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Kuyperania in 2021 and 2023: An overview of English-language works on Kuyper

ABSTRACT

This article reviews works published in the English language in 2021 and 2023 by or about the Dutch polymath Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). The works under review here illuminate Kuyper's continuing influence across a number of disciplines. These works testify to Kuyper's ongoing relevance to modern discourse, furthering investigation and research into his multifaceted contributions to theology and public life. The reviewed works remark on how relevant Kuyper's writings remain, addressing issues such as poverty, wealth, and the social question, while drawing connections to modern problems such as the sciences, globalization, pluralism, public theology, and the disenchantment of art.

Keywords: Abraham Kuyper; business; economics; natural sciences; pluralism; public theology; spirituality

ABSTRAK

Hierdie artikel gee 'n oorsig oor werke wat in 2021 en 2023 in Engels deur of oor die Nederlandse veelweter Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) gepubliseer is. Die werke wat hier behandel word, werp lig op Kuyper se voortgesette invloed op verskeie dissiplines. Hierdie werke getuig van Kuyper se deurlopende relevansie in die moderne diskoers en voer ondersoek na en navorsing oor sy veelsydige bydraes tot teologie en die openbare lewe verder. Die werke meld hoe relevant Kuyper se geskryfte steeds bly; hy bespreek kwessies soos armoede, rykdom, en die sosiale vraag, en hy bring dit in verband met moderne probleme soos die wetenskappe, globalisering, pluralisme, openbare teologie en die ontgogeling van kuns.

Kernbegrippe: Abraham Kuyper; besigheid; ekonomie; natuurwetenskappe; openbare teologie; pluralisme; spiritualiteit

1. Introduction

Research into Kuyper has shown no signs of abating. What is perhaps most remarkable is that though Kuyper was writing at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, his work is as significant today as it was then. This is evident in many of the various authors' comments in the 2021 and 2023 publications on Kuyper reviewed here. It seems that Kuyper's insights are brought to bear on an increasing number of topics such as economics, pensions, trade unions, spirituality, apologetics, and the natural sciences. This wide-ranging engagement explains why Kuyper is frequently described as a polymath. Not surprisingly, some of Kuyper's more problematic and culturally specific ideas, such as his views on race and cultural stereotypes, have been critically examined (see Wagenman, 2021; Falconer, 2021).

This review provides an overview of scholarly works on Abraham Kuyper published in 2021 and in 2023.¹ It reviews and summarises key publications from 2021 and 2023 that engage with Kuyper's thought, highlighting the breadth of topics and themes his work addresses. The enduring global interest in Kuyper's works, particularly in Indonesia, underlines the lasting relevance of his ideas and the significant impact of the Kuyper's Collected Works in Public Theology translation project on the scholarly landscape. This review of works published on Kuyper provides evidence of the durability of Kuyper's work.

2. Translations of Kuyper

2.1 *On business & economics*

The penultimate volume of Kuyper's Collected Works in Public Theology, *On Business & Economics*, appeared in February 2021 (Kuyper, 2021). The details of this volume, following the style of Kuipers (2011), are as follows.

Translations

.01

On Business & Economics

Bellingham, WA, Lexham Press 2021. 429pp

Translator: Harry Van Dyke

Series Editors: Melvin Flikkema and Jordan J. Ballor

Forewords by Brian Fikkert, Paul Oslington, and Kenneth Barnes

Editor's Introduction by Peter S. Heslam

Volume Introduction by Jordan J. Ballor

Edited by Peter S. Heslam

Binding: Hardback

Published: February 2021

ISBN: 9781577996767

In his introduction, Heslam (2021) notes the lack of Kuyperian work on business. This volume should stimulate further research on this topic. In these collected writings and speeches, Kuyper's main emphases are on stewardship, the sabbath, pensions, trade unions and money – both in regard to its idolatry and how it has been, and can be, used to alleviate poverty. There is little material on business *per se* here. However, the range of topics does serve well to illustrate Kuyper's square-inch approach. Few Reformed scholars address these issues, let alone produce a selection that amounts to over 400 pages.

There are three forewords to this book. Fikkert highlights that Kuyper identified the paradox of the current global economy – the reduction of poverty coupled with the “insatiable desire for material prosperity” (Kuyper, 2021:x) having a devastating impact on both society and individuals. Similarly, Oslington notes Kuyper's concern about poverty as well as the “spiritual dangers of wealth” (Kuyper, 2021:xii). He asserts that Kuyper's concerns “were shaped by the fear of liberal and revolutionary ideas” (Kuyper, 2021:xiii).

Kenneth Barnes observes that Kuyper provides ample material “from which to mine the treasures of his thinking on economic issues” (Kuyper, 2021:xvi). In a pertinent passage he writes:

1 For a review of work published in 2022 see, Bishop (2023).

[Kuyper] addresses head-on the telos of our economic activity and the idolatry of greed, the blessings of abundance and the curse of scarcity, the benefits of hard work and the need for Sabbath rest, the right to private property and concern for the common good. He addresses the nature and the use of money and in prescient fashion considers the pros and cons of what we would call globalization today. (Kuyper, 2021:xvi)

This breadth of topics is testimony to Kuyper's all-encompassing perspective.

On Business & Economics also includes three of Kuyper's commentaries on the Heidelberg Catechism, translated from his *E Voto Dordraceno* (1892-1895). The Catechism was originally written with the express purpose of preserving and passing on the Reformed faith. Although the Catechism dates back to 1563, Kuyper demonstrates how it was relevant both in his time and today. The three commentaries are on the Lord's Day 50, 42, and 38; these cover: "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread", "You Shall Not Steal", and "Remember the Sabbath Day", respectively. Ballor in his introduction (Ballor, 2021) picks up some of the key topics in these commentaries. Ballor highlights three central themes in Kuyper: superabundance, stewardship, and sabbath.

There are some shorter pieces including, "Working People and the Church" (1870), "Sunday Rest and Hygiene" (1876), "Manual Labor" (1889), "Human Trafficking" (1903), "The Sacred Order" (1913), "Industrial Organization" (1903, 1910), and "What Next?" (1918). A longer piece, "The Social Question and the Christian Religion", was the opening address at the Christian Social Congress in 1891. Kuyper aims to show that there is an intimate connection between Christianity and the social question and that knowing this should raise "our consciousness". The "social question" is dealt with in two other items in this anthology: one from 1909 and the other from 1917. By the "social question", Kuyper has in mind poverty and increasing social inequalities. His 1909 article focuses on pensions – arguing for an old-age insurance scheme rather than government pensions. He argues that pensions are rightly earned wages. In the 1917 piece, he reflects on the changes in politics, society, and culture made since the 1878 publication of his *Ons Program*. Although supporting trade unions and insurance schemes for pensions, he keeps his focus on God and here notes that "A Christian's confidence must lie solely with God ..." (Kuyper, 2021:339).

Kuyper's "Draft Pension Scheme for Wage Earners" provides some interesting insights into his view of the role of government:

Government involvement in pensions must honor three principles. First, when citizens turn out to be unable to do what they should normally do for themselves, government should temporarily do it for them. Second, government is duty-bound to protect rights if injustice results when they are left in the care of the voluntary sector. Third, government is called to temporarily support every integral part of national life that would otherwise collapse. (Kuyper, 2021:245)

The volume closes with a small selection of some of Kuyper's Meditations and an Appendix: "Common Grace and Commerce" – this is Chapter 59 from Kuyper's *Common Grace Volume 3* (Kuyper, 2020:492-501). Overall, the editors have done an excellent job not only in selecting a wide range of connected writings from Kuyper's corpus but also in providing pertinent introductions to them.

