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# REC FOCUS



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The vision of the REC is to be a growing, unified family of Reformed churches, which shares the heritage of the Reformed faith with the whole church, and stimulates its members to proclaim the lordship of Christ throughout the world.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the REC is to express and promote the unity of Reformed Churches across cultures. It draws those churches together in mutual support and fellowship to preserve and develop the Reformed faith, serve the unity of the whole church, and share the love of Christ in the world.

Commission on Theological Education & Interchange  
Commission on Human Relations

## An Assembly Collage

## MULTICULTURAL DEMOCRACY: IN SEARCH OF A REFORMED APPROACH

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the invitation. I am a constitutional lawyer and a political scientist, who specializes in church-state relations, but not a trained theologian. It is therefore an honor to speak to you this morning.

The title of the paper that I would like to present is: 'Multicultural Democracy: in Search of a Reformed Approach'. As the title indicates already, it is very much meant to serve as a discussion paper, not as the final word about this complex issue.

The paper consists of four sections. I will start out by saying a few things about the concept of multicultural democracy in general. Next, I will specifically deal with the topic of church and state, which you will be discussing today and which is obviously at the heart of the concept of multicultural democracy. Section three looks at the Reformed contribution to the topic of church and state in religiously plural societies in the past. Finally, section four raises the question whether the notion of

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pluriform democracy, as developed by Reformed thinkers and put into practice in the Netherlands during the better part of the twentieth century, should be replaced by the concept of multicultural democracy.

### 1. THE CONCEPT OF MULTICULTURAL DEMOCRACY

The starting point of my paper is what to me was the most inspiring publication of last year: the Human Development Report 2004, published for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). According to this report, entitled *Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*, "[c]ultural diversity is here to stay – and to grow. States need to find ways of forging national unity amid this diversity. The world, ever more interdependent economically, cannot function unless people respect diversity and build unity through common bonds of humanity. In this age of globalization the demands for cultural recognition can no longer be ignored by any state or by the international community".<sup>3</sup>

The way states manage this cultural diversity matters because cultural liberty, "being able to choose one's identity – who one is – without losing the respect of others or being excluded from other choices,"<sup>4</sup> can be regarded as a human right. Usually five categories of human rights are distinguished: civil, cultural, economic, political and social. Of these five categories cultural rights have, certainly in the West, up till now received the least attention. Yet, there can be no doubt that cultural rights are human rights as well, and that their importance grows almost by the day.

The fact that cultural liberty is a human right implies, that states are under an obligation to actively pursue multicultural policies, "policies that explicitly recognize cultural differences."<sup>5</sup> The so-called *Minorities at Risk* data set, created by researchers at the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management, estimates that almost 900 million people in the world today, that is around one of seven, are discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their identity.<sup>6</sup> Yet, it is perfectly possible for a state to be multiethnic, multilingual, multireligious, et cetera. In order to achieve this, nation states should be replaced by state nations, "where various 'nations' – be they ethnic, religious, linguistic or indigenous identities – can coexist peacefully and cooperatively in a single state polity."<sup>7</sup> More specifically,

<sup>3</sup> At 2.

<sup>4</sup> At 1.

<sup>5</sup> At 2.

<sup>6</sup> Cited at 31.

<sup>7</sup> At 49.

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according to the Human Development Report 2004, multicultural policies are required in the following five fields: political participation, access to justice, language, socio-economic policies and, last but not least, religion.

As far as political participation is concerned, a multicultural conception of democracy requires that power-sharing arrangements be introduced. Power can either be shared territorially through federalism or, when the different groups are dispersed throughout a country, through consociation. Consociation is "a political arrangement in which various groups, such as ethnic or racial populations within a country or region, share power according to an agreed formula or mechanism."<sup>8</sup> Examples of such mechanisms include an electoral system of proportional representation, executive power-sharing, provisions for cultural autonomy, and safeguards in the form of mutual vetoes.

As far as access to justice is concerned, recognition of customary law ought to be considered, which could mean the introduction of some form of legal pluralism in for example an area of law such as personal law which governs sensitive topics like marriage, divorce, guardianship, adoption, inheritance and succession.

