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# Kuyperania in 2017

*This article looks at new works published in 2017 by or about the Dutch polymath Abraham Kuyper.*

**KEY CONCEPTS:** *Abraham Kuyper, Islam, Common grace, Ecclesiology, Organism-institute, Race*

*Hierdie artikel kyk na nuwe werk gepubliseer in 2017 deur of oor die Nederlandse polimaat Abraham Kuyper.*

**KERNBEGRIPE:** *Abraham Kuyper, Islam, Algemene genade, Ekklesiologie, Organisme – Instituut, Race*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There has never been a better time for an Anglophone to study Abraham Kuyper. There is the excellent work of the Kuyper Translation Society who are regularly publishing new translations of Kuyper's work and 2017 sees two more key additions, *Pro Rege* Vol. 2 and *On Islam*. Other recent important works include Bartholomew's (2017) guide to all things Kuyperian, which provides a useful introduction to the Kuyperian perspective, a former student of Bartholomew, Mike Wagenman has had his PhD published, this examines Kuyper's view of power and ecclesiology and another dissertation published applies the Kuyperian perspective to Korea (Ok Kim, 2017). Jochem Douma's original Dutch dissertation on the nature of common grace in Kuyper, Klaas Schilder and John Calvin has been newly translated and an issue of *The Journal of Reformed Theology* examined the neo-Calvinist approach to race, which included several papers on Kuyper.

In the following, I will examine these publications and other works on Kuyper. I begin by looking at the two books by Kuyper published by the Abraham Kuyper Translation Society: *Pro Rege* and *On Islam*.

## 2. TRANSLATIONS OF KUYPER

The details in the style of Kuipers (2011) of the two translations book are as follows.

.01 *Pro Rege: Living Under Christ the King.*

*Volume 2: The Kingship of Christ in Its Operations*

*Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology*

Bellingham, WA, Lexham Press 2017. 528 pp., 18 x 4.3 x 25.7 cm - £42.99/ \$49.99

Translation of: 1911.14 *Pro Rege of het Koningschap van Christus. Tweede deel*

Translator: Albert J. Gootjes

General Editors: Melvin Flikkema and Jordan J. Ballor

Editors: John Kok with Nelson D. Koosterman

General Editors' Introduction: Jordan J. Ballor and Melvin Flikkema (dated August 2015)

Editors' Introduction: John Kok and Nelson D. Koosterman

Volume Introduction: Govert Buijs

Binding: Hardback

Published: March 2017

ISBN 978-1-57-799671-2

.02 On Islam

*Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology*

Bellingham, WA, Lexham Press 2017. 400 pp., 18.3 x 3.6 x 25.7 cm - £38.38/ \$39.49

Translation (parts) of: 1907.13; 1908.10 Om de Oude Wereldzee

Translator: Jan van Vliet

General Editors: Melvin Flikkema and Jordan J. Ballor

Editors: James D. Bratt with Douglas Howard

Volume Introduction: Douglas Howard and George Harinck

Afterword: Diane B. Obenchain

Binding: Hardback

Published: December 2017

ISBN: 978-1-57-799674-3

## 2.1 *Pro Rege* Volume 2

This volume, translated by Albert J. Gootjes, follows on from the first volume published in 2016 (see the review in Bishop, 2017). Govert Buijs, in his introduction, writes 'So what Kuyper sets out to develop is a full-orbed "theology of every-day life," a theology of incarnation of Christ's kingship, ranging from politics to philanthropy, from the family to public opinion and the media, from civil society to academia, from economics to the arts' (xviii). I would want to take issue with the phrase 'a theology of ...'; what Kuyper was doing is much broader— but it does give the feel for what the *Pro Rege* volumes are about. And, of course, a Christian approach is far broader than a theological approach — a Christian approach is one developed from the sovereignty of God and thus from the notion of common grace that Kuyper is developing.

In this newly-translated second volume of the *Pro Rege* trilogy we catch glimpses of Kuyper's approach to church and family in particular. This second volume is split into three parts. The first deals with 'Christ's kingship and his subjects', the second 'Christ's kingship and his church' and the third 'Christ's kingship and the family'. As Kuyper puts it, this volume 'comprise a much more extensive series of chapters that place us before practical questions regarding the calling, task, and responsibility that Christ's kingship imposes upon us as his subjects' (3).

In the first part, he examines the roles and responsibilities of the subjects of the kingdom. But this is not a programme to be followed, rather it is all about grace. It is reassuring to know that 'The kingship of Christ does not depend on us in any way' (3). This is because 'The foundation on which the edifice of Jesus' kingship has been built is not the faith and devotion of his subjects, but rests in God's good pleasure alone' (4). Kuyper outlines several duties we have as subjects of the king. These include confessing him, witnessing to him, taking up our cross in obedience, living as pilgrims and being in a battle with Satan and his cohorts. This latter aspect is often forgotten - too often Satan is dismissed as being an irrelevance or an invention. Kuyper is clear the battle is real; it is a battle for the world:

'As King, Christ does not fight against the world but for it. He does not work to try to bring down the human race, but to preserve it. Accordingly, the battle he fights is directed entirely against the spiritual and unholy power that has stolen the human race away from God and that seeks to raise up its own kingdom against the kingdom of Christ' (51).

And again:

'It is against this demonic world that all of Christ's subjects must unite their forces. Satan alone is the real enemy to be fought, and it is in this battle against him alone that we must persist and persevere—persevere to the bitter end' (52).

However, the battle also takes place in our own hearts.