As well as this volume of Kuyper's writings there were several books published dealing with Kuyper and his approach to various topics. It is these I will now review. These deal with his public theology, modernism, worship, ecclesiology, the Indonesian context, and one by a contemporary of Kuyper's, on Kuyper's approach to the church and state.

3. Books on Kuyper

3.1 Reformed public theology

In *Reformed Public Theology*, Matthew Kaemingk of Fuller Theological Seminary assembled a diverse group of scholars who contributed to such a wide scope of topics in public theology. Despite their geographical, racial, and gender differences, the contributors share a common Reformed perspective, particularly drawing upon the insights of Calvin, Kuyper, and Bavinck. The book is also a fitting *Festschrift* for Richard Mouw (1940-). In his introduction, Kaemingk summarises the aim of the book:

This book is specifically designed to serve as a “taste and see” introduction to a variety of select ways in which Reformed theology and public life intersect. (Kaemingk, 2021:18)

The book is split into six parts: Public Culture, Public Markets, Public Justice, Public Aesthetics, Public Academy, and Public Worship – and Kuyper and his works make an appearance in all parts. There are 75 mentions of common grace, 21 for sphere sovereignty, but only six for antithesis. Calvin has 424 mentions, Kuyper 205, and Bavinck 139.² These mentions far outweigh those of other Reformed scholars. For example:

Jonathan Edwards has 5 mentions
John Owen, 15
H. Bullinger and H. Zwingli, zero
Theodore Beza, 1
Johannes Althusius, 14
Groen van Prinsterer, 5
and John Knox, 3.

Although not explicitly a book on Kuyper as such, his insights dominate the discussions. Some of the key themes from Kuyper are:

- his positive view of doctors and medicine, and his elevation but not deification of modern medicine (Van der Kooi and Van der Kooi, Ch 4);
- a critique of the triumphalism of Indonesia’s attraction to the Seven Mountains Theory (Sutanto, Ch 5);
- his advocacy for the political and economic rights of the *kleine luyden* and his opposition to “collectivism and individualism”, “political overreach and overregulation of markets” (Friere, Ch 7)
- his view that “economic and political justice requires something the states and markets cannot provide: spiritual life and vitality” (Chiu, Ch 8);
- his sphere sovereignty, providing a basis for a just and public order (Ashford and Greeson, Ch 9);
- a “more communal and institutional approach to politics and human flourishing” (Summers, Ch 11);
- his views are applicable to American suburbs and architecture (Jacobsen, Ch 15); and
- his connection between sin and systems, and evil and social structures (Liou, Ch 18). Liou also draws attention to the similarities between some themes in Kuyper and those in critical race theory.

This book is essential reading for those exploring public theology within the Kuyperian tradition.

² Dooyeweerd has 28 mentions.

3.2 *Protestant theology and modernity in the nineteenth century Netherlands*

The rise of modernity and its impact on Protestant theology come under scrutiny in Molendijk's (2021) book. Molendijk draws on some of his previously published papers (see, for example, 2006, 2008a, 2008b and 2011) to examine the roles played by Isaac da Costa (1798-1860), Kuyper, Allard Pierson (1831-1896), and Abraham Kuenen, among others. Kuyper's role inevitably dominates the discussion. Kuyper was the first person to use the term "modernism" in the title of a paper and he was vociferous regarding the negative influence of modernism on society (Molendijk, 2021:74). Molendijk describes Kuyper as the first modern mass politician in Dutch history. He is renowned for drawing large crowds with his speeches and suggests that he is comparable to the English Prime Minister William Gladstone (1809-1898) (Molendijk, 2021:123).

This book is valuable not least in that it portrays the theological and cultural climate in which Kuyper worked.

3.3 *Our worship: Meeting with God*

Our Worship: Meeting with God is a study guide prepared by Michael R. Kearney (2021) to Kuyper's *Our Worship* (2009). It provides a summary and is accompanied by study questions. This guide is a useful resource for small groups and highlights Kuyper's investment in the church as an institution.

3.4 *The politics of antithesis*

The Politics of Antithesis (Hoedemaker, 2021) is a collection of three works by P.J. Hoedemaker (1839-1910), translated and introduced by Ruben Alvarado. This volume includes "The State with the Bible", "Neither Right nor Left but the Royal Road", and "The Birthright for a Mess of Potage". These works, originally lectures and sermons, were written during the period of Kuyper's 1901-1905 premiership. *The Politics of Antithesis* explores the tensions between Hoedemaker and Kuyper, from Hoedemaker's perspective, regarding their views of church-state relations during a transformative period in Dutch history.

Hoedemaker, once a colleague of Kuyper's at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, later became one of his most persistent critics (Bishop, 2022). His main disagreement with Kuyper was the relationship between the church and the state. Even though Kuyper and Hoedemaker agreed on their dislike of the hierarchical structure of the Dutch State Church; they differed in their solutions and on their view of Article 36 in the Belgic Confession (Hoedemaker, 2019).

Hoedemaker held to a theocratic view of the state. The theocratic view regards the church as having a key role in society – thus Hoedemaker sees an important role for the state church. The church will play a role like that of Israel in the Old Testament. But Kuyper rejected the theocratic state view, stating "Israel's unique situation cannot serve as a model" (Kuyper, 2020:246). Kuyper's approach was of a "free church in a free state", which Hoedemaker maintained was a "recipe for the reign of liberalism and secularism" (Hoedemaker, 2021:188). He also thought that Kuyper had too narrow a view of theology and too broad a view of politics (Hoedemaker, 2021:126).

Kuyper and Hoedemaker's main dispute centred on antithesis and the principle of neutrality. According to Alvarado (2014) "The principle of neutrality and the doctrine of equal rights lay at the heart of Kuyper's politics." Hoedemaker argued that Kuyper reinterpreted the antithesis. No longer did it mean "no neutrality in anything" (Bishop, 2022:77).

Accepting the neutrality of the state leads, according to Hoedemaker, to the tyranny of majority rule. The majority and not God would be sovereign. However, Kuyper rejected the possibility of the neutrality of the state, regarding it as a chimera:

the fundamental notion of the “neutral” state was nothing but a chimera. For even if we assume that government could take a neutral position vis-à-vis the various churches and could refrain from making choices in the religious realm, it assuredly could not do so in the moral realm. (Kuyper, 2020:205)

Hoedemaker argues that Kuyper’s Christian/ non-Christian antithesis leads to a separation of believers from non-believers leads to the church being a “private voluntary association”. This is an overstatement of Kuyper’s view of the antithesis. For Kuyper, it was not a Christian/ non-Christian person separation; it was not a separation of sacred and secular; rather, it was a separation of *principles* not persons. Kuyper, in his *Lectures on Calvinism*, uses the terms abnormalist and normalist to show this antithesis or conflict (Kuyper, 1931:132). The conflict is not between faith and science, but between opposing scientific systems, each based on their own faith (Kuyper, 1931:131).

