

Reformed concept of the State

A Christian political view on the task of the government

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Unauthorized translation from
Reformatorsche staatsvisie, De RPF en het ambt van de overheid (1992)

Introduction

This publication is a translation of the main chapters of a book of mr. André Rouvoet, titled: "Reformatorische staatsvisie, De RPF en het ambt van de overheid".

The translation is not corrected, but we want to present some material in English. So please, don't bother to much about the errors in the text.

The original book was published in 1992.

This translation consists

Chapter 2: Society

Chapter 3: The State

Chapter 4: Responsibilities of the State

Chapter 5: Church and State

The chapters 1 (introduction), 6 (present themes) and 7 (perspectives on different topics) are left out. These are not very interesting for non-Dutch people.

2. SOCIETY

Politics is generally understood to be the administration of a state and its constituents, including the decision making process and the regulation of the relations between government and citizens. Basically, these activities demarcate the politician's working sphere. Political parties, too, mainly focus their attention on the social sphere which we call 'state'. It is of paramount importance for any political party to be explicit about its concept of state and of government, the latter operating within the boundaries of the former. On the one hand, the concept of state is a dominant factor in setting a party's image, on the other hand it serves as a framework for addressing concrete political issues and taking positions.

Understandably, therefore, the theme of 'state and government' has been the subject of many a discussion. The organisation of government, the responsibilities of government: all are subjects which no political party can or must simply overlook. It is our conviction that it is impossible to form an adequate concept of state without also defining one's concept of *society*. Often, state and society are too easily seen as one another's antipodes, implying the absence of their interdependence. This view ignores the fact that the state is just one sphere of society amongst many other spheres, the combination of which we call 'society'. The state, then, must be considered as an individual sphere with its unique characteristics and its unique place in society. We must therefore work out a concept of state within the framework of a more encompassing concept of society. This concept of society being the subject matter of this chapter, it lays the foundation of the themes which the following chapters will deal with.

2.2 The Reformed concept of society

To many people the idea of 'society' is rather indefinite. It is usually addressed in general terms, without accounting for what one is exactly talking about. Only few will say that society is nothing more than an unstructured quantity of relations between separate, unrelated individuals. Still, there exists a widespread misconception which is closely linked to this notion of society. It is the misconception that the individual is primary, that he comes first place, and that all other spheres are secondary, derived from -or rather: added to- the individual. The individual enters into relationships, together with other individuals it creates spheres on a voluntary basis. Forming and structuring the interrelations and common spheres is a matter of human possibility and of human responsibility. This view, although recognising the substantiality of these spheres (e.g. marriage, family, school, church, company and state), regards them as simply the outcome of *a self-willed structuring of interrelations*. They are considered temporary, arbitrary and a product of unimpeded human activity, and so lose their individual significance. At his own discretion man himself creates order out of the chaos of interhuman relations to accomplish a well-ordered society, This view is averse of the notion of fixed and normative structures.

The Reformed concept of society, however, holds that society is made up of *predetermined and normative structures or relations*, and that it is up to responsible man to further structure and substantiate them. These structures are not conjectures of the human brain/mental concepts, but they are rooted in a divine order and it is from this that they derive their meaning and purpose. It may be noted in passing that, although at face value this concept may seem to generate a rather *static* view of society, this is certainly not the case. It is part of man's mission in responsibility to give shape to the predetermined structures in continually changing times and circumstances. So the normative contexts *do* involve a dynamism to exploit and to deepen. It is therefore that we may claim with confidence that depicting this concept as conservative or conservating is far beside the mark. The principle of the normative structures implies goal-directed and discerning dynamism. Chapter 7 will provide some concrete instances of dynamism for certain political domains.

A Reformed view of society therefore leaves no room for notions which seek to establish the individual as the focal point from which emanates the order of society. And it is the very reason for Reformed politics to fundamentally oppose itself against the individualisation tendencies in present-day society. But it would be equally wrong to think of the spheres, (the state or industrial life) as the focal points. For this reason we must reject and oppose both individualism and collectivism.

We referred to a Reformed concept of society. Let us now look at it in greater detail. For what should we understand by it and what are its credentials? With reference to section 1.4, we recognise that the Bible is an indispensable guide in establishing a Reformed concept of society. But at the same time we must acknowledge that the Bible does not hand down a ready-made doctrine of societal structure to us. That is simply not what the Bible was written for. But, of course, neither do we have to start from scratch in developing our concept of society. There has been a long tradition of more or less successful attempts to arrive at a biblically accountable, integral view of society. We can benefit from them, appreciating for what has been achieved, but always critically testing it against the fundamentals of our political thought.

An major question to begin with is how we can tell what belongs to the normative *-i.e.* fixed and irrespective of time or place- structure characteristics of the various spheres. Asking ourselves this question, we enter the domain of philosophy, which, in compliance with its own rules of research, is occupied with the systematic research within the scope of a coherent structural doctrine. Such a research does not fall within the scope of this treatise. Moreover, it falls outside the province of politics. However, Reformed politics may draw from an abundance of resources which the Reformed school of philosophy has produced. Without indiscriminately incorporating the impressive output of Reformed philosophers such as H. Dooyeweerd, D.H.Th. van Vollenhoven, J.P.A. Mekkes, S.U. Zuidema, H. van Riessen and H.J. van Eikema Hommes, in our own set of ideas, it provides us with some useful material for formulating our own concept of society.

In the chapters 3 and 4 we will seize this opportunity when we define the distinctive nature of the state and the task of government.

We have already said that it is characteristic of a Reformed view of society to be based on the concept of predetermined contexts, each of them having its distinctive normative structure, and each of them rooted in the divine order.

Although this relates primarily to the order of *creation*, there is more to it. From what has been revealed to us about creation, does not follow automatically that the societal spheres of company, school and university belong to that order of creation in a literal sense. And when in its Confession of Faith the Church declares with regard to the civil government, that "because of the corruption of the human race God has ordained Kings, Princes and Governments" (article 36 of the Belgian Confession), we wonder whether the origin of the sphere of government might not have its roots in the fall of man, rather than in Creation, as presented to us in Genesis 1 and 2.

We are here facing a great mystery: the miracle of God's creation and the order He has laid into it. It should, however, render us cautious about how to appreciate different kinds of interhuman relationships. We must not presumptuously assume 'a sphere rooted in the divine order' Such would require at least its distinctive, irreducible structure, since every sphere possesses, and is characterised by, its specific nature and its specific normative structural features. The normative structure of the Church has a nature very different from that of the state. Therefore, Church and State cannot be reduced to each other. Neither is it possible to view the family sphere as a deduction from the state. Let us illustrate the practical implications of this view with one example. In socialist circles it has sometimes been argued that the education of children by the state community has been (partly) delegated to the family. It is a notion which we strongly disapprove of because it clashes with our view of society in the most fundamental way.

Let us make three interjacent observations. The first one concerns the question whether 'society' itself can be regarded as a sphere with its own normative structure in the given sense. To us, this does not seem to be the case. We feel that it would be better to have the term 'society' designate the collective name for all co-ordinate spheres taken together.

Our second observation concerns the specific nature of the spheres of society. In this matter it is elementary to discern properly. Next to the differentiated, irreducible spheres, our society is one with a diversity of manifestations in terms of interhuman relationships, which, to some extent, are 'period-dependent'. An illustration may clarify this. Because of the typical structure of the sphere of marriage, a marital relationship can be easily differentiated from, say, a friendship. Twentieth-century social reality, however, confronts us with the phenomenon of unmarried couples living together. One would possibly argue that what we are dealing with here is a new sphere with its very own nature. But what we really see here is a deviation from the normative marital structure, in which man autonomously gives shape to his relations. We will return to this point in section 2.5.

The third observation concerns the interrelations between the spheres [interspheric relations]. We pointed out earlier that our view of society is a dynamic one, in relation to which we pointed to the internal dynamism of the exploitation and deepening of the various spheres. And so we must here point to the dynamism of the interrelations. No view of society, the Reformed view included, provides us with a *blueprint* of society, but an *ordering principle*. In the next section we will expound this in greater detail.

The principle of each sphere having its individual normative structure implies that the Reformed concept of society does not leave room for the view that the spheres of marriage, family, church, company and school should be seen as belonging to an inferior class of spheres, with the sphere of state being superior. On account of their fundamental irreducibility to each other, any super ordination or subordination of the spheres is unthinkable. We ought rather to see them as co-ordinates. We must add, however, that *within* the normative structure we *do* recognise the occurrence of subordination, namely in the sense of 'higher and lower bodies' (as in the sphere of government: the national government in relation to provincial and municipal authorities). However, this is only true of bodies of an identical structure, to which identical structural features apply. Besides, each sphere has its own organisational structure, which implies relations of authority and respect. One of the characteristics of any sphere to have on the one end persons in authority, who exercise this granted authority in his jurisdiction within the sphere, whereas on the other end there are persons in a position to show respect and obedience to their superiors- but only within the sphere in which the hierarchical structure is valid.

The following (well-known) example may clarify this. A policeman lives next-door to the minister of his parish. Their mutual relationship and the positions they hold in terms of hierarchy depend on the context of their meeting. That is to say, the minister is the authority and may therefore claim respect and obedience, when he is paying a pastoral visit to his neighbour, or administers church discipline. But the minister cannot have recourse to that authority when the dutiful policeman, exercising his duties, fines his neighbour on account of illegal parking. In this situation it is a civil servant who exercises authority over a citizen and in that quality may demand respect and obedience (and payment) from that citizen.

It will have become clear that in the above sense we may positively speak of superiority and inferiority, authority and obedience *within* the spheres. Super ordination and subordination *between* the individual spheres, however, disregards the distinctive natures and individual normative structures of those spheres. In the illustration just given the meaning and the purpose of the family are interpreted in terms characteristic of the meaning and purpose of the state: the upbringing of children then becomes a matter of public concern, the responsibility of the government, which has been partly delegated to the family.

2.3 Sphere sovereignty

2.3.1 The principle of sphere sovereignty

Reformed politics adheres to a concept of society which incorporates the idea of spheres which in terms of their respective natures are incomparable with and irreducible to one another. Between the spheres, then, there exists no such relationship as of 'parts of the whole'. The social spheres are not the products of human 'creativity', but are rooted in a divine order. The nature of their interrelationship is one of subordination. All spheres have their unique internal organisation, incorporating relations of super- and subordination, of authority and obedience. These internal relations derive their validity solely from the meaning and purpose of the relevant sphere, *not* from those of other spheres.

Much of what has been argued so far resembles the notion of 'sphere sovereignty'. It was dr. A. Kuyper who is to be regarded as the architect of this philosophy. Later, the philosopher H. Dooyeweerd, through his writings, elaborated this notion into a broad, philosophical system, which has become known by the name of the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea.

It would carry us far beyond the domain of this book to expound thoroughly what Kuyper really had in mind when in 1880 he delivered his speech 'Sovereignty in our own circle' at the (Reformed) Free University (*Vrije Universiteit; VU*) in Amsterdam. However, the chief notions of it should concern us, if only for the misunderstandings about the concept of sphere sovereignty which prove to be alive even now and even in Christian circles. In the following sections we will briefly discuss some of these.

2.3.2 Sovereignty of the person in authority?

The misunderstandings relating to sphere sovereignty that have gradually arisen can largely be blamed on the word 'sovereignty'. The term is susceptible to misinterpretation when, for instance, authority becomes absolute, the source of it being vested *in* the sovereign's person, the one wielding authority. Pursuing that line of thinking, one is liable to mistake it for 'autonomy'. However, doing so one would overlook the fact that in Kuyper's intentions the dependence on, and obedience to God, the Absolute Sovereign, was pivotal! Very sharply did he state that the authorisation to practise authority in non-governmental spheres of society is a primal authorisation, not derived from government, but immediately from God. This awareness is ever-present in Kuyper's speaking about sphere sovereignty. "In all domains of life there is not one inch which Christ, who is Sovereign of *all*, does not claim to be His. For Kuyper, authority always means authority *by the grace of God*. The following quotation may be even more evincing: sphere sovereignty means that "the family, the company, the sciences, the arts and many more, constitute their own social spheres. They do not owe their existence to the state, nor do they derive their life-principle from the the state's exalted position, but submit to a high authority within them which, as does the state sovereignty, governs by the grace of God." Being in authority is synonymous with carrying responsibility and can therefore never be separated from *giving account*.

Let us clarify this essential point by providing some quotations. Wiskerke says that Kuyper speaks of sphere sovereignty "to make clear that not only the authority of government, usually held in popular esteem to be the only 'sovereign', but just as much the authorities of church, parents, the company etc. are immediately derived from God. The parental crown is as close to heaven as is the royal crown". Goudzwaard observes that in the ideas of Groen and Kuyper "obviously, the centre of each sphere of life, the origin of its particular coherence, is not the existence of human authority, but the divine norms typical of that sphere. This was pointed out earlier by Groen when he spoke of the authority of God's *law* in each sphere of life." (p. 66)

Goudzwaard quotes an excellent statement by professor Gerbrandy, the London-based Dutch prime minister during the Second World War, who in 1927 wrote: "In popular thought, the idea of sphere sovereignty, of outstanding Christian authenticity, is perverted to some sort of sovereignty of the patron, excluding all other authority; whereas the typical feature of this idea is: the sovereignty of God's ordinances in any sphere of life, to which both master and servant, government and citizens must obey in joint reverence."

The same emphasis is made by Schuurman when he argues: "Sphere sovereignty means that first and foremost God should be acknowledged and proclaimed as the Sovereign who in Christ governs all. God, being the Creator and Preserver, holds supreme authority in each sphere of life."

Van Riessen says about sphere sovereignty: "I'm not happy with the name, but the idea is ingenious."

Here we are touching what we might call 'the religious substratum' of sphere sovereignty. Goudzwaard applies this phrase when reviewing the working-paper *Reformatrische Staatsvisie*. In this review he refers specifically to the awareness of 'man living and working directly before the living Lord, *Coram Deo*, in all conditions of life, in which God Himself calls upon man to serve Him. It would therefore be inappropriate for any social sphere to try and 'sandwich' itself between the Lord of heaven and earth and the servants whom He calls upon, whether this sphere should be the church, the state, or -to be more up-to-date- the collective economic life/ the combined sphere of business and industry." Elsewhere, Goudzwaard refers to sphere sovereignty as "an echo of a profound biblical truth in political theory, *i.e.* we must obey God rather than any human authority. For this reason, as the principle has it, no human institution has the right to have our lives at its *absolute* disposal. The authorisation to lay down the law is only valid within the relevant sphere." (p.64).

Measuring the spiritual depth of sphere sovereignty takes us back to the biblical notions in section 1.3: man, being created in the image of God and standing before Him -*Coram Deo*- fulfills his call within the variety of creation. This emphasises once again that (political) fundamentals are more than merely a product of the human mind. They become visible to and force themselves on the 'unbiased listener', who wants to view and grasp the reality surrounding him from a biblical perspective and with a believing heart. That is how they can be instrumental in understanding and taking care of creation.

2.3.3 Watertight compartments?

Confining the jurisdiction of the various spheres within normative boundaries allows us to speak of the 'protective functioning' of the principle of sphere sovereignty. There are boundaries between the various domains of life, and they are to be observed.

The question arises whether this leads us automatically to believe in a strict separation fencing off the various spheres. Are there no relations whatsoever between family and school, Church and State? And would such a principle not usher in a liberal State view, according to which the government should abstain from all interference with matters falling outside its own sphere? The answer is a resolute 'no'. As early as 1969 Goudzwaard commented on this: "These terms also have proved to be easy victims of personal interpretation, and their original meaning can thus be drastically twisted. Instead of holding on to the original intention of the principle of sphere sovereignty, understanding it in terms of the government's respect for the self-performing competence of the individual spheres, it has often been reinterpreted in terms of a government that had to respect just any action taken by the various spheres. The typically liberal emphasis of uncurtailed government protection of all individual citizens' rights came suspiciously close within earshot." (p. 60)

But when Kuyper draws attention to a fundamental discrimination between the spheres of life, he does not envisage watertight compartments. Collective submission to God's Sovereignty all over creation, as well as the likewise collective attachment of all spheres to the ultimate goal *-i.e.* the praise of God-, is the very reason for us to recognize a strong mutual attachment of, and mutual support by the spheres. Recognizing the distinction of e.g. Church and State -in terms of their respective nature and office- must not lead us to conclude that both spheres are so much separated from one another as to have no interassociation at all. On the contrary, as was stressed by the Calvinist philosopher Althusius, mutual attachment, interwovenness and support in task-fulfilment *does* exist, be it in varying degrees. We could give many examples of this. We will, however, restrict ourselves to three instances of distinct spheres interfacing: companies pay corporation taxes to the State, marriages are performed before a registrar, and -not least important!- Churches and Christian families pray for the civil authorities.

Only if we fail to interpret sovereignty as God's sovereignty, but as autonomy of the person in authority 'in his own province', we are in danger of a liberal colouring. To put it differently: "whoever ignores the religious substratum, the spiritual dimension, thus applying a *secularised* principle in political practice, robs this principle from its heart and its outspoken Christian quality with it.

