ as experienced in a company, a family, or a trade union movement can lead to certain trade-offs within those social entities and households that can subsequently form the basis of an economic reaction.

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- ³⁹ Goudzwaard's associate writer in **Beyond Poverty and Affluence: toward and economy of care** Eeerdmans & WCC 1995. This was a translation from *Genoeg van te Veel, Genoeg van te Weinig: Wissels omzetten in de economie* (Enough of too much - enough of too little) 1986. There has also been a Canadian version co-published in 1995 University of Toronto Press. **Beyond Poverty and Affluence: toward a Canadian economy of care.** Harry de Lange was professor of economics at the University of Utrecht. https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_de_Lange
- ⁴⁰ This is what is known as the 'doctorandus thesis' - the formulation of an argument that demonstrates that the student is capable of undertaking Doctoral-level studies. Was this the basis for his article "De economische theorie en de normatieve aspecten der werkelijkheid" (in: W K van Dijk et.al **Perspectief. Feestbundel van de jongeren bij het 25 jarig bestaan van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte** Kampen pp. 310-323)?
- ⁴¹ "... ik had een intuïtie dat die dan in de storingsterm van de vergelijking terecht komen." Further examples of his thinking at this time can be found in "Zuivere en onzuivere maatstaven bij economische beleid" in *Economische Statistische Berichten*, 24 April, 1963.
- ⁴² <https://mjaalders.nl/a-j-de-sopper-een-biografische-schets/> De Sopper is also mentioned by Marcel E Verburg **Herman Dooyeweerd: the life and work of a Christian philosopher** 2015 p.438 ftn.75.
- ⁴³ Dutch: *De filosoof J.A.deSopper, in Dwaalwegen, gebruikt als voorbeeld een ei dat herleid wordt tot allerlei bouwstoffen, zodat wat het ei tot een levend ei maakt, tot een soort van spookje wordt teruggebracht.* As is often experienced with reading Goudzwaard's formulations, one needs to slowly consider them, phrase by phrase. The truly interesting point here is the way he relates the "ghostly who" to the "living egg". The living *biotic* egg may have been reduced to the physico-chemical building blocks - but the egg is a "*living egg*". The "ghostly mystery" is not only how the fertilized egg becomes a chicken - miracle enough - but also of the "who" is disclosed from the union of male and female humans.
- ⁴⁴ Dutch: *een impuls*

This was my attempt to open up the concept of causality in economics. Lambers appreciated it, but did not develop it much further.

But Mekkes sent me an encouraging note in which he said that if your work doesn't bring much appreciation, it may be that that is because I was on a path I would now have to take up.⁴⁵

Did you then have any idea of what you wanted to do after university studies?

First came military service, which I spent mainly as an ensign attached to the Bureau of Business Statistics and that was at the Eindhoven Air Base. Little of note happened. I didn't have that much to do, and so I took the opportunity to do a lot of study: for example, that was when I read all of Dooyeweerd.

In 1959, after my time of service, two options were open to me. One job offer was to Philips where I could take up a position as an econometrician. And the other job offer came from Johan Prins, director of the Kuyper Foundation, the scientific bureau of the Anti-revolutionaire Partij.⁴⁶

My father would have liked me to choose the former, because then my future would have been assured. But my heart was really with the latter, even though the financial prospects were not as great.

According to Prins, the Kuyper Foundation staff urgently needed the assistance and guidance that could be provided by an economist; the party was not doing that well. And back then, this Foundation did not have the influence that scientific institutes have today. To be employed as a researcher meant you were to be considered as a glorified secretary who wrote reports.

Early on, I had developed an interest in politics. I suspect this came mainly from my mother and conversations at home: I was strongly concerned with the question of what constitutes responsible or Christian politics.

You can still find my first-year speech in the annals of the students' union, the VGSR, because they had presented me with the impossible topic: *Anti-Revolutionary politics and Me in the light of history*.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ In the original published version of the interview the previous 4 paragraphs in this translation were all contained in one paragraph. A dense logic is at work that is not easy to grasp. Rudi Hayward has said that Goudzwaard needs to be read slowly. After re-reading this a few times, the example of DeSoppe's 'egg' in mind, it seems that Goudzwaard's point is that a 'restriktief' economic analysis can be overcome by noting how, as if from unanticipated impulses, economic life reverberates to be shaped by responsible human choices within families, companies, businesses and trade unions. And with "responsibility" we note the earlier connection to creation's "answer-structure".

⁴⁶ Anti-Revolutionaire Partij: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Revolutionary_Party

⁴⁷ Rotterdam Association of Reformed Students. Title in Dutch: "*de anti-revolutionaire politiek en ik in het licht van de geschiedenis*."

The Kuyper Foundation has been an important period for you?

I was interviewed at the Kuyper Foundation by Jan Schouten, chairman of the Lower House faction of the ARP, who wanted to know whether I had been a member of a party's youth association, as well as what I thought about the work of T.P. van der Kooy,⁴⁸ professor of economics at the VU.

It was nevertheless an important period,⁴⁹ extremely formative for my further development. I enjoyed it, especially because we worked as a team.

W. C. D. Hoogendijk, the other colleague besides Prins, was close to Mekkes. Later, he distanced himself from the PCI.⁵⁰ Initially, we thought deductively: from foundational terms, we tried to *design* responsible politics. We thought endlessly about basic terms like public justice. This led to a certain impasse. The issue was actually about how far theoretical thinking reaches. Later, we realised that philosophical-political reflection on foundational terms should not pretend to take precedence. Instead, the terms find their strength by giving due respect to what is prior to theory, what is already taking place.⁵¹

As a result, I came to give more attention to a spirituality that is involved in the immediacies of questions being raised in society, just like I would later find room to become involved ecumenically. With attention to concrete questions of society, the possibility of testing ideologies also emerges, in regard to how society gets entangled when means become ends and take on a religious meaning. Is it not noteworthy that in the three thick volumes of

⁴⁸ T. P. van der Kooy is referred to in **Capitalism and Progress** 1979 p.65 ftn.30. See his article "Methodologie der economie en christelijke wijsbegeerte" *Philosophia Reformata* 40,1975 pp.1-32.

⁴⁹ Dutch: *het werd niettemin een belangrijke periode*. What is conveyed here by "niettemin" nevertheless. Does it suggest Bob is referring to a vetting process to discover whether the applicant was "sound" - i.e. as a Rotterdam graduate rather than one from the Vrije Universiteit? Refer below the reference to "ideology" ftn.52.

⁵⁰ *Later werd de afstand wat groter tot de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*.