Hoedemaker objected to what he perceived as Kuyper’s use of pragmatic reasons over and above scriptural reasons. Kuyper maintained that the invisible church existed from creation, but the church as an institution began at Pentecost. This was a problem for Hoedemaker (Bishop, 2022:67)

Hoedemaker’s disagreements with Kuyper primarily arose from what he saw as Kuyper’s view of a neutral state. However, Hoedemaker misunderstood or overstated Kuyper’s position on the neutrality of the state.

It is clear from this book and elsewhere that Hoedemaker disliked Kuyper’s pluralist approach (e.g., Hoedemaker, 2021:56). Hoedemaker argued that Kuyper’s view of “equal rights for all” fostered individualism. He believed this reduced the nation to a mere collection of individuals within political borders. It leads to a majority rule and knows no national character.

Hoedemaker also wanted a return to the original Presbyterian church order and for the church to take its proper place in public life. Hoedemaker thought Kuyper’s solution was for a new denomination with a Congregationalist/ independent structure.

Hoedemaker’s vision of a theocratic state and his critique of Kuyper’s pluralism reflect his conviction that the church should play a central, covenantal role in society. His writings challenge Kuyper’s more pragmatic approach, which sought to address the complexities of a pluralist society. Hoedemaker raises important questions – even if we cannot always agree with his solutions. Kuyper’s approach is more pragmatic than Hoedemaker’s and Kuyper addresses the situation as it is; Hoedemaker, as he wants it to be.

Alvarado performs an excellent role in providing an introduction and analysis of each of the essays particularly as Hoedemaker is not an easy author to understand and much of what he wrote presupposes a detailed knowledge of the politics and church of the time.

The Kuyper–Hoedemaker debate remains relevant to contemporary discussions regarding the role of the church in public life, pluralism, and secularism. Kuyper’s emphasis on sphere sovereignty and Hoedemaker’s defence of a theocratic vision both address enduring tensions in how Christians engage with a secularizing society.

3.5 Neo-Calvinism: A theological introduction

Neo-Calvinism: A Theological Introduction aims to address what Brock and Sutanto (2023) perceive as a gap in existing literature. They offer a theological exploration of the distinctive doctrinal insights of the initial generation of Dutch neo-Calvinists, namely Kuyper and Herman Bavinck (1854-1921). The motivation behind this work stems from what they perceive as three primary considerations. Firstly, prevailing scholarly attention has predominantly focused on the political and philosophical aspects of neo-Calvinism, thereby

neglecting its doctrinal innovations. Secondly, there exists a considerable lack of consensus on what precisely qualifies as neo-Calvinism. And thirdly, the present landscape is marked by a wealth of English translations of works by Kuyper and Bavinck, distributed across various publishers, fostering a need for a comprehensive introductory resource.

Consequently, this volume endeavours to present a broad overview of the distinctive theological contributions of neo-Calvinism. It is important to clarify that the objective of this book is descriptive rather than prescriptive. Their primary aim is to expound and summarise key doctrinal developments, with Kuyper and Bavinck serving as the central focus. This is both a strength and weakness of their approach.

Both Brock and Sutanto are Bavinck scholars, and they have made significant contributions to Bavinckian studies³ as well as having translated important works of Bavinck's.⁴ They define neo-Calvinism as "a nineteenth and early twentieth-century movement in the Netherlands". They discern three main "binding themes" (p. 8): "The neo-Calvinists are methodologically and eclectically (1) orthodox yet modern, (2) self-consciously holistic, and (3) organic, not mechanical" (p. 8). Adding that "The organic unity in the nature–grace relation, or that grace restores nature, is perhaps the key insight and emphasis of neo-Calvinist dogmatics that gives shape to all else" (p. 13).

They also argue that (Brock & Sutanto, 2023:20-21):

The term "neo-Calvinism," then, refers to their development of Calvin's theology into a holistic worldview that had a particularly God-centered orientation toward all things within the context of the modern consciousness.

The term "all things" surely underlines the neo-Calvinist project; it is not limited to theology. Nevertheless, Brock and Sutanto concentrate on the theological issues underpinning neo-Calvinism. They focus on the vertical rather than horizontal facets of neo-Calvinism. Hence, there is little or no mention of politics, science, art, business and so forth.

They seem to want to interpret neo-Calvinism as primarily a theological system, although this appears to be at odds with Kuyper and Bavinck's approach. Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* is a case in point, there he deals with science, politics, and art. Bavinck too saw it as a much broader project as he dealt with not only dogmatics but also ethics, the sciences, and psychology in particular. For both Kuyper and Bavinck – as Brock and Sutanto do acknowledge – Christianity is a world-and-life view which shapes and affects the whole of life.

While Kuyper and Bavinck were both theologians, they were concerned with wider issues – both were deeply involved in politics, and while at the Vrije Universiteit Bavinck wrote on worldview, psychology, pedagogy and other sciences as well pure theology (see, for example, Bavinck, 2008, 2012, 2018b, 2019, 2023, 2024). Theology is important but it is not all-important.

Therein lies the weakness of their work: its emphasis on theology. However, it is also the book's strength, in that by focussing on the theology of Kuyper and Bavinck, they are able to show the theological underpinnings of neo-Calvinism. This is important as some strands of neo-Calvinism have been accused of minimising theology. However, Brock and Sutanto

3 Both studied for their PhDs in Edinburgh under James Eglinton: Sutanto (2020) and Brock (2020).

4 Translations they have been involved with include *Christian Worldview* (Bavinck, 2019), *Christianity and Science* (Bavinck, 2023). They have also edited an annotated version of Bavinck's *Philosophy of Revelation* (Bavinck, 2018a). They are also editors of the *T&T Clark Handbook of Neo-Calvinism* (Sutanto and Brock, 2024).

seem to overlook the contributions of the French neo-Calvinist theologians such as Auguste Lecerf (1872-1943)⁵ and Pierre Marcel (1910-1992). Theology was and is not a no-go area for later neo-Calvinists (see, for example, Spykman, Vander Stelt⁶).

The absence of discussions on Christology, pneumatology, or the Trinity is justified by their explicit intent not to produce a systematic theology. However, pneumatology is particularly surprising by its omission as Kuyper wrote over 120 articles on *The Work of the Holy Spirit* which became a book (Kuyper, 1946). Kuyper's innovative emphasis on the corporate and cosmic dimensions of the Holy Spirit's work added a unique and crucial perspective to the theological landscape. The areas they do focus on – reason and revelation, scripture and organism, creation and re-creation, the image of God and the fall, common grace and the gospel, and the church and the world – provide a good understanding of the theological underpinnings of neo-Calvinism.

Neo-Calvinism is an important book, Brock and Sutanto have provided an excellent exploration of the theological roots of neo-Calvinism. The book closes with 16 theses on neo-Calvinism, these alone are worth getting hold of the book.⁷

3.6 A free church in a free state

Surya Harefa (2023), in *A Free Church in a Free State*, explores Kuyper's ecclesiology and its possible application in Japan. It begins with the recognition that contemporary Japanese Christians face challenges in actively participating in politics due to factors such as Barthian theology and a missionary focus on individual salvation, resulting in vague ecclesiological concepts. Motivated by a desire to address this issue, Harefa, an Indonesian working in Japan, argues for the potential solution offered by Abraham Kuyper's ecclesiology.