2.3.4 A static principle?

It will be opportune in this context to clear up another misconception, namely as if the principle of sphere sovereignty were a static one. In this case, too, the

formulation and application of this principle might suggest this. Yet, what we have here is not a closed or static concept, but an ordering *principle for*, not a *blueprint of society*. The interrelations between the spheres of society involve an intense dynamism, although within the boundaries of the normative principle. We pointed this out in section 2.2. This dynamic nature of sphere sovereignty becomes evident in the reality of social life. We could illustrate this with a wide range of examples of familiar situations in which persons in authority unmistakably cross the line of their own sphere, performing tasks which are not theirs. Not always, however, does this give occasion to speak of a violation of sphere sovereignty.

Two examples may clarify this, a well-known one being that of public housing. Basically, this belongs to the domain of civic responsibility. In other words, of all spheres of society, the spheres of matrimony and family are those responsible for housing. However, the housing crisis faced by the Netherlands after World War II necessitated active government interference. Circumstances at that time rose above the possibilities of the citizen and his immediate environment, making government interference (building plans, just distribution) not only possible, but even necessary. This illustrates the occasional necessity of government interfering with a 'sphere in distress'. However, we should add that such interference must only be temporary. Once the situation has recovered, the task must be left to the 'original' authorities of the sphere in question. Should this be neglected, the government would yet be in violation of sphere sovereignty.[.....] For our next illustration, we return to Goudzwaard: the Government has to serve the freedom of the people in that it ensures their liberty to fulfill their spheric duties given to them. For this reason it is wrong to assume that, in the light of sphere sovereignty, e.g. incomes and prices policies are deemed prematurely to be a violation of the sphere sovereignty of a company. However, such policies may be necessary in order to preserve the company's singular characteristics, i.e. as a company to be serving the whole nation, which should be the basis for all enterprise policies. Particularly by interfering as a way to encourage enterprises to meet those standards, a government effectively respects the spheric responsibility of the enterprise." (p. 60)

2.3.5 Levelling?

Another significant aspect in valuing sphere sovereignty is the range of possibilities that this principle leaves us to discriminate between the various spheres qualitatively. Does it allow us sufficiently to give more weight to one sphere than to the other? It should be noted that what we are concerned with here is not a hierarchical order -such would be incompatible with the heart of the principle- but with a distinction based on function, 'weight' and position of the various spheres, and our appraisal of them. To be more specific: does coordination imply *levelling*?

A brief remark will suffice here. The significance of the principle of coordination is anchored in the recognition of the individual characteristics of each sphere, as a result of which they cannot be reduced to each other. However, having said this

still leaves their function in society undealt with. Levelling is not the issue. There is no reason why we should not attach a different, greater value to the church than to a sports club or a political party. What it *is* about, is that even in cases where we differentiate in terms of quality (or rather: allow for the differences), we fully recognize the individual, irreducible nature of the spheres. This key issue will recur in section 2.5.

2.3.6 On Scriptural evidence

Also in view of our previous remarks as to the way in which we may develop a Scriptural concept of society, it is necessary in this closing section to highlight the issue of Scriptural evidence for the principle of sphere sovereignty. Kuyper's ideas have had to endure severe criticisms with respect to this. Kuyper more or less raises the issue in his speech '*Sovereignty in Our Own Circle*', from which we already cited, (in his own words: "And should someone should ask, whether the idea of 'Sovereignty in our own circle' has come forth from the heart of Scripture and the treasure of Reformed tradition...", p. 25), but the Scriptural passages quoted to that end (e.g. Genesis 1 and 1 Corinthians 15:23) have been criticized for being too brittle to serve as the basis of a wholesale concept of society, a criticism which was not quite misplaced. In a publication, Veling discusses the Scriptural references by Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, Spier and Van Riessen. With apparent approval he quotes A.J. Verbrugh, who in a discussion of Kuyper's ideas concludes: "Sphere sovereignty is not a very valuable concept for us. If we wish to defend certain services in human society, we must substantiate it from Scripture. (p. 31). Douma's position in this matter is different. It is worthwhile to take notice of it in his own words:

"It is also possible to make sound statements without Scriptural evidence. Kuyper observed, speaking with Allard Pierson, that with respect to sphere sovereignty he had been 'peeping' at God's rich creation, testing his observations against Scripture. To put it in my own words: "It is possible, by way of observation and intellectual insight to arrive at conclusions, which may not be found in the Bible, but which are not in contradiction with it. And why could not the same be claimed for the fundamental thought which fascinated Kuyper. He perceived an accumulation of power in the hands of government which had detrimental effects on a healthy development of national life. Scripture had taught him about the offices which God gives to people (e.g. the office of parenthood, their mission being to raise their children). Why then would it not be commendable of him on the basis of the existence of various offices to surmise their mutual confines? (p.121)

This approach, coinciding with our own view, resembles what we said in section 1.4 concerning the development of a Biblical concept of society: applying the available Scriptural references, aided by a Biblical intuition nurtured by Word and

Spirit, continually testing the results against the word of God, the criterion for our political thought. Here we must also be reminded of what we observed earlier on about God's revelation in His word, in history and in creation. Another illuminating thought to bear in mind in this context is what Groen van Prinsterer observed about the 'wisdom from experience', that can be derived from the history of nature. Groen has the following to say about Holy Scripture as a foothold in all respects: "The Bible is the Book of books, also and especially so in....."

On the basis of this unambiguous principle, he also says that the gospel teaches "....."

Van Riessen says about sphere sovereignty:

"Of course the Bible does not present us with a theory on sphere sovereignty. It would be foolishness to expect such a thing. The term itself cannot be found in it. However, what we do find in the Bible -once we have an open mind about this principle of creation for the societal organizations- is the self-evident *harmony* with that principle, though always in agreement with the historical development of practice at this point. It is a fact, though, that the Bible addresses us from and about its contemporary setting. The diversity of the present time was an unfamiliar phenomenon in those days. Sphere sovereignty is therefore a principle, a signpost at the outset of the history of humanity. It has to be put into practice in the course of history, it needs to be developed." (p. 85)

In a similar sense he says in his book *Christelijke politiek in een wereld zonder God* (Christian politics in a world without God): "The principle itself is nowhere to be found in the Bible. We do find some indications for the variety of social spheres." (p. 90 v.v.) For this reason Van Riessen deems principles such as sphere sovereignty 'deduced from Scripture': "It means that they are not scriptural, but they can be deduced from Scripture. They are major signposts in politics." Veling chooses a similar approach: "It must be admitted that this line of thought (*i.e.* of the Reformed philosophy, AR) cannot boast of conclusive evidence from the Bible. However, it does follow from the diversity of reality which the Bible now and then refers to as a matter of course, and which at times is even ordained." (p. 35)

Far more resolute is Fowler's conclusion after a comprehensive exposition of a number of views, among which 'Sphere Sovereignty': "....."

2.4 Re-evaluating sphere sovereignty

The notion of sphere sovereignty is valid even today. Although some of his ideas can be disputed, the theory of equal, coordinated spheres or domains provides us with a satisfactory framework for a Reformed, biblically sound concept of society.

In addition, we should ask ourselves whether how Church and State are viewed

in relation to each other by the various contemporary Christian parties, is still a relevant issue in establishing the interrelationships between those parties. We feel it therefore to be perfectly justifiable to seek our basis in the views of societal ordering put forward by Kuyper and, in his footsteps, the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party.

Yet we have no wish to label our view of society, as presented in this chapter, as sphere sovereignty. We have a good reason for this. Although this concept has proved most helpful in clarifying the structure of societal reality, it has also caused major disagreement, discussions and -as we have seen- a number of misconceptions. This has to some extent caused the phrase 'sphere sovereignty' to become a rather controversial one. We become especially aware of this when inventorying which contemporary Christian parties have incorporated the concept of sphere sovereignty in their views of State and Society. Globally, we will get the following picture.

The Christian Democrat Party, an amalgamation of the Anti-Revolutionary Party (*ARP*), Christian-Historic Union (*CHU*) and the Catholic People's Party (*Katholieke Volkspartij; KVP*) owes its affinity to the notion of sphere sovereignty to the Anti-Revolutionary contribution. In this setting, it has had to tolerate the Roman Catholic concept of subsidiariness as its bedfellow. As we will see in **, ten years from its formation an attempt has even been made by the Christian Democrat Party to integrate both principles in order to provide a more unequivocal basis for Christian-Democratic politics. This amalgamation of principles, however, invariably leads to erosion of the fundamental character of the principles in question, either of which can only be done justice to when given prominence over its competitor. An exposition on this 'battle for primacy' and its outcome in Christian Democrat ideology can be found in a following section. Substantial as the idea of sphere sovereignty may be for the party's view of State and Society, it will suffice here to say that the idea of sphere sovereignty is by no means a generally accepted notion. Its competition with the idea of subsidiariness is undeniable and the key issue here is which of the two is going to bite the dust in the intended fusion.

The views held by the *SGP* can be said to betray major features of sphere sovereignty; the party, however, shows inconsistency when it abandons this principle in its concept on the interrelationship between Church and State (see chapter 5).

In *GPV*-circles, sphere sovereignty is a commonly known concept. However, it is not incorporated and applied integrally. On the whole, reluctance on their part does not seem so much to follow from any objections to the contents of the idea, as from the history of the terminology and, more specifically, the scriptural proof to sustain this principle.

From the outset of its activities the *RPF* has embraced this Christian concept of Society, with sphere sovereignty playing a prominent role in it. In one of the first publications issued by the then Board of Advisers, *Christelijke Politiek en Maatschappijvisie (Christian Politics and View of Society)*, the party's approval of this key notion in Christian political tradition is expressed very clearly.

In the foregoing section we discussed briefly some of the misunderstandings relating to sphere sovereignty. These misunderstandings sprang from the misinterpretation of the word 'sovereign', the 'watertight compartments' interpretation, the question of levelling, as well as the supposedly static nature of the principle. When we survey the history of Christian politics, we notice that it has not been easy to take away these misapprehensions, but rather have caused a good deal of confusion and division. The question arises whether it must not be deemed imperative to submit the concept of sphere sovereignty to a thorough re-evaluation and, if possible, a reformulation. This involves a major opportunity for a party like the *RPF* to formulate up-to-date and recognisable views which the party can truly identify with, whilst keeping in touch with the tradition of Christian politics.

We must realise, though, that the need for re-evaluation and, whenever necessary, adjustment of the results of biblical-philosophical reflection, has been acknowledged all along in circles of Reformed Philosophy, as it was by Dooyeweerd himself. With respect to this we may, for instance, refer to the further differentiation and concentration of the principle of sphere sovereignty, which is implied by speaking of 'natural relations and societal relations' (43, p. 201 vv.). In this section, therefore, we would not be so presumptuous as to claim originality for such a re-evaluation. Besides, from what has been said earlier on in this chapter about a Reformed concept of society, it may be inferred that re-evaluation and re-formulation cannot import the disposal of the heart of the principle of sphere sovereignty. As a starting-point for a biblically sound view of society, and as a guard against the intrusion of one sphere on another, the principle has proved too valuable to be wasted. Moreover, the very principle comes to us with irresistible force, in whichever way it may be phrased. The principle is simply the putting into words of what we see around us. How to interpret this, and how to formulate this, will never stop being a matter of trial and error. For this reason we must at all times be prepared to review open-mindedly cherished theories and ideas, purge them and, if need be, readjust them. This leaves unimpaired that in the disclosure of the principle of sphere sovereignty we have discovered a very essential principle for the ordering of society, a discovery which we cannot give up thoughtlessly.

2.5 Distinctive offices and responsibilities

At a closer examination of the misunderstandings relating to sphere sovereignty, as mentioned in section 2.3, it appears that these misunderstandings are largely due to the fact that 'sovereignty' is generally thought of in terms of relations of authority and respect as part of the various societal spheres. However, it is important that the internal hierarchical structure should not be considered as the only feature shared by all spheres. To fully understand this, we must make the following observations on the meaning and destination of the various spheres of society. Each sphere has *its own meaning and destination* and, as a consequence, its own responsibility to carry out. This diversity of responsibilities is fundamental to the diversity of societal spheres. However, all spheres of

society share their deepest meaning and ultimate destination. They cannot be different from the deepest meaning and ultimate destination of all things created. That is a fact of which every page of the Bible gives testimony: they lie in 'being there' to the glory of the Creator. Paul puts this crisply into words: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things". This implies that there is a common source, a common meaning and a common destination for everything: God, who is Creator and Preserver and Accomplisher. God must be central in all His creation, everything must be focused on Him, because everything is dependent on Him. It is His right to receive all glory (compare this with what we said in section 1.3). Serving God is the call of all that exists. This is the case for mankind and the world of flora and fauna alike, for natural creation as much as for the products of human culture, for the Church no less than for the spheres of matrimony and the State. Everything which does not exist to the glory of God, fails to reach its destination, misses the target. Whenever man, in his work, his relations and in the spheres of society, rather than pursuing the glory of God, pursues his own glory, he acts inconsistently with the order of Creation, with the highest command and, as a result, transgresses the law that God has laid down for the entire creation. In this opposition to God's will, involving both command and promise, we discern the core of what the Bible terms 'sin'.

This service to God, functioning to His glory subsequently becomes manifest in the various spheres of society in various ways, in accordance with their specific destinations and their specific responsibilities. Because of this, the service to God the Creator by the sphere of the church is essentially different from the service to God by the sphere of state, of the family, or of the school. It is imperative for all to be focused on God's glory, but how this is realised differs per sphere.

We could contend that, where sphere sovereignty emphasises the exercise of (derived) authority within the spheres, there is much in the light of what we have just claimed that argues for putting more emphasis on the service to God. In other words: the performance of an *office*, which should also be central in exercising authority. There is no other reason for authority to be exercised than to bring the societal sphere to which it belongs, to its destination, make it achieve its end. Moreover, when we speak of 'offices', this obviously involves the kind of exercise of authorisation and authority which exacts accountability to Him who has given authority to people and grants them authorisation.

The exercise of authority, therefore, is best described as the performance of *distinctive offices*. These offices within the various spheres cannot be reduced to one another, since each of them has its individual structure in which it is exercised. We will enter into greater detail about the office of government -the actual focus of this book- in a following chapter. It may be sufficient now to highlight the fact that this office is quite distinct from the office of persons in authority in other spheres. For instance, the office of the male head in the sphere of matrimony is of a different nature from the office that parents hold in the family sphere. The same is true of the office of the employer in the company, and of teachers at school. To us, of course, it sounds a great deal more familiar speaking about the clerical offices and about clerical office-holders. However,

this must not lead us to infer that it is only in cases of persons of authority that we speak of offices. Nothing withholds us from assigning the same term to those in subordinate positions, for they are no less to render service to God. The subordinate -parishioner, pupil, citizen, employee- is equally responsible for making the societal sphere reach its destination.

In this sense the awareness of distinctive offices signifies an amendment to the principle of sphere sovereignty, in that the misunderstandings and objections treated earlier in this chapter are put in an altogether different light. Emphasising the performance of an office removes every ground to the impression as if the 'sovereignty' were allocated to the person of the office-holder. Neither is it probable in this regard to suspect a closed and static view of society, nor that a 'watertight-compartments' idea or, e.g., the idea of a neutral state should logically follow from it.

This re-evaluation and amendment has eliminated the most elementary objections and doubts that have been raised in the course of time against sphere sovereignty. One more issue commands our attention, *i.e.* the point raised in section *** concerning the leeway to discriminate qualitatively between the various spheres. Speaking in terms of 'distinctive offices', we might put the question differently: 'Is every kind of responsibility, of exercise of authority within a societal sphere, to be considered an office? In compliance with what W.H. Velema (100, p. 12-14) observed, we tend to repudiate this claim and distinguish between *offices* and *responsibilities*. Both categories belong to a different order: the Bible teaches us about the institution of the normative framework of offices (matrimony and family, church, state), whereas responsibilities relating to spheres of life as a result of man's freedom of initiative with regard to the fulfilment of his mission to manage and exploit creation*. In being conferred an office, man receives his vocation directly from God, whilst being at liberty also to create other spheres with an eye to fulfilling his mission, to sustain or, if necessary, even terminate them. We may phrase the difference otherwise: any office always presupposes responsibility. However, not every responsibility equals an office. As for responsibilities, in the course of history we have witnessed both the emergence and sometimes the disappearance of spheres (e.g. the guilds). It is also possible for spheres to change shape, structure and substance. The same cannot be argued for offices, which have a fixed structure due to their foundation in the order of creation. This means that 'variations' of, say, marriage, must be designated as well as rejected as aberrations of the normative structure., whereas the spheres which in the light of the foregoing we would not identify as 'offices' do leave some room for such variations. (cf. section 2.2).