As far as language is concerned, recognition of a language "symbolizes respect for the people who speak it, their culture and their full inclusion in society."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in addition to a unifying national language the adoption of one or two local languages is recommended.

As far as socio-economic policies are concerned, recognizing legitimate collective claims to land and livelihoods and taking affirmative action are two means of addressing inequalities between groups.

Finally, because religion is of profound importance to one's identity, from the point of view of cultural liberty guaranteeing religious liberty in the best possible way is of foremost importance. As I said earlier, given the fact that this is the theme that you will be discussing today, I will elaborate on the issue of religion – or church and state – in the following section of my paper. Before doing so, however, I should like to make one more remark about the concept of multicultural democracy.

<sup>8</sup> [www.homoexcelsior.com](http://www.homoexcelsior.com).

<sup>9</sup> At 9.

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The Human Development Report 2004 defends a limited kind of multiculturalism. Thus, in addition to a greater respect for diversity it also stresses the need for a stronger commitment to unity. The boundary is to be found in a common commitment to a universal ethics based on universal human rights and respect for the freedom, equality and dignity of all individuals.<sup>10</sup> The approach could be summed up as "Diversity Within Unity." therefore, to use a phrase coined by the American sociologist Amitai Etzioni, who uses the term in a somewhat different way, however.

## 2. CHURCH AND STATE

The Human Development Report 2004 distinguishes between secular and non-secular states. Non-secular states come in three varieties. First of all, a non-secular state can be a theocracy, governed, as it were, by divine law. Examples of such states include the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan under the Taliban. Secondly, a non-secular state can have an established religion, that is a formal alliance between a particular religion and the government. Examples include Buddhism in Bhuta, Burma and Thailand; Hinduism in Nepal; Islam in Bangladesh, Libya and Malaysia; and Roman Catholicism in Argentina, Bolivia and Costa Rica. Thirdly, a non-secular state can have an established church or religion, but nonetheless recognize and even financially support more than one religion. Examples of such states include Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. None of these three types of non-secular states stands out from the point of view of ensuring religious freedom, although in practice the third type performs without doubt better than the first two. Generally speaking, however, a secular state is to be preferred.

Contrary to what is usually assumed, secular states come in at least three different varieties as well.

To begin with, there are anti-religious, secular states, which exclude religion from their own affairs but do not hesitate to interfere in the affairs of religion. Examples include Communist regimes in China and, formerly, in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Secondly, a secular state can be neutral or laicist. Neutral states are characterized by a strict separation between church and state. The state should be neutral as far as religion is concerned and this neutrality is

<sup>10</sup> At 90.

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considered to be realized best by stripping the public square of all religious elements. The United States after the Second World War and France since the Separation Law of 1905 are probably the best examples of countries with this type of church-state relations, although the differences between both countries should not be underestimated.

Thirdly, there are secular states asserting equal respect and principled distance to all religious and secular worldviews in society and their affiliated organizations. This engagement may take the form of support for religions, such as public funding of religious schools, as long as this is done even-handedly. The Human Development Report mentions the Indian Constitution as an example, but the Netherlands also fits in this category as we will see later on. What is important to note at this moment is that secularism apparently does not automatically imply the privatization of religion. In fact, in this third type of secular state the neutrality of the state is protected better than in so-called neutral or laicist, secular states. For this reason, according to American political scientists Stephen V. Monsma and J. Christopher Soper in their book *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies* (1997), there is "much to learn from the Dutch experience. (...) [T]he Dutch may do a better job at securing religious rights than almost any other country in the world."<sup>11</sup> The Human Development Report puts it this way: "What is important from the human development perspective is to expand human freedoms and human rights – and to recognize equality. Secular and democratic states are most likely to achieve these goals where the state provides reasonable accommodation of religious practices, where all religions have the same relation to the state and where the state protects human rights."<sup>12</sup>

This position roughly corresponds with what the American historian Wilfred M. McClay has argued in a recent essay entitled 'Two Concepts of Secularism'. According to McClay "[t]here is on the one hand, a way of understanding the secular idea as an opponent of established belief – including a nonreligious establishment – and a protector of the rights of free exercise and free association. On the other hand, one can understand the secular ideal as a proponent of established unbelief and a protector of individual expressive rights, a category that includes rights of religious

<sup>11</sup> Stephen V. Monsma and J. Christopher Soper, *The Challenge of Pluralism. Church and State in Five Democracies* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield 1997), at 82, 201.