In Chapter 2, Harefa scrutinises the responses of evangelical Christians and non-Christians in Japan to key political issues, including the Yasukuni shrine, constitutional amendments, and the aftermath of the 2011 Great Eastern Japan earthquake. Notable is the examination of Inagaki Hisakazu's Kuyperian-influenced approach, emphasising common grace and sphere sovereignty. Harefa underscores the need for an ecclesiastical understanding of Christians' dynamic role in society.

Chapter 3 delves into historical events shaping the Japanese church, from Jesuit missionary success to subsequent persecution, resulting in martyrdom and apostasy. Harefa traces a shift in communal authority from village ancestors to the state during Japan's early Imperial Period. The lifting of the prohibition of Christianity in 1873 led to a surge in missionaries, causing a proliferation of denominations. The advance of liberal theology, resentment toward Christianity's growth, and the rise of nationalism contributed to a decline in Christianity. Post-war, evangelical missionaries in Japan adopted a spiritual/physical divide, impacting the political attitudes of Japanese evangelical Christians.

Chapter 4 analyses Kuyper's ecclesiology, covering the organism-institution distinction, the believers' church, a free church, and the pluriformity of the church. Harefa dismisses the marginalisation hypothesis, asserting that Kuyper's ecclesiology was not about prioritising the church as an organism over the institute. He argues that marginalisation "fails to do justice to Kuyper's ecclesiology" (139).

5 On Lecerf, see Bishop (2024a).

6 Neither Vander Stelt (1978; 2020) nor Spykman (1992) is listed in the bibliography. I am at a loss to understand why Spykman was omitted. (On Spykman, see Bishop (2024b).)

7 Goheen and Bartholomew (2011) (updated in Ashford and Bartholomew (2020:367-368)) have produced a similar list; a comparison of the two lists is available in the Appendix.

In Chapter 5, Harefa explores the historical contexts influencing Kuyper to understand their potential application in the Japanese context. The contexts examined are church elections, the school struggle, and the Doleantie. He highlights Kuyper's pragmatic and adaptive organic approach, adopting "third-way" solutions that preserved essential forms while seeking new ones.

The final chapter explains how Kuyper's ecclesiology could provide a means of equipping Japanese evangelicals for sociopolitical engagement.

While Harefa explores the role of Kuyperian ecclesiology in Japan, Intan extends this analysis to legal theory in Indonesia, demonstrating Kuyper's continued influence in non-Western contexts.

3.7 Calvin's and neo-Calvinist legal theory in Indonesian context

This work by Intan (2023a), consolidates insights from several of his previously published papers across a variety of journals⁸. Despite this, the book maintains a coherent argument. One might assume that Dutch theologians from a different era and context have little relevance to Indonesia; however, Intan convincingly demonstrates otherwise. He primarily draws upon Kuyper's ideas, emphasising principled pluralism, sphere sovereignty, the relationship between church and state, and common grace. Intan convincingly argues for the application of these principles to Indonesia's pluralistic society for the common good.

3.8 Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Neo-Calvinism in Dialogue: Perspectives in Public Theology⁹

Dietrich Bonhoeffer and neo-Calvinism may seem like unlikely conversation partners; however, this volume, edited by Harinck and Himes (2023), illuminates some surprising areas of agreement. Notably, Bonhoeffer and Kuyper were both theologians who had an impact on society as well as the church. The comparisons drawn in the essays are insightful. While not all the essays focus solely on Kuyper, some delve into comparisons between Bavinck and Bonhoeffer.

Himes, in Chapter 2, examines both Kuyper's and Bonhoeffer's response to confession, forgiveness, and restoration. In Chapter 5 Jordan Ballor delves into the topic of natural law in Kuyper and Bonhoeffer. He sees natural law as a "particular manifestation of [Kuyper's] common grace." Matthew Kaemingk, in Chapter 6, explores the consensus and tensions between Kuyper's sphere sovereignty and Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the mandates, while in Chapter 7 Herman Paul explores Kuyper's and Bonhoeffer's responses to historicism.

The final chapter, Chapter 10, sees Dekker and Harinck discussing substantial similarities in the views of Kuyper and Bonhoeffer regarding the role of the church institute in society.

Beyond these volumes, recent journal articles further illuminate contemporary engagements with Kuyper's thought.

4. Articles

Several journal articles, although dated 2020, didn't appear until 2021, likely due in part to delays caused by COVID-19. Two such journals were *Unio Cum Christi* and *Journal of Market*

8 These include: *Unio cum Christo* (Intan, 2020; 2015), *Verbum Christi* (Intan, 2014), *European Journal of Theology* (Intan, 2018), *Calvin Theological Journal* (Intan, 2019a), *HTS Theological Studies* (Intan 2022a), *International Journal for Religious Freedom* (Intan, 2012), *International Journal of Public Theology* (2019b), *Religions* (Intan & Bangun 2022b), and the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (Intan, 2016).

9 For a fuller review see Bishop (2024c).

and Morality. It is the articles in these two journals I will now examine, before looking at other journal articles.

4.1 *Unio Cum Christi* articles

Unio Cum Christi, an “International Journal of Reformed Theology and Life” featured articles by Benyamin Intan, by John Witte Jr and Eric Wang, and by Antonius Steven Un in a section “The Calvin, Kuyper, Bavinck Trajectory”. It is encouraging to see Kuyper’s ideas gaining recognition in non-Western contexts. Both Intan and Un are based in Indonesia and are affiliated with the International Reformed Evangelical Seminary (IRES) in Jakarta.

Intan begins his article by looking at Calvin’s “public theology” before moving on to discuss Kuyper’s. He examines Kuyper’s approach under four headings: sphere sovereignty; confessional pluralism; a religious state; and the civil public sphere. He notes that “Kuyper challenged secularism and its idea of a secular state, which removes religion from the public sphere” (Intan, 2020:58-59).

John Witte Jr and Eric Wang observe that “Kuyper defended traditional teachings on the family, offered strikingly modern theories of ordered liberty and orderly pluralism, and stuck to a principled but pragmatic program on property, labor, and economics” (Witte, Jr and Wang, 2020:61). They discuss Kuyper under the headings of family, freedom, and fortune; noting that these “illustrate the method, depth, range, and prescience of Kuyper’s public theology” (Witte, Jr & Wang, 2020:77).

Un explores a key Kuyperian leitmotif, that of sphere sovereignty. He examines four related themes: the sovereignty of Christ and its relation to creation, fall, and redemption, the principle of structural pluralism, the notion of religious and confessional pluralism, and the state as the sphere of spheres. He identifies some weaknesses in Kuyper’s approach, including the problem of definition, meaning and nature of creational spheres (Un, 2020:111). He concludes by examining Dooyeweerd’s development of sphere sovereignty, maintaining that “Dooyeweerdian thought furthers and clarifies the Kuyperian scheme” (Un, 2020:113).

4.2 *Journal of Morals and Markets*

Another delayed publication was the *Journal of Morals and Markets* 23(2). The December issue, edited by Jessica and Robert Joustra, was devoted to Kuyper, commemorating the centenary of his death. In their editorial, they argue that Kuyper is

hardly the panacea for faithful Christian cultural and political engagement today in North America, but he is a very solid signpost, a guide, to help us in the increasingly turbulent and treacherous waters of polarized politics and tribal religion” (Joustra & Joustra, 2020:254).