'To be sure, an altogether distinct set of obligations derives from membership in the visible church. Therefore, now that we have discussed our personal duties, we will go on in the second place to examine our ecclesiastical duties' (102).

Part 1 looked at Christ's kingship for our personal lives, in Part 2 Kuyper turns to Christ's kingship within and through the church. Once again dispelling the notion that neo-Calvinism downgrades or minimises the institutional church. He laments the fact that Christ's kingship has too often been spiritualised and 'removed from the reality of the church' (289). The church, for Kuyper, is a result of grace rather than creation:

'The church is therefore alien to creation life. It has not come from it, but was added to it. It is an institution of a unique kind and order. It has entered the life of the nations as an institution with a unique origin' (115).

Christ is the one who institutes, protects, sustains and governs the church. It was instituted as something new (303). Throughout this section, Kuyper is eminently practical. He stresses the need for the church overseers to be personally acquainted with each member of the congregation if they are not then it is very difficult for them to admonish and warn them, the congregants could thus easily stray.

'More is called for than just preaching. Sermons can point to the pasture, but preaching does not and cannot tend to the various individual needs of each sheep in the flock. That kind of care can only be given through personal interaction' (248).

Kuyper often stresses the global and the local nature of the church. He sees no place for a national church. He goes on to identify three popular views of the church: the individualistic, the independent and the covenantal. The first is what he claims is the Anabaptist position – the members are those who have made a profession of faith out of a personal choice. In this view he maintains that the church is reduced to a club or association. In the second view, choice is not necessary, all who come are deemed members, no one is turned away and there is no restriction on baptism. The third view, the one endorsed by Kuyper, focuses on the covenant; this 'model insists on the truth that the Lord's mystical body has an organic character, and that the visible church must for that reason also rest on an organic foundation' (226). Although Kuyper's depiction of the first two positions may be something of a caricature there is much truth in it. Only the third model sits well with the Scriptures. It avoids atomism and stresses the need for discipline.

In the third part of the book Kuyper shows that he was a man of his time. His approach is rather patriarchal and assumes segregated conjugal roles, with the wife as homemaker and the husband as breadwinner. With the changes that have taken place within society since Kuyper wrote such an approach seems rather dated, particularly when both parents — through no fault of their own — may have to work to be able to afford the rent or mortgage on a family home. Although Kuyper stresses the origin of the family with creation, he takes the hierarchical nature of the family from the fall. There is no basis for a family hierarchy pre-fall. It may not have been unusual in Kuyper's time for families to have servants and Kuyper does discuss their role within the family. In his discussions, Kuyper shows that practicality and spirituality are not mutually exclusive.

The church, for Kuyper, did not arise out of a creation ordinance, unlike the family:

'The Christian family, therefore, is not a new creation. It arises from the existing order of affairs, and links directly with what came into existence through creation in paradise. In the church, the adjective Christian points us indeed to an entirely new order of affairs. But as soon as you leave the church and return to ordinary life, also what is called Christian in family or in society proceeds from creation' (309).

This among other things sets the family apart from the church. The family is not to be a micro-church. The church does influence the family but the family has an 'independent and unique life'. He is careful to note that a Christian family means more than being a morally upright good family. For a family to have the adjective 'Christian' it means that it should be constituted and ordered as God requires it to be. As Kuyper puts it:

'For a family to be Christian, three things must be present in it through the Spirit of Christ and the result of his work. The first is the restoration of what sin and misery have corrupted. The second is the elevation of original family life to its ideal. And thirdly, in order that this blessing might not be passing but fix its roots in the family and seek to be nourished there, the family must sanctify its communion by establishing a family altar before which the entire family (that is, parents, children, and servants) kneel so as to give to God the honor and worship he is due for what he in his grace has given the family and to ask him to bless its life. Only in this way can Christ exercise his dominion as our King over the family as well' (307).

Throughout the book Kuyper's main drive is for Christ's kingship to be exercised in and through the church and family. In the third volume - yet to be published - he shows how the kingdom affects other areas of life and society, such as the state, and the spheres of art and science, but he writes, 'the family takes precedence because every enrichment of personal life begins with the family and arises in part from the family' (301).

*Pro Rege* was first published in 1911 towards the end of his public political life – he retired from party politics due to ill health in 1912. He had been the Dutch prime minister from 1901-1905. After his 1905 election defeat, Kuyper set off on a journey around the Mediterranean Sea, the 'Old World-Sea', for several months. In part, he went on this trip to examine and understand the rise of Islam in the area. He wrote his observations in the two-volume *Om De Oude Wereldzee*. (Kuyper, 1907). Many of the sections of this fascinating work have now been translated in *On Islam*.

## 2.2 On Islam

*On Islam* is partly autobiography, partly travel diaries, partly sociological observations, partly cultural anthropology. What is most remarkable is the descriptions and observations of this mainly Muslim area. It provides an insight into early twentieth century Islam. This is a complex landscape, not only religiously but also geographically, culturally and politically. The introduction, 'The Western Islamic World at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century', by Douglas Howard, provides a good historical introduction to some of these complex issues. Likewise, George Harinck's insightful essay 'Abraham Kuyper's View of Islam: The Dutch Setting'.

Sections from *Om De Oude Wereldzee* have been translated previously by Jan Boer as the *Mystery of Islam* (Kuyper, 2010).<sup>1</sup> The 'Mystery of Islam' is an appropriate title — as this is what Kuyper was seeking to do to explore the enigma that was Islam. One crucial question that underlines this book of fresh translations is why has Islam flourished but Christianity faded in this area?