We therefore re-state as our conclusion that co-ordination of the various societal spheres by no means implies levelling. However, when distinguishing between offices and responsibilities, we must bear in mind that both include a final responsibility towards the Creator. The essence of all human activity in creation lies in man's responsibility as God's image. It is important to determine that this dimension - termed in section 2.4 'the religious substratum' of the principle of

sphere sovereignty- should remain present and, -putting it even more strongly- being its very core, cannot be absent in a truly Reformed view of state. This fundamental remains intact even in our redefining the principle in terms of the distinctive offices and responsibilities.

We must also remark here that this distinction does not alter our former observation about the essential of all human cultural activity, official and responsible, to take place in the light of the service to the Kingdom of God. In this we recognise the different motives mentioned in section 1.3: the cultural mandate of man, being the likeness of God, needs to be performed in responsibility towards the Creator (*coram Deo*) and in service to the King (*pro Rege*), in the perspective of His second coming and the founding of His Kingdom.

Re-evaluating the principle of sphere sovereignty thus leads us to modifying the definition, which now incorporates the necessary amendments to the principle: the principle of *distinctive offices and responsibilities*. With the help of this guiding principle for the ordering of society we will attempt in the following chapters to acquire a clearer vision of the unique position of the State in a differentiated society, as well as of the unique responsibility of government. Indeed -it is worth stressing once more- that is the most relevant part to a political party.

However, before proceeding with our major objective, we will have to review an altogether disparate principle which makes up part of the political vision of christian-democrats.

2.6 Subsidiarity

By making co-ordination of the societal spheres the core of its ideas, the Reformed view of society explicitly distances itself from the Roman Catholic view, in which the idea of subsidiariness plays a central role. This principle is the result of the organic, and therefore highly hierarchical philosophy so typical of the Roman Catholic tradition. In his famous encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), Pope Pius XI worded the principle of subsidiariness as follows:

With these words we are forthwith introduced to the 'religious substratum' of the principle of subsidiariness (cf. section 2.3.2). In this principle the centrality of the notion of the *corpus Christianum* is conspicuous. In the light of 1 Corinthians 12 human society must be viewed as the body of Christ, made up of different parts into an organic and harmonious solidary aggregate.

From this view of the makeup of society it follows that 'inferior' spheres (e.g. family, company, etc.) are seen as autonomous, independent *constituents* of the state aggregate (cf. section 3.2.3). With an appeal to the public interest, the government is licensed to intervene, whenever the 'inferior' communities fall short in performing their responsibilities to the benefit of the greater whole of the state (20, p. 63). On the other hand, given its definition it must be conceded that

the principle of subsidiariness can also be interpreted as an instrument for preventing the state from contracting totalitarian traits.

2.6.2 Efficiency

After this attempt to outline the spiritual dimension of the principle of subsidiariness, we cannot help perceiving the religious substratum of this principle to be in steady retreat. No more than the protestant-christian vision of society, captured in the principle of sphere sovereignty (see section 2.3.3), has the Roman Catholic philosophy of society proved immune to a secularisation process and it is equally likely to be wasting its original character. There is, however, a crucial difference in the respective positions that both will end up taking. We previously observed that there is a good deal of agreement between a secularised 'sovereignty idea' and a liberal view of State and Society. Similarly, political practice has shown a secularised notion of 'subsidiarity' to link up easily with the socialist (social-democrat) view. The social-democrat view has the same strained view of the role of State as the 'top of society', taking up or allotting itself responsibilities on grounds of efficiency (centralisation!). In Roman Catholic social doctrine, one of the major questions from the outset has been on which level a specific responsibility could most efficiently be dealt with. But with secularisation gaining ground in Roman Catholicism, a concomitant spiritual dismantling of the principle (society as organism, the *corpus Christianum*) and its degradation to a mere *principle of efficiency* have become manifest. Especially during the past few years the consequences of this efficiency tenet have become clearly visible: a technocratic approach to the social problems surfacing, irrespective of whether these problems are government business or not. It is striking to see the effortless adaptation of terminology used in both liberal and social-democrat state philosophy. Although with regard to the responsibilities of government the former favours a narrower view and the latter a broader view, both share a disregard or lack of understanding of the individual characteristics and of the normative structure of the non-State spheres in their view of society. This flaw is epitomised in their speaking of these spheres as 'intermediary spheres'. This terminology betrays the assumption of a hierarchically layered society, with the non-State spheres caught in the middle between the State as the highest and the individual as the lowest unit. Attracted as we may find ourselves to the christian-democratic concern for a 'caring' or 'responsible' society, with the government returning responsibilities to the individual and the societal spheres in which he functions, we must not overlook the fact that it is here that we find the christian democratic view fundamentally at odds with the Reformed view. For in the process of present-day government responsibilities being transferred to the intermediary spheres, efficiency is the word. Too often, however, the fundamental question of which responsibilities essentially belong to the government and which do not, remains unasked. This must be attributed to the fact that the subsidiarity principle does not take into account the distinctive structures of State and non-State spheres - together with their mutual irreducibility as its immediate result-, or insufficiently

so. And such cannot remain without consequences. The spheres will not suffer their individual characters being neglected thus.

2.7 No 'state-ification' of society - no socialisation of the state

When considering what we have just said about the relationship between State and Society, it will be evident that from a Reformed perspective we must disapprove of any infringement of the individual character of the State or of any other societal sphere. We should therefore explicitly point to the dangers of the 'state-ification' of society' on the one hand, and the socialisation of the State on the other. We will make a few comments on both developments.

There is a close link between the emergence of the welfare state and the tendency of collectivism or centralism. Wherever the citizen and his societal spheres are unable or hindered to fulfill their responsibilities, we see the state perform as a substitute, taking up mandates and responsibilities or being saddled with them. As a result, society becomes 'state-ified': the state is gaining more and more ground, forcing back the spheres. The fact that next to nothing is done to halt this development is to be blamed on a number of factors; overrating the role of State in both the socialist and the Roman Catholic view of State is certain to be a prominent one. The reverse of 'state-ification' is acquired by the socialisation of the State. This development, known as *corporatism*, involves likewise the risk of infringement on the unique character of the distinctive societal spheres. It means that the State in performing its responsibilities calls in the help of other spheres, transferring some of its mandates to them. An often-heard term in relation to this is *functional decentralisation*, an unsuitable phrase which unmistakably reveals a 'part-of-a-whole' line of thought.

The socialisation of the State is also apparent from the phenomenon of the so-called *covenants*, which has been enthusiastically received. In these covenants, the government commits itself to generally binding agreements with social organisations on the performance of responsibilities. This development fits the picture of a 'collective bargaining economy', that many find desirable and worth pursuing. As an illustration that there are not only positive sides to such a collective bargaining economy or *consensus state*, we render a remarkable quotation of a prominent Dutch social-democrat, Th. Wöltgens. He argues that "our collective bargaining economy' has been carried to absurd extremes. It has deteriorated into a situation where the government has seriously decapitated itself in terms of decision making." (*Trouw*, 16 January 1992). In order for us to evaluate this development we must distinguish carefully. For instance, in socio-economic matters one deals with 'general policy frameworks' for harmonising the ideas and planned policy measures of government, employers' organisations and trade unions in matters such as wage levels and price movement, aimed at common targets. A major question here is whether one might be right in claiming that making agreements between government and, for instance, private enterprises (e.g. on environment protecting measures) should be preferred to

exacting co-operation by force of law. Generally speaking the government will yet have to show a good deal of reserve entering into covenants which concern the performance of government responsibilities, the successfulness or failure of its policies being made to depend completely on the co-operation of (organisations from) society. This dependence also surfaces in a more structural, even institutionalised shape, such as industrial organisations and organisations for employment policy. In that area the disadvantages are most acute. However, phenomena of a more incidental nature, such as covenants, tie a government hands and feet to the preparedness of others to co-operate. Many though the advantages recognised in this administrative instrument may be, this self-chosen dependency removes from the hands of government the opportunity at all times to fulfill its own responsibilities.

Besides, in view of the supervisory role of parliament covenants taking the place of legislation is a fact to be criticised. However, it cannot be denied that from a state minister's point of view a covenant may prove a particularly practical and helpful instrument which can be used considerably easier and faster than the common legislative and regulatory tools. However, the major drawback of it lies in its minimum of accuracy and supervisability. Parliament, as co-legislator, is completely sidetracked, forced in most cases to acquiesce to the agreements already settled upon, if the minister has been so generous as to submit them to Parliament for approval at all.

We subscribe to some of the conclusions made by W.J.V. Vermeulen, who rules "(...) that many uncertainties escort the government's use of covenants. This being the case, the government would do better to limit the use of covenants to situations where more reliable instruments fail. (...) The use of covenants as a substitute for regulatory or economical instruments seems as yet not very desirable. It will take more certainty about the effectiveness of the existing covenants. Moreover, democratic supervision over the contents of policy (especially the level of the aims to be pursued) is to be a key factor in the evaluation. (105, p. 188).

A Reformed view of State and Society will have to object to both society's 'state-ification' and the state's socialisation, for these developments are at variance with the principle of the individuality of distinctive spheres. Schuurman has made it clear how both developments naturally fit the Roman Catholic view of State and Society, featuring the State as the supreme entity of a hierarchically layered society which is the aggregate constituted by the other spheres of society. (88, p. 34). The dynamism in the mutual relations between the societal spheres mentioned in section 2.3.4 by no means implies that we must ignore the fundamental distinction of responsibilities. Schuurman has put it thus:

"A Reformed view appreciates society's being made up of a great number of societal spheres, each having their own responsibilities and each being irreducible to each other. The State is one of these spheres. It should function according to its individual structure or nature among the other spheres. The state is not superior to other spheres of society; in their turn these spheres do not depend on the

State, After all, they do not owe their existence to the State. Even though there is a certain interwovenness, this fact does not deny them their unique responsibility. In our dynamic society this interwovenness is on the increase. Yet this does not suggest that their distinctive responsibilities are cancelled. Especially now the complexity and dynamism in society are increasing, it is vital that we should continue to recognise the distinctiveness of the societal spheres. Failing to do so will amount to repercussions in terms of levelling which will be devastating as regards responsibilities. Although the existence of the other spheres of society are not immediately denied in the idea of the welfare state, the central position of the State in the welfare state easily sets limits to their responsibilities. I hasten to add that because there is so much attractive about the welfare state, there tends to be too much permissiveness towards this deprivation of responsibilities taking place, and even a preference of relinquishing of responsibilities to the State. This process of 'state-ification' of society is wanting the right vision of the normative limits of each sphere of society. The State's jurisdiction is inflated at the expense of the domains of the other spheres." (88, p. 35)

By way of conclusion we claim the Reformed view to have appreciation for the distinctive responsibilities of the State and of the non-State spheres, and to distance itself unequivocally from the consensus state, in which the government makes itself dependent on the co-operation of persons and institutions from the non-State spheres in performing its tasks.

With this excursion at the end of our exposition of the Reformed view of Society, the sphere of State has come into focus. The following chapter will address the sphere of State in greater detail.

3. THE STATE

Many have attempted to describe the essence, the nature of the State. Such attempts always result in a political theory. These theories are not so much concerned with the functioning or the organisation of the sphere of State as they are with its *foundation*, its *origin*. Hence, the scholarly discipline of politicology, or State Philosophy, must be viewed as a philosophical rather than a strictly legal occupation.

History shows that there has always existed a close alliance between the ruling religion or religious persuasion of a given period on the one hand, and the concurrent philosophy of State on the other. H. Dooyeweerd and H.J. van Eikema Hommes have presented a classification of Western philosophy of State, in which the various philosophies of State are viewed against the background of four religious *fundamental motives*¹ *prevailing in the cultural evolution of the Western world. They are listed below in chronological order:*

- a) *the Ancient Greek motive of form and substance,*
- b) *the Biblical motive of Creation, Fall and Redemption,*
- c) *the Roman Catholic motive of nature and grace,*
- d) *the humanistic motive of nature and freedom/independence/autonomy.*

It has been chiefly Dooyeweerd's achievement to portray in various instances the functioning of these fundamental motives in the theories of Law and State. His insights will prove very valuable within the scope of this chapter, to understand the various concepts of State as they have evolved in the course of history. Before passing some of these in review, we will briefly discuss which make up the essential contrasts between the four fundamental motives. The thing in common with the Ancient Greek, the Roman Catholic and the humanistic fundamental motive, is the inner dialectics. It means that there is always an irreconcilable tension between the two equalling antipodes. This tension, surfacing in the continuous struggle to gain prominence, can never be resolved theoretically. Primacy will always be given to one of the antipodes at the expense of the other. The tragedy of the philosophers who are governed by such a fundamental motive -we will exemplify this with some individual cases- is that they try to resolve this dialectic rationally. The biblical fundamental motive of Creation, Fall and Redemption, on the other hand, knows of no such dialectic. Its motive is *integral*. The elements of Creation, Fall and Redemption are not equalling antipodes between which there exists an irreconcilable tension. After all, sin is not equal to Creation, but parasitises on it! Because of the integral nature of this fundamental motive there is no contest for prominence. Hence

¹ On the terminology used in English, Gordon H. Clark in the introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's *the twilight of western thought* (1960; Philadelphia, Penn.) writes: Dooyeweerd has been criticized for using the word *motive* instead of *motif*. Let us note, however, the difference between these two words. *Motive* means 1) that which incites to motive or action; 2) a predominant idea; design. *Motif* means the leading feature in literary or artistic work, especially in music. *Motif* implies a conscious and deliberate pattern. *Motive* implies exactly what Dooyeweerd is concerned with, the religious presuppositions of a culture, the ground of thought rather than the product of thought, as with *motif*.

Christian philosophising needs to be characterised by the integrality of the philosopher's fundamental attitude: believing that God, the Source of all reality, has created everything; confessing that man is sinful and guilty; and recognising that Redemption by Jesus Christ is needed.

In the next section we will briefly discuss a number of more or less representative philosophies of State. For the analysis of the link with the religious background of the philosopher(s) in question the reader is referred to the writings of Dooyeweerd and Van Eikema Hommes, listed in the table of reference. Given the actual purpose of this book it is especially important to get a clear view of how the various philosophies of State evolved. This will provide us with a helpful, if not indispensable framework for an evaluation of these philosophies when comparing Reformed politics with other political views. In other words: the present-day liberal, socialist and Christian-Democratic philosophies of State and the ensuing political stances in topical issues are rooted deeply in the history of State philosophy and can only be understood against this historical background.

In section 3.3 we will give special attention to the development of a Reformed philosophy of State. Finally, in section 3.4, we will address ourselves to the philosophy of State as conceived by the RPF.

3.2 Philosophies of State throughout history

3.2.1 Plato

The renowned Greek philosopher Plato (427 - 347 B.C.) has disclosed his philosophy of State in his book *Politeia*. He believes the State to be an all-embracing sphere, with man and the other spheres in which he functions being subordinate. It is a totalitarian State, which is responsible for the organisation of society and which is to take care of justice, happiness and well-being. Plato's ideal state comprises three classes. The lower class, made up of manual workers and agrarians, embodies the main virtue of moderation. The middle class, which is the military one, represents the main virtue of courage, and is responsible for protecting the State society against threats from the outside as from within. The highest class accommodates the governors. The main thing about their education is that it involved philosophy. For that matter they are the epitomes of the main virtue of sagacity. It is a well-known phrase of Plato's, that there is no solution to the maladies of the State, unless 'the philosophers become kings and the kings become philosophers'. It is by these philosophers, whose function is to contemplate the eternal ideas of ontological forms of which the transient world and all things perceptible are mere copies, that the lower classes -moving within this transient world of substance- are governed. In this *doctrine of ideas*, forming the religious background for Plato's philosophy of State, we recognise both antipodes (form and substance) of the Greek fundamental motive. Plato, in giving primacy to the motive of form (the ideas), eventually arrives at his totalitarian vision of State, which assigns philosophers

the leading position in society. There is no consideration at all for any of the other societal spheres in which people are functioning. Central in his views is the *polis* (city state), from which the word 'politics' is derived. The polis exhibited the qualities of a religious community: only within the polis could a Greek be truly human. "Whoever cannot live in the polis, is no member of the polis and must therefore be either a beast or a god", said Aristotle, Plato's disciple.

3.2.2 Augustine

The emergence of Christianity signified the introduction of an altogether different religious fundamental motive, *i.e. Creation, Fall, and Redemption through Jesus Christ as the Word of God incarnate in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit*. A frontal clash with the ideas of the Greek-Roman philosophy resulted. The Greek-Roman philosophy attributed altogether different meanings to the elements of creation, fall and redemption, or lacked these notions altogether. For the first Christian philosophers this meant that they had to decide on whether to adapt or to reject them. Should the existing sciences and philosophies be modified so as to make them compatible with the newly-gained christian insights ('christianisation') or did the biblical fundamental motive exclude any possibility for a compromise? We must conclude that especially in the early days of Christianity, religious motives borrowed from Greek philosophy were often an unnoticed influence on the Christian perception of humanity and the world. This influence is noticeable even in the ideas of the leading philosopher of the epoch, St. Augustine (354-430). Consider for example his famous work *Confessiones* (Confessions). Most relevant to the present discussion, however, is his book *De Civitate Dei*, in which he unfolds his doctrine of 'two realms', on the responsibility of government. It was Martin Luther who, hundreds of years later, would adopt this doctrine to further elaborate it. With this two realms doctrine, a secular and a spiritual realm, St. Augustine has contributed greatly to Christian thought about government. Till this present day -though not always rightly so- debaters on government responsibility and on participation of Christians in politics frequently support their arguments with this two realms doctrine. However, neither Augustine nor any other philosopher in the early days of Christianity has bequeathed to us a consistent and full-fledged State doctrine.