<sup>12</sup> At 8.

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expression."<sup>13</sup> The former view, which understands secularism as a freedom from establishmentarian imposition of any worldview on society, is a rather minimal understanding of secularism and can therefore be called "negative secularism." The latter view, called "establishmentarian or positive secularism," is held by more militant secularists, who can to a certain extent be considered enemies of religion (with important exceptions, such as the Christian separationists): "Such a regime seeks, under the guise of separating church and state, to exclude religious thought and discourse from any serious participation in public life, and to confine religious belief and practice, as much as possible, to the realm of private predilection and individual taste."<sup>14</sup> In this terminology the Human Development Report prefers negative secularism.

In order for negative secularism to work, however, religious faiths must undergo a certain degree of adaptation in accommodating themselves to it. "They must," as McClay puts it, "learn their table manners, and learn how to behave around strangers."<sup>15</sup> One of the most intriguing questions in this respect is of course whether Islam will manage to achieve this degree of adaptation. "But," as McClay rightly observes, "the task of adapting to a negative-secular order faces all the world's religions, if they are to bring any of their resources to bear effectively on the task of living in the next century."<sup>16</sup> Interestingly enough, Protestants have been among the first to adapt to negative secularism, which brings me to my discussion of the Reformed contribution to the issue of church and state in religiously plural societies in the past.

### 3. THE REFORMED CONTRIBUTION<sup>17</sup>

When I say that Protestants have been among the first to adapt to negative secularism, I have in mind the approach of principled public pluralism that neo-Calvinists such as Abraham Kuiper (1837-1920) and legal philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) have developed

<sup>13</sup> Wilfred M. McClay, "Two Concepts of Secularism," in: Hugh Hecllo and Wilfred M. McClay (eds.), *Religion Returns to the Public Square. Faith and Policy in America* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003) 31-61, at 46.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 47-48.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, 52.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 54.

<sup>17</sup> Parts of this section and the next one are based on: Hans-Martien ten Napel "Protestantism, Globalization and the Democratic Constitutional State," in: V. Küster (ed.), *Reshaping Protestantism in a Global Context* (forthcoming).

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during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,<sup>18</sup> and which is set out in section seven of the excellent report on 'Church, State and the Kingdom of God' by John Hiemstra. I therefore can be brief about it here. Suffice it to say that a major starting-point for this theory of society is that, no matter how sovereign nation states and other political entities might regard themselves to be, ultimate sovereignty only belongs to God. This goes back as far as to the early church's confession that "Jesus is Lord" (1 Corinthians 12: 3). From this it follows that neither the national state nor for example a supranational institution like the European Union in themselves can claim to be the ideal of political organization in this world. The criterium for the legitimacy of both is how well they are doing in establishing justice, nationally as well as internationally. Since justice in the political sphere will not easily amount to the ideal of biblical justice, it is referred to as public justice instead.

As far as domestic justice is concerned – to which I will limit myself in this paper – two kinds of pluralism are important. The first type can be called institutional or associational pluralism.<sup>19</sup> It starts from the idea that God has created society with the potential to unfold into a number of different spheres, such as the family, education, business, the arts and government. Since government constitutes only one of these spheres, it is under an obligation to recognize and uphold the autonomy and freedom of civil society that has responsibilities of its own. The second type can be called directional pluralism.<sup>20</sup> This principle implies that religion, on the other hand, does not constitute a separate sphere, but has instead a bearing on all aspects of life.<sup>21</sup> However, since Jesus and Jesus only is Lord, society should neither be governed by a particular religion, such as Christianity or Islam, nor by some other value system, such as Secular Humanism. Instead, a government should uphold the right of all people who live within its territory to be free to practise their diverse religious or nonreligious faiths in both private and public life.