Kuyper sees much of value in Islam:

'... it is seriously mistaken to imagine for even a moment that the spiritual patrons of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism are men without knowledge, insight, and willpower. Their learning may be different, but their critical faculties are no smaller than ours'.<sup>2</sup>

1 This comprises the Introduction and Chapter 1 of volume 2 of *Om De Oude Wereldzee*.

2 I am unable to provide page numbers as I was supplied an advance pre-paginated copy by Jake Mailhot of Faith Life, the parent company of Lexham Press.

In particular, he seems to appreciate its all of life approach and the commitment in endears among its followers. As he puts it:

‘Muslims do not have separate social, religious, and political spheres; rather, all of life is bound together in one Qur’anic sphere, and this life relies on personal love for a living tradition’.

At times he seems optimistic about collaboration: ‘we cannot exclude the possibility that [Moslems] will ultimately join us in the battle against pantheism and polytheism’. However, he notes that ‘it is enough to observe that the strict legalistic and regulated character of Islamic ritual leads to little more than a shallow deism’. And yet he also identifies with some followers, such as the Sufi, a yearning for mysticism:

‘This inner movement in the life of the soul arose from three factors: world-aversive asceticism, mystical inwardness, and pantheism’s thought-system’.

He notes the patriarchal and sometimes oppressive nature of Islam towards women

‘In Islam the female is merely incidental. She is no more than a footnote to the male and, ideally, is denied any independent existence’.

However, he finds that the Christianity of the area has succumbed to cultural and Islamic pressures. This is particularly so in the treatment of women; for example:

‘Even in a Christian church I found women considered just as inferior as in a mosque. The imitation goes so far as the use of prayer rugs in the church the same as you would find in a mosque. The spiritual maturity of the Christian folk of Asia Minor is minimal’.

‘... the position of the woman in Christian families follows the Turkish manner and remains downtrodden. They have been unable to maintain the much higher Christian perception of women. Even in Christian families the husband eats alone at the table and is served by his wife who sits down with the remaining female staff and the children only when her husband is finished’.

The Islamic world that Kuyper travelled in displayed a great variety of forms - there is not one such monolithic religion that is Islam. He identifies a number of different ‘differentiated sects’: ‘one finds—besides the Sunnis—Shiites, Ismailis, Nosairis, Ansaris, Mutawilés, Druze, and Yazidis or Satan worshipers’.

In essence, he identifies two apparently contradictory tenets of Islam, their ‘fatalism and their obligation to promote the faith by the sword’. Interestingly he notes that ‘At the moment Muslims are still in a state of political despondency, so courtesy and kindness can soften their mood considerably’. That may well be a message for today.

An afterword by Diane B. Obenchain of Fuller Theological Seminary, “By What Magic Did Muhammad...? The Missiological Implications of Abraham Kuyper’s Observations on Islam”, examines Islam in Kuyper’s theological context - namely, that of covenant.

One of the translators of this new work is Jan van Vliet. He has provided an excellent introduction to Kuyper’s approach to Islam in his article in the journal *Pro Rege* (See below). Other works that have examined this topic include Lee (2004) and de Vries (2010).

From works by Kuyper we now turn to works on Kuyper, first starting with some important books.

### 3. BOOKS ON KUYPER

#### 3.1 *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition*

In his *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition* Craig Bartholomew (2018) presents an excellent introduction to Kuyper's ideas and his legacy. Bartholomew is right when he suggests that Christians need 'to develop an integrally biblical Christian worldview and to live creatively and thus plausibly from this perspective ...' (9). There is no better place to begin this development than by looking at the resources Kuyper has to offer, and no better place to begin to find out those Kuyperian resources than in this book.

In Chapter 1 Bartholomew presents a brief biography of Kuyper - and suggests that the notion of *palingenesis*—the new birth—is key to Kuyper's work. In Chapter 2 he looks at the crucial issue of creation and redemption. Too often evangelicals have emphasised redemption at the expense of creation — not so Kuyper. As Bartholomew notes:

'For Kuyper, we should not make the mistake of thinking that God preserves his creation only in order to make possible the salvation of the elect' (37).

Salvation is not unconnected to creation, and grace is not external to nature. Kuyper's holistic view, as Bartholomew stresses, 'stems not only from Christ's work but also from [Christ's] identity' (41). This chapter also has an excellent summary of the way in which nature and grace have been expressed, with a justification of the way in which Kuyper and Bavinck see it: grace restoring nature. Bartholomew supports the view that this is a biblical approach by examining both covenant and kingdom.

The issue of the Scriptures, how we read and interpret them, is often very divisive. Chapter 3 looks at the Kuyperian approach to Scripture. Kuyper was not a fundamentalist and he, like Bavinck, makes a distinction between Scripture and the Word of God — though they both hold to Scripture 'as being God's infallible word' (96). Kuyper's approach is best described as belonging to the redemptive-historical school. Bartholomew closes this chapter with an important warning that we do not loosen 'our hold on Scripture as God's infallible Word' (99).

Chapter 4 focuses on the important issue of worldview. This is an important Kuyperian concept appropriated and popularised by Kuyper in his *Lectures on Calvinism*. It is also probably the most misinterpreted aspect of Kuyper. There has been a tendency to intellectualise the concept and to equate it with philosophy. Bartholomew identifies five shadow sides to the notion of worldview: it intellectualises the gospel; it universalises the gospel; it relativises the gospel; it becomes disconnected from Scripture; and it can entrench middle-class values and lead to an unhealthy messianic activism (118-123). Even so, Bartholomew is right, appropriated correctly, it is a 'rich and useful' term.

