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## Abraham Kuyper and his Political Thought: Calvinist and Pluralist<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Dutch theologian, journalist, and statesman Abraham Kuyper is commonly cited as an authoritative figure with regard to Christianity and politics. His example as a theologically sophisticated and politically active Christian is widely lauded and celebrated. However, his thought and impact have been rarely considered from the perspective of political theory, and his contribution to the field has largely been overlooked.<sup>2</sup> There are notable exceptions to this, and some of these will be cited in this paper. None the less, due to this lack of theoretical clarity in political studies on Kuyper himself, this paper aims to provide a clearer vision of the theoretical basis of Kuyper's political thought. It will be shown that his political thought can be located in the broad streams of pluralism and Calvinism. We will first survey pluralist political thought, and then survey Calvinist political thought, focusing on John Calvin and Johannes Althusius. These surveys will lead to Dutch Calvinism and Abraham Kuyper's doctrine of sphere sovereignty. This core Kuyperian doctrine

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Prof. Gary Bouma, Prof. Greg Barton, and Daniel Rinaudo for their comments and assistance in the preparation of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Sherratt, 'Rehabilitating the State in America: Abraham Kuyper's Overlooked Contribution in Thomas W. Heilke and Ashley Woodiwiss (eds), *The Re-Enchantment of Political Science: Christian Scholars Engage Their Discipline* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001), 122.

will be expounded, and will be shown to be an expression of Calvinist pluralism, thereby locating Abraham Kuyper's political theory within that stream.

## Pluralism

Pluralism can be used in different senses, across different fields. For example, in social sciences it can simply mean the acceptance of diversity.<sup>3</sup> It should be made clear that we are dealing with a different type of pluralism to the mere 'acceptance of diversity.' We are interested in pluralism as a *political theory*. Initially, it can be helpful to contemplate pluralism by emphasising that which it is not. Skillen and McCarthy define pluralism as being in opposition to *collectivism* and *individualism*. Pluralism, they say, developed in response to these two positions 'under the conviction that the structural diversity of human social life cannot be explained away' by either *collectivist* or *individualist* philosophies.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, pluralism can be defined more positively. Like most political ideas, it is concerned with power. Lowi defines it as a theory which recognises that there are multiple sources of power in a society.<sup>5</sup> In expressing his own conception of a pluralist society, Veit Bader says that pluralism is a theory of power-sharing between autonomous groups.<sup>6</sup> In summary, pluralism is a theory which takes diversity as a given, and thereby recognises and legitimises the differentiated groups within a given society.

However, within the theory of pluralism there are two main schools. One is the English school, or 'European corporatism' and the other is the American school, also known as 'American behaviouralism.'<sup>7</sup> The English pluralists saw groups, or associations, as a 'bulwark of liberty'

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<sup>3</sup> James Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196.

<sup>4</sup> James W. Skillen and Rockne M. McCarthy (eds), *Political Order and the Plural Structure of Society* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), 31.

<sup>6</sup> Veit Bader, *Secularism or Democracy: Associational Governance of Religious Diversity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 186.

<sup>7</sup> Skillen and McCarthy (eds), *Political Order*, 5.

over and against the looming danger of a powerful state.<sup>8</sup> Hirst writes that English pluralism entails a 'belief in the vitality and the legitimacy of self-governing associations as means of organizing social life,' combined with the belief that political representation must be functional and represent the aforementioned self-governing associations.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the American understanding of pluralism is that the state establishes conditions which allow for many groups and interests to compete for influence in the political process.<sup>10</sup> American pluralism conceives of self-governing associations acting in a political contest, while the state acts as mediator of competing associations 'striving to influence policy' and achieve the objectives of 'dominant organised interests.'<sup>11</sup> The English considered pluralism to be a guide and norm for how society ought to be structured, and the Americans utilised it to shape the behaviour of society's differentiated groups.<sup>12</sup> Both schools of pluralism find common ground in their understanding of the state. The English school is critical of the unlimited sovereignty of the state, and the American school responds to the results of a state with unlimited sovereignty.<sup>13</sup> From this brief survey, we can also conclude that pluralism is both a critique of centralised sovereign state power (English) and a theory of the way interest groups jostle for influence under such states (American).

