

# THE KUYPER NEWSLETTER

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This is the first issue of the Kuyper Newsletter, devoted to Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), the Dutch Calvinism political and religious leader. The format, at least initially, will be informal. The aim of the Newsletter is to act as an information center, a clearing house, a place for notes of interest, rather than as a formal journal. Emphasis will be on materials in English dealing with Kuyper. We hope that the Newsletter will appear quarterly. Your contributions and suggestions are invited, and solicited.

Kuyper is a major figure in modern Dutch history. We hope that the Newsletter will be of service to those concerned with such matters as: K's contributions to political and social thought; his influence on Calvinist theology and philosophy; Dutch Calvinism in the Kuyperian era; K's influence on the Dutch diaspora in the United States, Canada, and South Africa; and K as an important figure in "Christian Democratic" parties and political thought.

The initial Board of Editors includes: D.W. Jellema and Richard Mouw (both of Calvin College), and Rockne McCarthy (of Dordt College). Subscription, at least initially, is free. All correspondence should be directed to: Kuyper Newsletter, Department of Philosophy, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

The cover, which we plan to use as a logo in subsequent issues, is the famous Hahn caricature of Kuyper.

Dirk W. Jellema, Calvin College

### A KUYPER LOGO

What's a newsletter without a logo? For a "Kuyper Newsletter," this one is a natural. It was created by the Socialist political cartoonist, Albert Hahn. With Kuyper's consent, it appeared as the front cover of the 1909 publication entitled Dr. A. Kuyper in de Caricatuur. Kuyper was a man of many faces. This is one of the most familiar.

Hahn zeroes in on his political target, exaggerating the forceful lines in Kuyper's facial features. He labels this piece of political artistry "Abraham de Geweldighe". But how to adequately capture the thrust of that powerfully descriptive adjective, "de Geweldighe"? It has shades of meaning which range from "the Great" and "the Mighty" to, possibly, "the Terrible" or "the Violent". At best it is a left-handed compliment.

Whatever Hahn's intent, his famed cartoon reflects a certain sense of respect. Given Kuyper's articulate Reformed world-and-life view, his sharp criticism of both secular liberalism and secular socialism, his vision of a just social order which put him ahead of his times, vigorous reaction by cartoonists like Hahn is what we would expect. Kuyper tended to bring out the best in his adversaries. Whether friend or foe, no one could take him lightly.

Gordon Spykman, Calvin College

THE KUYPERIAN TRADITION AND MEDIATING STRUCTURES

Kuyper lived in an age not unlike our own. The spirit of secularization and individualism unleashed by the eighteenth century Enlightenment affected persons and institutions throughout Europe. The result was a spiritual and social malaise, which threatened to undermine the very institutions of society. Kuyper believed that the wellbeing of society depended upon a renewed understanding of God's ordinances over such institutions as the family, the school, the church, labor, and so forth. These he said, were social spheres, sovereign in their own right. Thus his concern with "sphere sovereignty."

Today there is growing concern that many of the basic institutions of North American society are being weakened by public policy decisions that reflect the same Enlightenment individualism that Kuyper struggled against in his day. Well known sociologist Peter Berger and Worldview magazine editor Richard Neuhaus, for example, have coauthored a booklet (To Empower People: The Role of Mediating Structures) which argues that public policy often works to the disadvantage of such mediating structures in society as the neighborhood, family, church, and voluntary association. Their position is that public policy in the United States is dominated by Liberalism which has its roots in the individualistic tradition of the Enlightenment. That thought stresses the rights of the individual on the one hand and the duties of the state on the other, viewing "anything 'in between' ...as irrelevant, or even an obstacle, to the rational ordering of society." Mediating structures find inhospitable soil in the liberal garden. It is this aspect of American Liberalism, they conclude, which "may be the Achilles heel of the liberal state today."

Since the publication of the Berger and Neuhaus booklet in 1977 there has been a growing interest in the theme of mediating structures. In June, Syracuse University and the American Enterprise Institute cosponsored a week long seminar entitled "Democracy and the Mediating Structures: A Theological Inquiry." Participants included James Luther Adams, Michael Novak, D.B. Robertson and others who have demonstrated through their writings a serious interest in associational life and structures.

Scholars who stand in the Kuyperian tradition with its emphasis on "sphere sovereignty" have a unique opportunity to dialogue with individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives as they work together to clarify the meaning and task of institutions and structures of society. The ambiguity that surrounds the meaning of the term "mediating" in reference to structures, the rationale of referring to such diverse entities as a neighborhood and a family as societal structures, and the debate over transcendental norms for structures, are all questions that must be addressed from a Reformed perspective. Reformed scholars must enter this discussion in order to clarify Kuyper's insights into the testimony of Scripture and creation for the institutional life of society.