⁵¹ This is consistent with what Goudzwaard sets forth in other discussions when giving a retrospective account of what he had been doing. See e.g., "What is Normal in Social-Economic Life?" in H. Algra et.al. **Wat is Normaal?** Bosch & Keuning N.V. Baarn 1974 pp.20-33 at p.23: (trans: *During my time at the Kuyper Foundation, I was busy in the development of towering structures that were intended to give an explanation, as precisely as it was possible to give, of what could be called normal in state and society. But the strange thing now, as I look back, is that all such concern is but a pedantic worry and relatively fruitless. Why? Because, if I understand the Bible correctly, all of God's norms for our lives are much more direct, simple and disarming than we will usually refer to them as we try to formulate a plan for the way ahead in some way or other. God's commandment, His standard, is not as far from us as we tend to think: No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.* (NRSV Deut 30:14). Also **A Christian Political Option** 1972 Chapter V "The Unique Radicality of the Gospel" (pp.25-30) has discussion of the futile search for "derived principles" pp.26-27. A footnote 6 p. 27 reads "Those who believe that truly scriptural principles for the State can be obtained solely from explicit Biblical texts, base their beliefs on a completely wrong view of scripture. They merely see words, but forget that God's Word is Spirit and Power, and that this Word has to bear upon all of life...." See here also Herman Dooyeweerd **Roots of Western Culture** 1979, "Biblicism" pp. 58-59.

Dooyeweerd's **A New Critique of Theoretical Thought**, the term 'ideology' is used only once?⁵²

I was reading Bonhoeffer at the time and learnt from him that Christianity can be brought together in order to actualise its confession.⁵³ Therefore, his ethics too are different from an ethics that would be derived from the PCI, and that by starting from situations in which choices must be made, to then focus upon the path to actualisation.⁵⁴

How did the transition from the Kuyper foundation to the ARP parliamentary group take place?

From 1965, I became a staff member assigned to the ARP parliamentary group attached to group leader Bauke Roolvink (1912-1979).⁵⁵ In that capacity, I was present in 1966 to experience the 'night of Schmelzer', the night when the Cals cabinet fell.⁵⁶ I happened to be in the back seat of the car behind Roolvink and Schmelzer on the afternoon before that fateful night. They exchanged each other's motions, in order that they could avoid being played off against each other in the debate. So Schmelzer in fact tabled a motion that came from Roolvink. The fact that the ARP did not see that the motion it had itself submitted was a vote of no confidence (as did happen

⁵² This is an observation that needs further explanation. It relates to the absence of Karl Marx and Marxist philosophy in **New Critique**, with neo-Kantian philosophy dominating Dooyeweerd's 1920s philosophical development. Besides this is not strictly true. The term is not found in Vol.1 of the *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, once in Vol.2 and 11 times in Vol.3. In the translation it is found 3 times in Vol.1 pp.252-3, once in Vol.2 p.264 and many times in Volume 3.

⁵³ Dutch: *en leerde van hem dat de christenheid gegroepen kan zijn om te komen tot een actualisering van haar belijden.*

⁵⁴ The full consequences of what he is suggesting in this cryptic statement are not immediately apparent. Could it be that he was suggesting that a 'Biblicist' method with respect to the Scriptures was carried over within the ARP by a search to 'derive' ethical principles from the text of Dooyeweerd's philosophy? Might he be saying that among the PCI adherents a 'restrictive' view prevails? Does not such an outlook constrict human choice in the 'here and now' as the Christian task is construed in terms of 'developing towering structures'? Note also the earlier reference to Mekkes "taking distance from any overly scholarly elaboration" of the PCI" pp.4-5 and ftns 22 and 27 p.5. And what is to be understood by his reference to Bonhoeffer's impact upon him "that Christian public profession can be grouped (BCW: I have translated it above as 'brought together' or maybe 'consolidated') in order to make a public profession." Bob was also alert to the declension from professing Christianity as it ought to be actualised should it become restricted (nb) to a 'Christian pillar'. Reference is made by him to his friendship with Harry de Lange, from a remonstrant background.

⁵⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bauke_Roolvink

⁵⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Night_of_Schmelzer This is a detailed account of the fall of the Cals Government. Hans-Martien ten Napel gives an account of this on behalf of the CDA, tracking how it was formative in its ecumenical formation in 1980, in his 1992 book '[Een eigen weg' De totstandkoming van het CDA](#) (1952-1980) and with special attention in pp.112-117. Ten Napel indicates that this was also an important historical moment in the way parliamentary party-politics would be configured thereafter. We read here Bob's account of how his own understanding also for his work as an economics scholar was developing (i.e. being 'disclosed') in relation to other responsibilities that he had and the relationships he formed when he was involved in law-making in Parliament. This part of the interview conveys the sense of important changes in the way party-politics was being configured within the Dutch parliament.

with the KVP motion) was thanks to an addition I had suggested in group consultations.⁵⁷

However, I did not want to be co-responsible for the cabinet's fall, so I did my utmost to think of something to suggest that could be constructive. When asked for my opinion, I suggested "with the cabinet" be included to read "... with the cabinet of the opinion that there has been a decline in the health of state finances...". This, more or less, was the amended sentence, an addition that helped make the Roolvink motion acceptable to Prime Minister Cals.

I suspect that both Roolvink and Schmelzer wanted the cabinet to fall, paving the way for a coalition with the VVD⁵⁸. It was well known that Roolvink thought that it was a waste of time to debate who to choose between the PvdA⁵⁹ or VVD as coalition partners. But within the party, not everyone was happy with this position. However, I do have positive memories of him. There was something worthily paternal about him. And he was also a simple man. It sometimes happened that a speech I had written for him contained something about a subject about which he knew only a little, or even nothing at all, but that didn't faze him. I couldn't help laughing when I just had to sit there and listen as he prepared for his speech in the Chamber, reciting them aloud in his room in the Lower House. Then, as it happened, Van der Sluis, the ARP party secretary, would come by and say to him:: "Bauke, you need to pull out more organ stops at this point!"

And then chamber membership soon followed?

Wiert Berghuis (1911-1989)⁶⁰, then chairman of the ARP, had read my report on the political problem of the distribution of population across the Netherlands. It caused him to wonder out loud whether this was worthy of a parliamentary seat.