3.2.3 Thomas Aquinas

A different ingenious thinker, however, *did* leave us a genuinely worked-out concept of State. It was Thomas Aquinas who, ignoring the biblical fundamental motive of Creation, Fall and Redemption, constructed a new religious fundamental motive which was to become the Roman Catholic motive of nature and grace. It incorporated both the Greek and the biblical fundamental motive. This impressive synthesis of Greek-Roman thinking and Christian faith allowed Thomas Aquinas to construct a doctrine which is even today the official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. The doctrine has also had a tremendous impact on the concepts of State of philosophers in previous times as well as on present-

day political beliefs.

By adjusting the Christian fundamental motive of Creation, Fall and Redemption to the Greek fundamental motive of form and substance, Thomas Aquinas was led to divide reality into two domains: the domain of the natural sub layer and the domain of the supernatural grace, with the latter domain covering the former, the centre of which is the (Roman Catholic) Church as the perfect community in the domain of grace. Not only non-anthropoc organisms, such as plants and animals belong to the natural domain, but also the societal spheres of family, company and school. And so does the State, being no less than the 'perfect community' in the domain of nature. This put the State in a powerful position towards the other spheres of society, which were seen as constituents dependent on the state aggregate. Hence, Thomas' theory did not cater for the uniqueness of those spheres. They are just 'inferior' spheres which must be subservient to the 'highest' sphere, the State. Meanwhile, however, the State has been made subjected to the Church, the perfect community in the domain of grace. The spiritual sword of the Church, held by the Pope, must rule over the secular sword of the State, held by the emperor. With regard to the dialectic of the religious fundamental motive, we point out that Thomas did establish a harmonious link between nature and grace (both of them having their own domain, with State and Church being the respective highest communities). However, the 'two-swords doctrine' ultimately gave the motive of grace primacy, degrading the motive of nature to a secondary level.

We should realise that these ideas emerged in the twelfth and 13th century against a cultural background of church homogeneity. The Roman Catholic Church as the sphere of Christian faith controlled all aspects of medieval life which was then largely undifferentiated. The sciences, the arts, economic life, language; everything was subject to the Church, which exerted her influence on all domains of life.

3.2.4 The humanistic fundamental motive

It is a fascinating thing to perceive how other thinkers in the late medieval period the motive of nature gradually rid themselves from being dominated by the motive of grace. Thus we see a growing opposition between nature and grace in thinkers such as William of Ockam and others belonging to the so-called 'nominalist movement'. They had more consideration for 'nature', which was now given greater opportunity to emancipate. Ockam condemns the predominant position of the Roman Catholic Church in the natural domain. His pupil Marsilius of Padua carries the issue one step further by subordinating the Church to the State.

This process was taking place as the Church's culture of homogeneity was in gradual decline: the sciences, cultural life, the arts and economic life were gradually liberating themselves from church domination and the princes of the newly emerging national states opposed their sovereignty to the political claims of the Church and the Pope. This changed opinion about the relationship

between nature and grace was to have far-reaching consequences for the philosophy of State. There was growing scepticism about the metaphysical foundation of Law and State. The origin of the State was no longer sought in the metaphysical, the 'supernatural'. As a result, the explanation for the existence of a hierarchical relationship between the State and its subjects had to be sought elsewhere. This required a working method which, assuming abstract individuals, tries to construe the social relations between individuals. It was in this period when the construction of the so-called *original* or *social treaty*, or *social contract* was introduced: the voluntary subjection by individuals to others by relinquishing their natural powers to them, who, from that moment on, are the government and have become the highest authority in the State. There is no reason for them to tolerate any infringements of this authority, granted to them by the citizens -church interference included.

In this respect we should mention *Jean Bodin* (1530-1596), who conceived the so-called 'modern sovereignty idea'. Bodin understood by this the exclusive authorisation of the supreme authority in the State to create positive legislation within the national boundaries. Other legislation -notably in the sphere of common law- is considered by Bodin to be valid only when recognised by the sovereign authority. Van Eikema Hommes points out that this concept of sovereignty has had an enormous influence. With his ideas about the *droit divin*, as disclosed in his book *Les six livres de la République*, Bodin has to largely set the trend for the developments of the states on the Continent. His influence is exceptionally conspicuous in the absolutist interpretation of the royal office by the kings of France. Dutch legislation too, breathes Bodin's concept of sovereignty***.

The construction of the social contract is encountered in one way or another with a great many other writers: Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, Samuel Pufendorf, John Locke, Christian Wolff, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. However, there are differences in interpretation. The first three -as well as Rousseau, who started from the social contract- eventually ended up with a strict State absolutism. Locke and Wolff, on the other hand, espoused a more individualistic concept of State. However, all of these writers present a new religious fundamental motive, *the humanist motive of nature and freedom*. Further on we will feature some of the representatives of either interpretation which have developed from this new motive -which is once again a synthesis between the previous fundamental motives, viz. the biblical and the Roman Catholic motive.

It should be noted that the humanistic fundamental motive has evolved from a new attitude towards man and nature. Once man has cast off the galling bonds of the Church, man feels free, independent, autonomous and able to act 'creatively' himself. The biblical motives of creation, fall into sin and redemption become secularised, with redemption now being interpreted as the self-liberation of autonomous man. Man takes his fate into his own hands, and is no longer willing to be subject to some divine authority.

It is important to notice that the humanistic motive of nature and freedom is *dialectic* by nature: emphasis on one antipode (for instance the predomination

motive) poses a threat to the other antipode (the freedom motive). A clear example of this can be found in the presuppositions of the strictly scientific, positivist method: when we assume the entire reality to be determined, there is no room left for man's freedom to give shape to reality. Man's personality and his freedom are then sacrificed to scientific thought.

Here we see a concretisation of what in section 2.2 we referred to as the misconception of man himself creating spheres on a voluntary basis. In the state, the social contract is the result of a 'self-willed structuring of interrelations'.

3.2.5 Thomas Hobbes

The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) unfolded his philosophy of Law and State in his book *Leviathan*. In his absolutist view of the State, he assumes an original state of absolute anarchy, in which there is a war of all against all (*bellum omnium in omnes*), the highest law being the law of self-preservation. From Hobbes stems the well-known statement, that one man is a wolf to the other (*homo homini lupus*). The cause of this situation lies in the fact everybody is entitled to everything. For there is no civic state and hence no generally valid regulation of possessions and property. Add to this human qualities such as covetousness, distrust and self-inflation, and the scene is set for a permanent threat of turmoil. It is human reason that convinces him that this situation can only be changed when the individuals decide to bring into being a collective power, which, as the government, can enforce a peaceful society. This, then, is realised by means of the 'original treaty', by which the individuals devolve all their rights to the sovereign authority. This may be a king (monarchy), a group of persons (aristocracy) or the (general union of the) people (democracy). One way or the other, the sovereign has absolute power. This explains the title of his book; the sovereign meets the description of the Leviathan given in Job 41 and 42 (especially 41:33, "On earth it has no equal, a creature without fear", cf. Isaiah 27:1). Hobbes even speaks of the State as 'earthly god'. His absolute power over its subjects leaves no room whatsoever for independent spheres outside the sphere of state; there is no check on the power of state. Neither does Hobbes allow for the right to freedom of individual citizens. Besides, given the historical background of State absolutism, the absence of the demand, or the seldom occurrence of the demand, for an intrinsic restriction to government power with respect to other societal spheres, need not surprise us. Due to the emergence of the modern unity states in the 16th and 17th century, and the internal conflicts that were taking place (religious wars!), it was a matter of course that the main focus was with how to preserve unity. Hence it was necessary to render all power into the hands of the sovereign monarch (monopolisation of government power).

3.2.6 John Locke

John Locke (1633-1704), with his doctrine of inalienable innate human rights,

protested against the absolutism of thinkers like Hobbes. In his view of the original treaty, he deviates from Hobbes' view on a cardinal point: the individuals do not transfer all their liberties and rights to the State, but only the exertion of their right to self-maintenance and the natural mandate to punish. This reduces State power to protecting the freedom rights of the citizens. Locke meant to safeguard the humanist personality ideal from the natural scientific, positivist domination ideal. Locke was also the first one to hint at a separation of powers, which was later elaborated on by Montesquieu in the well-known doctrine of the separation of the legislative, executive and the judiciary powers.

With Locke's philosophy of State began the idea of the *constitutional state*. However, he was so preoccupied with the protection of citizen's material possessions, that he was blind to the principle of restricted State power with respect to persons (expressed in fundamental rights such as the freedom of speech) as well as to the non-governmental spheres (expressed in in e.g. the freedom of association and assembly). The impact of his doctrine of the inalienable human rights on subsequent philosophers such as Rousseau, Montesquieu and Kant is evident and of major importance for the later development of the idea of the constitutional state. Constitutional practice, too, is based on his doctrine. This is true of, e.g., the 1776 Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, and the French Declaration of Human and Civil Rights in 1789.

3.2.7 Jean-Jacques Rousseau

In his book *Du Contrat Social*, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau continues in the tracks of Locke's philosophy. However, the main role that Rousseau ascribes to the original treaty is that each individual, by acceding to this treaty, surrenders unconditionally to the community. According to Rousseau, this would create a perfect unity between the people, with no one dominating the other, but in which everyone is absolutely free and equal to all others. Freedom is to be understood as a new form, *i.e.*, being protected by the collective power, in return for that which he has devolved and transferred to the collective.

Rousseau hereby puts all emphasis on the community: in the original treaty, multitude becomes unity (*unité*), private interest becomes public interest (*intérêt commun*), the will of all (*volonté de tous*) becomes the public will (*volonté générale*). This public will led Rousseau to believe direct popular democracy to be the only lawful form of government, enabling the entire people directly, *i.e.*, without representation, to participate in legislation. This would be the eventual realisation of the citizens' freedom. Rousseau therefore asserts that all citizens should submit to popular will -*volonté générale*-, signifying the bending of the will of all individuals to the public will, which is aimed at the public interest.

Reasoning thus, he arrives at the statement that whoever breaches the law, does so to the damage of his own freedom. Thus forced to comply, man is forced to be free (*on les forcera à être libre*).

For Rousseau, the power of popular democracy is absolute, sacred and unimpeachable. Like Hobbes, in his theory Rousseau does not accommodate

non-governmental spheres with their own, independent jurisdiction that cannot be reduced to government/state/national legislation. And so the dialectics between both antipodes of the humanist fundamental motive of nature and freedom looms large in Rousseau's ideology as well; whereas his starting-point is man's freedom, by way of the social treaty construction he finally ends up with the absolute State doctrine of direct popular democracy, in which individual freedom is unequivocally sacrificed to the unlimited power of the *volonté générale*.

The influence of Rousseau's philosophy of State has been significant. His theory of freedom and equality of all citizens on the one hand, and the uncurbed potentialities for the power of the people to place strictures on freedom on the other, materialises in the developments in France soon after Rousseau died. Van Eikema Hommes justly perceives a direct link between Rousseau's doctrine of the *contrat social* and the terrorism of the French Revolution. (21, p. 138).

3.3 The development of a Reformed philosophy of State

3.3.1 Introduction

So far we have reviewed some episodes in the history of political or State theory. Many more philosophers and authors could have been added. However, we are mainly concerned here with presenting the main outline, whilst not losing sight of the link with underlying religious convictions as expressed in a fundamental motive.

In this section we will devote ourselves to the question of how much has been contributed to developing a philosophy of State on the basis of the biblical fundamental motive of Creation, Fall into sin and Redemption through Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

To eliminate misunderstandings, it seems worthwhile to repeat our remarks in section 1.2 about the usage of the label 'Reformed'. Whenever we apply the phrase 'Reformed philosophy of State' in this section, we do so in order to assert the intention of this philosophy, i.e. to be truly biblical. This intention was the reason for this philosophy to be developed, on the basis of the biblical fundamental motive.

3.3.2 Reformation

We already mentioned St. Augustine's vision of State, but our conclusion was that his was not yet a full-fledged one. Successively, we showed the main stream of the philosophy of State to be enticed by the Roman Catholic fundamental motive of nature and grace, a synthesis of the biblical fundamental motive with the Greek motive of form and substance. When returning to St. Augustine and carrying on in his footsteps, we will not be surprised to find ourselves ending up in the days of the early 16th century Reformation. For it was the Reformation which rediscovered the Bible as the Word of God, and which it

reinstated in its rightful position in the heart of the Church, but also in the heart of science and philosophy. It is therefore justifiable to claim that this Reformation signified the conception of a Reformed/Christian philosophy of State based on the biblical fundamental motive, as described above.

When we take special notice of views of State held at the time of the Reformation, we must realise that the great Reformer Martin Luther was first and foremost a preacher of the gospel, rather than a politician or political theorist. However, still largely predominant in his social and political views was the Roman Catholic scheme of nature and grace. In matters in the domain of nature, Luther, well-acquainted with the doctrine of the two realms, accredited absolute authority to the State.

Not so with John Calvin, in whose ideas we do perceive a radical influence of the biblical fundamental motive. This leads Calvin to view the relationship between the sphere of State and the other spheres in a fresh perspective. Calvin defies any form of State absolutism, in which all other societal spheres are reduced, and made subject, to the sphere of State.

It was *Johannes Althusius* (1557-1638) who developed a comprehensive doctrine of Law and State based on the biblical fundamental motive. It is in his doctrine that the outlines of the principle of sphere sovereignty become manifest. About the spheres of society he writes in his book *Politica methodice digesta*, clearly betraying the influence of the creation idea: "*****"

With this he asserted -in forthright contradiction to Bodin's sovereignty idea (see section 3.2.4) - that all non-statal spheres of society have their individual, authentic authorisation to rechtsvorming which cannot be reduced to State legislature.

Unfortunately, in their time the ideas of Calvin and Althusius found little response. Their Scripture-based resistance against State absolutism suffered defeat by the humanistic views of Hobbes, Bodin, Grotius, Locke and Rousseau. In other words: the humanistic fundamental motive of nature and freedom overrode the biblical fundamental motive of creation, fall into sin and redemption. This frustrated any further development of a Reformed-Christian philosophy of State. The trend set by St. Augustine and taken up again in the Reformation, was once more interrupted for a long stretch. Van der Pot says about Althusius: "He was rediscovered as late as in the past hundred years, viz. at a time when, after the freedom of the individual had been secured against the State, the other spheres of society were again put on the agenda." (68, p. 17)

3.3.3 G. Groen van Prinsterer

A new epoch was dawning as in the course of the 19th century the states in Europe witnessed radical changes in political relations. The absolute power that the monarchs had wielded so far had to give way to a system in which it had to be shared with a representative body for the commons. The parliamentary system was forging ahead.

This system was institutionalised in the Netherlands slowly but surely. In 1814,

prince William became King of the Netherlands with the title of 'Sovereign Monarch'. William I considered himself to be the centre of the State, and ruled as an 'enlightened despot'. He thought it appropriate to meddle in everything and would interfere wherever and whenever he saw fit. The best illustration of this was his sanctioning the General Regulations for the Administration of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1816, which caused unrest within the Church, persecutions and finally, in 1834, a schism. In 1840 -after a short-lived reunification with Belgium- the relations saw a clear change: power of parliament increased at the expense of the King's. In 1839, Parliament, against the King's wish, made two ministers of the Crown resign due to a conflict. A year later the King, disillusioned, abdicated.

In the following years, which saw a further evolution of the parliamentary system, the Christian-politician *G. Groen van Prinsterer* made his appearance. One should realise that in those days there were no political parties, within which a particular tradition of state philosophy could be developed. The members of parliament were divided in 'conservatives', which counted the religious members among them, and 'liberals'.