Harinck (2020) provides a new perspective on the origins of the notion of “sphere sovereignty”. He convincingly challenges the consensus that sphere sovereignty was a Kuyperian development of ideas in Calvin and Althusius and maintains that it was Kuyper’s own idea. Harinck summarises his position:

Abraham Kuyper’s ontological notion of sphere sovereignty was not so much the cumulative result of his knowledge of the intellectual history, mainly that of Calvinism, but to a large extent his own invention – he did this by looking out of his window. (Harinck, 2020:271)

Mouw (2020) argues that for Kuyper human diversity is “God ordained and fundamentally good” – this includes nationhood. He also explores the distinction between state and nation.

Heslam (2020) assesses some of the key components of Kuyper’s cabinet (1901-1905), with a focus on the Dutch East Indies’ colonial policy. He does so under four facets: financial capital, spiritual capital, institutional capital, and relational capital.

Tuininga (2020) argues that Kuyper “advocated a political theology that is best described as a form of Christian liberalism”. He examines Kuyper’s writings on charity and justice to identify how to “articulate a vigorous, socially aware, gospel-centered Christian vision for a world that is in danger of fracturing under the diffusive and secularizing pressures of modernity”. He also observes:

Kuyper’s evaluation of liberalism and conservatism, democracy and socialism, materialism and individualism, capitalism and secularism, pluralism and consumerism remain so apt for our times that it is sometimes easy to forget that Kuyper wrote these words more than a hundred years ago. (Tuininga, 2020:338)

Ballor (2020) examines the economic implications of the Heidelberg Catechism (1563). He draws both on Kuyper and Zacharius Ursinus (1534-1583), an early commentator on the Catechism. He focuses on three themes: superabundance, stewardship, and sabbath to tease out economic teachings. He comments “If the origin of our economic activity is God’s superabundance, and the essence of that activity is stewardship, then the goal or *telos* of economic activity is sabbath rest” (Ballor, 2020:381).¹⁰

Pahman (2020) examines Kuyper’s view of the sciences. He focuses on some key questions: What is a science? How is science possible? What is the science of encyclopedia? What is a theological encyclopedia? And, how is science impaired by sin? In the second section, he examines Kuyper’s view of the structure of the university. He summarizes it thus:

(1) the *Theological* faculty investigates our relationship to God; (2) the *Juridical* our relationships to each other; (3) the *Philological* our relationship to our own souls; (4) the *Medical* our relationship to our bodies; and (5) the faculty of *Natural Science* our relation to the natural world outside of ourselves. (Pahman, 2020:398)

All these articles serve to show that, in the words of the editors: “Abraham Kuyper can seem very contemporary when we read him, and it is our argument that he is a wonderful model for us partly for that reason” (Joustra & Joustra, 2020:259).

4.3 The big picture

The Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology (KLC), based in Cambridge, UK, launched a new magazine, *The Big Picture*, edited by the director Craig Bartholomew. Issue 1 contained several articles on Kuyper. Bartholomew (2021b) looks at “Five Reasons to Read Kuyper Today”, these are: Kuyper’s emphasis on palingenesis, his attention to Scripture, him asking the right questions, his foundational work on theology, and the fruits of the Kuyperian tradition. Beldman (2021) examines Kuyper’s use of the Scriptures in his “Christ and the Needy” (Kuyper, 2011a [1895]) article:

Kuyper offers us a model and tools for listening attentively to Scripture so that it speaks to the challenges of contemporary culture, a model that is worth retrieving, deepening and renewing for today. (Beldman, 2021:23)

David McIlroy, a barrister and trustee of KLC, examines Kuyper’s legal thought. He concludes: “Laws were, for Kuyper, rules which promoted justice and the common good” (McIlroy, 2021:28). Rusthoven (2021) briefly explains “Why Kuyper Matters Today for Medicine”, he writes that “in my view, Kuyper’s insights have become very relevant and helpful for medicine in the century since his death” and he briefly mentions three areas in which this is the case (Rusthoven, 2021:29).

Halliday and Harding utilise Kuyper and his notion of sphere sovereignty to “seek a more robust framework for meaning, society and business” (Halliday and Harding, 2021:32).

¹⁰ This article was also the basis for his introduction to Kuyper’s *On Business & Education* (see above).

Cooper (2021) compares educationalist Charlotte Mason (1842-1923) with Kuyper and identifies some commonalities, not least a Christian concern for the education of the poor and disadvantaged.

The second issue of *The Big Picture* has a piece by White (2021) on “Kuyper’s Conversion via Victorian Fiction”. He looks at the impact of Charlotte Yonge’s Tractarian-influenced novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe* on Kuyper.

4.4 Pro Rege articles

Pro Rege, the journal produced by Dordt University, features two articles discussing Kuyper. Both were submissions for the Lambertus Verburg Prize for Excellence in Kuyperian Scholarship¹¹ competition, 2023.

Erin Holmberg (2023) discusses the topical issue of artificial intelligence and its implications for human work. She provides a helpful overview of the new generative AI developments, then moves into a Kuyperian perspective of work. She contends that Kuyper’s views, developed during the rapid changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, remain relevant to contemporary concerns. Notably Kuyper’s view that work is both a calling and a gift. Kuyper also saw practical benefits to work: it is a tool to combat laziness, and to keep us from sin. It is also a means of God’s provision – it brings an income. Work should also be treated as “forms of fruitful service.” Consequently, Kuyper opposed the devaluing of human life to the level of the machine; work should bring dignity. Thus, Holmberg sees the threat of the devaluing of the worker as one of the most significant risks posed by AI.

This devaluing occurs when humans are prevented from the benefits given by God through work. Humans should be given more respect than AI machines, as humans, not machines, bear the image of God. She finishes in a positive note remarking that AI may present new opportunities and possibilities for new work. Holmberg concludes, “Though AI may change how humans work, it will never replace God’s blessing of work.”

The other Lambertus Verburg Prize essay is by Eoghan Holdahl (2023). His article advocates for a robust philosophy of nature. He ably argues that Kuyperian Calvinism with its emphasis on an organic creation can provide that philosophy.

4.5 Papers on Kuyper and the natural sciences

Several other papers, in addition to Pahman’s (2020) – discussed above, have been published in 2021 that discuss Kuyper’s view of the natural sciences and of evolution.

Van den Brink and Cook (2021) examine some Reformed responses to evolutionary theory – they show that there is no consensus. The responses range from acceptance (Warfield) to rejection (Charles Hodge) via caution (G.C. Berkouwer) and incorporation (Hendrikus Berkhof). They discuss Kuyper’s and Bavinck’s views under the *hesitation* category. They note that Kuyper rejected the all-comprehensive worldview rather than the scientific theory and that he thought it might be possible to accept some form of it when stripped of its ideology.

Gomes (2021a) also looks at evolution; he focuses on Kuyper’s rectorial address on “Evolution”. Surprisingly, he maintains that “Kuyper draws no distinction between *evolution*, denoting a scientific theory, and *evolutionism*, referring to a worldview” (Gomes, 2021a:330). He then goes on to explore how three Vrije University professors, René van Woudenberg, Jacob Klapwijk, and Gijsbert von Brink have explored the “link between faith and evolutionary science”. He concludes “In a nutshell, Christian interaction with evolutionary science must take into account the limits of science, the necessary distinctions between evolution theory and worldview, the historical drama of redemption, and human dignity” (Gomes, 2021a:346).