⁵⁷ From what Goudzwaard tells us, in his characteristic 'cryptic' style, is that he was 'in the thick of' a most important event that has had an enduring impact upon the shape of Dutch parliamentary party politics. This is the view also of Hans-Martien ten Napel *op cit* pp.12-13 notes: *There are various versions of the exact course of events and the background to the events of 13 to 14 October 1966. Here it will suffice to say that Schmelzer's night, in retrospect, marks a turning point in post-war Dutch politics. It brought the party system into the spotlight. In the PvdA, the New Left, founded in the late summer of 1966, had stirred up the discussion. In this context, an important impulse also came from the new Democrats '66 (D'66) party, while the popularity of the Farmers' Party (BP) also showed discontent.* (trans). In a footnote he writes: *For the positions of Schmelzer and Cals respectively, see G. Puchinger, **Christen en secularisatie** (Delft 1968) 268,282-283; Idem, *Hergroepering der partijen*, 495-506. See also J. de Vries, **Grondpolitiek en kabinetcrises** (PhD dissertation Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden; n.p. 1989) 91-99; H.A.C.M. Notenboom, **De val van het Kabinett-Cals. De financiële politiek van de Katholieke Volkspartij in de parlementairetermijn 1963-1967** (The Hague 1991).*

⁵⁸ VVD: Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie - The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy. It is a classic liberal, free market party.

⁵⁹ PvdA: Partij van den Arbeid - Labour Party

⁶⁰ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Wiert_Berghuis

But before I go into my parliamentary experience, I should first list some of the reports I prepared. There was a report for the Meynen committee, on the question of industrial co-determination, but that was torpedoed by the veto of Marinus Ruppert (1911-1992)⁶¹, and so remained in the drawer. Ruppert felt that the employee participation advocated therein had not been regulated sufficiently. A shame really, because it could have had an impact.⁶²

I have fond memories of contributing to the pleasant collaboration of the Report on Economic Policy and Competition of Jelle Zijlstra⁶³, presented to the European Commission (Brussels 1966).⁶⁴ Zijlstra's memoirs referred to my contribution. My contribution was well received, not least because it was the first report to spell out policy for the desired economic order for Europe.

In parliament, during the De Jong⁶⁵ cabinet, I worked well with parliamentary ARP group chairman Biesheuvel.⁶⁶ My membership of the chamber became one of the most fascinating periods of my life, but it was tough at home - especially because I was so often pre-occupied with the parliamentary work in the evenings. At Biesheuvel's request, Hannie van Leeuwen⁶⁷ sometimes even stepped in at our home.

The Chamber was one of the most fascinating meeting places in the Netherlands.⁶⁸ I had long conversations with Marcus Bakker,⁶⁹ of the CPN,⁷⁰ because I wanted to know what drove that man to choose the communist way.

⁶¹ <https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q1919932>

⁶² Bob saw its potential for influencing the emerging coalition Government policy, but also as a way of confirming the ARP's appeal to those who were *employees*.

⁶³ Jelle Zijlstra (1918-2001) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jelle_Zijlstra

⁶⁴ Zijlstra, Jelle and Goudzwaard, Bob (1966), **Economische politiek en concurrentieproblematiek in de EEG en de lidstaten** (Economic Policy and Competition Problems in the EC and the Member States), Serie Concurrentie, Brussel. See also Goudzwaard's 1959 article, his initial piece for *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatskunde* which was published shortly after he became public-policy researcher for the Dr. A. Kuyper Stichting, "De economische politiek en het conjunctuur-vraagstuk", *ARS* jrg-29, 264-285.

⁶⁵ Piet De Jong, (1915-2016). See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Jong_cabinet

⁶⁶ Barend Willem Biesheuvel (1920-2001) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barend_Biesheuvel

⁶⁷ Hannie van Leeuwen (1926-2018) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannie_van_Leeuwen A female member of the Dutch Lower House (1966-1978) and then as a Senator from 1995-2007.

⁶⁸ BCW note: What is significant in Bob's account here is not only his stress upon his ecumenical involvement but also his *sociological* insights of how appointment to the Chamber 'opened up' as 'one of the most fascinating meeting places' and here he is explaining in his interview how his subsequent involvements in promoting an economy of care, with a range of Christian groups, had begun to be disclosed from his parliamentary involvement. But also family friendships developed.

⁶⁹ Marcus Bakker (20 June 1923 – 24 December 2009) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Bakker

⁷⁰ CPN: Communistische Partij Nederland

Likewise with the Van Dis of the SGP.⁷¹ Via the KVP⁷² financial expert Harrie Notenboom,⁷³ I got in touch with St Paul's Abbey in Oosterhout,⁷⁴ to which his brother belonged. Since then, from time to time, I have been a visitor.

Because I held the finance portfolio, I often had to deal with VVD minister Johan Witteveen,⁷⁵ my former teacher; a somewhat curious situation which, as a matter of fact, he handled very well. Now, of course, the relationship had become quite different, and there were no problems.

Halfway through my membership of parliament, in 1969, I wrote **Grote taak voor kleine mensen**⁷⁶ - the title came from Anton Veerman,⁷⁷ on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the ARP. You can already see lines merging here: the influence of Dooyeweerd, but also that of ecumenism.

Those years were an era when co-operation in aid and development was just beginning. In 1970, I visited India for an inter-parliamentary conference in New Delhi. I have never lost the image of poverty in old Delhi, while I was staying in a hotel with a swimming pool. On that occasion, I was also able to make a breathtaking trip to a leper home at the foot of the Himalayas, run by the Save a Child Foundation.⁷⁸ That visit was made possible because Mrs Rookmaaker was active in that foundation.

Didn't the discussion on party renewal also get under way during the parliamentary period?

⁷¹ SGP: Staatskundig Gereformeerde Partij - Reformed Political Party. Cornelis Nicolas (Cor) van Dis (jnr) (1923-1994) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_Political_Party

⁷² KVP: Katholieke Volkspartij - Catholic People's Party [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katholieke_Volkspartij_\(Nederland\)](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katholieke_Volkspartij_(Nederland))

⁷³ <https://archives.eui.eu/en/isaar/925>

⁷⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Paul%27s_Abbey,_Oosterhout

⁷⁵ https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johan_Witteveen Johan Witteveen (1921-2019) was involved in Jan Tinbergen's Central Planning Bureau.

⁷⁶ This would be translated into English as **A Christian Political Option** 1972. <https://tukampendatastore.blob.core.windows.net/neocalvinism/allofliferedeemed/Goudzwaard/BG10.pdf> From this interview and Bob's other accounts of the social context in which he wrote this book, we gain deepened understanding of his view of what Jurgen Habermas has dubbed 'deliberative democracy'. Bob was committed to ongoing deliberation on all sides, even as we note his contact with SGP a 'testifying parties' https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_Political_Party with no interest in forming a coalition government with other parties.