It was Groen van Prinsterer who left us his meritorious work '*Unbelief and Revolution*', which achieves an accurate analysis of the gap between the French Revolution on the one hand, and the 16th century Reformation on the other. He challenged in his writings and political actions the notion of popular sovereignty. It was also Groen who restated the antithesis, the enormous and unbridgeable gap between humanism and Christianity. This antithesis, according to Groen, is all about a battle between principles. Christians should remain faithful to their principles, also in the domain of politics. "Isolation (=holding on to the principles) is our strength". Thus he made room for a Reformed/Christian philosophy of State and Society, based on the biblical fundamental motive, as against the humanism-based views of philosophers such as *Immanuel Kant* and *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel* and, in their footsteps, *Karl Marx*. Besides, Groen himself initiated the formation of the first genuine Dutch political party of Christian principles, which made a platform for the elaboration of the biblical fundamental motive into a Reformed philosophy of State and Society. Groen's reflections on the 'Christian state' has been of no little account to the development of a Reformed philosophy of State. R. Kuiper has rendered a clear exposition on the evolution in Groen's ideas on this issue, in which he points out that the discussion on the Christian state has generated 'a formulation of principles with regard to the relationship between Church and State.' (48, p. 82)

3.3.4 A. Kuyper

The political party that we mentioned in the above section, was the Anti-Revolutionary Party. The ARP was established in 1879 under the energetic leadership of *Abraham Kuyper* (1837-1920). It would be possible to devote volumes on the person, the activities and the achievements of Kuyper. However, within the scope of the present discussion we will be mainly concerned with his

contribution to developing a Reformed philosophy of State and Society. The central idea that Kuyper introduced was the concept of *sphere sovereignty*. This concept has been amply described in section 2.3 dealing with the ideas of the interrelations between the spheres of society. With the introduction of this guiding principle for the ordering of society, Kuyper gave a strong impetus to political thought in Christian circles. Kuyper, standing in the tradition of Augustine, Calvin, Althusius and Groen and from a Bible-based attitude, provided a footing for determining the limits of principle, set to the sphere of State and its reach. To Christian politics, this insight in the responsibilities of, and the restrictions to the State in its confrontation with other, non-statal spheres has proved very important. For claiming derivation from the absolute divine authority for the wielding of authority in its own sphere, means that this authority does not descend from State authority. Hence, persons of authority within the distinct spheres are not accountable to the State, but directly to God for the way in which they utilise their authority, their sovereignty within their jurisdiction. In Kuyper's own words: "Without 'Sphere Sovereignty', State power is unrestrictedly commanding; disposing of persons, their lives, their rights, their conscience, of even their religious convictions." (50, p. 9-10)

We must point out here that Kuyper's Reformed philosophy of State was to a great degree supported by the ideas of *A.F. de Savornin Lohman*. In 1874 this expert in organic law wrote a book, *Gezag en Vrijheid* (Authority and Freedom), in which he contested that State authority should be accredited absolute power, endangering the freedom of the individual and the spheres of society that he belonged to. Like Kuyper, Lohman underscored the fundamental limitation of State authority, and was anxious for State intervention in the private sphere. Indeed, the principle of sphere sovereignty is so valuable, because it sets an *intrinsic* and *fundamental* limit to the jurisdiction of spheric authority. This is the excellence of the Reformed, Christian philosophy of State and Society as against the multitude of humanist philosophies and theories of the centuries before. Time and again these philosophies alternately emphasised the liberties of citizens and their spheres and the absolute power of the State with respect to the same citizens and their spheres.

3.3.5 H. Dooyeweerd

The Reformed philosophical movement -the heart of which is named *the Philosophy of the Cosmogenic Idea* have adopted Kuyper's doctrine of sphere sovereignty, elaborating it into a doctrine of universal significance for the understanding of created reality. The person of *H. Dooyeweerd* (1894-1977) is central to this philosophy. Van Eikema Hommes narrates how Dooyeweerd, when he was inaugurated in 1926, advocated an integral and radical Reformed-Christian view of created reality as the basis for philosophy and scientific and scholarly study. "He terms this view *cosmogenic idea*, understanding by it a philosophical *fundamental idea regarding the origin, the order and the coherence of temporal reality*. In imitation of Kuyper, he titled this view 'calvinistic' and, like Kuyper, understands this term in the sense of an all-embracing, Reformed-

Christian philosophy of life and reality. This philosophy has the divine sovereignty over creation as the very origin and legitimacy of all laws governing created reality as its central idea; and the idea of divine Providence as the organic bond, uniting all laws on a deeper level. From the idea of divine creation and divine Providence emanates the principle of sphere sovereignty of all God-given orderings of life with their individual immanent boundaries; as well as the principle of the organic coherence of all those domains of life, a coherence which is revealed in the structural organisation of the domains of life. (22, p. 8) In his treatise *Kuypers Wetenschapsleer* (Kuyper's Doctrine of Science), Dooyeweerd himself put it this way: "A Calvinistic philosophy of Law and State, which were viewed by the ingenious Kuyper as indispensable parts of the Calvinistic cultural mandate for our modern time, standing and falling with its being based on a cosmomic idea, binding together thinking and believing, religion and science, views of nature, society, law and morality, into one organic structure of unity, and makes them co-exist in harmony? Well -and I claim this with strongest confidence- indeed, such unity has been inherent to Calvinism from the outset." (13, p. 63)

It should be noted, however, that Dooyeweerd wished to reserve the term 'sphere sovereignty' to designate the relations between the various spheres of society ('individuality structures'). When speaking of the relations between the various 'modes of being', or 'aspects' of reality -on which assumption the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea is based- Dooyeweerd preferred to refer to their 'mutual irreducibility'.

It has been Dooyeweerd's major achievement to closely study the various societal spheres ('individuality structures') in the light of the impressive, coherent Christian-philosophical system, which the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea undoubtedly is. He has always distinguished a 'typical founding function' on the one hand, and a 'typical qualifying or guiding function' on the other. Both functions together in correlation make up a characteristic interpretation of the concerning individuality structure.

In a similar way Dooyeweerd studied the State, interpreting it in terms of philosophy. When we wish to represent Dooyeweerd's concept of State in this section, we will do so by including the results of his study of the typical structure of the sphere of State. These are divisible into two classes. Firstly the founding function of the State: this can be found in the cultural-historical aspect and can be described as "the monopolistic organisation of the power of the sword over a specified cultural area within territorial boundaries". Secondly, the qualifying function of the State, which can be found in the legal aspect, allowing us to describe the State as "a public legal community of authorities and subjects within the State territory."

We should also mention the systematic and worthwhile exposition given by *H.J. van Eikema Hommes* on Dooyeweerd's philosophy in relation to the domain of law.

Dooyeweerd's significance to the history of Christian politics is emphasised even more by his activities within the Anti-Revolutionary Party. From 1922 to 1926 he

was affiliated to the ARP's advisory office, the Dr Abraham Kuyper Foundation, which had been set up shortly before. Van Eikema Hommes remarked about this: "There he set up a practical (legal and political) department which was to give advice on requests that were coming to the office, and also a scientific department for systematical studies in the realm of law and political theory, which was to provide scientific support to the advisory office. With regard to the latter purpose, Dooyeweerd initiated the issuing of a magazine called *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatskunde*' (Anti-Revolutionary Political Science), and for a long time was one of its editors. In this magazine, Dooyeweerd has published comprehensive studies. The range of articles *In den strijd om een Christelijke Staatskunde, Proeve van een fundering der Calvinistische levens- en wereldbeschouwing* (Campaigning for Christian political science; proof of a foundation of the Calvinistic philosophy of life and reality) published in the years of 1924-1927, especially deserve to be mentioned here, although they never saw completion. (22, p. 1-2)

3.3.6 H. van Riessen

Last but not least we would like to mention in this range of authors who have contributed to the development of a Reformed philosophy of State is *H. van Riessen*. His countless writings, both philosophical and practical, were devoted to fundamental reflections on the State and its relation to other spheres of society. Van Riessen mainly continues the heritage of Dooyeweerd. However, within the circle of Reformed philosophy his publications stand out because of his unique way of expressing Christian philosophical ideas.

We would like to highlight three of these publications. In *Society of the Future* (1952), which is to be considered his major work that is topical even in our time, he presents an extensive exposition of the structural principles of society. In *Wijsbegeerte* (Philosophy) he outlines the basics of Reformed philosophy, dedicating special attention to the State. In his reflections on the relations between the State and other societal spheres, he renders a discussion of the principles of subsidiariness and sphere sovereignty. Thirdly, in view of the present issue we must refer to the publication by Van Riessen of *Christelijke politiek in een wereld zonder God* (Christian politics in a world without God). In this book he also provides an ample discussion of the structural principles for the sphere of State, besides other more down-to-earth issues such as the bankruptcy of the Welfare State.

Van Riessen, too, epitomises that the Anti-Revolutionary Party, as a channel, has made a great contributor to the development of Christian thought. For ± thirteen years, he was the ARP general secretary, and for *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatskunde* he authored various valuable contributions on the domain of political thought.

This course of development of a Reformed-Christian philosophy of State, however, was suspected to be discontinued, when in the late '70s the ARP merged with two other parties.....

3.4 The view of the RPF

Now that we have reached the last quarter of the 20th century on our journey through the history of political theory, which focused primarily on Reformed-Christian political theory, we wish to conclude with a close look at the RPF's views. By relating its declaration of principles to the biblical fundamental motive, the RPF has attempted to resume the course that seemed to be coming to a halt. We would like to call to mind that since its foundation in 1975 the RPF has consciously stressed its affinity with the Reformed-Christian tradition. The party has explicitly affirmed its willingness to put the heritage of its predecessors to use. This is manifest from the formulations of the party's statutes and the Party Platform, stating the party's basis, purpose and view of government. This makes clear where the party has its political-theoretical and political-philosophical roots.

When we wish to typify the heart of the party's philosophy of State, we may safely declare this philosophy in keeping with the tradition that has been described in the foregoing section. In gratitude for what was achieved in the past, we have embraced the insights of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Groen van Prinsterer and Kuyper, incorporating this legacy into a fundamental, truly biblical view of State, and combining it with the accomplishments of ARP personalities such as Dooyeweerd and Van Riessen. Meindert Leerling, a former RPF Member of Parliament, expressed could not have expressed himself better when he stated that "whenever it is about the deepest meaning of Christian politics and the position it is given to hold in the middle of society (...) there is a line of fundamentals running from Groen and Kuyper to the RPF." (53, p. 3)

A Reformed-Christian approach requires the State to be defined as a *public legal community* rooted in the divine order, consisting of government and citizens in a certain domain. In this domain the State functions as the authoritative body by the grace of God. In their turn the citizens are called to respect the authorities, which in the exertion of their authority have the exclusive power of the sword in order to carry out its responsibility by force, if necessary.

In the following chapter we will go into greater detail about public justice being the essential motive for the execution of government responsibilities within the context of the State, as well as the related issue of the government's power of the sword. We will repeatedly fall back on the notable study *The State in the light of Scriptures* by dr. Stuart Fowler, published in 1988 by the 'Institute for Reformational Studies' of Potchefstroom University, South Africa.

Fowler presents a description of the State which resembles largely the above description.: ".....(check Fowler).

James W. Skillen also speaks of the State as a community of public justice. (91, p. 210)

Concluding this chapter, we would briefly like to address ourselves to the definition of State as 'being rooted in the divine order'. In section 2.2 we already touched upon this issue. Opinions differ as to the origin of the State, and -more particularly- as to whether the State was called into being before or after the Fall

of man. Although this is not the place for a detailed treatise on this point, we cannot evade it altogether.

We need to say first that by using the phrase 'rooted in the divine order' our primary intention with it is to say that God Himself meant the State to be, and as such it is no human invention. Hereby we assume a radical position against every doctrine of State that in one form or another is based on a contract theory, as we saw in the sections 3.2.4 and 3.2.7. For the rest it will suffice to quote two authors, with whom we agree on this point.

In *Unbelief and Revolution*, Groen van Prinsterer writes about the origin of the State:.....

Secondly, we mention the viewpoint of J.A.H.J.S. Bruins Slot, who says in his *Bezinning en Uitzicht* (Reflections and Perspectives): "The State embodies a God-given legal order in the order of creation which is human society. Added to this has been the power of the sword as the repercussion of sin."

Now that we have gained better insight into the specific nature, the character of the sphere of State, it is now time for us to look more closely at the authoritative body within that sphere: the government.

4. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENT

4.1 Characterizing government

In the foregoing chapter we observed that the Bible does not only present us with a complete and fully fledged doctrine of State, even the number of Scriptural passages dealing with the State is very limited. Now that we wish to examine the responsibilities of government more closely, we will encounter a far greater amount of biblical data. Many passages, from both the Old and the New Testament, relate to government, its authority, the responsibilities which it has to carry out, and also the attitude towards the authorities which is exacted from its subjects. The passage generally seen as the principal one delineating the responsibilities of government is Romans 13:1-4. This need not surprise us, for in it Paul renders a resolute description of the nature of government, as well as a definition of its responsibilities. Still we must bear in mind -an observation that we have made before- that Paul does not provide us with a detailed and comprehensive view of government in this epistle. J. Koopman has pointed out correctly, that Paul does not address himself to the government in this epistle. Rather, Paul speaks 'by way of admonition to the subjects and -more specifically- to the Christian congregation in a non-Christian society' (47, p. 28). Nevertheless, certain characteristics of government are conspicuous in this passage.

4.1.1 Servant of God

In the first place, Paul's words leave no doubt about the government being a servant of God, called into being in the interest of the subjects or citizens.: "For it is God's servant for your good (verse 4). In this quality that the authorities exert their powers, and are authorized to demand obedience from the subjects. (cf. 1 Peter 2:13-14, "For the Lord's sake accept the authority of any human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong, and to praise those who do right"). In Christian politics, this 'servant element' of government has always been strongly emphasized. For it tells us some important things about the position of government. When we try to picture how a maid or a servant in past times would behave towards the one who had hired her or him (their 'master' or 'mistress'), it is clear that not private opinions and wishes, but those of the 'mistress' or 'master' should be expressed. It would be very important for a maid to take good notice of what the opinions or wishes of the 'missus' were. Her wish was command. Obedience, subservience, dependence and loyalty are the key-words in a master-servant relationship. To the government this means that it must be aware of its dependence on its Employer. It should be obedient to Him, seeking to know His will, and discharging itself adequately of its office. His Word is His command.

Unfortunately, however, we must conclude that nowadays authorities have very

little left of this attitude: the government takes little notice of God's Word and Commandments, biblical norms are generally considered outdated and irrelevant, and those in government often feel free to set standards of their own. The maid has assumed an independent attitude, for she feels a master-servant relationship to be something out of touch with modern reality. The government has become disloyal to its Lord. His commandments may now and then prove useful, but they have lost their normative power. The government thus neglects its office and with it its highest call. However, the governing authorities *remain* in service of God, even though they may no longer recognize it themselves. They cannot terminate a servant-master relationship of their own accord.

4.1.2 For your good

A second characteristic of government is its responsibility for the interests of its subjects. The government has been instituted 'for your good' and is therefore charged to pursue the good for its subjects. Although in this context the current terminology of 'public interest' and 'public well-being' seem to be synonymous, it would be ill-advised to apply these unqualified terms uncritically. We will return to this in the following section. The government's being there 'for your good', however, does not translate as 'in the people's service'. It is not immaterial to stress this point, since the notion of the government as the servant of the people, and its consequential commitment to carry out the will of (the majority of) the people, has become very much *en vogue*, among Christians as well. However, not even a government is able to serve two masters: it is in God's service, hence not in the people's. This remains true irrespective of the polity within which the government operates. The highest norm for government does not exist in the will of the majority either (cf. section 3.2.7!). Here is revealed a fundamental disagreement of Reformed political thought with the Christian-Democrat conviction that the government is committed to 'following the developments in society. Fowler writes about this: "This does not suggest that the government should be considered as merely an instrument for the people(25, p. 10)

It is in the light of these two primary characteristics that we must interpret Paul's admonition to Timothy: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity." (1 Timothy 2:1-2) J. Koopmans comments on this: "The prayer for the government aims at peace and order in the world. The order in the world aims at the freedom of the Church. And the freedom of the Church signifies knowledge of the redeeming truth for all mankind." (47, p. 32)

4.1.3 The power of the sword

A third conspicuous element in Paul's definition of government that needs mentioning is the power of the sword. The government has been given the

sword as an instrument in performing its office. This means that under certain circumstances the government is legitimised to wield its authority by force and violence. However, Paul combines this recourse to violence to the government being God's servant on the one hand, and to a specific goal, viz. the punishing of wrongdoers on the other. The government must only resort to the power of the sword insofar this is necessary for the government to discharge its responsibilities: doing justice to the citizens, the punishment of evil being one aspect of this. Fowler remarks very concisely:.....

With respect to the government's power of the sword, Fowler and Douma, *i.a.*, have drawn attention to the logical and fluent transition between Romans 12 and Romans 13. In Romans 12, the congregation in Rome is exhorted to charity, and in verse 19 Paul warns them: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord." But some verses later, he points out that God has instituted authorities to punish evil, "to execute wrath on the wrongdoer".

4.1.4 The authority of government

At various occasions we mentioned the authority of government. One more comment has to be made. In a Reformed view of State the authority of government is *derived* authority. So much has become evident in the foregoing. It leans on the absolute authority of God, who distributes authority to those who have been called to the office. This vision is the exact opposite of the humanistic idea, which considers authority as a matter of mutual consent, custom, or tradition, acquired by the person of authority on grounds of personal skills and qualities. Ubbink remarks the following about the foundation of authority: "An often-heard statement these days is that authority should come not from above but from below if it wants recognition, but what is meant by that? Authority comes from above by definition. Whatever comes from below can only be accumulated power, never authority. Still, there is some truth in the claim that authority needs to come from below, i.e. it involves us, it is not some kind of leadership that comes out of the blue, to which, as it happens, we have to submit. God has taken care that his commandments are also engraved deep down in our conscience, so that the implementation of true authority which comes from above, and the recognition of it from the bottom of our hearts, always go hand in hand."(94, p. 47).