11 The scholarship is funded by the estate of Rimmer and Ruth de Vries, in memory of Rimmer’s great-grandfather, Lambertus Verburg, who settled in Sioux Center, Iowa, in the 1890s.

Donald Roth, a professor at Dordt University, also takes up the theme of the sciences, he develops Kuyper's view of science as a temple to God (Kuyper, 2011b:45). Roth (2021) sees this as an alternative metaphor to the phrase "building the kingdom", as temple imagery avoids some of the misunderstandings and misuse of kingdom terminology.

Also, on Kuyper and the sciences is Bishop (2021). This paper takes a positive but critical look at Kuyper's view of the natural sciences: "there are some areas in which Kuyper was unable to escape dualistic and scholastic traits", nevertheless,

[Kuyper] does provide a solid foundation for a distinctively Christian approach to the natural sciences. One that does justice to sphere sovereignty and to the antithesis and common grace, even though their relationship is left ambiguous by Kuyper. His creational view of [the] science[s] avoids the extremes of idealism and empiricism. (Bishop, 2021:12)

Bartholomew (2021c) offers an additional perspective on Kuyper's view of science in an edited volume analysing ten theologians' approaches to science and creation (Fulkerson & Chopp, 2021). Bartholomew rightly observes, "For Kuyper, science is possible because of the way God has ordered the world and because humans are made in his image."

4.6 Papers on Kuyper's spirituality

Kuyper's spirituality, often neglected, has come under discussion in two papers: Kristanto (2021) and van Vlastuin (2021). Kristanto identifies three strands in Kuyper's spirituality. These are his meditations, his view of palingenesis and his ecclesiology, most notably his notion of the church as mother. He concludes:

A Kuyperian spirituality always begins with coming to the presence of God (journey inward), so our strength will be replenished to reengage better with the world (journey outward). (Kristanto, 2021:165-166)

Van Vlastuin (2021) compares Kuyper's and Calvin's understanding of the mystical union with Christ. He identifies several elements of spirituality in Calvin and uses these as an "interpretative framework" to examine Kuyper's approach.

According to Kuyper, mystical union is deeper than our consciousness. He uses the imagery of a mother having communion with her child on the breast, even though the little baby is not aware of it. (Van Vlastuin, 2021:534)

While Van Vlastuin identifies many commonalities between Calvin and Kuyper, he also highlights some key differences:

The reformer of the sixteenth century spoke about the knowledge of God through his works, but the reformer of the nineteenth century spoke about an immediate communion with God. (Van Vlastuin, 2021:536)

4.7 Papers on Kuyper and race

Kuyper's racist views and cultural stereotyping have rightly been highlighted recently. Falconer (2021) takes an unusual approach by using Marvel Studio's movie *Black Panther* as a model for transforming the Kuyperian tradition. The film decolonised superhero movies and Falconer suggests we can and should do the same with Kuyper. Unfortunately, he does not offer any suggestions of how this might be achieved. Wagenman (2021) poses the question, "Abraham Kuyper: Cancel or Celebrate?" He wisely responds:

As I've journeyed with Kuyper, I've become more convinced that he can lead us to be the liberating hands and feet of Jesus in the world today – but only where Kuyper points us to follow Jesus, not himself or some ideology. (Falconer, 2021:xx)

4.8 Papers on miscellaneous topics

The topics covered in this section reflect the breadth of contemporary Kuyperian scholarship, showing its intersections with apologetics, economics, political theory, interfaith dialogue, and cultural analysis.

Wagenman is also a co-author with Bishop (Wagenman and Bishop, 2021) on an article that examines Kuyper's approach to apologetics. They seek to answer three important questions: Why did Warfield and Kuyper disagree over the questions of apologetics; Why did Kuyper have such a low view of apologetics; and What alternative did Kuyper propose to apologetics in Christian life and thought? They conclude:

Rather than being apologetic [Kuyper] proffered an alternative and showed that Calvinism as a life-system was able to combat modernism. (Wagenman & Bishop, 2021:16)

Harinck (2021) provides a helpful overview of "international Kuyper research". He notes that in national terms Kuyper's fame had faded by the late 1930s, however, in the Reformed world he was still influential and the "Kuyperian community of church, party and university was more or less kept intact" (Harinck, 2021:18) up to the Second World War. Kuyper research only gained momentum in the 1970s, though it was hindered by the limited availability of his works in languages other than Dutch. Harinck concludes the paper with "desiderata" for Kuyper research. These include an extension of research to other disciplines than theology and history – this judging by the articles reviewed here is already taking place – and the strengthening of the institutional nature of Kuyper research: "the world would be served with a Kuyper institution" (Harinck, 2021:39).

The growing interest in Kuyper has also brought attention to other Dutch Calvinists, such as Klaas Schilder (1890-1952) – the *Schilder Reader* published in 2022 – will provide much impetus for further Schilder studies (Harinck, De Jong & Mouw, eds., 2022). Dennis Greeson provides an interesting comparison with Kuyper and Schilder, while noting many similarities between them, Greeson focuses on their "eschatological visions of the future" (Greeson, 2021:368). He thinks that Schilder's view of the antithesis provides an important corrective to Kuyper's emphasis on common grace, which may result in an over-optimistic view of culture.

Kuyper described himself a "just a dilettante economist", nevertheless as Hengstmengel (2021) points out, he was the source of inspiration for a Calvinist economics as developed by economists such as Bob Goudzwaard and Alan Storkey among others. Hengstmengel examines Kuyper the "amateur economist" and shows how well-read Kuyper was in economics – he provides a list of almost 40 contemporary economists Kuyper referred to. Though it seems that Kuyper had a "love-hate relationship" with the new science of economics: "On the one hand, he could not help but see economics as a legitimate and essential field of research. On the other, he was critical of the methodology and conclusions of mainstream classical economics" (Hengstmengel, 2021:150).

Jessica Joustra (2021) has written a good brief summary of Kuyper's life and work in the *Christian History Magazine*.

Benyamin Intan (2023b) suggests that Kuyper's principled pluralism – in terms of confessional and structural pluralism – is a means of avoiding religion as a pretext for violence. This is crucial in Indonesia, where counter-terrorism efforts have largely failed due to the emergence of new terrorist groups and the inadequacies of secularisation. Non-Muslims are often the victims of acts of intolerance in Indonesia. Religious freedom may be a solution to religious terrorism, and principled pluralism can guarantee religious freedom. The connection between Pancasila and principled pluralism are noted. It is hoped that Pancasila can bring confessional pluralism.

David Kristanto and Tony Salurante are two other Indonesian scholars that draw extensively upon Kuyper (Kristanto and Salurante, 2023). Indonesia is a country that in theory guarantees religious freedom, however, it is the state that defines what is or isn't a religion. The authors argue that Kuyper's sphere sovereignty is relevant to Indonesian institutional freedom. After discussing Kuyper's sphere sovereignty, they move on to show its relevance to Indonesian context. They conclude that true religious freedom can only be realised when the state relinquishes its role as the sole determiner of what constitutes a legitimate religious belief.

Salurante, Kristanto, and Wibowo (2023) collaborated on a thought-provoking paper examining the nuanced interplay of Kuyper's common grace in inter-religious dialogue. They are aware that theology has often been a barrier to dialogue but see in Kuyper's common grace how doctrine need not create divisions but can also develop an appreciation for people of other cultures and religions, without succumbing to the pitfalls of relativism.