⁷⁷ https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoon_Veerman Antoon Veerman is also said to have coined the name for the 'ecumenically' combined Christian Democratic Appel (CDA) party. At this point Bob goes on to explain how **Grote taak voor Kleine Mensen** was also midstream in ecumenical efforts in the ARP seeking a credible *actualisation* of a Christian political confession as he will go on to reiterate. (see ftn.51 above and ftn.81 below)

⁷⁸ <https://www.saveachildfoundation.org/about-us/>

Biesheuvel asked me to join the ‘Eighteen’⁷⁹: an initial exploratory body consisting of six representatives from the ARP, six from the KVP and six from the CHU.⁸⁰ Van Niftrik was on it for the CHU, Erik Jurgens from the KVP. I was one of the youngest, but these were people with whom I had close relationships. The fascinating thing was that the word ‘pragmatism’ would not have belonged there. It was to be a party of integrity. Intensification of existing cooperation was being considered but, at that stage, it was certainly not about a merger. Merger only came into the picture later, in the deliberations within the Contact Council, the successor to the Eighteen.⁸¹

Then Hendrik Algra, the ARP senator,⁸² entered into the discussion. He would say: “the whole thing hangs on the wall with one loose nail” as he gave his opinion that the Council had no more a common basis than a vague shared sense of ‘being addressed’ by the Gospel. I found his image of the one nail on the wall not quite correct... you couldn’t just dismiss Roman Catholic representatives in that way. I was thinking, for example, of the inspiration brought by another, Piet Steenkamp, at that time. Steenkamp was a vocal critic of consumerism. He spoke of one continuous Saint Nicholas Eve in our culture; it could not go on like this, he had said. In his view, we should take a stand, and put our hands between the spokes of the wheel of history. There was a dynamism in it. With all the appreciation I had for Algra, I could not easily share his criticism.

Later, around 1976, things started to move as a new generation emerged with those wanting to make a great party together. Veerman had trouble with it. He and Willem Aantjes⁸³ started showing signs of concern: was that what we were wanting to develop? I had not proposed a federation. But a mainstream movement had emerged that certainly wanted more than a mere federation; there was very rapid local developments across the country.

Did you end up closer to the Christian radicals yourself?

⁷⁹ see Hans-Martien ten Napel *op cit* Chapter 3, De Groep van Achttien (1966-1971). In this chapter Ten Napel details the “De Nacht van Schmelzer”. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_of_Eighteen

⁸⁰ CHU: Christelijke-Historische Unie - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Historical_Union

⁸¹ Discussions between ‘The Eighteen’ proceeded from 1966; it was not until 1980 that the CDA ‘merger’ was confirmed.

⁸² Hendrik Algra 1896-1982. https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hendrik_Algra Is Goudzwaard not here indicating the internal, somewhat precarious views, within the ARP. See fn 51 above. The little book, **Wat is Normaal?** (1974) was edited by Algra. His contribution can be found in W.P. Berghuis & H. Algra, eds **Anti-Revolutionair bestek. Toelichting op het beginsel- en algemeen staatkundig program van de Anti-revolutionaire Partij**, Aalten 1964. Bob’s major essay was of 67pp, on Article 17 of the ARP policy platform, *Political Economy*.

⁸³ Willem Aantjes 1923-2015 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willem_Aantjes

The Christian radicals, the PPR⁸⁴ were still a bridge too far for me at the time; I was not ready for them. I could not simply accept the juxtaposition of Christian and humanist inspiration in the foundation. But there was agreement on all kinds of issues. For instance, I got on well with Jacques Aarden,⁸⁵ the radical who had left the KVP. In discussion about company mergers we made a joint statement. The ARP allowed it; but the KVP certainly didn't greet it with applause.

You also found time to do a PhD?

In my last year as an MP, I received my PhD.⁸⁶ The dissertation took seven years, and the work was done partly in the evenings and partly during recess periods. The topic was 'unpriced scarcity'. The problem which I focused upon was that though economics recognises objects of use, it ignores objects of care. Even then, I could not be satisfied with the presumed axiom that, in economics, what has no price does not count. Does everything have to have a price to be of value? Lambers⁸⁷ liked the theme; he was also interested in the issue of 'social costs'.

I did not yet use the word 'care' in an emphatic sense; I did use a term like 'entrusted management'. At the end of the thesis, I took up the thread of the thesis again by arguing for an expanded concept of causality. Zijlstra helped me with this, for example by pointing out to me the distinction between income and wealth effects. Lambers asked Zijlstra whether this book was worthy of a *cum laude*. Zijlstra's answer was: yes, provided another six months' work is done on it. I myself preferred it to stop then; and I did stop then.

Why didn't you continue in the chamber membership in 1971?

⁸⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_Party_of_Radicals

⁸⁵ A group of KVP MPs, led by Jacques Aarden, had quit the party and referred to themselves as 'Christian Radicals'.

⁸⁶ The dissertation was titled: **Ongeprijsde schaarste: een onderzoek naar de plaats van expretiale of ongecompenseerde effecten in de theoretische economie en de leer der economische politiek** Den Haag. Van Stockum 1970. (Trans: Unpriced Scarcity: social costs and expretial (or uncompensated) effects as a problem for economic theory and policy). The English summary can be found here: <https://tukampendatastore.blob.core.windows.net/neocalvinism/allofiliferedeemed/Goudzwaard/BG5.pdf> See also ftn.40 for reference to the Drs. thesis on economic causality.

⁸⁷ This suggests that though there was considerable time between his Drs on economic causality and his PhD on "unpriced scarcity", Goudzwaard is telling us he had still worked to cultivate his contribution within the economics discipline in which he had been nurtured in Rotterdam. For instance his contributions to the journal *Economisch-Statistische Berichten* (E-S.B) 1963-1968 attests to this. Moreover, the account also tells us about the availability of organised support for relevant and prominent public contributions by Dutch citizens of reformed Christian conviction at that time *before* gaining doctoral qualifications.

It had admittedly been an instructive period, but, partly because of the trip to India, I grew with the realisation that I lacked international experience.⁸⁸ In addition, at times, something of a loyalty problem arose. For instance, at a speaking engagement in Friesland, I heard myself defending a group position that inwardly was not really mine. This raised in my mind a question that probed my deepest feelings: “What was I actually engaged upon?”