What John Hiemstra does not deal with in his report, probably due to lack of space, is the fact that the rise of pluriform democracy in the

<sup>18</sup> James William Skillen, *The Development of Calvinistic Political Theory in the Netherlands, with Special Reference to the Thought of Herman Dooyeweerd* (Ph.D.: Duke University, 1974); Luis E. Lugo (ed.), *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life. Abraham Kuiper's Legacy for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen, *Pluralisms and Horizons. An Essay in Christian Public Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 1993) 16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> Note that religion is not synonymous with the church as an institution, which is confined to its own sphere.

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Netherlands in the early twentieth century is to a considerable extent rooted in precisely this well worked-out theory of Reformed origin. Politically speaking, the single most important characteristic of the Netherlands is without doubt that it is a religiously plural society. Since the Reformation and the revolt against the Spanish (1568–1648), Dutch society has consisted, roughly speaking,<sup>22</sup> of three groups: Roman Catholics, orthodox Reformed and a secular or humanistic minority. Thus, Dutch politics during the past 400 years can be interpreted as a permanent struggle for power between these three groups of about equal size, but with distinctive identities. After Roman Catholics had been dominant during the Middle Ages, orthodox Reformed took over during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and humanists dominated the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The twentieth century has been dominated by orthodox Reformed and Roman Catholics together. Throughout this period, one of the main issues has precisely been argument about the type of church–state relations that should be preferred. As a result, the Netherlands has known very different regimes.<sup>23</sup> In the time of the Republic (1579–1795), the Dutch Reformed Church was more or less the established church, making it a non-secular state of the second type distinguished earlier. After the Batavian Revolution of 1795 had brought the secular state, the nineteenth century was characterized by a strict separation of church and state. Finally, in 1917, under pressure from a political alliance of orthodox Reformed and Roman Catholics principled public pluralism was introduced, making the Netherlands a secular state of the third type mentioned above. The approach of principled public pluralism as developed by Neo-Calvinists has strong similarities with Roman Catholic social teaching.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, until now this latter paradigm shift is misinterpreted in the so-called “consociational democracy” literature, through which the Netherlands is known best both nationally and internationally. According to consociational democracy theory, the key issue at the beginning of the twentieth century was whether the stability of the political system could be maintained, despite the gradually increasing degree of segmentation or pillarization of Dutch society. This was eventually done by prudent elites that prevented a near-civil war by establishing a consociational

<sup>22</sup> Roughly speaking, if only because (certainly in the beginning) many humanists were practising Christians.

<sup>23</sup> Monsma and Soper, *Challenge of Pluralism*, 51-86.

<sup>24</sup> James W. Skillen and Rockne M. McCarthy (eds.), *Political Order and the Plural Structure of Society* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press 1991); *Journal of Markets and Morality* 5 (2000) nr. 1, special issue on “A Century of Christian Social Teaching: the Legacy of Leo XIII and Abraham Kuyper.”

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democracy, characterized by precisely the kind of power-sharing mechanisms that the Human Development Report speaks about, that is an electoral system of proportional representation, executive power-sharing, provisions for cultural autonomy, and safeguards in the form of mutual vetoes. In reality, however, as the historically oriented American political scientist Stanley Carlson-Thies has rightly pointed out, “[t]he four subcultures which took shape in the latter decades of the nineteenth century [by this time the secular or humanistic minority had split up politically into Liberals and Socialists, HMTN] did not pose a deadly challenge to democratic governance, as assumed by consociational theory. The challenge was instead to state policies inhospitable to the diversity of ways of life embodied in the subcultures. The prevailing liberal model tolerated, but privatized, differences. But Catholics and orthodox Protestants insisted that their religious beliefs should guide also their public activities and institutions. (...) Segmentation (...) necessitated the transformation of state policies and structures. The Netherlands became not a consociational democracy but a pluriform democracy – a democracy in which subculturally-rooted differences are affirmatively accommodated by the state.”<sup>25</sup> I must admit that, in the light of the Human Development Report 2004, I object much less to the term “consociational democracy” as such than I used to do, but the problem is that it is still too much associated with the largely negative meaning that the term “pillarization” has for most social scientists and historians. The period of pillarization between 1917 and 1967 is, possibly partly as a result of personal experiences and frustrations, regarded by them as a culturally “dark” period of Dutch history, in which the political and religious elites of the day succeeded in controlling their rank and file adherents on an unprecedented scale. As the Human Development Report demonstrates, however, it is also possible to be more positive about the same period in Dutch history, and to regard it as a kind of second “Golden Age” in which religious and political life flourished once more.