It is self-evident that this fundamental disagreement has consequences for our view on issues such as civil disobedience. For whoever considers authority a personal quality, will be readier to accept that someone has forfeited his or her authority, than someone who is aware that authority has been given from above (cf. John 19:11) Paul's admonishing words in Romans 13:1-2 ("Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment") should render us particularly cautious about civil disobedience.

Van Riessen has made the following comment on those in authority: "People in authority are not always people of outstanding quality. This is also the case for fathers and mothers. But in other spheres of society, too, people who are not very suitable for it, may receive authority. However, that is not what authority depends upon. It has been given to them by God and should therefore be respected. (...) Furthermore, the question whether the person of authority holds that position on grounds of either tradition or election is not so relevant. For authority as such is instituted by God. It is historically relevant, though, since political authorities are now elected into their office. This office then raises them above their election." (73, p. 90)

4.2 'Public justice' as a core notion

4.2.1 Biblical justice

In the previous sections we have already occasionally referred to notions of 'justice' and 'law': the state is a public *legal* community, within which the government, as God's servant, is committed to promoting justice. Not without a reason has the expression 'to serve and promote public justice' often been used throughout the history of Christian political theory to typify the responsibility of government. Someone as early as Augustine did so. Although the often-cited comment that "states are nothing but bands of robbers" was his, the unabridged quotation goes: "Once justice is taken away, what else can states be but enlarged bands of robbers?" Indeed, there is much that speaks for seeking the essence of governmental responsibility in justice and righteousness, especially from a biblical perspective. The bible teaches us that man's destination, as well as of all created things, is seeking the praise of God: we are called upon to seek His Kingdom and His *righteousness*, and to do which is right in God's eyes. Numerous Bible passages demonstrate how this duty should be given substance with regard to the relations and spheres that they bear relevance to. In this way Paul discusses the spheres of matrimony and family in Ephesians 5 and 6 ("Children, obey your parents in the Lord, *for this is right*"), as well as the relationship between master and slave. Much more could be recounted about the biblical perception of justice. We must, however, refrain. Instead, we refer to the comprehensive body of literature on this excellent issue, which we may unhesitantly call a core issue in the Bible.

4.2.2 Public justice

Governing authorities are also admonished to seek God's righteousness. They do so by enacting laws, by administering them and by dispensing justice in accordance with established legislation. Being in God's service in the sphere of State, the government hence also carries responsibility for the kind of justice

that we will henceforth call *public* justice. The Bible is very explicit about this (cf. Deuteronomy 16:18-20; 21-11 & 22:3, Romans 13:4; 1 Peter 2:14). The judges, and in later times the kings of Israel were ordered to guide their people and to speak justice among them. They must administer justice and righteousness, in the service of which they mirror the great King and righteous Judge, as He is referred to in innumerable passages in the book of Psalms (e.g. 96:13, 97, 98:9, 99:4, 103:6). And in Proverbs 8:15, when Wisdom speaks, we read: "By me kings reign and rulers decree what is just". The prophet Isaiah also speaks of this: "See, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice" (Isaiah 32:1).

Velema puts it as follows: "Righteousness wants us to do justice to our neighbour and to his intrinsic value as ordained by God. The government is commissioned to administer this justice -because of its public nature!" (99, p. 21)

As we have already argued in the former section, from the viewpoint of Reformed political thought, the concepts of 'public well-being and 'public interest' seem less suitable as criteria for government performance. These concepts lack any further qualification and in no way provide a normative framework for judging the government's task performance. In other words: 'public interest' as a criterion does not fit in with public justice as the core concept for government responsibility. As we have seen in section 3.2.7 the direct link made by Rousseau between public interest and the 'will of the people' (the consequence of which is the direct people's democracy as the only lawful form of state) must render us particularly heedful on this point.

Any government that aims at discharging its responsibilities with public justice in mind, thereby observes the 'principal and greatest commandment', which is to love God above all. In this we recognise the two motives of which we said in section 1.3 that they should be predominant in the kind of society that Christians aspire: the glory of God and the love for Him. Furthermore, justice as the basic concept in the execution of government responsibilities cannot be separated from the notion of the commandment 'to love thy neighbour', leave alone that here we should perceive a contradiction. Goudzwaard said the following about this as he discussed the functioning of the evangelical commandment to love one's neighbour in Christian political practice: "We cannot dismiss these observations by arguing that it is justice rather than love for one's neighbour which should be the guiding principle in politics. Justice should indeed be the motive behind all government dealings with its subjects. However, justice is enclosed, disclosed and deepened by the commandment that we love our neighbours as we love ourselves. And it is not up to our *esprit de corps*, or our feelings of sympathy to decide who is our neighbour. Of all people it is the feeble, the deprived who are in need of our love -meaning in politics: our doing justice". That is the breakthrough of evangelical charity in politics". (27, p. 50)

One aspect of justice as spoken of in the Bible that cannot go unmentioned in

this respect, is the promise of blessing which is associated with rendering justice. Thus the first verse of Isaiah 32, cited above, is continued in verse 17: "The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever." Likewise, in the New Testament we hear Jesus Christ speaking of His heavenly Father: "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

We wish to make one final remark on the nature of this section. Our speaking of public justice is highly normative, but this is consistent with the overall nature of this treatise. Referring to what we have argued in a general context in section 1.3, we should here point out the sad truth of real-life government performance often being more compatible with notions of injustice rather than justice. This reveals that sin not only becomes manifest in the lives of individuals, but has its repercussions on structures and spheres of society.

Summarising, we claim public justice to be a reflection of the biblical notion of justice, which in Scripture characterizes the nature of God and His dealings, and which is at bottom justice *in Christ*. The essence of this justice is determined normatively by divine revelation, which is the only source from which it can be learnt. We perceive an inherent link between the notion of justice and the motives in section 1.3. The idea of justice, in its multiple meaning of normative justice, punitive justice and redemptive justice, can only be fully understood against the background of the motives of creation, fall into sin, redemption and re-creation.

4.2.4 One or two tables?

As the government is in God's service and is therefore bound to His commandments and ordinances, an often-heard question in Christian politics is whether authorities are bound to *both* tables of the Decalogue. Anyone following discussions about this issue, will have the impression that the answer to this question is used as a criterion for rating Christian political parties. Answering the question in the affirmative would then point at a theocratic view, including a rejection of freedom of religion, whereas a negative response would betray adherence to the view of a neutral government. In the following chapter we will return to the subject of theocracy and its significance for Christian politics. A single remark will suffice here to demonstrate what is wrong with asking the question thus. Our insisting that the government is in God's service and bound to His commandments and ordinances implies that we have no right to except some of those commandments. Meanwhile we must realise that in view of distinctive responsibilities God's commandments are to be taken differently for government than for individuals. For instance, the commandments "You shall not commit adultery" and "You shall not steal" imply for the government the responsibility to create by means of legislation and the penal code those public preconditions enabling the observance of these commandments. Likewise, commandments such as "Remember the sabbath day" exacts from the

government a distinctive obedience characterised by the specific nature of the sphere of State: respectively the combating of *public* (!) blasphemy and the securing of the Sunday rest so as to give the citizens the opportunity to keep the day of the Lord holy.

D.J. de Groot discusses this issue in his book *De Reformatie en de staatkunde* (The Reformation and Politics), pointing out that "Calvin not only felt it the civil government's responsibility to supervise the observance of the second table of the Decalogue, but also the observance of the first one. In the latter case, however, this can only mean exacting outward obedience. The government has no power to command the inward convictions of people. It cannot convert people's hearts, neither is it required to. The State with its vehicles is not able to open or shut the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven. Its only responsibility is in society, corrupted by sin, to administer justice and righteousness, keep peace and tranquillity among the people, which includes safeguarding the exercise of the true religion." (32, p. 76). Having made this necessary additional observation, we may unhesitatingly contend that the government is bound to the entire Decalogue. We will return to this issue in section 5.6 which deals with the freedom of religion.

4.3 Integral justice-based politics

Now that we have established the serving and promoting of public justice to be the central motive, the core idea in our delineation of the responsibilities of government, we must proceed with defining the range of public justice. Indeed, from the nature of things it is of paramount importance that the responsibilities of government are delimited. We ought to make the preliminary observation that the concept of public justice cannot be defined so as to be valid for all times and places. To say it with Goudzwaard: "Like with love, what is justice is not for the asking. And I think that was the very reason for Groen van Prinsterer to link principles directly to the work of the Holy Spirit.." (29) We would do well to bear this in mind when we will try in this section to give substance to public justice.

We must pay regard to the occasionally heard assertion, that the notion of public justice as core motive for the government would lead to a (too) limited description of its responsibilities. The notion of 'public justice' is associated too closely with notably such fields of policy as 'Police and Justice'. These are apparently the first responsibilities to spring to mind when thinking about 'justice and righteousness'. Yet this means an unacceptable reduction of government responsibilities. The scope of serving and promoting public justice is considerably wider and should not be restricted to enforcing the law and combating and punishing violations. To give an impression of the integral nature of the government's justice-based politics, let us take a comprehensive quotation from the most recent party manifesto:

"In its long-standing tradition, Christian politics has always considered the responsibilities of government to be serving and

promoting public justice. The RPF wishes to continue in this tradition. Everything the government says and does must be tested against the biblical norms that are valid for all times and places. In the public domain the government must apply such criteria in its legislation, its policies and its administration as to guarantee the public preconditions for all citizens to be given their due, appreciating the diversity of their possibilities and responsibilities. God's creature, man is called to serve God and his neighbour. Government, by means of the public means at its disposal, must therefore give everyone and every distinct sphere of society opportunity to maximum development. The government must eliminate anything that poses a threat to this within the limits of possibility and accountability. The government therefore especially has to restrain the corruption of man. In our present-day context this involves that special attention should be given to combating hooliganism, crime and intimidation. The call to do justice makes this mandatory. (...) The RPF feels it its duty to serve and promote public justice, but wishes not to restrict this to a few selected themes. Justice-based politics is integrated politics. It concerns all fields of policy. Justice-based politics is the antonym of welfare-stateism, which reckons only with what man seeks of his own accord. Justice-based politics therefore requires a fresh approach in many areas. Justice-based politics stands for socially just policies, for a healthy environment, for an economy and for technology guided by norms, for responsible health care, for a sound employment policy, for sustaining legislation and regulation, for integrated development aid, for integrated agriculture, for the protection of life, for keeping peace and security, for total freedom to serve God both in private and in public, in the contents of faith as well as in the practice of faith, for a sound and responsible financial government policy." (70, p. 3-4)

Moreover, whenever the Bible speaks of justice, it reaches further than merely administering justice. The Psalms more than once contain unambiguous references to the social element of the king's responsibilities. Thus we read in Psalm 82:3-4: "Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy." Likewise, in Job 29:7-27 we find a summary of matters that may be considered the exercise of public (notice the phrase in verse 7 to "the gate of the city") justice.

A similar broad view of justice-based politics as manifest from the RPF manifesto seems to be espoused by Griffioen. He regards public justice as the decisive, qualifying viewpoint for the State. ("The essence of the responsibilities of the State resides in the public administration of justice"), and he continues: "This includes the guarantee for independent, sound rechtsvorming and jurisdiction; furthermore the socio-political responsibility to create conditions that enable the spheres outside the sphere of state to

function; finally, the State is bound to pursue active policies for the relief of the underprivileged: they who cannot provide for their own lives (anymore)." We agree with Griffioen who argues that unlike Christian-Democrat practice, notions such as 'solidarity' and 'responsibility' ought not to be considered distinctive principles, but rather moments of the core notion 'justice': "Solidarity and responsibility point the way to where the State is called to practise public justice." (30, p. 42-43)

When we try to summarise the integrality of the notion of justice, we distinguish the following four core notions:

- a. being a shield for the weak;
- b. promoting justice (and fairness), and accordingly combating injustice;
- c. doing justice to other spheres by creating 'infrastructure' to enable these spheres to develop in accordance with their individual characteristics;
- d. If necessary, temporarily taking over the responsibilities of other spheres, whenever the infrastructure proves inadequate.

The notion mentioned under c) is commonly referred to as 'favourable' (voorwaardenscheppende taak) of government, leaving room for what is called 'the self-regulating capability' of society. It may be clear that 'infrastructure' is to be understood in a broad sense, encompassing both material provisions (among which public works) and the necessary legislative and regulatory activities. Activities such as road-construction and traffic regulation, education and elementary provisions in health care are considered by Velema to be instances of infrastructure as well. He describes these government responsibilities as "the establishing of order and peace". In his view, the limit to government intervention is the care for infrastructure: "What is set up with the help of this, is a matter of civic responsibilities and concern." (99, p. 17-19). The RPF's Declaration of Principles expresses the same thought in article 4b as follows: "The government is called in legislation to act so as to enable the members of the distinctive spheres of society such as family, church, school and company, to fulfill their God-given vocation. The government must therefore always be aware of the limits of its competence, to ensure the independence of the societal spheres. A good illustration of such 'infrastructure' can be found in the article in the Dutch constitution which secures the freedom of education; this infrastructure has enabled Dutch parents to set up and maintain Christian schools. It is not in the last place that 'infrastructure' also entails the care for what is understood by the 'public works' (e.g. landscape and environment).

What has been said for d) may require some explanation. On face value, it would seem as if the notion of distinctive offices is at stake here. Would indeed the government be justified to meddle in the responsibilities of other spheres of society for the sake of public justice. Or is it this kind of meddlesomeness that we must strongly denounce? And when we have concern for a poorly or deficiently functioning sphere, a 'sphere in distress', are we not dealing with a

situation falling under a)? However justified these questions may be, yet such government interference is not necessarily condemnable. In section 2.3.4 we observed that a Reformed view of State leaves room for recognising dynamism in the relations between the distinctively natured spheres. We exemplified this by referring to the housing problems that the Netherlands was facing following World War II. From the government's viewpoint, such interference may hence *become* a matter of public justice. At the same time, however, it is clear that for the government interfering in the jurisdiction of 'a sphere in distress' invariably involves performing unusual tasks (see section 4.5). The government is therefore not to take over the performance of responsibilities belonging to the sphere in question, but can at most temporally supervise. Once the sphere can manage by itself again, the government should withdraw. Furthermore, it is important to stress that in cases like this we are dealing with extreme situations; stipulating as the express condition that it is public justice which must make government interference mandatory -even in extreme situations like this- provides a good enough check on too rash government interference. This extraordinary characteristic justifies the separate listing of such instances under the core issues of the motive of justice.

What we have just argued may resemble the functioning of the principle of subsidiariness -whose critics we profess to be. However, we wish to point out that it is in the additions and conditions as specified that the fundamental difference between a subsidiariness-based approach and the approach of distinctive offices and responsibilities surfaces.

A parallel view of governmental support -a view which also allows for the correlation with what we have mentioned under a)-, can be found in H. Colijn's *Saevis Tranquillus in Undis*, a commentary to the Anti-Revolutionary Declaration of Principles (7, p. 408). In this book he vindicates the sovereignty of the spheres outside the sphere of State. Meanwhile, he does not feel government support to be a violation of sphere sovereignty, but rather part of its responsibility, "to protect the individual members and the weak in those spheres from abuse, thus enabling all to fulfil their divine call".

Similarly, S.U. Zuidema writes about the limits to government competence. Condemning unwarranted government interference as 'a hazard to national health', he proceeds by saying that "justified government interference, on the other hand, does not go against the civic rights *and* responsibilities, nor does it collectivise life. Indeed, it is concerned with supporting the weak, protecting the independent, and precluding unjustified excesses in national life. It is concerned with encouraging and recognising the independent prospering of national life and the many spheres of life. It interferes where abuse occurs, it sustains in times of distress, when no-one else appears to be able to.

However, it does not take over responsibilities that belong to other bodies, and always takes care that it is not becoming the nation's sole mass employer, the only self-employed." (115, p. 37)

4.4. The bounds of the public domain

The foregoing has rendered us a clearer view of the responsibilities of government. We have seen how it has been characterised in terms of serving and promoting public justice, appreciating its integral nature. We must now attend another aspect, viz. the limitations of the public domain. For the integral character of justice-based politics could blur our vision of the limits to government performance. In this we agree with Zuidema: "Nothing is more imperative and more difficult than the self-imposed restrictions of government. This difficulty looms even larger when the authority of government is fundamentally seen as derived from supposed popular sovereignty. The will of the majority has no restraints anymore, thus evolving into a dictate of the will, with the State turning into a will-monster. Christian politics is called to put a halt to such capriciousness of power. There are limits. Their are divine ordinances. The State crashes if it fails to recognise those limits by handcuffing and restraining the lives of subjects in their spheres of family, church, free organisation and enterprise." (115, p. 15).