Then on top of that re-evaluation of my path, came an invitation from the Institute for Christian Studies, in Toronto. The intention was for a stay of several years. That was also acceptable to Riny, my wife. But then there was a sudden turn of events in that in relation to a medical examination, we learned that our eldest son Theo, due to a brain injury, could not qualify for the Canadian system of social insurance. On top of that, a VU psychologist advised us about the psychological strain emigration could place on Theo. We therefore had to decline the invitation.

Six months followed during which I was unemployed. You can understand that sometimes the thought would come up: “What is going on with my life?” And the question came with great intensity, because to that point everything had been going so well.

At that time, the request came for me to come to the VU, as successor to T.P. van der Kooy. I held him in very high esteem. The position was for economics in the faculty of socio-cultural sciences. Harry de Lange had been approached earlier, but he had declined the invitation. And so, I ended up working there with two associates, Geert van Driel and Bart Prakken (now a professor in Nijmegen). The lectures were mainly about economic policy - in the beginning mainly building on Tinbergen - the doctrine of economic order, and international economic relations. I always felt it was right for me to be there. The contact with students was especially satisfying. My day was good if, at lectures, I could sense that the students were interested in what I had to say. It was when you could see in their eyes that they understood. That was a moment of deep pleasure.

Meanwhile, I remained politically active, as a member of the Contact Council (as mentioned earlier) and later also as chairman of the programme committee for the CDA.⁸⁹ The group of Aantjes, Kruisinga and Andriessen, respective chairmen from the ARP, CHU and KVP, were members of that committee. I was given quite a lot of space there to map out an agenda. First,

⁸⁸ Dutch: *groeide een besef dat ik internationale ervaring miste*. This reads as a frank admission that he wasn't satisfied with only a provincial Dutch outlook.

⁸⁹ CDA: Christen-Democratisch Appèl. Christian Democratic Appeal
https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Democratic_Appeal

for three months we discussed the starting points⁹⁰; then I was able to break with the habit of dividing the programme's sections by departments, and could instead work from points of interest.⁹¹ It led to **Not by Bread Alone**. Curiously, the title was not mine, but from Steenkamp.⁹² He said at one point, "I know the title, and you will surely like it yourself." I had no idea what he was getting at. But he was referring to the motto of the Norwegian Christian People's Party: "Not by bread alone". I had returned enthusiastically from a visit to that party not long before.

That was also the time when Capitalism and Progress came out?

Actually, it was Hans Rookmaaker who earlier put me on the trail of **Capitalism and Progress**.⁹³ This book grew out of conversations with students, who came from all over the world to the l'Abri Nederland,⁹⁴ the Dutch house Rookmaaker founded for reflection and culture as a branch of what was founded in Switzerland by Francis Schaeffer, an American missionary. During the time we lived in Schoonhoven, I went to l'Abri in Ecken Wiel once a week or fortnight. Those contributions grew into a series. At one point, Rookmaaker said: there is the potential for a book here, only you have to include certain literature. Among other things, he was referring to Peter Gay's study of the Enlightenment.⁹⁵ So this book underwent the test of communicability before it was written.

The reception of **Capitalism and Progress** surprised me: Jelle Zijlstra gave it a good review, and Lubbers devoted a reflective article to it, one of the most interesting articles I have read of his. Both articles appeared in the 1976 editions of *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatskunde*.⁹⁶ At the time, the CDA was still wanting to digest this effort to stimulate thinking.

⁹⁰ Wij hebben eerst drie maanden over de uitgangspunten gesproken; vervolgens kon ik breken met de gewoonte om de programma-onderdelen in te delen in te delen naar departementen, en kon in plaats daarvan vanuit aandachtspunten werken.

⁹¹ What is he saying here? It seems as if the discussion was not going to be ruled in the first instance by assuming that the party (i.e. what became the CDA) had to be divided by candidates for the various policy portfolios from among the potential party's Parliamentarians?

⁹² The KVP critic of consumerism mentioned earlier.

⁹³ **Kapitalisme en vooruitgang. Een eigentijdse maatschappijkritek**, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976. Translated 1979 **Capitalism and Progress, a Diagnosis of Western Society**, transl and ed by Josina van Nuis-Zylstra, Eerdmans; Wedge.

⁹⁴ <https://www.labri.nl/> L'Abri Nederland was established in 1971.

⁹⁵ Peter Gay **The Enlightenment: an Interpretation** Knopf. NY 1966-1969. Volume 1 **The Rise of Modern Paganism**; Volume 2 **The Science of Freedom**.

⁹⁶ For Drs. R. F. M. Lubbers "Kapitalisme en Vooruitgang", it was actually published in *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatskunde* 47:1977 pp.3-16. I have not been able to locate the Zijlstras review.

Is it true that from then on the climate within the CDA became more unfavourable, and therefore a split became inevitable?

Van Agt⁹⁷ admitted openly that he had no affinity for **Not by Bread Alone**; that was in 1977 when I was being interviewed for a ministerial post. A remarkable admission for a party leader to make! With him, a happy-go-lucky⁹⁸ pragmatism made its appearance. In itself, this was no reason to break with the party. If it had only been that, I would probably have stayed, hoping for a change of course in the future.

However, all it took was a debate on nuclear weapons – with the ultimatum that if I still opposed it, I would have to table a motion of no confidence against the party’s policy platform – and so the conclusion became inescapable: I wouldn’t be waiting around to do that. I am convinced that a Christian party simply cannot affirm reliance upon offensive weapons of mass destruction for the defence of the civilian population.⁹⁹

And so, a difficult period broke out for me. You might call it a minor depression. The pieces of my life no longer seemed to fit together. I kept getting the sense that the music was passing me by, while I could only stand on the footpath and watch. It was the pain of merely having to watch.

What also gave pain was that colleagues and acquaintances fell away in a single day. There were a few exceptions, like Marga Klompé.¹⁰⁰ With the KVP and the CHU, I no longer had any contacts. I also heard nothing more from most members of the old ARP party, apart from Wim Aantjes and a few others. Curious.

In retrospect, I think it was indicative of a breakdown of trust as conveyed to me by Biesheuvel, with whom I was in correspondence at the time; he wrote that he could no longer recognise his own outlook in my thinking and actions.

In the opinion of some, I had left too soon, but at least this prevented bitterness on my side. For W. F. de Gaay Fortman,¹⁰¹ my leaving evoked great incomprehension; his thought was that “you never leave your party.”

⁹⁷ Dries van Agt (1931-2024) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dries_van_Agt

⁹⁸ *blijmoedig*

⁹⁹ Presumably because the CDA’s party’s principles did not explicitly exclude such deployment as a point of basic principle.