After it had been introduced first in the field of education, by means of the adoption of a constitutional amendment in 1917, the model of principled public pluralism has later also been applied to other areas, such as the media,<sup>26</sup> and – after World War II – health and social welfare services. Because of the shifting worldview beliefs of the society, however, from the 1960s onwards yet another paradigm shift with regard

<sup>25</sup> Stanley Warren Carlson-Thies, *Democracy in the Netherlands: Consociational or Pluriform?* (Ph.D.: University of Toronto 1993) iv-v.

<sup>26</sup> See John Hiemstra, *Worldviews on the Air: Founding a Pluralist Broadcasting System in the Netherlands* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America 1997).

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to church-state relations in the Netherlands is gradually taking place, which might bring with it the end of pluriformity. In essence, this most recent shift involves a return to the neutral or laicist state of the nineteenth century, at a moment in time when society because of both secularization and immigration is becoming more plural than it already was. The pace of change is slow, because – as Monsma and Soper have noted – the pluralist theories of society of Reformed and Catholic origin “have become part of the Dutch mindset on issues of church and state.”<sup>27</sup> Yet, the change is unmistakable, as is currently demonstrated for example by the demise of the pluralist broadcasting system. Again, to many social scientists and historians, this marks a kind of liberation from a “medieval past,” and the dawning of a new era of “enlightenment.” Others, however, are increasingly worried about the effects that the secularization and individualization processes may have on the cohesion of Dutch society. They regard the present situation as being a culturally “dark” era because relatively few people and organizations are still trying to maintain an explicit relation between their religious and other beliefs and social and political action. This might even be an explanation for the widening “confidence gap” between Dutch citizens and the Dutch political system about which a number of Dutch politicians and political commentators have become increasingly concerned over the last few years, especially since 9/11. Because of the de-pillarization process, Dutch people are finding it increasingly difficult to relate to parties and politicians that in their eyes have become too technocratic.

Since the prospects for Dutch pluriform democracy are greatly dependent on the process of European unification, it appears indispensable to take developments at the European level into account as well. The draft Constitution, which was recently voted down in the French and Dutch referendums, provides in Article I-51, that the European Union “respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States” (paragraph 1) and “equally respects the status of philosophical and non-confessional organisations” (paragraph 2). This restraint is perhaps understandable, given the principle of subsidiarity.<sup>28</sup> More plausible, however, is that the topic of church-state relations has proven too sensitive to regulate at this stage, given the already problematic nature of the discussion about the possible inclusion of an explicit reference to the Judeo-Christian heritage

<sup>27</sup> Monsma and Soper, *Challenge of Pluralism*, 58.

<sup>28</sup> In Article 9, paragraph 3, of the draft Constitution subsidiarity is described as the principle that ‘in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence the Union shall act only if and insofar as the objectives of the intended action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States’.

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in the Preamble. As a result, one will have to wait and see whether for example the French tradition of Laicism or the Eastern Orthodox inclination towards the established church model will prevail in the European Union, although a gradual process of convergence is conceivable as well. Even the Dutch model of pluriform democracy might have a – be it small – chance of success, especially since the European Union, according to the Preamble of its draft Constitution, sees itself as “united in its diversity.” It would be interesting to explore whether there is a difference between “Unity in Diversity” and “Diversity within Unity,” which as we have seen is the approach of the Human Development Report. This brings me to the question which marks the beginning of the fourth and final section of my presentation: could Dutch pluriform democracy, despite its specific historical shape, also more generally serve as a model for the United States and the Two-Thirds World respectively, in so far as it presents a middle course (Via Media, as Anglicans would say) between the rivaling models of the neutral or laicist state and multicultural democracy?