## Calvinism

While the English and American schools of pluralism are highly influential, Dutch Calvinist thinkers have their own theory of pluralism. This theory is called *souvereiniteit in eigen sfeer*, or 'sphere sovereignty.'<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Q. Hirst (ed.), *The Pluralist Theory of the State* (London: Routledge, 1989), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Skillen and McCarthy (eds), *Political Order*, 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Hirst, *The Pluralist Theory of the State*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Skillen and McCarthy, *Political Order*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Hirst, *The Pluralist Theory of the State*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Johan D. van der Vyver, 'The Jurisprudential Legacy of Abraham Kuyper and Leo XIII', *Journal of Markets & Morality*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2002), 212. The phrase was first used by Dutch politician Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, in 1862; Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Abraham Kuyper on the Limited Authority of Church and State', *The Georgetown Journal of Law and Public Policy*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2009),

As hinted at by their name, Dutch Calvinist political theory stems from the French reformer John Calvin. Spykman traces sphere sovereignty back to Calvin's doctrine of the sovereignty of God over creation, and God's creational norms for human society.<sup>15</sup> God is sovereign over all, and all is directed, differentiated, and legitimised by him.<sup>16</sup> Skillen and McCarthy state that Calvin's thought focused on the teleological significance of creation, in which God's creatures have specific purposes and responsibilities.<sup>17</sup> These responsibilities and purposes are derived from, and known through, God's general revelation in creation and by God's special revelation in the scriptures.<sup>18</sup> Every authority, including civil authority, is accountable directly to God.<sup>19</sup> This conception of the biblical order of creation, according to Skillen and McCarthy, rejects the claims of autonomy made by man, and the claims of authority made by the church.<sup>20</sup> Flowing from Calvin's doctrine of creation, they say, is the possibility of differentiation and integration in human society.<sup>21</sup> In the thought of Calvin, God's creational norms make order and differentiation possible.<sup>22</sup>

The outworking of Calvin's doctrine of creational norms, and of the sovereignty and authority of God, was expanded upon by Calvinist

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108-109.

<sup>15</sup> Gordon J. Spykman, 'Sphere Sovereignty in Calvin and the Calvinist Tradition', in *Exploring the Legacy of John Calvin: Essays in Honour of John Bratt*, ed. David E. Holwerda (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1976), 165.

<sup>16</sup> Ralph C. Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundations of Modern Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 36; Skillen and McCarthy, *Political Order*, 21.

<sup>17</sup> Skillen and McCarthy, *Political Order*, 20-21.

<sup>18</sup> Harro Höpfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 187.

<sup>19</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1491. See 4.10.6; Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundations of Modern Politics*, 81; Skillen and McCarthy, *Political Order*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Skillen and McCarthy (eds), *Political Order*, 22.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, *Political Order*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Calvin applies this principle to the role of the civil magistrate with regards to the church and society. See Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*: 1488. 4.10.3

political scientist Johannes Althusius (born 1557). His influence on Dutch Calvinism was probably significant even in his own lifetime, due to his living in Emden, East Friesland, ‘the fulcrum of northern Calvinism.’<sup>23</sup> Like Calvin, Althusius places all earthly authority in subjection to God. ‘All power and government,’ says Althusius, ‘is said to be from God.’<sup>24</sup> A statement like this requires grounding in the reality of politics and society, and the principle has been applied in a variety of ways by different schools of thought. That ‘all power is from God’ is of foundational importance for Calvinist political thought, as shown in the above discussion of Calvin’s thought, and as will be shown below. Althusius saw God’s law as the basis for society and politics, and Calvin’s influence is evident in Althusius’ conception of law.<sup>25</sup> All humans have God’s will implanted in them, and this he calls ‘common law,’ or *lex communis*.<sup>26</sup> Althusius’ ‘common law’ is not dissimilar to the Roman Catholic and Thomist understanding of natural law. However, Calvinist theology and political thought is still grappling with the similarities and distinctions between the Calvinist and Roman Catholic understanding of natural law.<sup>27</sup> Althusius goes on to assert that rulers must draw up laws

<sup>23</sup> Also see Frederick S. Carney, ‘Translator’s Introduction,’ in Johannes Althusius, *The Politics of Johannes Althusius*, trans. Frederick S. Carney (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), xv-xvi; Daniel J. Elazar, ‘The Multi-Faceted Covenant: The Biblical Approach to the Problem of Organizations, Constitutions, and Liberty as Reflected in the Thought of Johannes Althusius,’ *Constitutional Political Economy*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1991): 193.

<sup>24</sup> Althusius, *Politics*, 15.

<sup>25</sup> Althusius, *Politics*, 136-140; For Althusius, see Elazar, ‘The Multi-Faceted Covenant,’ 196; For Calvin, see van der Vyver, ‘The Jurisprudential Legacy,’ 214-215.