¹⁰⁰ Marga Klompé (1912-1986) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marga_Klompé

¹⁰¹ W.F. de Gaay Fortman (1911-1997) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_de_Gaay_Fortman

I had been twice approached for a ministry. They might not have been successful. Perhaps I am too mild-mannered for such positions, too much of a ‘fair-weather sailor’, as Johan Prins¹⁰² once characterised me.

The first approach was by Biesheuvel in 1971, when he had me in mind for a portfolio in economic affairs. I had already promised the Vrije Universiteit that I would come. Moreover, I felt it was not yet my turn, but that of Bakker, who had been acting Minister for Economic Affairs. In retrospect, I think it could then have worked out.

The second time was concerned with ‘development cooperation’. That was the occasion when Van Agt said in advance that he had no affinity with **Not by Bread Alone**. Moreover, I did not at all like the fact that the chairman of the ARP, Hans de Boer, actually put me forward as one who would be a reliable loyalist¹⁰³ in the cabinet to be formed. I did not consider loyalism a sufficient basis for participating in a cabinet.

As the cruise missile issue came into play in that government, it could very well have come to a break with the cabinet and, after all, Roelof Kruisinga¹⁰⁴ after a short time, would also quit because of the nuclear weapons issue. Who knows what would have happened if I had been in the cabinet ... ?

Did new political initiatives follow then?

I soon became involved in an attempt from the ARJOS (ARP youth organisation) and the Christian radicals, including Egbert Boeker, to form a broader coalition, including within it the Evangelical People’s Party.¹⁰⁵ I had drawn up a list of 10 points on which we could agree. The consultation broke down because from the outset the members of the EPP insisted upon the name ‘Christian Evangelical’.

On this point, I was by now closer to the PPR¹⁰⁶ (The Political Party of Radicals, a Christian-radical, progressive Christian and green political party). My assessment was that this had to be asserted as a coalition, created in a difficult situation, and therefore it came down to working with each other

¹⁰² J H Prins, ARP Party-secretary mid-1960s. See references to Prins and other ‘left-leaning’ leaders in the party during the 1960s and 1970s. J C Kennedy “The Problem of Kuyper’s Legacy: The Crisis of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in Post-War Holland” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 5:1 Spring 2002, 45–56.

¹⁰³ *mede-loyalist*

¹⁰⁴ Roelof Kruisinga (1922-2012) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roelof_Kruisinga

¹⁰⁵ EVP: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelical_People%27s_Party_\(Netherlands\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelical_People%27s_Party_(Netherlands))

¹⁰⁶ PPR: Politieke Partij Radikalen, Political Party of Radicals (1968-1990)

first. But all of this was undertaken, hopeful of commanding respect from others, so that in retrospect it could be said, “this has been Christian politics.”

Initially, the envisaged regrouping looked like it could come to something. There was even speculation that there might have been 10 to 12 seats in the House of Representatives. Den Uyl invited me to talk to him. He wanted to acknowledge the importance of the initiative, was willing to cooperate, but was apprehensive about flags using the word ‘Christian’.

When that initiative too came to nothing, I felt an ever-growing need for deeper understanding. Out of this, **Genoodzaakt goed te wezen**¹⁰⁷ was born; for me it was a matter of processing the crisis within the CDA. It was a necessary labour of love and was written in about a fortnight. Conversations arose from writing this book with (among others) Harry de Lange. His initial question was: “*So, what’s stopping you from joining the PvdA?*” Through these conversations with Harry, I did become involved with ecumenism but not with the PvdA (Labour Party). I found this contact with a pioneer from ecumenism to be enriching. When he wrote the article on ‘the economics of enough’ for the *ESB* (Economic Statistical Reports), the magazine for economists, he came to me with the suggestion: “*Isn’t it time we wrote a book together?*”¹⁰⁸

It did come to a meeting with the party chairman of the PvdA, Max van den Berg. Former KVP chairman Dick de Zeeuw, then a member of the PvdA, was wanting me to join the party. But I found myself particularly resistant to the power politics I encountered, even in the chairman’s message to me. He told me that I could not immediately count on an important position in the PvdA. As if that was my concern! With regard to the CDA, to this day I feel no grief; the loss of seats and influence does not leave me unmoved. I did express my willingness to give some form of advice on occasion, but there was no uptake on my offers.

Did ecumenism mean a break with your Vrijgemaakte¹⁰⁹ past?

¹⁰⁷ Later translated as **Idols of our Time** 1984 (Translation of the Dutch title: **Forced to be good.**)

¹⁰⁸ As well as **Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward an Economy of Care with a Twelve-Step Program for Economic Recovery**, Foreword Maurice F Strong Eerdmans/WCC 1994, Goudzwaard and deLange also authored "Review of Ulrich Duchrow **Global Economy: A Confessional Issue for the Churches?** Geneva WCC 1987 and Charles Elliott **Comfortable Compassion? Poverty, Power and the Church** London Hodder and Stoughton 1987" in *Ecumenical Review* 40:2 April 1988 pp. 292-294. https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_de_Lange

¹⁰⁹ The reference is to the “Vrijgemaakte”, the dissenting reformed led by Klaas Schilder, as noted at the beginning of the interview. The paragraph that follows is indicative of a complex Dutch reformed cultural context. social situation among reformed Christians in the Netherlands, Dutch church situation among

Not exactly.¹¹⁰ My past within the ‘Gereformeerde-Vrijgemaakte’ remains, and in many respects it is a rich tradition of my life, while ecumenism has given added depth. At this point I should say something about church developments.

In our Schoonhoven period we belonged to the Langerak congregation,¹¹¹ where Rev. Amelink presided. Then, ‘overnight’ as it were, the congregation’s context changed; when we woke up, we found ourselves within a new ‘context’¹¹², what would later take the name: Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken.¹¹³ In Oegstgeest, with Rev Meint van den Berg, we found a particularly cordial congregation although, at the end of this period, we did realise that the world was getting out of sight.¹¹⁴ Then we said to each other: if we do move, we will make a decision at that time to do things quite differently. In Driebergen, we joined the *Samen-op-weg* congregation.¹¹⁵

There is something captivating in the idea of a people’s church.¹¹⁶ There is something in the third chapter of the Ephesians letter that always resonates strongly with me, especially after a sermon by John Stott (1921-2011)¹¹⁷ that I heard in London. I mean the place where Paul talks about being grounded

¹¹⁰ Dutch: *Niet zonder meer*.