#### **4. FROM PLURIFORM DEMOCRACY TO MULTICULTURAL DEMOCRACY?**

With respect to the United States, Carlson-Thies has on the one hand remarked during an international conference on Sharing the Reformed Tradition: The Dutch-North American Exchange, 1846-1996, held at the Free University in Amsterdam in 1996, that “[i]n the final analysis, what is most important is not any direct line of influence from the philosophers and builders of Dutch segmentation to American pluralist developments. Great leaders like Groen van Prinsterer, Abraham Kuyper, and Herman Schaepman were not seeking to craft a Dutch model of pluralism for export to the world.”<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, he suggested during the same conference that “[t]o resolve its dilemmas of religion and public life, America needs to adopt for itself at the end of this century the pluralistic solution the Netherlands adopted near the beginning.”<sup>30</sup> Five years into the twenty-first century this has far from happened yet, although for example in the case law of the U.S. Supreme Court there is at least since the early 1980s a growing tendency to move away from the model of

<sup>29</sup> Stanley W. Carlson-Thies, “The Meaning of Dutch Segmentation for Modern America,” in: George Harinck and Hans Krabbendam (eds.), *Sharing the Reformed Tradition: The Dutch-North American Exchange, 1846-1996* (Amsterdam 1996) 159-175, at 172.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem.

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strict church-state separation.<sup>31</sup> Noteworthy as well is the Faith-Based and Community Initiative which President Bush has launched during his first term. While the Dutch seem to abandon the model of principled public pluralism, scholars, judges and politicians in the United States are seeking its inspiration.

Outside the West, the situation is different, if only because such classical doctrines of the democratic constitutional state as the rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances and democratic accountability – which can be seen as necessary preconditions for a pluriform democracy, because they forge unity – are not universally respected. Nevertheless, by their adherents the notion of pluriform democracy is regarded as relevant to all cultures and all times, because it is believed to correspond “with the way things really are in terms of God and the nature of human being.”<sup>32</sup> As James Skillen puts it, the President of the Center for Public Justice in Washington, D.C., “Dutch society at the turn of the [twentieth, HMTN] century could not or should not be taken as a model for all times, but Kuyper’s way of seeking to discover and honor the integrity of creation’s diversity illuminates one of the central social challenges people will always face in all parts of the world. (...) If individualism, collectivism, and secularism are all misleading in one direction or another, then the need for a God-centered, pluralist social vision will remain strong throughout the world.”<sup>33</sup>

Given the analysis of the Human Development Report 2004 that virtually all societies have by now become more or less multicultural societies, however, both in the Netherlands and abroad proponents of the model of pluriform democracy will be confronted with the question whether it should be replaced by the concept of multicultural democracy. In his report on ‘Church, State and the Kingdom of God’ John Hiemstra observes that the removal from the Belgic Confession of the Constantinian element of the state’s task that requires it to enforce true religion, as was done by the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands a century ago, was in keeping with the principle of *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est* (“the reformed church is always reforming”):

<sup>31</sup> See for an excellent survey John Witte Jr., *Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment. Essential Rights and Liberties* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press 2000).

<sup>32</sup> Peter S. Heslam, “Prophet of a Third Way: The Shape of Kuyper’s Socio-Political Vision,” *Journal of Markets and Morality* 5 (2002) 11-33, at 26.

<sup>33</sup> James W. Skillen, “Why Kuyper now?,” in: Luis Lugo (ed.), *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life. Abraham Kuyper’s Legacy for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 2000) 365-372, at 368.

