

CALL FOR PAPERS

Neo-Calvinism and Capitalism

6th European Neo-Calvinism Conference 2024

29-30 August 2024, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Introduction

'It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.' This famous quote by philosopher Slavoj Žižek captures both the dominance of capitalism in our world and the profound challenge it poses therein. Although critique of capitalism was once on the fringes of Western society, recent economic crises, growing inequality, and climate change increasingly place it on center stage. This trend is also prompted by post-colonialism, awareness of modern slavery, and the challenges of the provision of health care and education, all of which brings the limits of the prevailing capitalist emphasis into view. More and more, the modern capitalist order appears to suffer from inherent problems that call for its reimagining.

One source of inspiration for such reassessment is Neo-Calvinism. Ever since its emergence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the Netherlands through Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, Neo-Calvinism aspired to be more than a theological renewal movement. Rather, it sought to reform the whole of society by applying its principles to politics, science, and the arts, among other areas. Building on the social commitment of the earlier Dutch *Réveil* movement, it also received a socio-economic application. What began with Groen van Prinsterer and Kuyper in the age of industrial revolution as an analysis of the 'social question' of poverty and unemployment, grew into a full-fledged socio-economic theory in the twentieth century. In the process, a tradition of Christian social and economic thought took shape in the university, politics, and the labor movement.

Despite this, Neo-Calvinism has always had an ambiguous relationship with the rise of modern capitalism. On the one hand, it was part of the age of renewal and modernization and thus accepted capitalism as a historical fact. On the other, Neo-Calvinists have always been critical of its downsides—a form of criticism that also stems from biblical and theological perspectives. Its double-faced response to the rise of socialism is a good example of this ambiguity. Neo-Calvinism could not close its eyes to the economic problems accompanying the new capitalist era but could not embrace dissenting voices hostile to religion and economic freedom either.

Conference Theme

This conference is devoted to the engagement of Neo-Calvinism with modern capitalism. This relationship will be explored from several perspectives. *Historically*, it will deal with the rise and development of Neo-Calvinist socio-economic thought—roughly from “Groen to Goudzwaard,” but also in its international transmission in the 20th and 21st centuries. *Philosophically* and *theologically*, the key question of how we should evaluate Neo-Calvinist thought on these issues will be posed. What is its use for contemporary challenges such as increasing inequality and climate change?

Suggestions for Contributions

- the socioeconomic thought of the *Réveil* in the Netherlands and abroad

- the engagement with socialism and capitalism by theologians such as Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, W. Geesink and Klaas Schilder
- the assessment of economic liberalism, communism, and socialism in antirevolutionary political thought
- the history of economic theorizing and education at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam from P. A. Diepenhorst to Jelle Zijlstra and beyond
- the legacy of economists in the Neo-Calvinist tradition such as T. P. van der Kooy and Bob Goudzwaard, as well as forgotten writers like T. (Tiemen) de Vries, J. A. (Johan Alexander) Nederbragt, and Jan Ridder
- the contribution of Neo-Calvinist economists and sociologists abroad, for example in the US, Canada, Australia, and South-Africa
- the social and economic modal aspect in Herman Dooyeweerd's philosophy of the cosmonomic idea
- contemporary Neo-Calvinist approaches to economics and sociology
- pressing "social questions" in contemporary society viewed from a Neo-Calvinist perspective
- the economization of health care and education from a Neo-Calvinist perspective.
- theological and philosophical evaluations of the notion of the cultural mandate in light of capitalism, economic growth and climate change
- theological and philosophical reflections on growth, possession, and profit.

One-page proposals including the presenter's institutional affiliation can be submitted to Dr. Marinus de Jong (imdejong@tukampen.nl) before March 1st, 2024.

The conference is in-person and will be in English. We value the communal and reciprocal aspect of academic enquiry, and therefore encourage those who present to attend the entire two days conference.

The European Neo-Calvinism Conference is organized by

Dr. James Eglinton (New College, University of Edinburgh)

Prof. Dr. George Harinck (Neo-Calvinism Research Institute, TU Utrecht)

Dr. Joost Hengstmengel (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Dr. Marinus de Jong (Neo-Calvinism Research Institute, TU Utrecht)

Prof. Dr. Jan van der Stoep (Neo-Calvinism Research Institute, TU Utrecht Stichting Christelijke Filosofie)