In addition to sphere sovereignty and common grace, another foundational aspect of Kuyper's thought is his understanding of worldview. Worldview is a subject that has often been misunderstood. Jeremy Hexham examines some of these misconceptions surrounding worldview, particularly among North American evangelicals and fundamentalists (Hexham, 2023).

Hexham discusses worldview as understood by Kuyper and then Dooyeweerd and goes on to show how it was popularised by Francis Schaeffer and subsequently utilised by the American religious right. Schaeffer used ideas from Kuyper and Dooyeweerd – usually unacknowledged – and applied them in an apologetics context. Unfortunately, it was then (mis)appropriated by the Christian Right and writers such as Tim LaHaye. As Hexham observes, "The problem is: how many people who use 'worldview,' in their conversations really understand it." He feels "[i]t has become a form of legitimation rather than an analytic concept." Though I would argue that it was Schaeffer who turned the pre-theoretical concept of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd into an analytic tool. Worldview then in Hexham's words became "a propaganda weapon".

4.9 Chapters in books

In recent years, alongside the swell in Kuyper studies and research, there has been renewed interest in Aquinas, particular among Reformed scholars. It is pertinent then that Eglinton's chapter in a volume on Aquinas reception examines Kuyper's use of Aquinas. Aquinas is something of a villain for Reformed theologians; the blame for scholastic dualism is often placed at his door, so it is surprising that:

While much of Kuyper's public rhetoric was sharply polemical, it is noteworthy that his treatment of pre-Reformation Catholic theology, and in particular the work of Thomas Aquinas, was far from acerbic in tone. Rather, Kuyper read Aquinas through a particular view of historical progress, praising Thomas for the hitherto unsurpassed advances made in the Summa, all the while setting up Kuyper's neo-Calvinism as Christianity's next great step forward. (Eglinton, 2021:453)

Eglinton notes that Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* make few comments on Aquinas, so he focuses on Kuyper's *Encyclopedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*. Only sections of this have been published in English as *Principles of Sacred Theology*, thus Eglinton uses the complete three-volume Dutch version. Eglinton organises his chapter subheadings around each volume of Kuyper's work. From volume 1, Kuyper on Aquinas as Doctor, volume 2 Kuyper on Thomas, Tradition, and Reformation, and from volume 3, Thomas and Abraham amongst the Doctors and fathers.

He notes Kuyper's distinction between types of geniuses: "the genius of perception and the genius of mastering the thing perceived" (Eglinton, 2021:456). Aquinas was the latter, Augustine the former.

James Bratt (2023), Kuyper's biographer (Bratt, 2013), offers another view on Kuyper. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Religion and State*, he offers some interesting insights. Not least this observation (Bratt, 2023:182):

These impressions [from his overseas travels] prompted Kuyper to some important modulations in his political principles. His remarks on civil politics in *Pro Rege* show how much the world had changed in the thirty-odd years since *Our Program* appeared in 1879. While the earlier work is haunted by the fear of an expansive state, now a once-good "society" had expanded into a massive complex of economic, technological, and social forces that were overwhelming the old bulwarks of church and family – and overshadowing the sovereignty of both government and God.

Prideaux (2023) draws upon some of her themes from her 2020 Exeter University PhD thesis (Prideaux, 2020). She brings Kuyper into dialogue with cultural anthropology and discusses "otherness". Prideaux (2023:381) maintains that Kuyper's sphere sovereignty needs recontextualization:

A recontextualization of Kuyperian sphere sovereignty through Kuyper's other commitments to freedom of conscience and social and economic equality shapes a Christian 'otherness' that is combined with 'commonness'.

In *Seeking Stillness or The Sound of Wings*, a *Festschrift* for Lambert Zuidemaart, Rebekah Smick (2021) examines Kuyper's and Calvin's view of the disenchantment of art. Calvin's removal of art and imagery from worship has been taken to suggest a divorce of art from religion – known as the disenchantment thesis. Smick challenges this hypothesis and suggests that "the removal of art from the worship should not be so readily equated with a demystified understanding of the world", she posits that it is Kuyper and not Calvin "who disenchants the aesthetic by removing it completely from his account of sacramental revelation" (Smick 2021:217).

The mammoth 720-page *Handbook of Calvin and Calvinism* has a chapter on Kuyper by Wood Jr (2021). He argues: "The starting point for understanding Abraham Kuyper's life and thought is the church because that was where Kuyper himself began." Wood Jr acknowledges the significant contributions of Kuyper, particularly fresh approaches to church and society; he also highlights the challenges that arise from his legacy. He closes his piece with a rebuke for Kuyperians, which is worth taking seriously: "For all their talk about godly living, Kuyperians talk remarkably little about God" (Wood Jr, 2021:522).

5. Reviews

In their reviews of Kuyper's *On Education* (2020) both Gomes (2021b) and Chrosniak (2021) note the contemporary applicability of Kuyper's writings. For example, Chrosniak (2021) praises Kuyper's *On Education* and regards it as:

a rich retrieval for the Christian educators of tomorrow, as well as for all those who seek inspiration to fight a good fight in valuing and defending the parental conscience in the raising and educating of children. (Chrosniak, 2021:162)

Gomes (2021b) concludes by stating:

As in Kuyper's time and place, the current situation of education in the Americas is well below expectations. We need radical reforms too. And even though there can be no simple application of Kuyper's thoughts to our context, this volume provides helpful perspectives as we consider present-day challenges in the educational sphere. (Gomes, 2021:203)

Economist Haan (2021) highlights the enduring significance of Kuyper's *Business & Education*. He observes, "This beautiful anthology is enlightening for us who live more than a century after him. I wonder whether, 'with the increasing seriousness of the times', it will be all the more so" (Haan, 2021:231).

The Protestant Reformed Theological Journal offers critical reviews from David Engelsma (2023a,b) of three prominent Kuyperian books (Bartholomew 2021a; Joustra and Joustra 2022; and Brock and Sutanto 2023). Engelsma, as a Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) theologian, is staunchly opposed to common grace. Unsurprisingly then, that the opening of his review of Brock and Sutanto's *Neo-Calvinism* is a denunciation of common grace. Engelsma (2023b:109) suggests:

The entire motivation and activity of neo-Calvinism depend upon a common grace of God. It is difficult, indeed impossible, to exaggerate the importance of common grace for neo-Calvinism. Common grace is simply fundamental to neo-Calvinism. Rightly understood, neo-Calvinism is common grace, and common grace is neo-Calvinism.

However, there are neo-Calvinists who reject common grace. One such example is Klaas Schilder (1890-1952). Engelsma (2023b:110) suggests that in *Neo-Calvinism*, "At every significant point throughout the book, over and over again, appeal is made to a common grace of God." This is somewhat of an overstatement.

Moreover, Engelsma suggests that "Evident in Kuyper's description of common grace is its denial of the total depravity of the unregenerated world." I would suggest that it is evidently not the case. Kuyper was a firm adherent of total depravity. Engelsma (2023b:112) finally suggests that:

Neo-Calvinism is an informative, provocative, significant study of a subject of the utmost importance to every Calvinistic church and Christian. Along the way, the reader learns something, but not everything, about the theology of two Reformed giants.