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“This reflects the biblical belief that the Holy Spirit is always urging Christians to renewal, reform, liberation and greater maturity in our sinful and broken lives and societies.” At the time this step was considered necessary by Kuyper to adapt to the negative secularism of the approach of public pluralism. Would not a new adaptation of Calvinism to modern circumstances be therefore in the spirit of Kuyper? This is obviously a difficult question. On the one hand, the notion of pluriform democracy covers already two of the five dimensions of the concept of multicultural democracy, political participation and religion. Moreover, there seem to be no fundamental objections against multicultural policies in the three remaining fields of access to justice, language and socio-economic policies, although especially legal pluralism is still considered something of a taboo in the West. On the other hand, however, from a Reformed perspective something will probably be missing in the concept of multicultural democracy, in the sense that it is too much involved with directional pluralism and too little with institutional pluralism. What this demonstrates once more is that the latter doctrine, institutional pluralism or sphere sovereignty, remains the most distinctive Reformed contribution to the topic of church and state.

Yet, further reflection on the concept of multicultural democracy from a Reformed perspective appears desirable, because of its importance from the point of view both of human development and for Protestantism. As far as the importance of the topic for Protestantism is concerned, Oxford theologian Alister E. McGrath believes that religious conservatism has the future, i.e. evangelical Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>34</sup> In the Blackwell Companion to Protestantism, co-edited by him, it is remarked that “a comprehensive Protestant political and legal platform, faithful to the cardinal convictions of historical Protestantism and responsive to the needs of an intensely pluralistic modern polity, did not emerge in the twentieth century.”<sup>35</sup> The name of Dooyeweerd does not appear in the 512-page volume. The conclusion of this paper, however, must be that a public role of the historically mainline denominations still cannot be missed. In the past, Protestantism in general and Calvinism in particular have acted as a force toward cultural liberty by helping to pave the way for the “three great revolutions” in the Netherlands (sixteenth century), England (seventeenth century) and

<sup>34</sup> “McGrath voorziet einde protestantisme,” *Beweging* 67 (2003) 29-34.

<sup>35</sup> John Witte Jr., “Protestantism, Law and Legal Thought,” in: Alister E. McGrath and Darren C. Marks (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell 2004) 298-305, at 304.

North America (eighteenth century) that gave rise to the democratic constitutional state.<sup>36</sup> In particular the approach of principled public pluralism, developed by neo-Calvinists, has the potential to act once again as a force toward cultural liberty in these multicultural times, especially if they succeed in building bridges with Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism. As far as Roman Catholicism is concerned, I already indicated that the approach of principled public pluralism has strong similarities with Roman Catholic social teaching. As far as Evangelicalism is concerned, given its growth and the simultaneous decline of the historically mainline churches, this appears to be in the interest of pluralist thought. Evangelicalism for its part has to gain from this development as well, because in the United States, and particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America, it is characterized by a "lack of theorisation about political engagement."<sup>37</sup> After the central event in Kuyper's life, his religious conversion resulting from conversations with the orthodox farmers and labourers of Beesd between 1863 and 1867,<sup>38</sup> he dedicated his life to persuading and equipping the orthodox Reformed to participate in the public life of church, state and society, where necessary in cooperation with the Roman Catholics. This latter cooperation was a remarkable development, in the sense that it occurred in a country in which orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics had gone their separate ways for centuries and in a period of time in which of course no ecumenical contacts whatsoever existed between their respective churches.

Finally, as far as the importance of the topic for human development is concerned, according to the Human Development Report 2004 human development is as much a question of politics as economics: 'If the world is to reach the Millennium Development Goals and ultimately eradicate poverty, it must first successfully confront the challenge of how to build inclusive, culturally diverse societies. Not just because doing so successfully is a precondition for countries to focus properly on other priorities of economic growth, health and education for all citizens. But

<sup>36</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 1994 [1931]) 86, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Freston, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001) 316. See, however, the document "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility," adopted by the Board of Directors of the National Association of Evangelicals in October 2004, at [www.nae.net](http://www.nae.net).

<sup>38</sup> G. Puchinger, *Abraham Kuyper: De jonge Kuyper (1837-1867)* (Franeker: Wever, 1987); see also George harinck (ed.), *Dr. G. Puchinger, Abraham Kuyper: His Early Journey of Faith* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1998).

because allowing people full cultural expression is an important development end in itself.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> At 5.