Another broad theme that Kuyper developed, and was central to his social and political philosophy, was sphere sovereignty - this is the topic of his Chapter 5. Sphere sovereignty was developed by Kuyper taken from hints of the idea in Groen van Prinsterer, F.J. Stahl and Althusius, although its formulation was unique to Kuyper (for further on this see Henderson, 2017a - discussed below). Sphere sovereignty was central to Kuyper's view of the relationship between state, education and the church. It was also central to the pillarisation (*verzuiling*) of society in the Netherlands. Some also misused it to justify apartheid in South Africa - a point well dealt with by Bartholomew.

Another of Kuyper's important insights was the distinction between the church as institute and church as organism. This is examined in the next chapter. Here, Bartholomew is right to stress the importance of the church in Kuyper's thought: 'From his conversion to the end of his life the church remained an issue of major concern for Kuyper' (162). Kuyper's concept of the church was in part formed from his reading of Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Heir*

of Redclyffe. Yonge was influenced by the Tractarian Movement in the UK and in particular Cardinal Newman. It was their high view of the church and the role of the church as mother that Kuyper appreciated. Even though Kuyper, as Bartholomew carefully points out as he traces the changes in Kuyper's ecclesiology, later adopted a more congregational view of the church (188).

Bartholomew disagrees with Kuyper — as many contemporary Kuyperians do — regarding Kuyper's view of government as being a post-fall institution (192). Nevertheless, Kuyper did develop a Christian perspective on politics and government as Bartholomew shows in Chapter 7. This is perhaps not unsurprising as Kuyper as well as being theologian was a politician. He founded the first modern political party in the Netherlands (the ARP) and did so with Christian principles. He also fought for a new electoral system within the Netherlands. Bartholomew closes this chapter on a sad note: '... when it comes to Kuyper's thought on the social issues of his day, one cannot help but fear that Kuyperians have failed to hear his call' (212).

Chapter 8 moves on to look at mission. This chapter mainly focuses on the work of J.H. Bavinck — Herman Bavinck's nephew. While Chapter 9 looks at two philosophical schools that developed largely out of Kuyperianism, namely, Dooyeweerd's and Vollenhoven's Reformational philosophy and the more popular, but less insightful, approach of Reformed epistemology.

Theology is the subject of Chapter 10. Kuyper was a theologian but this aspect of his work has been somewhat neglected. Bartholomew discusses some reasons for this, namely, the liberalisation of the Free University (VU); the conflict, at the VU, between theologians and philosophers; the on-going church conflicts at the time; and then the impact of two world wars. He thinks now is the time to 'retrieve, renew, and develop the Kuyperian theological tradition for today' (271). I whole-heartedly agree! This chapter represents a good first step towards that aim. Certainly, Kuyper's *The Work of the Holy Spirit* deserves more attention.

Education is under review next (Chapter 11) — education, like the church, theology, politics and mission was close to Kuyper's heart. For Kuyper, education, church and the home were intertwined. Nurture and education are inseparable, as parents hold primary responsibility for the education of their children. Teachers must make their own decisions about pedagogy — the role of the state is not to dictate how teachers should teach. Hence, the need for Christian schools.

The final chapter concludes the book with a look at 'The need for a spiritual formation'. This has often been a weak spot in the Kuyperian approach - although not in Kuyper (see, for example, De Jong, 2017 - discussed below).

Bartholomew writes as one steeped in the Kuyperian tradition, but this doesn't mean he is uncritical of it and he is aware of the danger of absolutising the man. At times Bartholomew seems to prefer Bavinck's approach to Kuyper's. He sees the weaknesses in the Kuyperian tradition as well as its strengths and he is not afraid to point out what he perceives as its faults. For example, he thinks the Kuyperian tradition can be enriched by the Pietistic tradition (245). He also aware that Kuyperians need to learn from non-Kuyperians, not least, according to Bartholomew, Max Weber and Mother Theresa.

Bartholomew concludes:

The Kuyperian tradition has the resources to produce culturally savvy Christians today' (323).

He is right - and this book is a great place to begin to understand and then go on to appropriate and implement those resources.

### 3.2 *Johanna and Henriette Kuyper*

The next book, *Johanna and Henriette Kuyper*, is different from the books I usually read and review. It is a novelisation cum biography of two female Kuypers: Johanna (Abraham's wife) and their daughter Henriëtte Sophia Susanna (aka Harry) (1870-1933). It is facts plus imagination. Unfortunately, it is more imagination than fact. It is aimed at teenage females and is part of a series published by Presbyterian & Reformed entitled Chosen Daughters. The book is split into three parts, the first dealing with the childhood of Johanna, the second with 'Jo and Bram' and the third 'Harry'. It provides an interesting insight into the patriarchal culture of the time and gives a good feel for what life might be like in the Kuyper household. The main aim of the book appears to be to help the readers be true to themselves and true to what God intended them to be - just as Jo and Harry did. For example:

'Above all, honor the Lord and be true to your heart' (114).

'When I surrendered to the Lord, I didn't lose myself; I gained the true me' (188).

'The Lord gave each of you a unique personality. He wants you to honor him and be true to yourself' (269).

The historical aspects are then given second place to moral examples for the readers to follow. This becomes particularly clear in the 'Go deeper' section at the end of the book where questions such as: 'What in Jo's story could help you to be friends with that girl [i.e. someone who doesn't have a Christian faith]?' and 'At her sewing class, she saw a girl being mistreated. How did Jo stop the bullying and help the girl to feel welcome in the class? How can you help if you see a girl being bullied?'