¹¹¹ <https://www.versteegt.net/Eng/Emphasize/WilligeLangerak/Church/Main.html> It would seem that when Bob and Riny lived in Schoonhoven they were involved in a reformed congregation but the story suggests that there was a development that meant the congregation became part of the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken, a denomination that at that point was distinct from what is being referred to when Bob mentions “gereformeerde-vrijgemaakte” earlier in the section. Bob frames his account in his characteristically irenic way. He is referring to events in the 1960s when the NGK emerged from another rift within reformed denomination. Presumably, Bob and Riny had been involved in an NGK congregation in Oegstgeest although, once in irenic terms, we wonder if he is suggesting an “otherworldliness.”

¹¹² *bleken we ‘buiten-verband’ geworden te zijn*

¹¹³ Bob is describing the experience faced by himself and Riny when they found that the congregation seems to have woken up to a new federative or denominational ‘context’. It’s as if it had been a congregation that did not generally share the spiritual ‘context’ of other reformed denominations but then he even found it didn’t share its own context, or something like that. It is difficult to comprehend although reflection upon what church membership means in denominations where top-down administrative changes prevail, brings on this kind of uncertainty. It indicates the need for some coherent sociological research that takes seriously Goudzwaard’s Christian direction. In Dutch, the sentence reads: *De gemeente werd ‘in één nacht’ uit het verband gezet: toen we wakker werden, bleken we ‘buiten-verband’ geworden te zijn, de latere Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken*. And so it is as if they were at the birth of a new denomination. <https://ngk.nl/gereformeerd/geschiedenis/>

¹¹⁴ Here the indication is that the church is somehow taking its members “out of this world.” Dutch: *ofschoon we op het laatst van deze periode wel het besef kregen dat de wereld uit het zicht raakte*.

¹¹⁵ https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samen_op_Weg-proces **Samen op Weg** (Together on the way) refers to attempts since 1961 of closer cooperation of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Netherlands since 1961.

¹¹⁶ Dutch: *volkskerk-gedachte*. It seems to suggest a congregation that sees itself in terms of a local initiative of an independent kind to be a “local church”.

¹¹⁷ John Stott English evangelical teacher and priest. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULCHY1W9yWM>

and built up by faith, so that you and all the saints begin to understand something of the height, breadth and depth of the Kingdom of God.¹¹⁸ To that understanding, in depth and breadth, windows have been opened to me through ecumenism.

I am also thinking, for example, of the book on confessional economics by Ulrich Duchrow (1935 -)¹¹⁹, written from within the Lutheran tradition, but also the explanation of why a close relationship could develop between myself and Harry de Lange.¹²⁰ We are two people with very different church backgrounds, one Vrijgemaakt, the other Remonstrant, and thus even standing in the tradition of liberal Protestantism,¹²¹ but with an unmistakable deep spirituality. For me, this is an example of how added value can emerge from the meeting of faith traditions. In other words, that we need the other to move forward ourselves.

However, I do have concerns about the World Council of Churches. The WCC is in danger of becoming an administrative body, weakening the ecumenical impulse. In part, though, this impulse is now also at work within the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).¹²² There, in WCC circles, I met Julio De Santa Ana¹²³ and Philip Potter¹²⁴; there I feel again the chargedness, which always reminds me of Bonhoeffer. The way Potter reads the Bible: that is breathtaking.

With Dooyeweerd and Mekkes I sucked up the systematics and learned to appreciate them, but for the dynamics, with that Mekkesian word ‘unlocking’, you have to, above all, take on an ecumenical outlook.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Ephesians 3:17-19:

¹¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulrich_Duchrow

¹²⁰ ref. ftn. 107 above.

¹²¹ *in de traditie van vrijzinnigheid* https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vrijzinnig_protestantisme

¹²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Alliance_of_Reformed_Churches

¹²³ with Julio de Santa Ana, "Globalization and Modernity" in Ninan Koshy ed. **Globalization: the Imperial Thrust of Modernity**, Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Mumbai India, pp. 1–33; with Julio de Santa Ana, "Stating the Problem" and "The Modern Roots of Economic Globalization" in Julio de Santa Ana et.al, **Beyond Idealism, A Way Ahead for Ecumenical Social Ethics**, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans pp. 3-16 & 91- 125.

¹²⁴ "Ethical Dimensions of a Globalising Economy" in Fritz Erich Anhelm (ed) **Gerechtigkeit – oder die Frage nach gerechten Beziehungen, Die Ökumenische Bewegung im Prozess der Globalisierung Tagung zu Ehren Philip Potters**, (Justice as Right Relationships: the Ecumenical Movement in the Process of Globalization: Conference in Honour of Philip Potter, 2nd Sept, 2001) Evangelische Akademie Loccum, 53/01, pp. 49-61.

¹²⁵ This is an aspect of Goudzwaard's contribution that requires careful and deepened consideration. He is referring to a time when Christian discipleship is lived out without the assumption that it is church membership that defines the path of obedience on which one follows. The question that arises here then is not only what does reformation mean for the followers of Christ Jesus for church membership but what does reformation mean for Christians to follow faithfully on the path of an all-of-life vocation?

Going overseas to a foreign country has also always meant Canada and the United States.

Canada became a second homeland. I felt a moral obligation even though my stay in Canada could not go ahead. All in all, I visited fifteen times. The friendship with Gerald Vandezande¹²⁶ has been central to all this. We share a deep commitment, with our preference for forming broad cooperation. Canada has become so much a second homeland that I was once asked to participate in an evening talk-back radio broadcast with someone I did not know at all while it was broadcast 'nation-wide'. While talking, we forgot the time. Afterwards, I heard that people found this broadcast extremely fascinating.

This summer I went back for the Niagara conference of the Institute for Christian Studies.¹²⁷ Intensive contacts with the ICS and Vandezande's Citizens for Public Justice¹²⁸ made it possible to produce an adaptation of my book with Harry de Lange tailored to Canada.¹²⁹

Contacts with James Skillen's Washington-based Association for Public Justice¹³⁰ group also meant a lot. It was a privilege to be included as the only European within a team of Americans, some from the ghettos, and to be able to participate in discussions on the persistence of poverty. It led to a contribution in **Welfare in America**.¹³¹ This experience confirmed my conviction that the contemporary economic paradigm has built-in impediments¹³² that prevent us recognising the problem of poverty. The cause of poverty is either dismissively explained as merely the result of a lack of incentive to work, or a lack of spending power. In both explanations, the dynamics of exclusion and the lack of recognition and affirmation are ignored as a matter of course.