<sup>26</sup> Althusius, *Politics*, 134.

<sup>27</sup> For a Reformed critique of a Thomist understanding of ‘natural law’ in relation to societal structures see Skillen and McCarthy (eds), *Political Order*, 378-382. Interestingly, Althusius is implicated in undermining a Christian understanding of natural law and politics, and his political theory is branded as ‘secular humanist’ in E. L. Hebden Taylor, *The Christian Philosophy of Law, Politics and the State* (Nutley: The Craig Press, 1966), 5. Van der Vyver claims that Calvin’s jurisprudence was a synthesis between an Aristotelian understanding of natural law, and Old Testament directives. He used the terminology of ‘moral law.’ See Johan D. van der Vyver, ‘Sphere Sovereignty of Religious Institutions:

based on the *lex communis* for their jurisdictions, and this he calls ‘proper law,’ or *lex propria*.<sup>28</sup> Importantly for our discussion of pluralism, though, Althusius states that politics is about relations among *associations*. Individuals form associations and make covenants with one another.<sup>29</sup> Private associations, in Althusius’ political theory, are like *groups* in the English pluralist’s theory – families and guilds.<sup>30</sup> Public associations are the city, province and commonwealth.<sup>31</sup> Associations are governed by both *lex communis* and *lex propria*.<sup>32</sup> ‘Proper laws (*leges propriae*),’ he says ‘are those enactments by which particular associations are ruled. They differ in each specie of association according as nature of each requires [sic].’<sup>33</sup>

It is here that Althusius becomes the first to express the doctrine of sphere sovereignty.<sup>34</sup> The summary of the doctrine is as follows; each association, each social entity, is ruled by their own laws which differ according to the nature of the association. Or, to be even briefer, each social entity is sovereign in its own sphere. Out of this foundational theory of sovereign spheres, Althusius builds a theory of sovereignty of the people through *associations*, and by this theory he articulates a pluralist vision for society rooted in Calvinist theology. Friederich describes Althusius’ ‘construction of the political order’ as ‘pluralistic to the core.’<sup>35</sup> Elazar, going a step further, points out that, in vesting sovereignty in the people through associations, Althusius has softened the impact of the state, all the while preserving the ‘diverse and primordial ties that characterize European

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A Contemporary Calvinistic Theory of Church-State Relations’, *Church Autonomy: A Comparative Study*, ed. Gerhard Robbers (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001). No page numbers. Accessible at <http://www.peterlang.com/Index.cfm?vID=36223&vLang=E>.

<sup>28</sup> Althusius, *Politics*, 139.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 28, 46 and 61.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 16. The grammar in this sentence seems askew, but this is an accurate quotation.

<sup>34</sup> van der Vyver, ‘The Jurisprudential Legacy’, 213; van der Vyver, ‘*Sphere Sovereignty of Religious Institutions*’, no page numbers.

<sup>35</sup> Carl J. Friedrich, ‘Preface’, in Althusius, *Politics*, xi.

society.<sup>36</sup> Althusius' pluralist political theory serves as a platform for all subsequent Calvinist political thought, and his statement of the doctrine of sphere sovereignty takes us to the heart of Calvinistic pluralism.

### Kuyperian Structural Pluralism

Like Althusius, Abraham Kuyper's vision for society was a pluralist vision. His own context, late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century Holland, was one of considerable religious and cultural diversity.<sup>37</sup> While not diverse in the 'multicultural' sense that the West experiences today, Dutch society was divided along diverse confessional and political lines. These divisions were made quite distinct in the late decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, through the political debates over education known as 'the school struggle'.<sup>38</sup> Kuyper's solution to the problem of governing this diversity was the Calvinist doctrine of sphere sovereignty. At the foundation of this doctrine is the Calvinist doctrine of creation, which entails the inherent order of that creation.<sup>39</sup> Kuyper also sees significance in the 'multiformity' of creation, or what Mouw calls 'many-ness' both in nature and in human society.<sup>40</sup> For Kuyper, then, both nature and human society display a God-imbued plurality. It is within this theological framework that Kuyper shapes his conception of sphere sovereignty. A clear explanation of sphere sovereignty, or as he expressed it 'sovereignty in the individual social spheres,' is found in the third of his *Lectures on Calvinism* (sometimes referred to as *The Stone Lectures*). Each of the social spheres, which include the family, commerce, science, art, education, and the state, derive the laws of their existence from God.<sup>41</sup> This aspect of sphere sovereignty shall

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<sup>36</sup> Elazar, 'The Multi-Faceted Covenant', 203.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3; Johan Goudsblom, *Dutch Society* (New York: Random House, 1967), 31-33; E. H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries, 1780-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 568-569.