The book has some appropriate photographs, a recipe for Dutch apple pie and details of how to make a textile book cover. There are a useful timeline and a two-page list of bibliographical resources.

I hope this book will provide a catalyst for more research into Harry Kuyper, as there is so much more to learn from her than is suggested in this book. She was a member of the Central Committee of the League of Nations and Peace and the Central Committee for the Film Inspection and she wrote and spoke extensively on politics, literature and the role of women.

### 3.3 *A. Kuyper's View of Sphere Sovereignty and the Korean Church*

This book is a case of content over style - the aesthetics of the book, sadly, leave a lot to be desired. However, this is made up for with the content. *A. Kuyper's View of Sphere Sovereignty and the Korean Church* is a privately published version of Jeom Ok Kim's MTh from Calvin Theological Seminary in 2000. It offers a critique of the Korean Presbyterian Church. Kim begins with a helpful overview of the political-cultural developments in Korea since the 1960s and with the rise and then clinging to power of General Chung Hee Park. The 1970s saw tremendous economic growth, but at the expense of rising inequality, and a rise in increasing spiritualities.

In Chapter 3 he examines the polarised Korean Presbyterian Church. The conservative side is characterised by the theology of Hung Nong Park and Chosin Theological Seminary. These have an emphasis on the soteriological side of the sovereignty of God which is accompanied with a negative attitude towards social participation and reform. The liberal side of the Korean church is exemplified in the work of Chai Choon Kim. He has a horizontal rather than vertical theology and his approach has similarities with liberation theology. This approach is one of accommodation with the state and epitomises a pluralistic syncretism approach.

Kim finds neither approach acceptable. In Chapter 4 he focuses on Kuyper's 'theological

principle for social involvement' namely sphere sovereignty and a free church in a free state. In Chapter 5 he applies this to the extremes of the Korean church. Both the conservative and liberal streams are ignorant of sphere sovereignty and Kin argues both could benefit from its approach. The conservative side emphasises the separation of church and state, however, such an approach is not followed consistently. They give absolute obedience to the state and patriotism, and take part in prayer breakfasts for politicians, which seems to break down the church-state distinction. It also means that there is no notion of Christian politics. The liberal side, on the other hand, doesn't separate church and state and the church is involved in the affairs of the state. Kuyper's sphere sovereignty offers an alternative to both flawed views. This means that on the conservative side they should avoid the church-state confusion and reject the blind flattery of the state. A free church in a free state means that protest against unjust political power is justified. Likewise, on the liberal side, a free church in a free state means that church and state should not be confused. The state arises from the sovereignty of God, not from popular sovereignty.

This book provides an insight into the Korean church and shows how Kuyper's ideas can be applicable to contemporary non-Western societies.

### 3.4 *The Power of the Church: The Ecclesiology of Abraham Kuyper*

Mike Wagenman's brilliant 2014 PhD Thesis (Bristol University and Trinity College, supervised by Craig Bartholomew) has now been published as: *The Power of the Church: The Ecclesiology of Abraham Kuyper*, Wagenman (2107). After a long period of neglect Kuyper's ecclesiology is now having a resurgence – and rightly so. It has been a long time since the publication of Zwanstra's (1974) look at 'Abraham Kuyper's conception of the church'. The hiatus was broken by Wood's (2013), since then Ballor and Joustra (ed.) (2015) applied Kuyper's distinction between church as institute and organism to contemporary issues. (Wagenman was also a contributor to that volume; he also contributed a chapter on the church in *On Kuyper* (Wagenman, 2013)). In this book, he examines the elusive concept of power with a particular look at ecclesiastical power. He writes:

'... by looking to the worldview, in which we find Kuyper's view of power, we will be able to engage in a multi-dimensional understanding of power - something which both accomplishes comprehensiveness and avoids reductionism' (Loc.<sup>3</sup> 1828).

He provides a clear and succinct summary of his aims:

'As such, this project seeks to examine Kuyper's ecclesiology from a theologically systematic point of view with an eye to further theological developments relative to power and authority which can assist the church today in appreciating and implementing its identity and mandate in culturally constructive ways for human and cultural flourishing' (Loc. 2078).

He shows that Kuyper's ecclesiology has two key elements:

'1) The church is grounded in creation, and 2) The church is both an institution and an organism'.

These differences between the organism — institution distinction is clearly summarised:

by organism Kuyper means the church as Christians "sent" into the whole of life to bear witness to the gospel in their everyday affairs. By the institutional church, Kuyper means the bricks-and-mortar church, gathered under duly ordained leadership, for official functions (Loc. 759).

3 Loc. corresponds to the position in the kindle edition.

Surprisingly, Kuyper's PhD (Kuyper, 2016) is seldom referenced here – it would have been helpful to see how seminal this dissertation is to Kuyper's later work. Nevertheless, Wagenman has provided an excellent analysis of Kuyper's ecclesiology.

### 3.5 Common Grace in Kuyper, Schilder, and Calvin

Jochem Douma's *Common Grace in Kuyper, Schilder, and Calvin: Exposition, Comparison, and Evaluation* is translated from *Algemene genade: uiteenzetting, vergelijking en beoordeling van de opvattingen van A. Kuyper, K. Schilder en Joh. Calvijn over 'algemene genade'* (Goes, Neth.: Oosterbaan & Le Contre, 1974). The book was originally a version of Douma's PhD dissertation from the Theological University in Kampen, the Netherlands.

The original title General grace (*Algemene genade*) has been replaced by common grace in the translation. It is a shame that this new translation doesn't use the recently translated works of Kuyper. Instead, the references to Kuyper's work are to his original Dutch *De Gemeene Gratie*.