¹²⁶ Gerald Vandezande (1933-2011) <https://cpj.ca/gerald-vandezande-biography/> See also https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1099&context=pro_rege

¹²⁷ Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto. Canada. <https://www.icscanada.edu/>

¹²⁸ Citizens for Public Justice <https://cpj.ca/>

¹²⁹ <https://utppublishing.com/doi/book/10.3138/9780802076373> Bob Goudzwaard, Harry de Lange and Mark Vander Vennen **Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward a Canadian Economy of Care** University of Toronto Press 1995.

¹³⁰ Center for Public Justice, Washington DC <https://cpjustice.org/>

¹³¹ James W Skillen and Stanley Carlson-Thies (eds) **Welfare in America: Christian Perspectives on a Policy in Crisis** Eerdmans 1995

¹³² Dutch: *verhinderingen*

On the latter, contact with Anna Terruwe¹³³ has become dear to my heart. The poor will have to be able to come within our horizon, and be considered valuable in our lives, otherwise we go missing. This is what I have learnt thanks to this American research.

We should not conclude this interview without asking you about South Africa.

Indeed, the trips to South Africa should be mentioned. The initiative came from Harry Brinkman, from the Executive Board of the Vrije Universiteit. He did not want the severing of formal contacts with Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education to be the last word. He wondered whether, with cooperation from Beyers Naudé (1915-2004),¹³⁴ something could not be done from within a firm Kuyperian-Dooyeweerdian outlook. When Brinkman asked me to suggest who might be a good partner, I mentioned Bernard Zylstra (1934-1986), of the Institute for Christian Studies, in Toronto. The trip took place in 1976. On a second trip, in 1977, Jim Skillen came along, who was then at Dordt College¹³⁵, in Iowa.

From the intensive interaction during that trip, the Koinonia Declaration, a testimony against apartheid, would emerge in 1977.¹³⁶ The signatories paid a heavy price for it including Elaine Botha (1938-2020)¹³⁷ and Lourens du Plessis (1949-2021).¹³⁸ You saw what a state degenerates into that fails to meet the requirement of justice for all groups of its population.

My friendship with Beyers Naudé, dates from this time, as it did for Bernard Zylstra. I will not soon forget meeting Bishop Tutu (1931-2021): when we asked him how he could continue without any prospect of change, he stood up and said, “I am upheld by the thousands of prayers of God's people.” Bernie had his famous interview with Steve Biko on that trip.¹³⁹

¹³³ Anna Terruwe https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Terruwe

¹³⁴ Beyers Naudé https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyers_Naudé

¹³⁵ <https://www.dordt.edu/>

¹³⁶ For Bob's assessment of this timely declaration see his 1978 essay with John van Baars “Norms for the International Economic Order <https://tukampendatastore.blob.core.windows.net/neocalvinism/allofliferedeemed/Goudzwaard/BG31.pdf> (pp. 36-38 concluding with an excerpt from the Koinonia Declaration of 1977.)

¹³⁷ <https://allofliferedeemed.co.uk/elaine-botha/> For some years Bob was a widower but he married Elaine and they lived for a time in South Africa.

¹³⁸ <https://law.nwu.ac.za/law/prof-lourens-du-plessis-passed-away> Elmien (WJ) du Plessis Faculty of Law, North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa has written an appreciation of her father “L. M. du Plessis” *South African Journal of Human Rights* 2021, 37:4, 558–565.

¹³⁹ https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/sites/default/files/pdf_files/int19771200.032.009.761x_0.pdf See also “July 1977 Interview with Bernard Zylstra.” In Biko, edited by Donald Woods, 117–27. Endeavour Press Ltd. 2017.

When we were on our way to Johannesburg airport after visiting Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi (1928-2023), the plane had to be diverted (just imagine it!) to Potchefstroom military airfield due to a lack of fuel. From then on, we were so clearly watched that it was almost impossible to work. Elaine Botha noticed that people had been on her phone. And so did others.

The VU is still to be praised for the fact that after breaking off contact with Potchefstroom it was said: this is not the end of it.

A curious initiative did emerge from this later. In 1982, Elia Tema sought contact with me. This was in the garden of Nicholas Wolterstroff, then still attached to Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Michigan). At the time, Tema was chairman of the Soweto Action Committee. He sought my cooperation in setting up a highly secret meeting between the white and black leaders of South Africa, Mandela included. To this end, we travelled together to Minister Van der Klaauw's residence to ask for a Dutch naval vessel that could accommodate this gathering in international waters for a few days. Mandela was to be secretly brought there from Robben Island by ship. The minister wanted to cooperate. That it ultimately did not go ahead was partly because Tema had lost his position.

We haven't yet asked about your final years within the VU. In conclusion, could you briefly characterise their significance?

When I look back over the period at the VU, I am actually intensely grateful that I was able to be in this place. That also applies to the last few years, which is usually the time when people get a bit bored with their own work. As far as I am concerned, not only did the international contacts increase during those years, but I also got the chance to join the Faculty of Philosophy as a lecturer in an evening course in cultural philosophy titled: Philosophy and Spirituality. This was just when I was getting a bit bored with economics! I enjoyed it intensely, especially the opportunity to ask students about the wonderful phenomena, problems and paradoxes we encounter in modern society and culture. We undertook to engage in questioning until we arrived at the deepest layer, that of the meaning of life and living together, where you simply cannot avoid admitting your colours.¹⁴⁰

Almost at the same time, Egbert Boeker, then Rector, asked me to join Rob Boschhuizen in a series of talks with up to 60 Vrije Universiteit lecturers to explore the possibility of what later came to be called 'The Values and Standards Project.' I think this is how I really got to know the VU. In the most hidden places in the university, we came across jewels of people, with a

¹⁴⁰ This sounds very much like the orientation spelled out in his major work with Craig Bartholomew **Beyond the Modern Age. An Archaeology of Contemporary Culture**. IVPpress 2017.

heart for their profession, with compassion for their students, who, together with the Rector and with us, were genuinely concerned about whether we were imparting enough wisdom, courage and spiritual baggage to students. For myself, that project dovetailed almost seamlessly with what I was doing in that evening lecture. Because of course, the deepest values, the real standards, are not something you make up yourself. Their origin is 'from on High'. They assert themselves or simply turn out to be there, inescapable, recognisable and even unforgettable, and especially so for when you want to question your own students seriously and honestly about the foundations and meaning of your own field.

So I think it's a fantastic result that four faculties - with Biology at the forefront - have already embarked on this path of searching together with the hope of eventually finding meaning and a firm hold on what they are doing. Something like that gives courage to even a departing academic.

November-December 1998.