kere’ (quaedam), ‘net zoals’ (sicut) en ‘ongeveer’ (quasi).

Ik hoop dat uit deze recensie van de dissertatie van J. A. Aertsen is gebleken, met hoeveel interesse en instemming ik dit werk heb gelezen en herlezen en hoezeer ik hoop, met hem het door hem gecontinueerde gesprek verder voort te zetten.

Amsterdam, op het feest van Thomas van Aquino
28 januari 1985
Mich. Marlet, KTHA.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, Until Justice and Peace Embrace, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1983

This book consists of the first series of the Kuyper Lectures begun by the Free University of Amsterdam in 1981. The theme chosen for the first several years was ‘The Political Consequences of the Reformation’ and the first lecturer chosen was the philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff of Calvin College. Wolterstorff interpreted his theme liberally and the result is a work of vast scope. Amongst the topics he covers are: the nature of religion; the distinguishing features of the Calvinism of the Reformation as a world-formative religion; theories of global social structure, especially ‘modernization’ and ‘world-system’ views; a comparative criticism of the social analyses provided by liberation theology (especially Gutierrez) and by Dutch neo-Calvinism (especially Dooyeweerd and Goudzwaard); analyses of the biblical meaning of shalom and of the rich and poor; the nationalistic ideologies manifest in Israel and in the Afrikaners; cities as objects of beauty, delight and morality; the state of and possibilities for liturgy in Protestantism, especially Reformed Protestantism; theory and praxis. Indeed, its scope is wide enough that I as a reviewer do not feel competent to comment on some sections of it, especially those on the city and on liturgy.

Apart from its scope the book has several other pronounced strengths. Wolterstorff usually seizes upon the most important questions in the areas he covers, and he grapples with the most important texts. The writing is clear, the style dynamic, the argument usually tight, and the whole systematically organized. He is especially trenchant in his criticism of the Calvinist tendency to express the cultural mandate and the task of theory in largely formal terms rather than in terms of the Godly service of humankind.

Despite these many and pronounced strengths the book has several flaws. At the cost of seeming overly negative I will, in this review, concentrate not on the strengths but on exploring one of the flaws - what I will call its ‘voluntarism’. I do this because I believe it will illustrate some of the disagreements between Wolterstorff and, in his words, ‘neo-Calvinism’, and in the hope that those disagreements may be fruitfully discussed. As a means to my criticism I will treat the book as a work in social theory, concentrating on the first few chapters as its systematic core, and acknowledge that this procedure neglects several of its central features.

In chapter 1, ‘World-formative Christianity’, Wolterstorff distinguishes
salvation religions as those religions which 'look forward to salvation from what is defective in our present mode of existence' (p. 5). Within these religions are two types – 'avertive' and 'formative'. He describes medieval religion as typically avertive and the Calvinism of the Reformation as typically formative.

This contrast manifests itself sociologically in that 'the medieval' viewed society as part of 'the great chain of being'. Society was created by God, mirrored a universal structure, and was part of the order of nature. One might call for the reform of persons within the structure, but one could never question the structure itself, for this was a given (pp. 7-8).

The Calvinists, on the other hand, did not believe that 'social structures' were natural. Rather, such structures 'are the result of human decision, and being made by us, they can be altered by us'. This is not all, for the very 'structures themselves are corrupt and in need of reform, not only the persons who exist in these structures'. The 'structure is determined by our human actions' and 'it is capable of being altered' (p. 9). Finally the Calvinists believed that they themselves had the responsibility to carry out such reforms. This complex of ideas is what Wolterstorff refers to as 'world-formative' Christianity.

Here I think that Wolterstorff has read several modern notions of 'society' back into the controversies of the time of the Reformation. He says that societies have (or are) structures and that such structures can be viewed either as naturally given or else as the expression of human will. He identifies Calvinism with the view that social structures are the expression of human will and he adopts this view as his own. However, there is little evidence that such a relation between will and social structure was envisaged by early Calvinists, and little evidence that anybody envisaged such a relation before Hobbes.

In propounding such a view of will Wolterstorff has tended to pass over what was distinctive about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Calvinist social theory. It is certainly true that Calvinists dissented from the medieval view of society as a divine creation, but they did not thereby view social arrangements as the result of human decision, human will. As David Little has argued in his Religion, Order and Law, Calvinists rejected an identification of the existing social order with the will of God, but they argued that God had laid down conditions for the social order and that such conditions called for and were fulfilled by the free consensual participation of God's people. Fundamentally, the social order was seen as the meeting of God's law and free human response.

It is not clear why Wolterstorff, who refers to Little, neglects this point. One reason could be his debt to Michael Walzer's The Revolution of the Saints, a book that focuses on the psychodynamics of Puritanism but is weaker on the actual content of Calvinist views. Another possible reason is Wolterstorff's own suspicion of the idea of social structure other than as expression of human will. Elsewhere he refers to "creation ordinance" theologies and philosophies that have been used to support conservative positions (p. 59) and seems, rather ideologically, to regard this as a criticism of the idea of creation ordinances rather than as a possible defence of conservatism. In any case, the pattern that emerges is that Wolterstorff regards