Douma provides a helpful summary of the three different positions on common grace. There are three large chapters that examine each of the individual thinker's approach to common grace and then a helpful comparison in Chapter 4. The chapter on Kuyper looks in detail at Kuyper's use of the key texts, Genesis 9; Genesis 2:17; Genesis 3; John 1; Romans 1 and 2; and Revelation 21:26.

The comparisons that Douma makes I have summarised below in Table 1. Douma then in Chapter 5 provides his evaluation of the positions. He thinks that Kuyper's doctrine of common grace is 'unacceptable because he focuses this grace not on salvation and the knowledge of God, but on culture'; and he sides mainly with Calvin in: 'it is to be commended in Calvin that his discussion of grace in a general sense is focused correctly'.

Douma is emphatic that:

'The treatment of our topic [common grace] would have been unthinkable but for the fact that each of the three theologians accepts the doctrine of double predestination' (Loc. 6999).

He continues:

'Among all three theologians there is a connection between this double predestination and our topic' (Loc. 7004).

And yet — even though according to Douma, all three accept double predestination — they have different perspectives on common grace! That connection doesn't lead to the same conclusion! Kuyper advocates common grace, Schilder denies it, and Calvin has some notion of common grace; although Douma thinks that Calvin doesn't have a *doctrine* of common grace.

'Calvin recognized general grace. God's display of grace is not limited to the church. But that is something different from adhering to a doctrine of general grace in which this grace inevitably becomes an independent entity (as in Kuyper)' (Loc. 7408).

It seems the key difference between Kuyper and Schilder is the effect of the fall:

'while Kuyper believes that culture continues itself (thanks to common grace) despite the Fall, Schilder regards the Fall as causing a rupture' (Loc. 7225).

Common grace has been a controversial topic and Douma in his triangulation of these

important theologians has posed some important questions and identified some important distinctions – even if he is not always right in his conclusions.

**TABLE 1. A comparison of the views of Kuyper, Schilder and Calvin regarding common grace.**

	<b>Kuyper</b>	<b>Schilder</b>	<b>Calvin</b>
§1 Double predestination	Yes – it is in the background	Yes – it has a dominant position	Yes – in the background
§2 Parallelism of election & reprobation	No – the doctrine of double predestination barely illuminates common grace	Yes	No
§3 Breadth of predestination	Broader than both Schilder and Calvin – organistic	Narrow - personal	Narrow - personal
§4 Development from bud to bloom	Strong sense of specifically cultural attention	Appears only in a modest form	This cultural attention is missing in Calvin
§5 The place of Christ in fulfilling creation mandate	Indispensable & stimulating  Duality in mediator: creation & redemption	Foundational	
§6 General grace – orientation & end result	More general sense – a development of culture		More general sense – a knowledge of God
§7 General grace - doctrine	Yes		No
§8 God's wrath	Not discussed	Yes	Yes
§9 God's eternal disposition	Barely	Continually	Now and then
§10 Grace & necessity	Both ascribe the character of necessity to the continuation of history		The issue does not arise
&11 Culture & pilgrimage	Common grace – used as the foundation of his appeal to Christians not to avoid culture	Humans as office bearers	Pilgrimage

Source: Douma (2017; ch 4).

#### 4. JOURNAL ARTICLES

*The Journal of Reformed Theology*, 11(1-2) is a special issue edited by George Harinck (Harinck, 2017a) devoted to neo-Calvinism and race. The papers were originally presented at the annual Kuyper Conference of the Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in 2015. It contains papers on Bavinck (Joustra, 2017), Kuyper (de Brujine, 2017; Eglinton, 2017; Harinck, 2017b) and also papers on race (Liou, 2017; Van Jagt, 2017).

Ad de Bruijne analyses Kuyper's comments about the Jews and interprets these in the light of basic themes in his theology. He also draws some lessons for today. He identifies both supersessionist and chiliastic accents in Kuyper's approach. He poses the question: was Kuyper anti-Semitic?

'Across his work we encounter biased and even negative statements about Jews in each of these four domains, most outspokenly in his *Joden en Liberalisten* ("Jews and liberals") from 1878' (27).

For Kuyper, Israel was an interlude in God's dealings with humanity - in this sense he was supersessionist; he sees the church as the new Israel. He sees the Jews as greedy and as liberals. He obviously assents to the contemporary cultural stereotypes. So, to some extent, he could be characterised *prima facie* as anti-Semitic. But as De Bruijne points out it is more complex than that as he warns against a scapegoat mechanism against the Jews. He also recognises the problem of stereotypes and that they may inadvertently result in anti-Semitism. He also sees the survival of the Jews as a divine miracle. There are evidently some contradictions regarding the Jews in Kuyper's writings. Kuyper held to the view that many Jews would be converted to Christianity in the new earth. God's promise to Abraham has both spiritual and national parts.

Eglinton (2017) examines Kuyper's (as yet) untranslated *Varia Americana*. It was written during Kuyper's visit to North America to deliver his *Stone Lectures on Calvinism*. As Eglinton notes this is one of Kuyper's most awkward publications as it 'condemns racism' and can be 'condemned as racist' (66). It is a 'perplexing and contradictory' work (68). There are no doubt some (unintentional) racist descriptions, but as Eglinton highlights:

'[Kuyper] offers no tacit approval of racial status quo encountered during his American *séjour*. Rather, it is his description of a dysfunctional society produced by enforces slavery: its "evil consequences" center on the creation of a population caught in its "abhorrent self-degradation" and subjected to the "relentless application" of "inhuman Lynch Right"' (76).

