

This book accomplishes its task of presenting varying Christian perspectives on the financial crash. It is not so technical that only professional economists or ethicists might understand it, but its rigor in presenting the complexities of the crash and the ethical issues involved certainly do justice to the subject. I highly recommend the book to anyone interested in considering the crash and its attendant challenges to the common good.

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**The Kuyper Center Review, Volume 1:
Politics, Religion, and Sphere Sovereignty**
Gordon Graham (Editor)
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2010 (150 pages)

This first volume of a planned annual review is from Princeton Theological Seminary's Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology. The Center's aim is to promote public theology from the best of the Reformed tradition—in this case suitably named after the Dutch minister, journalist, author, and statesman, Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). This maiden volume contains papers that were associated with a 2008 conference, “Sphere Sovereignty and Civil Society.”

The contributors were well chosen as leaders to comment on a variety of subjects. Oliver O'Donovan's “Reflections on Pluralism” begins with an echo (perhaps unintentional) of Kuyper's notion of antithesis when he claims, “pluralism conceives difference as a danger.” His peripatetic reflections attempt to answer two queries: in what sense good theology is public and in what sense it is reason. With a single, scant reference to Kuyper (and then, in effect, contrasting Kuyper with his mentor Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer), O'Donovan avers that the “concept of an absolute public reason is therefore incompatible with the terms of any open practical inquiry, and especially with a Christian one” (7).

Jonathan Chaplin provides an interesting sociological discussion of civil society under the sway of Christian social pluralism. He, among others, notes the similarity between the Roman Catholic idea of subsidiarity and the Kuyperian notion of sphere sovereignty. However, he helpfully notes that sphere sovereignty is not merely devolutionary but that it also recognizes spheres with “irreducible identities” (18) as performing independent tasks. To be a legitimate sphere, as contrasted with mere proceduralist decentralizing, it cannot be absorbed by another, nor is it hierarchically subservient to another (22–23). There is a parity or non-coextensivity of spheres, rightly understood. In the next essay, James Bratt notes that Kuyper was not always clear as to which or how many spheres existed. His indeterminateness (*imprecise* is the term Bratt uses) weakens the concept of sphere sovereignty, although Bratt believes that sufficient determinateness existed for the political sphere in Kuyper's work. Bratt's fine article also shows how Kuyper differed from Groen van Prinsterer and why he avoided both Althusius and a later secularization of Althusius by Otto von Guericke.

The editor of this volume, Gordon Graham, provides a quickly paced essay on whether Kuyper or neo-Calvinism can survive in a post-Rawls world. In one of the articles that refers heavily to Kuyper's own work, Graham presents (in fewer than ten pages, no less) a Kuyper-versus-Rawls cage-match on one simple query (on page 52): "Are political institutions and practices best grounded in a comprehensive worldview like Calvinism, or should any such worldview be eschewed in the name of political liberty?" Along with a short, albeit helpful review of Rawls, Graham focuses on two determining features of sphere sovereignty: (1) It wields its own definitive credentialing source of authority, and (2) no external political control can wield adverse authority over that valid sphere. With such helpful inferences, Graham concludes in a fashion that would surely cause a smile to curl across Kuyper's lips, averring that not only has the "liberal democratic public sphere [offered] no special protection for either freedom or reason" (59) but also that "the attractiveness of a much more robust conception of sphere sovereignty ... which Kuyper espouses becomes evident." Graham's elucidation of Kuyper's notions succeeds in presenting it not only as a robust competitor but also as possibly bearing potential superiority as a worldview (contra Rawls) for political theory.

Subsequent essays discuss the role and need for "political friendship" (Michael J. DeMoor); the role of covenant theology amidst a secularizing society, particularly in modern Dutch society (John Halsey Wood Jr., drawing heavily on original sources); and how the welfare state rose to popularity in the Netherlands after World War II (George Harinck), which concludes by asking how long the modern welfare state can thrive without a well-functioning church.

Two final essays round this volume out: (1) a discussion of the views of Fred Van Geest, James Skillen, and Nicholas Wolterstorff on whether Kuyperianism can condone same-sex marriage (by James J. S. Foster, with impressive appeal to Kuyper's own thought); and (2) a lively discussion (by John R. Bowlin) of practicing tolerance while seeking to hold to religious virtue in a pluralistic context.

Reading the final essay on Islam (a summary not an actual translation) by Rimmer de Vries, one senses both how progressive Kuyper was in terms of his acquaintance with other faiths and how critical he was of Islam as an evangelistic faith. His 1907 "The Enigma of Islam" sought to explain why Christianity had begun such an astonishing decline (already!), while elsewhere in the world the crescent was on the rise. This survey concludes: "The Christians under the caliphs become Muslims, but Muslims living in Christian countries remained faithful to the Prophet Mohammed." One senses that this essay, at least, calls for a revival of the notion of antithesis.

This small book could be strengthened by an index. It will be interesting to see if future volumes explore and appreciate Kuyper's thoughts or revise them in ways that conform the original to the evolving *zeitgeist*. Most readers of this journal would welcome such explorations that bring an important voice to the conversation.

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