The existence of these limits may be beyond doubt. It is not so clear, however, what are the real-life situations when government interference would be justified, or when the government would be supposed to pull back, and decide not to interfere. This question is particularly urgent in situations involving another societal sphere besides the sphere of State. To what extent is the government authorised to interfere? Where does the competence of government end? Generally we might argue that the government is committed to support individuals and their spheres or communities, in order *for their rights to be recognised*. However, this does not answer the question of how far the government is permitted to go in actual instances.

.....
In the May 1982 issue of RPF's official party magazine *Nieuw Nederland*, an excellent article by W.H. Velema was published on the issue of circumscribing the public domain *vis-à-vis* the private domain of the non-state spheres. The article was published as a contribution to a debate on the reach of government responsibility with respect to combating sin. Velema takes an unambiguous position, which is entirely in line with the beliefs of the RPF. He writes:

Is government called to bar sins from and punish sins in public life? Anyone who regards the government as God's servant -and we do- will be immediately inclined to respond to this question in the affirmative. But in fact we ought to give ourselves a few moments to ponder over the government's jurisdiction. Is government authorised to interfere with the personal lives of its subjects or in the internal affairs of unions and organisations? Such does not fall within the government's jurisdiction, as long as these individuals and organisations are not in violation of the canons of public law. To a degree the government has a mandate to interfere with internal affairs of individuals and organisations, but exclusively in cases of violation of the rules of law of our society, as stipulated in legislation. Within this context, government is entitled, even obligated, to come down on offenders, combat injustice and punish violations of rules of

law." (97, p. 15-17)

Velema illustrates this by mentioning the judge's competence to interfere with the family sphere in cases of child abuse. He relates government interference in combating immorality and lawlessness to its responsibility to enforce public law. For the government this may involve that it "must content itself with putting restrictions, restraining evil without eradicating evil itself root and branch", as also applies to Mosaic legislation with reference to divorce. This approach is based on the belief that in discharging its responsibility government is to put restrictions to the individual responsibilities of the citizens and their spheres. Basically, that is the limit for government, even when these citizens are sinning against God's commandments. This view does not conflict with the nature of government as servant of God. On the contrary, it is the immediate consequence of the government *per se* as the authoritative body residing *in the public domain*. In Velema's words: "Wherever the government wields authority, it should operate according to God's law." To this should be added the following remark by the chief editor of a Dutch Christian daily: "the government's power of the sword is not an appropriate means to avenge all sins. Employing it to that purpose, the government would overplay its hand by far."

Fowler also takes an unequivocal view: "....." (25, p. 9)

4.5 Proper and improper responsibilities

This chapter cannot be concluded before we have applied ourselves to the question of proper and improper government responsibilities. Debates in the past few years dealing with a retreating government were mainly focused on that issue. This matter is generally discussed with reference to 'core responsibilities' which government ought to confine itself to. However, there are some grave objections to applying this term, since it suggests that, while these core responsibilities remain in the hands of government, other government responsibilities, which do not rate among its core responsibilities, are being 'contracted out', because the government cannot cope with the total of its responsibilities.

On the other hand, we must conclude that during the past few decades the government has taken up many responsibilities that are not the government's to deal with. (.....) For example, when considering the process of construction and decline of the welfare state, we contend that this development is partly due to an overactive government, embracing a massive amount of responsibilities, partly to a passive society, conveniently transferring all sorts of responsibilities to the government, of the collective. So there has been an interaction culminating into an overburdened government threatening to collapse under its responsibilities. For the government to prevent itself from collapsing, it has no choice but to hive off certain responsibilities. However, in the process of responsibilities being hived off and government is retreating, it is vital that no essentially governmental responsibilities be hived off, while other

responsibilities that are not typically the government's be retained. In other words: we must clearly distinguish between *proper* and *improper* responsibilities as they are presently taken up by the government. Proper responsibilities should be dealt with by the government itself on any account, whereas improper responsibilities should be left to those organisations and spheres in society to which they actually belong.

In the process of a retreating government, this distinction between proper and improper responsibilities makes a safer basis than the notion of core responsibilities. To forestall misunderstandings we hasten to add that there is nothing wrong with distinguishing between core responsibilities and 'less important responsibilities' within the range of proper government responsibilities. We could also speak of primary and secondary responsibilities. There can be no objections to such qualifications, as long as their reference to a further classification within the total of responsibilities is recognised.

The question presenting itself now is the possible extent of determining the proper responsibilities of government. Could we even accomplish an exhaustive account? How much easier would that make the debate on a retreating government and the regressing welfare state! But however attractive this thought may seem, unfortunately things are not that simple. Various attempts of that kind have been made, but time and again they turned out to be unsuccessful because of conflicting definitions of proper government responsibilities by socialists and liberals. Our view of government responsibilities is inextricably linked with our view of State and Society. However unsurprising this may be given the scope of this treatise -which strongly emphasises the mutual coherence of vision of society, of state and of government- it does make it extremely difficult to reach an agreement on the list of 'real government responsibilities'. In the issue of *Intermediar* of April 26th, 1991, Thijs van Raa, a researcher at the Department of Economics of the Catholic University of Brabant, has the following to say on this dilemma in his article 'Core business' (though unfortunately using the term 'core') "What is the the government's core business? A liberal might mention public education and police. On the basis of equality, a christian-democrat would come up with Christian education and police. Public transport and environment protection would certainly top the social-democrat's agenda. All things considered we would end up with a substantial list of core responsibilities, which would make a contradiction in terms." Subsequently, Van Raa himself proposes an exhaustive account of five core responsibilities of government: police, national defence and jurisdiction, the guarantee for minimum income and correction of external effects (e.g. environment and infrastructure). Using a different model, two Dutch journalists submitted an alternative for today's welfare state, the 'simple state' fashioned after the 19th century nachtwakersstaat. Government responsibilities in this 'simple state' would be limited to national defence, police and justice, as well as public administration. On top of this would come an elementary system of social security, marginal

government contribution to health care, and education up to secondary school level. All other government expenditures would be cut. Like Van Raa's, the ideas of these journalists -unsurprisingly- present a most economical picture.

In our approach, however, we choose to base ourselves on a different model. We are well aware that -let it be stated once more- whichever model is preferred, it will never be possible to reach a classification for proper and improper responsibilities which is exhaustive, conclusive and valid for all times. This is so because of the dynamism which we recognised in section 2.3.4 as inherent to the ordering of society. We will therefore not even attempt to submit a summation of proper responsibilities. This, however, does not mean that it is impossible to provide more tangible indications of which responsibilities the government should and which it should not attend to. However, it is our conviction that in order to distinguish proper and improper responsibilities it is essential to have an adequate criterion. In our view, there can be no other criterion than that of public justice, which is indeed the central criterion for any government activity. This immediately reveals the second reason why we should slightly downplay the outcome of our exercise. At the beginning of section 4.3 we pointed out that even for the concept of public justice it is impossible to provide a conclusive and exhaustive definition. We might call this the internal dynamism of the norm of justice itself.

Still this criterion provides a solid basis because it links government performance to the demand of *public* justice. Though some argue that the cultural mandate is the criterion, we believe that the cultural mandate must be seen generally in relation to our motivation to cultivate and preserve creation, but that it does not tell us anything about which responsibilities are the government's to fulfil. For that reason we must take care not to exaggerate the relevance of the cultural mandate in politics. In other words: in its address the cultural mandate is general rather than specific and therefore cannot give us a sufficient lead as to which responsibilities are to be attributed to the distinctive spheres.

The criterion of public justice helps us achieve a global description of proper government responsibilities: these should always relate to public justice. With the summation of some core issues of public justice (a, b, c, d) given in section 4.3 we may conclude that responsibilities which could be classed a, b or c, fall under proper government responsibilities, such as: defence, police, justice, legal protection, protection of life, upholding (traditional) fundamental rights, the care for public and infrastructural works and for the 'public goods' (e.g. landscape and environment).

It should be observed, however, that this does not automatically release other spheres from also carrying responsibilities in the areas that we have just designated as proper government responsibilities. The care for the weak is not exclusively government business, but the public nature of this care is! This approach leaves ample space to e.g. churches (the *diakonia*), or companies for discharging their individual, original responsibilities. Environmental protection is another current issue involving common responsibilities, with ways of dealing

with these responsibilities varying according to the structural essence of the spheres in question.

As for core issue d), we observed in section 4.3 that these invariably concern improper government responsibilities. For this reason any government dealings in those areas must be performed with great reserve, and they should be temporary by definition. Also, it should be aimed at encouraging societal spheres to take up some of the responsibilities which are under government supervision. Such encouragement could, for instance, result in a legal obligation of citizens to fulfil their individual responsibility (cf. the legal obligation for car-owners to take out car insurance).

Instances of domains of government policies

By way of conclusion we wish to add a brief remark about the term 'core responsibilities'. In this section, we started out by explaining why we wish to avoid this designation, and apply the term 'proper responsibilities' instead. To remove even the slightest doubt, we wish to add that naturally there can be no objection whatsoever to introducing a hierarchy of some kind within the total of proper government responsibilities. Taking public justice as the guiding principle, it is very well possible for us to distinguish between primary, secondary and tertiary responsibilities. Whenever 'core responsibilities' imply such a distinction, there would not be much against it, though in common practice the term tends to have a more general sweep, *i.e.* in the sense that we have disqualified it. In our opinion it therefore deserves no recommendation to make use of this term.

5. CHURCH AND STATE

In chapter 2 we have provided an outline of a Reformed view of society. Subsequently, in the chapters 3 and 4, we have concentrated on the sphere of State and the performer within that sphere, the government. Limiting ourselves to the sphere of State follows directly from the nature of the RPF as a political party. Since the domain of State is the working field of a political party, it is well-advised to concentrate on that domain.

In consequence, it is not our concern to detail more closely the distinctive nature and responsibilities of other spheres of society, such as marriage and family, school and university, company and church. Neither have we indulged in an exposition of the relationship between the State on the one hand, and the non-state spheres on the other. As the title suggests, this chapter will highlight the relationship between the State and one of the non-state spheres, the church. Choosing the sphere of church as the object of more detailed treatment is no random choice. The history of Christian politics tells us that there has been continuous attention for the issue of Church and State. How do they relate to each other? To what extent are they able to influence one another, directly or indirectly? Is the Church on a higher or rather on a lower plane than the State?

Till this present day these matters have kept Christians separated in church life as well as in political life. Another approach to these questions is the one from the relationship between *Christian faith and politics*. J. Douma and S. Fowler have both provided solid contributions to these issues (17, p. 9-25; 25, p. 16-29), which for the sake of brevity we only mention. Also, the issue of *theocracy*, which is relevant in this context, will be discussed later on in this chapter.

We will hereby have pointed out the relevance of this matter, sufficiently sustaining the decision for us to give it separate treatment in this treatise on the RPF's fundamentals. It would be expedient, though, to make a preliminary remark about the angle from which we focus on the relationship between Church and State. As a political party, we will naturally do so from the perspective of the State. It will be wise to bear this in mind, for it will determine the emphasis of this chapter.

5.2 The relationship between Church and State

In the light of our view of Society, as outlined in chapter 2, it is logical that the relationship between the spheres of Church and State should first and foremost be defined by the distinctive nature and responsibilities of either sphere. The Church is the congregation of Christ and is to be characterised as a religious community with a hierarchical structure that is unique and qualified by the sphere's nature, whereas the State is a public legal community of government and citizens. Groen van Prinsterer wrote: "....." J.J. van der Schuit said in conclusion of his speech on *Church and State*: "With the New Testament as our guide we can and must vindicate a separation of Church and State. (...) We mean *separation* in the sense of *discrimination*. (83, p. 28). We

agree with Fowler that ".....(25, p. 28), but we wish to add that the State's concern is public justice, whereas the Church's is justice through faith! Especially valuable is Fowler's note of warning, immediately following the quotation just given, against a separation "....." So here we have distinctive offices, from the basis of which we must conclude that the State cannot be reduced to the Church or *vice versa*. They do not relate to each other in terms of super ordination and subordination, but in terms of co-ordination. In the exertion of their respective offices they are basically independent. They do not derive their competence from one another, but directly from God. This removes every ground for what Douma calls *ecclesiocracy* ('church government' in the sense of 'government by the Church') or *caesaropapism* (with the worldly ruler also governing the Church). Also, this explicitly avers that both Church and State are completely subject to God's absolute sovereignty. Strictly speaking, whenever we speak of 'the Church', we imply nothing beside the Christian church. Indeed, the word 'church' derives from the *kurios*, Lord, by which the Bible refers to Jesus Christ. However, whenever we speak of the church as a societal sphere, the extent of reference increases, encompassing all religious communities without exception (more about this in section 5.6).

Given the basic idea of Church and State being co-ordinate to each other, as are all societal spheres, we must make an additional observation. For this basic idea could be an invitation to believe that the church is 'just' a sphere like any other and is therefore level with the spheres of company, school, marriage, etc. We must therefore repeat what we have said in section 2.3.5, *i.e.* co-ordination in no way suggests *levelling*. Recognising the distinctive nature of the various spheres does not tell us anything about the role that they fulfil in society. As for the Church, we should note that being a community of *faith* by nature, it holds a special position in society. Fowler speaks of "....."(25, p. 16) With regard to the Church among the other, differently characterised spheres, we could also speak of it as the *primus inter pares*, the principal among its equals. This central position of the Church follows from the fact that the Church has been entrusted with the Word of God, whereas the authority of the Word of God is not confined to the Church. God's revelation bears decisive relevance to all domains of life and so to all spheres. It is the Church nurturing the believer through the preaching of the gospel, and preparing the believer to his office in the various spheres that he belongs to: as a father or son, as a member of the congregation or an elder, as an employer or an employee, as a citizen or politician.

Also as for the State, starting out from the principle of co-ordination has prompted comments. For instance, W.H. Velema, in the second volume of *Het verval van de verzorgingsstaat* (The breakdown of the welfare state; 99, p. 16 vv.) formulates a view of State which at face value seems to deviate from the view as outlined in this brochure. Although Velema is seeking to take his stand on the principle of sphere sovereignty, he nonetheless assigns a special position to the State : "The State embodies a societal sphere which distinguishes itself from all other spheres of society. It cannot be defined but for

comprising all other spheres of society, even the individual citizens, in that definition. Any sphere of society can enter into a relationship with other spheres of society. Each sphere, however, has its own jurisdiction which forfeits neither its independence nor its individuality in relating to other spheres. The sphere of State, however, exists and carries validity by virtue of its associations with other spheres of society, without turning into some super-sphere of society, to which all other spheres would be subject, or within which other spheres would have just that much freedom as would be granted to them by the all-embracing societal sphere of State!" Hence Velema concludes: "To avoid the idea of supremacy and absolute sovereignty, it might be tempting to agree to the notion of 'not superior to other spheres, but level with them'. There is an element of truth in this observation. But it does not reveal the heart of the matter. What is typical of the State is its responsibility for serving the public interests, which does not fall within the competence of only one sphere, or which cannot be fulfilled by only one sphere to the benefit of all."

These quotations make clear that Velema tries to typify the State as a societal sphere with a special position among the other spheres. It should not escape anyone's attention, though, that he successfully tries to justify this special position in the State's *responsibilities*, *i.e.* "serving the public interests". In other words: the nature of public justice being a core notion in government responsibilities leads Velema to assign to the State its special position among the other spheres of society. In fact, it says no more than that the State has a nature which is unique from other spheres. It is hard to grasp why this uniqueness should necessitate a watering down of the principle of the co-ordination of all spheres, including the State. Velema's approach is especially noteworthy because it echoes the recognition of the public -and hence totally individual- nature of the State on the one hand, and it dismisses the idea of the State being some super sphere. With this Velema once again draws attention to the fact that co-ordination of the spheres does not imply levelling.

5.3.1 Theocracy and its various interpretations

Theocracy makes for a hot issue in Christian politics. Different people ascribe different meanings to it, which makes any constructive discussion very difficult. Douma distinguishes as many as three meanings of theocracy in his *Politieke verantwoordelijkheid* (Political responsibility; 17, p. 16-25). In the first place, it refers to the prominence of the spiritual, ecclesiastical leadership over the secular powers. He feels that theocracy in this interpretation is a somewhat unfortunate term, since it basically refers to an 'ecclesiocracy' (literally church government). The second meaning is derived from the literal translation, *i.e.* divine government. Douma describes this meaning as "any attempt at allowing the Word of God to govern through the Church." Thirdly, theocracy is seen as a legitimation for engaging the worldly powers to fight idolatry and false religion.

In the light of the idea of distinctive offices and responsibilities, theocracy in the

first sense must certainly be rejected. It does not befit the Church to wield authority over the State. It is not charged with it, neither does it command the proper tools for it. What theocracy in this sense may lead up to is epitomised in the history of the Roman Catholic Church with its 'two-swords doctrine', with the spiritual sword of the Church holding supremacy over the worldly sword of government (cf. 3.2.3). However, it would be equally objectionable incorporating the third interpretation in a truly biblical view of the relationship between Church and State. Indeed, the consequential blending of both distinctive offices would be intolerable. The same objections hold whenever worldly powers are commissioned to use violence in the domain of the Church. The sword that Paul speaks of in Romans 13 was not given to the State to arbitrate in spiritual matters. Faith cannot be instilled by the sword: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" (Zechariah 4:6). In this respect, Van der Schuit also refers to bible passages such as John 18:36, Luke 9:54-55 and Matthew 22:21.