Enslavement rather than emancipation was the cause of the problem for Afro-Americans according to Kuyper.

VU Historian Hans van der Jagt, in his 'Coffee-colored Calvinists', examines a debate among Dutch neo-Calvinists during the colonial period that took place in *De Heraut* (between 1893-1894). The question he addresses is: how did the colonial racial practice affect the Dutch neo-Calvinists' perspective on race?

Jeff Liou (2017), of Fuller Theological Seminary, takes his starting point the division in the United States with regard to race and the #blacklivesmatter campaign, initiated in the aftermath of the Trayvon Martin killing in 2012. Liou uses as a discussion partner Critical Race Theory (CRT). He established common ground between neo-Calvinism and CRT in the shared critique of liberalism. He then goes on to look at how they can be used to correct each other and finally applying both Kuyper and CRT to the current racist environment in the States.

Richard Mouw (2017), the former Fuller Theological Seminary President, looks at the example Kuyper set for the basis of a shared humanity. He begins by looking at Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his ideas for what constitutes a shared humanity and moves on to David Cannadine's account of identity and community. All this is to show that the notion of a shared humanity is problematic. Mouw then turns to Kuyper for some possible answers. He does so by looking at Kuyper's concept of worship. Worship is an antidote for individualism; it is a corporate act of devotion to a transcendent God. However, Kuyper didn't develop his ideas of worship into a spiritual formation, but he seems to have stopped short of its implications for the public sphere:

'(...) it seems that Kuyper is quite content, when focusing on personal spirituality and worship, to pretty much ignore the implications for public life' (Mouw, 2017: 259).

Perhaps this was because Kuyper was too concerned to distinguish between the church as organism and the church as institute.

Mouw continues:

[Kuyper] 'insisted on the role of worship in promoting a sense of a shared Christian identity with believers in other times and places. What we share with each other within the broad Christian community is, Kuyper insisted, 'much stronger, firmer, and more intimate' than any other human bond' (Mouw, 2017: 261).

It is through worship, then that according to Kuyper (according to Mouw), we can go from the root of our Christian identity to our shared humanity as all bear the image of God.

James De Jong (2017) looks at Kuyper's meditations. This paper was originally presented at the annual Kuyper conference in 2014. The original title was 'The neglected Kuyper'. In it, he focuses on the 2200 meditations that Kuyper wrote. For most of Kuyper's contemporaries, the meditations were the most widely read of his writings. Today they are sorely neglected as De Jong points out; most emphasis in Kuyper studies is on his social perspectives.

Here De Jong reminds us that the meditations were at least a weekly feature in *De Heraut* and were subsequently reprinted in book form. Writing them was for Kuyper a regular Sunday activity. It is rather ironic that he wrote them rather than attend public worship. The meditations continued to be written when he was on vacation and even during the stressful and gruelling times of his premiership; such was the importance he placed on them.

Understandably then De Jong maintains that 'they are basic and essential for understanding ... Kuyper' (2017:39). Yet 'Attention to the meditations has for the most part languished' (2017:41). This lack is shown in a brief bibliographical overview of recent works on Kuyper — the devotional works of Kuyper are largely missing from recent scholarship. De Jong is right when he writes that they deserve more attention. He then turns to look at the meditations published in book form. Most of which, but not all, are available in English:

*To Be Near to God*, 1918, 1925, abridged 1997, 2005

*In the Shadow of Death*, 1928

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*, 1928

*His Decrease at Jerusalem*, 1928, abridged 1948

*Keep the Solemn Feasts*, 1928

*Asleep in Jesus*, 1929

*Women of the Old Testament*, 1933

*Women of the New Testament*, 1934

*The Implications of Public Confession*, 1934

— this is the only translated section from *Voor een distel een mirt* [Instead of a Thistle, a Myrtle]

*The Death and Resurrection of Christ*, 1960

*The Ascent of the Son — The Descent of the Spirit* (e-book)

*Honey from the Rock* — this is currently being translated by De Jong.

The titles show the wide range of Kuyper's meditations: liturgical, Christian feast days, pastoral and theological. De Jong concludes:

'That Abraham Kuyper's meditations were printed and reprinted by the thousands in the Netherlands is hardly surprising. They present a dimension of the man that we need to recapture if we would understand him truly and appreciate him fully. They should not be neglected as we revisit Abraham Kuyper in our generation. They reflect the heart and soul of this remarkable religious leader' (De Jong, 2017:61).

Robert Joustra (2017) takes a look at Kuyper's approach to foreign affairs – another neglected aspect of Kuyper's work. He poses the question 'So, what was Kuyper's "Christian" perspective and policy on foreign affairs (1)' and answers it, largely, by looking at the recently translated *Ons Program* and comparing it with three main crises Kuyper faced: the Boer Cause in South Africa; the "pacification" of Aceh, in modern-day Indonesia; and finally, the Great War. Joustra concludes:

'Kuyper unquestionably had his failures and his blind spots, some very serious, and extremely damaging, but he also labored to find balanced and faithful positions on international affairs, and upon principles, that we would do well to imitate today. We would not want to adopt his policies as they were, but we could do much worse than to have a new man like him work out, with his theological and political seriousness, the intractable problems of our globe today' (Joustra, 2017: 21).