<sup>39</sup> Peter S. Heslam, 'Prophet of a Third Way: The Shape of Kuyper's Socio-Political Vision', *Journal of Markets & Morality*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2002), 17; Skillen and McCarthy, *Political Order*, 236-237; Spykman, 'Sphere Sovereignty', 165.

<sup>40</sup> Richard J. Mouw, 'Culture, Church and Civil Society: Kuyper for a New Century', *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2007), 55.

<sup>41</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers,

be called Kuyper's *structural pluralism*. The spheres of society are organic, and grow out of the creation order.<sup>42</sup> It must be noted that Kuyper fails to show *how* the spheres derive their existence from God, and *how* they are evident in the creation order. This fact is assumed in his formulation of sphere sovereignty, and betrays a theoretical weakness in his political thought. There is a sort of Kierkegaardian leap, if you will, between the doctrine of creation and the existence of the spheres. None the less, as a part of this creation order, Kuyper states that God has invested each sphere with its own sovereignty.<sup>43</sup> Or, as Kuyper asserts elsewhere, 'Each [sphere] obeys its own laws, and each . . . stands under its own supreme authority.'<sup>44</sup> This authority is supreme only in an earthly or temporal sense, because all authority is granted to the spheres by the sovereign authority of God.<sup>45</sup> In summary, foundational to Kuyper's political thought are: the order in creation, the plurality or 'many-ness' inherent in creation, and God's sovereignty over his creation. These ideas form the basis of the doctrine of sphere sovereignty, which in turn forms the basis of his political theory.

Abraham Kuyper did not articulate a systematic political theory, and his political thought is scattered throughout his various writings and speeches.<sup>46</sup> He did, however, make some clear statements with regard to the role of the state, and the role of other institutions within society. Firstly, he opposed 'state sovereignty,' developed by the Hegelian

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2008), 77.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>43</sup> See also Abraham Kuyper, 'Manual Labor', in James D. Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans, 1998), 241; Kuyper, *Lectures*, 77.

<sup>44</sup> Abraham Kuyper, 'Sphere Sovereignty', in Skillen and McCarthy, *Political Order*, 260.

<sup>45</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, trans. Dirk Jellema, (Grand Rapids: Piet Hein Publishers, 1950), 51-52; Kuyper, *Lectures*: 81; Skillen and McCarthy, *Political Order*, 258.

<sup>46</sup> Sherrat makes this observation in, 'Rehabilitating the State in America', in Heilke and Woodiwiss (eds), *The Re-Enchantment of Political Science*, 126. Kuyper did, however, stipulate an epistemological method for political theory. See Kuyper, 'The Ordinances of God', in Skillen and McCarthy, *Political Order*, 247-248.



school of Germany.<sup>47</sup> Secondly, he opposed the ‘popular sovereignty’ of the French Revolution.<sup>48</sup> ‘In opposition both to the atheistic popular sovereignty . . . and the pantheistic state sovereignty,’ wrote Kuyper, ‘. . . the Calvinist maintains the sovereignty of God as the source of all authority among men.’<sup>49</sup> He has further scruples, though. Under the school of state sovereignty, society is swallowed up by the state, and this is reversed under the popular sovereignty school, where the state is consumed by society.<sup>50</sup> Kuyperian sphere sovereignty opposes each of these rival theories. Kuyper says that the state and society are not identical, with each having their own sphere sovereignty.<sup>51</sup> Society itself is broken up into smaller spheres, which each have their own inherent sovereignty and ordered place in God’s design.<sup>52</sup> Importantly, Kuyper does not place the state *above* the spheres, but alongside them.<sup>53</sup>

The state is contained within its own sphere, and has a specific role to play. The duties of the government, writes Kuyper, are the imparting of justice and care for its people, both at home and abroad. This, he asserts, is ‘according to apostolic testimony,’ thereby grounding his understanding of the role of the state in the writings of the New Testament.<sup>54</sup> The state should maintain order between the spheres of society by enacting laws, and thereby acting as an umpire between them.<sup>55</sup> However, its role and scope is limited and it cannot meddle in the individual spheres, or become ‘an octopus, which stifles the whole of life.’<sup>56</sup> For example, in writing

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<sup>47</sup> Kuyper, ‘Sphere Sovereignty,’ in Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper*, 469-470; Kuyper, *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, 45; Kuyper, *Lectures*, 72.