Whoever judges otherwise, believing that the government, being the servant of God, should 'hence' use its derived competence - including the power of the sword -, in spiritual matters, overcharges government because it overlooks its vocation to serve public justice. Indeed this would require the government to resist not only all non-Christian religions ("....."), but also liberal preaching in the Christian Churches!

We wish to observe in passing that the problem of multiple interpretation of the theocratic idea cannot be resolved by substituting it by the word 'bibliocracy' (a form of government with the Bible as its basis; e.g. in W. Fieret's doctoral thesis *De Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij 1918-1948*; p. 20-21). This term does, however, make clear that it does not refer to a form of government under direct divine guidance. But the question remains how this bibliocracy should be put to practice.

5.3.3 Israel, Church and State

The issue of theocracy necessitates us to consider the basic notion underlying traditional theocratic thought, *i.e.* the State in the New Testament dispensation being the continuation of the Old Testament theocracy in Israel. In his speech in 1929, Van der Schuit devoted a few comments on this line of thought. (83). It is very worthwhile to listen to his contribution in greater detail. We will therefore reproduce his captivating speech on the nature of Church and State from the moment he addresses the specific nature of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation. "The gospel, then, is not a world power, it does not cry 'look here and look there', it does not come parading, it wishes no violence nor does it solicit violence. Whoever requires the government to employ armed force for maintaining and spreading the gospel, can only do so by ignoring that the gospel and Christ, the embodiment of the gospel, gainsay this. (...) The Church is so deeply convinced of the power of the word of God that it requires nothing else besides. Leave the Church its position, leave the Church its

commission received from its King, 'preach the gospel to all creatures', and it asks no more of the State or the government. Such is the teaching of the Acts of the Apostles, who, to be sure, make better correctors than any article from any confession or any State proclamation." (p. 14-15) Later on, he returns to this issue, saying: "Should indeed our Reformed forefathers have meant to argue in article 36 of the Confession of Faith that the spiritual Kingdom of Jesus Christ is to be expanded or maintained by the sword, there would not only be in contradiction with what we have referred to as the nature of the gospel, but also with the very practice of our Reformed forefathers. Our forefathers themselves would have been the first to have gone against their own confession. We therefore subscribe to Groen van Prinsterer's statement in *Grondwetsherziening en eensgezindheid* (Revision of the constitution and consensus; p. 385): 'Practice, I believe, has proved that our fathers did not interpret the article as an encouragement to start persecutions'." (p. 22) When he subsequently comes to speak of the relationship between Church and State, he regrets that "our Reformed forefathers did not achieve a better rendering of the relationship between Church and State. For you will understand, we will not concede to the relationship between Church and State as it was vindicated by our Reformed forefathers and as such stipulated in the Dordt Regulations of Church Government ." In Van der Schuit's opinion, one of their mistakes was to "perceive in the old covenant theocracy the anticipation of the Church in the new covenant. (...) However, they were unobservant of the fact that theocracy has a unique nature. At the time there was not just some government or monarchy, but God Himself was King of Israel. Therefore, when Israel desired a king, as all nations around them had kings, the Lord spoke to Samuel, saying: "for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them". Because of this theocracy a close union between Church and State existed. The people made up the Church, and the Church made up the people. Such was the national church, (...), from which it was impossible to secede, for the simple reason that whoever would secede, would also place himself outside the people, the State. The Church under the new dispensation has an entirely disparate make-up. It is no longer *of* the people, but *from* the people. It is no longer a national phenomenon; the congregation coming to the gate of Zion's King descends from all tongues and people and nations. The question is no longer whether you are a Jew, but whether you have been regenerated by the Spirit. All this gives the Church its distinctive cachet, its distinctive position. Theocracy was part of the Old Covenant. It is directly associated with the plan of Redemption. God wants a people that is set apart in order to reveal his redeeming plan. Hence the nation of Israel bears the marks of something typically symbolical of the Kingdom of God. God wanted to prepare Himself a people, which would bring forth the Christ in the flesh. The reason for theocracy was Christ, and it had to disappear in the fulness of time." (p. 26-28).

Van der Schuit's view can be summarised as follows: Israel is an archetype of the Church, not of society or the State. Skillen holds a similar view. He points out that the line of argument discussed here can be traced back to the "....."

Against this view, he contends that the history of the Covenant of Israel serves as a model for the *Church*. (91, p. 174)

5.4 RPF and theocracy

Demarcating clearly our position as RPF once more in this matter and excluding any misunderstandings in the process, we need to put first and foremost that a Christian is a theocrat by definition. He is so by virtue of his positive acknowledgement of God's reign over all aspects of life. When we read the Psalms, we find innumerable passages making this divine government the object of praise (e.g. Psalm 24, 33, 47, 96, 97, 99). From the perspective of God's dominion over all aspects of created reality, this recognition of God's reign should be reflected in all aspects of the Christian's life: in his family, in church, in his work and in politics. Indeed, what we are dealing with here is sanctification of life! This theocratic inclination is also characteristic of the Christian politician. In his daily duties, *i.e.* in performing his responsibilities in his office as a servant of the government, he is called to reinforce with zeal this theocratic inclination within the government as a whole. He relies on the spiritual nurturing through the Church's preaching of the gospel.

In this sense we wish to associate ourselves with the second interpretation as mentioned by Douma. What matters is the government's *theocratic inclination*; whether it recognises its position as a servant of the LORD God, who is the Absolute Sovereign over all dominions of life. Theocracy does not imply an alternative form of state or government to some other form of government, such as democracy. This is what Schuurman means by arguing that theocracy does not belong to the same class of such words as 'monarchy, democracy, aristocracy'. Because like technocracy, theocracy gives expression to an inclination. Therefore we prefer to speak about the form of government in terms of the desirability of 'democracy set to the norms of theocracy'.

Seen from this perspective, the theocratic character of Christian politics proves in every respect to be in accordance with the notion of distinctive offices, as expounded in chapter 2. The government's theocratic inclination must be given substance to in the government's proper domain, in the public domain of the State, as well as in the performance of the office it has been charged with: serving public justice. By associating theocracy thus with the core motive of public justice, we have also indicated the overall framework for drawing a distinction between the government's 'positive and negative tasking' (*i.e.* respectively the responsibility for order, involving the creation of order and the protection of the 'good', as well as the responsibility for discipline, involving the containment of human immorality and, accordingly, the punishing of 'the wicked'). We have explained in the foregoing why a third responsibility for the government -resisting and eliminating false religion - does not fall within this scope.

.....

A faithful rendering of the RPF's view of theocracy has been supplied by Schuurman, writing a column in a Christian regional daily. We will quote a passage from this valuable contribution:

For the sake of clarity, we first need to establish what exactly is understood by 'theocracy'. It cannot be the kind of theocracy that Old Testament Israel was familiar with. In those days, it was possible for the authorities to regulate the religion of the people, and, if necessary, enforce it. The New Testament is unambiguous in its teaching of the separation between Church and State. The Church is governed by the Word and the Spirit. In the State, the authorities have the power of the sword. That is why the government can exact obedience from its subjects. (...) The offices in the Church are different from those in the State. But in relation to the State we nevertheless speak of 'offices'. As the New Testament testifies, the government has received its vocation from God. Not to serve the Christian religion through violence and force, but as God's servant to protect public life and serve public justice. What these fundamentally involve is determined by divine right and divine justice. If such were not the case, all government policy would be left to the mercy of the whims of an unguided democracy which from one day to the next could transform the legal order. The State is instituted by God. The Bible makes this very clear. Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. (1 Timothy 6:15). Therefore all authorities must give Him His due honour. From this perspective we may genuinely speak of 'theocracy'.

In conclusion, we once more approvingly quote him when elsewhere he states the following on theocracy:

'Theocracy in a narrow sense leads to spiritual intimidation, discriminating too little between the distinctive offices of Church and State. Allowing this discrimination to culminate in a separation, without recognising that in their respective offices both are accountable to God in Christ, does not leave room for viewing theocracy in a broad sense. And it is the very recognition of this 'theocracy in a broad sense' which has proved such a blessing in the history of Christian politics and for which we still ought to be grateful. For indeed, by 'theocracy in a broad sense' we understand God's reign over everything. This notion always used to, and still ought to prevail in Christian politics.'

5.5 The fiction of the neutral state

We must give separate attention to the widespread misunderstanding that the rejection of theocracy as a form of government should automatically lead to the

endorsement of the concept of a neutral state. This fallacy goes back to an early date; because of his doctrine of sphere sovereignty, Kuyper was and still is rated among the defenders of the concept of a neutral state. It is sometimes suggested that present-day Christian politics involves a choice between theocracy and a neutral state. Unjustly so, since a neutral government is not the only alternative to a theocratic form of government. The state as a societal sphere, with the government wielding authority within that sphere, cannot possibly retain neutrality. Kuyper's view on this point -recorded in his famous Stone lectures- is rendered by Douma as follows: "The government is and remains the 'servant of God'. It must acknowledge God as the Supreme Lord. It must serve God by governing the people after *his* ordinances. It must contend blasphemy whenever this blasphemy takes on the downright quality of derision of God's majesty. The act of acknowledging God's supreme power is performed by confessing His Name in the constitution, by observing the Sabbath, by encouraging annual ceremonies of prayer and thanksgiving, by invoking His divine blessing, and by giving its protection to the churches. (17, p. 107-108). Another Christian politician, G.J. Schutte, puts it this way: "The government as God's servant is therefore no fancy, but reality, and reflecting this in its policies is the government's -any government's- responsibility. What *is* fancy is the idea of a neutral state. A servant can never assume a neutral attitude towards his master. Any such attempt would signify unfaithfulness." (84)

The idea of a neutral state is nursed by the distinctive offices of Church and State commonly being discussed in terms of a *separation* of Church and State. Among Christians, this usage has too readily been copied, in which case it tends to operate as a pigeon-holing device. The expression dates back to the altered views of the relationship between Church and State in the years following the French Revolution. True-blue champions of separation will indeed find themselves adopting a neutral state view. The former Dutch minister of Justice, E.M.H. Hirsch Ballin, wrote in 1987 that Dutch constitutional law is based on the principle of separation between Church and State. This separation derives from "the principle of the religious/philosophical neutrality of the State" (34, p. 13). If this statement did not have a broader sweep than to identify the government's duty to respect freedom of religion, we would agree. We shall address this point in greater detail in the following section. However, the implications of a neutral state are more far-reaching than that. It implies the alleged inappropriateness of government itself to show allegiance to a religious persuasion on account of society's religious and denominational pluralism. Schuurman comments on this: "Because there are so many religious convictions, the State is to assume a neutral attitude. Within a neutral State there should be room for everyone to act according to personal judgement and responsibility. Contrary to former practice, it is now no longer stated explicitly that being the servant of God - as we learn from the Bible - the government must obey God and his commandments in the public domain. Even though the government's responsibility to serve justice and righteousness is still

acknowledged as a matter of course, the vision tends to become blurred about the interpretation of justice and righteousness as well as which direction it should be given. At times this vagueness proves to have most far-reaching consequences." (106, p. 76).

The following clarifying observations by J.J. Oostenbrink are also worth noting: "The word choice (that the State ought to be 'neutral', AR) may give rise to misinterpretation. It is true that in view of articles 1 and 6 of the Dutch Constitution should treat all religious denominations equally in identical situations. Preferential treatment of one denomination is certainly at variance with the Constitution. Likewise, equal treatment of the various denomination-based institutions is mandatory. This, however, does not make the State 'neutral'. When introducing legislation, or when determining and implementing policies, any State or government is bound to be guided by certain principles and norms. (...) No government will be allowed to give preferential treatment to one particular denomination or denominational organisation. However, a government may indeed be influenced by what is proclaimed or asserted by the various kinds of denominations and denominational organisations, allowing them to co-determine the contents of potential regulation and policy making." (64, p. 13)

5.6 Theocracy and freedom of religion

A political party's view of theocracy are to a great extent predeterminative of its attitude towards freedom of religion. It adds up easily that whoever views theocracy in the sense that the government is charged with resisting false religion, must fundamentally have prohibitive objections to any constitution-based freedom of religion.

Appreciating this freedom, however, we feel more comfortable with G.J. Schutte, who remarks that "the government should be prevented from putting restraints on the conscience at all times. Of all institutions, a government realising from whom its authority descends, will have to guarantee the freedom of thought and conviction of all citizens. A Christian State and freedom of conviction for everyone must be associated by definition." (84). We can fully subscribe to this remark. We would like to add that establishing and shielding this freedom of conviction -constituted by the freedom of religion and of thought- is a valuable thing. And we feel it an appropriate thing to include in our view of State and government. Safeguarding freedom of thought is part and parcel of the responsibility to serve public justice.

This position is similar to Groen van Prinsterer's views, in which -as Smitskamp has observed- maintenance of "the most treasured of people's rights, freedom of thought for the observance of evangelical duties" is the main responsibility of national politics. At the same time, he also showed consideration for the freedom rights which are immediately related: "freedom of thought, freedom of religious practice, freedom of education, there is an inextricable link between them." (92, p. 55). Expressing similar views, Van der Schuit writes: "If you asked me the same question that once was asked Groen van Prinsterer,

"which Church do you mean", I would answer in Groen's spirit: "in a State accommodating multifarious denominations with historical and acquired rights, I do not refer to one particular denomination, but to all, excepting none". (Parliament Session of 1 December 1853.) Indeed, everyone will understand that the issue here is not *the* Church, *i.e.* not the Church in the confessional sense. The issue is the State's position towards the religious institutions. The State must not permit itself to take sides in the splintery religious issue. For this very reason Groen accepted not the Godless State, not the anti-Christian State, but the religionless, neutral State (see his *Nederlandsche Gedachten*, part 1, p. 43). This neutrality is not to be interpreted in the revolutionary sense, but in the interdenominational sense; a State protecting all denominations on the basis of equality. Groen championed a general Christianity, not to be understood as a form of Christianity *above* the state of denominational division, but Christianity *in* this state of division." (83, p. 31)

We shall now try to be more explicit about what we understand by the freedom of religion. What does it imply in political practice, how far does this freedom range? Let us begin by observing that we object to the narrow definition that it is accredited by some, *i.e.* allowing freedom of conscience, but without allowing any manifest demonstration of persuasions that do not agree with the Christian faith (or the only-sanctioned interpretation of Christianity), such as the building of a mosque.

We feel that the word 'public' provides us with a helpful and major support for establishing our own position. It designates a key characteristic for government performance, as explained in chapter 4. In combination with the notion of the distinctive offices of Church and State -which means that neither of them must govern the other (see section 5.2)- we are led to conclude that the safeguarding role of the freedom of religion can only apply to the outward aspects, to the outside of the various denominations and denominational institutions. It is the government's responsibility to create public infrastructure enabling the citizens to perform their religious activities. Constitutional freedom of religion is to be considered an aspect of infrastructure, in the sense given in section 4.2.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) provides the following definition of the freedom of religion: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

S.O. Voogt has made the following comments on this: "In our national (*i.e.* *Dutch*) context, which corresponds with international law and the Constitution of the United States, this definition also covers the *freedom of education* and the *freedom of organisation*, as far as religion-based organisations are concerned (hereafter named 'freedom of religious organisation'). Because Dutch legislation considers these two freedoms as separate fundamental rights, it would be wrong not to include these major aspects of 'living one's

faith' in this study. In the subsequent stage of this study we will use the so-called "three shell model", the inner shell representing freedom of thought, meaning the freedom to adhere any religion or none at all. The two outer shells, after 1848 generally labelled "freedom of confession", embrace the freedom to express this faith. The second shell concerns religious assemblies (conveniently called "freedom of worship"). The third shell represents the other public forms of 'living one's faith, such as expressing this faith in word and writing as well as in social intercourse."

This prevailing interpretation of freedom of religion would require the government to realise this freedom (equally for the various religions) on the one hand, and to refrain as much as possible from interfering with how these denominations use this freedom on the other. Voogt correctly points out that religious communities themselves decide what makes up the contents of their confession. This does not suggest that there are no limits. Not anything goes as long as it is tagged 'freedom of religion'. Such limits may have been stipulated in the legal order (particularly in the penal code, e.g. the ban on polygamy and the restrictions on ritual slaughtering of cattle). However, limits may also have been set in order to maintain public order (e.g. rules concerning church bell ringing and summons to prayer, the ban on processions, clauses regarding licences for outreach campaigns, etc.).

A local council will therefore be required to issue a building permit, whether for a church or a mosque, but it has to abstain from interfering with matters of worship or religious gathering. Of course a separation of Church and State would disallow equally much any government funding of religious activities or activities directly related to religious life, including the building of places of worship and the like.