Roger Henderson, a former professor at Dordt College and now an independent researcher, surveys the development of Kuyper's sphere sovereignty in his 'The development of the principle of distributed authority, or sphere sovereignty' (Henderson, 2017a). Written, in part, as a response to Glenn Friesen's work attempting to show the dependence of Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd on von Baader.<sup>4</sup> Regarding Friesen's hypothesis Henderson writes:

'Making von Baader the real star behind Dooyeweerd's philosophy suggests Dooyeweerd was not a very forthcoming, courageous, or honest scholar. This is difficult to believe of a young man who openly opposed a senior scholar at a legal conference, wrote against National Socialism during its early rise in the Netherlands, and endlessly quotes other scholars' (Henderson, 2017a: 96).

Henderson shows the influence of Groen van Prinsterer on Kuyper, although:

'... Kuyper was sufficiently independent and creative to express and further develop them in his own way. Groen was like the steady, slow-moving first stage of a rocket that set the course; Kuyper then followed like the lighter, second stage of a booster rocket, lifting the project into orbit'.

Kuyper gave the concept '*souvereiniteit in eigen kring*' its definitive form, he recognised the roots of it in Groen and what Groen had called 'independence in its own sphere'.

Henderson has another article on Kuyper, this time in the journal *Pro Rege* where he examines Kuyper's theory of art (Henderson, 2017b). Kuyper dealt with the topic of art several times in different pieces. Most notable is a chapter in his Stone Lectures and in his address at the VU in 1888.<sup>5</sup> As Henderson notes:

'[Kuyper] believed that [art] has played an important though often overlooked role in history, and he wants Christians to be sure not to neglect it' (Henderson, 2017b: 1).

4 Henderson asserts that 'Glenn Friesen appears to be oblivious to Dooyeweerd's background and relationship to Kuyper, as well as to Kuyper's relationship to G. Groen van Prinsterer and the Anti-Revolutionary outlook'.

5 This was subsequently translated into English in 1892 and read by J.H. De Vries, the translator, to the American Institute of Christian Philosophy in New York.

In this article Henderson explores and explains Kuyper's theology and philosophy of art. Kuyper sees art as a life-sphere, one of God's ordinances, and for that reason alone art has an important part in creation. Thus, as Henderson argues, for Kuyper:

'Artistic work should be free to function and develop in its own direction and not be dominated by another sphere and set of ordinances'.

Henderson concludes the article with this:

'Works of art carry meaning and reflect attitudes and parts of perspectives of those who make them. Each work contributes to an ongoing conversation and debate about human life, God, and the world. In conclusion, Kuyper asks, "would it not be both a degradation and an underestimation of art, if you were to imagine the different branches into which the art-trunk divides itself, to be independent of the deepest root which all human life has in God?"' (Henderson, 2017b: 8).

Also in the journal *Pro Rege* is van Vliet's look at Kuyper's view of Islam (van Vliet, 2017). Van Vliet is the translator of *On Islam* and this paper provides an excellent commentary on it. He writes:

'... Kuyper surveys this historical regression of the Christian Church and the Church's interplay with an entirely new religion' (14).

Van Vliet forces on several areas that Kuyper examines, these include the religious practices, the political — as he notes 'Islam dictates all of life, it is difficult to separate the religious from the political dimension' (16) — and the sociological, notably the approach to women, toleration and scholarship. He closes his piece with what he considers to be some areas for 'further critical engagement'. These include: the transcendence/ immanence of God in Christianity and Islam; the role of spiritual transformation; the nature of the kingdom; Christian missionary zeal; and the relevance for today.

Bruce Pass (2017), an Australian involved in doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh, takes look at the religious journalism in Australia, focusing on the, broadly Kuyperian, Centre for Public Christianity (CPX). He notes several points of contact with the CPX and Kuyper. He notes that this is remarkable that 'Neo-Calvinism has virtually no reception history' in Australia. (He seems unaware of the work of Ted Fackerell, Stuart Fowler, Bruce Wearne and Keith Sewell - see, for example, Sewell (1972).) The points of contact that Pass identifies include:

'First, the CPX bears a striking semblance to Kuyper's ecclesiological conception of the church-as-organism. Second, like Kuyper's own journalism, the CPX is characterized by an awareness of its prophetic function in furnishing public debate with a reasoned Christian voice. Third, the CPX is well aware of an inherently political dimension to religious journalism' (Pass, 2017: 331).

He also notes some contrasts:

'(...) the CPX's focus on an educated elite stands in stark contrast with Kuyper's appeals to "de kleine luyden". Moreover, in contrast with Kuyper's rather combative style the CPX avoids a denunciatory tone and seeks to affirm what Christians and non-Christians hold in common. Significant points of difference are also evident in connection with the relationship to politics. Whereas *De Standaard* functioned as the virtual organ of Kuyper's Anti- Revolutionary Party, the CPX deliberately avoids promoting the agenda of any single political platform'. (Pass, 2017: 331-332)

## 5. REVIEWS

Surprisingly, there have been few published reviews of Kuyper's work in 2017. One exception is Simon Kennedy's review of Kuyper's *Pro Rege* (volume 1) and *Common Grace* (volume 1) in *International Journal of Public Theology*. Kennedy notes: 'These volumes are important additions to the English-language public theology repertoire' (Kennedy, 2017: 367).

## 6. CONCLUSION

This overview of works by and on Kuyper published in 2017 shows that Kuyper's legacy continues and produces insights and fresh applications in the twenty-first century and it shows no sign of abating. These books and articles all serve to illustrate what a polymath Kuyper was: race, the Jews, biblical meditations, ecclesiology, political involvement, art, Islam and journalism are all subjects Kuyper has written on. The writings surveyed also have indicated a number of neglected areas of Kuyper's work; these include his theology, his meditations and international politics.

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