<sup>48</sup> Kuyper, ‘Sphere Sovereignty,’ in Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper*, 470-471; Kuyper, *Lectures*, 72.

<sup>49</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures*, 76.

<sup>50</sup> Kuyper, *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, 52.

<sup>51</sup> Kuyper, ‘Manual Labor,’ in Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper*, 241; Kuyper, *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, 52.

<sup>52</sup> Kuyper, ‘Manual Labor’ in Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper*, 241; Kuyper, *Lectures*, 77-78.

<sup>53</sup> Skillen and McCarthy, *Political Order*, 398.

<sup>54</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures*, 79-80.

<sup>55</sup> Kuyper, ‘Sphere Sovereignty,’ in Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper*, 468; Kuyper, *Lectures*, 83.

<sup>56</sup> Kuyper, *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, 57-58; Kuyper, *Lectures*, 83.

about the interaction between organised labour and employers, Kuyper states that the government, bound by the doctrine of sphere sovereignty, does not have the right to interfere directly in industrial disputes.<sup>57</sup> He is critical of the Bismarckian welfare state in Germany, and the submission of the people under it, seeing it as over-paternal and functioning outside its bounds.<sup>58</sup> He is critical of ‘Constantinianism,’ and the institutional union of church and state.<sup>59</sup> He rejects the traditional Calvinist position on the role of the civil magistrate in the punishment of heresy.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the relationship between church and state is one of equality; they are differentiated and exist alongside each other, and mutually limit each other.<sup>61</sup> In short, Kuyper is an advocate of limited government, with the limits defined by the principle of sphere sovereignty. He gives a definite role to the state: that of upholder of justice as umpire between the other social spheres.<sup>62</sup> Kuyper also saw a limited state as fundamental to the church’s autonomy.<sup>63</sup> The church exists autonomously in a society brimming with institutions that exist within their own sovereign sphere, and that operates within the strict limits of those spheres.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, it is not merely the state that is limited in its authority, but the church, the family, the school—all have limits on their authority.

### **Kuyperian World View Pluralism**

A second aspect of Kuyperian pluralism is what has been termed *world view pluralism*. Kuyper understood that everyone had a world view which informed each part of their life, and that each part of this life will find a natural institutional expression. As Wolterstorff asserts, Kuyper understood that people will often form ‘confessionally-oriented’

<sup>57</sup> Kuyper, ‘Manual Labor’, in Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper*, 241 and 254.

<sup>58</sup> Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper*, 253.

<sup>59</sup> Kuyper, *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, 31; Kuyper, *Lectures*, 87-88.

<sup>60</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures*, 86.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>62</sup> Heslam also notes the similarities at this point in Kuyper’s theory with Otto von Gierke, in Peter S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper’s Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 158; Kuyper, *Lectures*, 83.

<sup>63</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures*, 92; Wolterstorff, ‘Abraham Kuyper on the Limited’, 112.

<sup>64</sup> Wolterstorff, ‘Abraham Kuyper on the Limited’, 112.

institutions (e.g. Islamic schools, Jewish butchers).<sup>65</sup> Kuyper draws a clear line between religion (or world view), and religious institution.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, the issue of church and state is entirely separate from the issue of 'religious conviction' and the state.<sup>67</sup> Religious convictions, or world views, constitute a different category to that of institutions, hence the phrase *world view* pluralism. Van der Vyver notes that Kuyper would also acknowledge ethno-religious groupings as spheres (in contrast to the thought of Kuyperian philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd, who would not).<sup>68</sup> Indeed, Kuyper did attach the idea of world view pluralism to the doctrine of sphere sovereignty.<sup>69</sup> Heslam states that Kuyper was prone to use the term sphere to refer to confessional or social groups, as well using it to refer to social institutions.<sup>70</sup> This raises considerable problems with terminology, for if sphere refers to institutions existing in God's creation order, then Kuyper is claiming that social and confessional groups are a part of that order while giving them the status of 'sphere.'<sup>71</sup> While agreeing that this is semantically confusing, James Bratt contends that these two definitions of sphere are not incompatible. One type of sphere proceeds from God's original creation, while the confessional groupings sphere proceeds from God's work in redeeming a people to be a part of his church.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, according to Bratt, Kuyper *was* promoting two streams of pluralism in his efforts to affirm the goodness of living in God's creation, and in his efforts to mobilise Christians to action in society.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Wolterstorff, 'Abraham Kuyper on the Limited', 116.