Edwardo Echeverria (2023) contributes an extensive, appreciative yet critical review of *Neo-Calvinism*. He identifies key missing components from the book, such as the role of faith. As he states, "faith is an irreducible function of the whole process of human knowledge" (p. 3). Echeverria expresses perplexity at its exclusion from Brock and Sutanto's account, as it is a distinctive element of neo-Calvinist epistemology.

Other missing elements, according to Echeverria, are tradition, and the creation order. Echeverria (2023:8) argues that "they give no systematic attention to the normative standard of God's constant creation order. This is also a lacuna in their theological account of Kuyper's and Bavinck's thought." Additionally, he is critical of their anthropology: "Brock and Sutanto's account of Bavinck and Kuyper overlooks, in their anthropology, the point that the human body is intrinsic to personhood, and hence Brock and Sutanto's account is less than holistic" (p. 9). Despite these perceptive criticisms Echeverria heartily recommends their book. Perhaps a second edition could address these missing elements.

In another review, Thomas Davis (2023) provides a helpful summary of each chapter. He goes on to suggest that there are neo-Calvinist themes in the Scots Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) and William Cunningham (1805-1861).¹²

Cornelius P. Venema (2023) also reviews *Neo-Calvinism* in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church magazine *New Horizons*. He acknowledges that the book fills a gap, that of the theological foundations for neo-Calvinism. He notes, "The great strength of Brock and Sutanto's book is their focus upon the theology of Kuyper and Bavinck that undergirded the neo-Calvinist revival in the Netherlands at the end of the nineteenth century" (Venema, 2023:14).

6. Conclusion

It is encouraging to observe that two under-researched areas of Kuyper studies, economics and spirituality, have been addressed in several pieces in 2021. The surge of interest in the Kuyperian approach to the natural sciences and evolution is also worth noting. The renewed emphasis on spirituality is welcome, as Kuyperians have often neglected this area to their detriment.

The publication of four major books on Kuyper and neo-Calvinism in 2023 underscores the enduring interest in Kuyperian thought. Notably, the fact that two of these books and three articles are written by Indonesian scholars highlights a crucial shift – Kuyperianism is no longer confined to Western academia but has evolved into a global phenomenon. It is also heartening that several articles and reviews have drawn attention to the significance of Kuyper's writings for today.

12 Cunningham was one of the founders of the Free Church of Scotland and author of *Historical Theology*. Chalmers was the Free Church's first moderator. Both were professors of theology (on Chalmers see Harinck (2013)).

Appendix

Table A1: A comparison of Goheen & Bartholomew's (2011) contours and Brock & Sutanto's (2023) theses on neo-Calvinism.

Source: Bishop (2024d)

| Mike Goheen and Craig Bartholomew "Contours of the Neo-Calvinist tradition" | Cory C. Brock and N. Gray Sutanto "Neo-Calvinist Theology: 16 Theses" |
|--|--|
| | 1. Neo-Calvinism is a critical reception of Reformed orthodoxy, contextualized to address the questions of modernity. |
| | 3. Neo-Calvinism rejects theological conservatism and progressivism. Instead it applies historic creedal and confessional theology to the concerns of the contemporary world. |
| | 6. The image of God is the pinnacle of creation's organic shape, referring to humanity collectively, male and female, and the self as a unity. |
| 1. Neo-Calvinism begins with <i>Christ</i> and this focus opens up into a full Trinitarian faith. | 4. The Triune God created the world and all creatures as a living unity in diversity, with a definite purpose and goal. |
| 2. Christ is rendered to us truly in <i>Scripture</i> , which is fully trustworthy as God's Word. | 11. The Bible is God's revelation of himself, as the Spirit inspires a diversity of human authors to write all that God intends to communicate, which serves as the ultimate norm and agent of unity, though not the sole source, for the fields of knowledge. |
| 3. Christ stands at the centre of the biblical story and the good news he proclaimed is about the kingdom as the goal of history – God restoring his rule over the whole of human life and creation. | |
| 4. Since Christ has revealed and accomplished the end of history the Scriptures have a storied shape, and as such tell the true story of the whole world. | |
| 5. A central theme in the biblical story is God's election of a people to embody the kingdom, to be a preview of the goal of history, and thus to bear witness to Christ's rule over all of life – this constitutes <i>mission</i> . | 8. Out of the sinful mass of the organism of humanity under Adam, God elects to regenerate individuals into a new, sanctified organic humanity under Christ, thus positing a covenantal antithesis between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. |
| 6. The comprehensive gospel of the kingdom has been narrowed and consigned to a very minor place within the dominant Western humanist worldview, and this calls for a conscious articulation of a biblical worldview in relation to the cultural worldview to enable the church to recover the all-embracing scope of the good news. | 2. Christianity can challenge, subvert and fulfill the cultures and philosophical systems of every age. |
| 7. The good news reveals the restoration of the creation from sin, and thus a neo-Calvinist worldview insists on a comprehensive and integrated understanding of <i>creation, fall and restoration</i> . | |

| | |
|---|---|
| 8. The fundamental backdrop of God's drama of restoration is <i>creation</i> and thus neo-Calvinism articulates a rich doctrine of creation including its good and dynamic creation order and humanity's place within it. | 5. "Organism" and "organic unity" are fitting terms to describe creation's many unities-in-diversities, as it analogically reflects the Triune God. |
| 9. History is part of God's order for creation and thus neo-Calvinism affirms the historical development or differentiation of creation. | 9. By the Spirit's work in common grace, God restrains sin and gifts fallen humanity with moral, epistemic, and life-giving goods to enjoy, for the sake of redemption in Christ. |
| 10. The implication of <i>the fall</i> is that the power of sin and evil now radically twists every part of creation, and while the structures of creation remain good the distorting power of sin means they have been radically misdirected. | 7. The problem with the world is not ontological but ethical, that sin has corrupted much, in fact, everything. |
| 11. The Bible tells the story of <i>restoration</i> centred in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which is the recovery of God's originally good purposes for the whole of his creation and all of human life. | 14. Re-creation's end is brought about by divine agency alone and brings creation to its original goal: that God would make his dwelling place with humankind, in a consummated and sanctified cosmos. |
| 12. Since God's restorative power is at work in the creation by the Spirit, and the forces of evil remains at work in the creation, neo-Calvinism recognises an ultimate religious conflict in the whole of human life. | |
| 13. God is at work leading his creation to its destiny of a <i>new heavens and a new earth</i> , and only then will the kingdom finally come. Until then the church is called to participate in God's redemptive mission – the <i>missio Dei</i> – as <i>witnesses</i> to his victory, but since we await the final victory there is no room for triumphalism in neo-Calvinism. | 15. Jesus Christ's Messianic dominion as King of the Kingdom of God is the aim of God's work in history and the purpose of creaturely redemption. |
| | 10. God has truly revealed himself to every person both objectively and subjectively. This implanted affection and knowledge of God is not a human determination as the product of reason (or natural theology), but God's general revelation by the presence of the Holy Spirit. |
| | 16. The visible church exists as institute and organism: as an institute to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments, and as an organism of individuals bound together by the Spirit to witness to new creation. |
| | 13. Humans are wise to pursue a Christian worldview: Christian theology should discipline the insights of both philosophy and the various sciences and Christians should conform their whole selves to the Lordship of Christ. |
| | 12. The Triune God and his revelation matter for the whole of the human life because every person always stands before the face of God. |

7. Bibliography

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