<sup>68</sup> van der Vyver, 'The Jurisprudential Legacy', 223.

<sup>69</sup> Vincent E. Bacote, *The Spirit in Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 63; Heslam, 'Prophet of a Third Way', 19.

<sup>70</sup> Heslam, 'Prophet of a Third Way', 19.

<sup>71</sup> See also J. Budziszewski, *Evangelicals in the Public Square* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 62-66. Budziszewski identifies six different ways in which Kuyper uses the word 'sphere'; Heslam, 'Prophet of a Third Way', 19.

<sup>72</sup> James D. Bratt, 'Passionate About the Poor: The Social Attitudes of Abraham Kuyper', *Journal of Markets & Morality*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2002), p. 34.

<sup>73</sup> Bratt, 'Passionate About the Poor'.

At the bottom of this drive for world view pluralism, it seems that Kuyper has the Christian faith's interests at heart. Kuyper's world view pluralism allows people of all faiths, or none at all, to express that faith freely in public and private. Coming out of this freedom, Kuyper hoped his political conception of religious liberty would result in the *rechristianisation* of Holland.<sup>74</sup> In Article 4 of Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party platform, it states that the government should allow the gospel to spread among the population, that it should not restrict individual conscience, that it should not interfere with the 'spiritual development of the nation,' and that it should treat all religious societies and churches as equals.<sup>75</sup> Kuyper states elsewhere that 'the government must honor the complex of Christian churches as the multiform manifestation of the church of Christ on earth.'<sup>76</sup> According to Kuyper, it is under these conditions that the church can flourish; 'a free church, in a free state.'<sup>77</sup> Calvinistic churches, Kuyper claims, in their multiplicity of institutions, have grown and flourished under the influence of liberty from the state.<sup>78</sup> So, while this plurality of world views might be motivated by the desire to maintain freedom for his own world view sphere, this aspect of Kuyper's sphere sovereignty is still very apparent and important as we consider his location within political theory. To summarise the above two points, Kuyper's sphere sovereignty entails two types of pluralism; *structural* pluralism and *world view* pluralism.

### **Kuyperianism: Calvinist and Pluralist**

What has become apparent from this investigation is that Kuyper's political thought can be located in two major streams: pluralism and Calvinism. At the very foundation of Kuyper's doctrine of sphere sovereignty is the Calvinist rendering of the doctrine of God's sovereignty, and the Calvinist understanding of creation norms. What we find in

<sup>74</sup> John Bolt, 'Abraham Kuyper and the Search for an Evangelical Public Theology', in Budziszewski, *Evangelicals in the Public Square*, 149, Taylor, *The Christian Philosophy*, 43.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Bolt, 'Abraham Kuyper and the Search', in Budziszewski, *Evangelicals in the Public Square*, 153.

<sup>76</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures*, 92.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.

Kuyper's political thought is a doctrinally-driven pluralism, borne out of his evident desire to be faithful to God's sovereignty over creation, and the inherent order in that creation. In using the Calvinistic rhetoric of his predecessors John Calvin and Johannes Althusius, Kuyper clearly places himself in the Calvinist stream of political theology. Of importance to Calvinist political theology, and therefore Kuyper's political theology, is the role of 'groups' in society. These groups are called 'spheres' by Kuyper. God invests each group with its own sovereignty, and from the position of being sovereign in their own sphere these each work out their particular and peculiar role in God's creation order.

The different spheres of society hold an equivalent place in Kuyper's thought to 'associations' or 'groups' in the thought of other pluralist theorists. We have also seen that Kuyper's investiture of the differentiated spheres of society with a sovereignty of their own is consistent with the political theory of pluralism. Kuyper's pluralist thought with regard to world view spheres is similar in respects to the thought of contemporary pluralists like Veit Bader, who are attempting to resolve issues around multiculturalism and the governance of diversity.<sup>79</sup> Kuyper sees the public square as ideally being filled with a cacophony of voices from different confessions. The modern equivalent would be a public square filled with representatives from every ethnic and religious community in a diverse society. This pluralism of world views is far from a religious relativism, as shown by the fact that Kuyper's motivating force behind this world view pluralism was the uninhibited spread of the Christian gospel. Kuyper's approach is clearly a pluralist one with regard to managing or governing diversity in society, and with regard to the structure of society. Therefore, we can confidently assert that Abraham Kuyper's political thought can be placed with the theoretical stream of Calvinist pluralism.

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<sup>79</sup> See note 6 above.