In this regard it should be noted that one of the projects of the newly formed Dordt Lectureship Center is the collection, translation and editing for publication of seminal essays of nineteenth century social pluralists in Germany, France, The Netherlands and elsewhere who opposed the individualistic social philosophy of the

French Revolution. Contemporary scholarship has almost completely lost sight of these figures. And yet important insights into societal pluralism can be gained by examining the views of such individuals as Kuyper's mentor, Groen Van Prinsterer, (1801-1876) and the French Catholic social philosopher, Félicité Lamennais (1782-1854). The important similarities and differences in their response to "the Revolutionary atomism and uniformity" of the French Revolution need to be more fully understood. If anyone has suggestions or comments regarding this publication project of the Dordt Lectureship Center, they can write directly to the center at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa 51250.

Rockne McCarthy, Dordt Lectureship Center

#### KUYPER ON POLITICAL CARTOONING

At Kuyper's seventieth birthday in 1907, his family faced the perennial problem, what to give "the man who has everything." The idea of a new tea table was quickly laid aside. The occasion called for something more memorable. Out of these conversations at home a major project was born. The Kuyper family expressed its preference for the publication of a collection of "the best cartoons with which people from various quarters have been needling me now for nearly forty years."

Kuyper's serious writings often breathe a playful mood, couched in vivid imagery. This is the Kuyperian style we meet in his preface to the collection Dr. A. Kuyper in de Caricatuur, dated April 1, 1909. He reflects on English, French, and German political cartoons, noting some of their strengths and weaknesses. By the way of comparison Kuyper notes that "in the past our Dutch cartoons were not very good." The German writer, Eduard Fuchs, ridiculed them as "Philistine garbage." Yet, comparing later Dutch cartoons with those from before 1870, "I note," says Kuyper, "a remarkable progress in wit, in typically Dutch imagination, and in quality of drawing." Thus, "all in all, we can take pride in the substantial progress manifest during the past thirty years. We may state that The Netherlands now plays an honorable role in the area of cartoon production. I am grateful that I, as cartoon subject, can take at least a little credit for this progress."

"From good cartoons," he says, "I experienced only pleasure." He therefore "never felt offended" by them. For, he adds, "I was usually treated quite respectably... Except once," he recalls, "when in 1873 someone drew a cartoon of my recently born child in connection with the vaccine question. That was cowardly." Nevertheless, "misuse of cartoons, sometimes even cynical misuse, may not cause us to close our eyes to the serious place and role they hold in life... No matter how great this abuse, we may never react by condemning cartoons as such."

Kuyper commends the publisher for placing an actual photograph of himself on the opening page. After all, "people who graze in these pastures have a right to know what I really look like as a corrective upon the cartoons which always present a quite different picture of me,... drawings which sometimes presented almost masterful photos in their comic imagery."

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Kuyper sees such comic relief as a redeeming thread woven into the very fabric of our sinful situation. "There is so much 'priceless folly' in human life," he explains, "and in almost every personal life, that we just cannot afford to miss generous laughter as a corrective upon our human folly." More than once, he says, the Bible tells us that God laughs at the foolishness which characterizes our sinful existence. In the Psalms and prophets, in Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees, "again and again we see the fine irony with which the Bible chastizes the sinful relationships which mark our lives."

Bearing in mind such Biblical norms, Kuyper argues that "the authentic and uplifting cartoon maintains its honorable position precisely because it never assults the person, but only lampoons a person's mistakes in public life, and then in such a way that the person involved can himself enjoy the cartoon, can laugh about it, and can give in to it. In this spirit I have often enjoyed cartoons and learned from them."

There was one aspect of the history of political cartooning in The Netherlands which, though Kuyper understood it, he nevertheless regretted it deeply. "No cartoonist has arisen in Calvinist circles who could lash the 'priceless folly' of our modern culture with holy irony. This one-sidedness--how could it be otherwise?--led many people on the Right among us to discredit cartoons." Kuyper's forces were never able to answer in kind. For, as he says, "I lacked the talent to answer cartoon with cartoon, and none of my friends was able to compensate for my lack of cartooning talent." Kuyper experienced this as a serious blind-spot in the development of a Christian culture, since, as he says, "I never thought that other politicians did not have things about them that needed badly the corrective of cartoons. But they were spared by party interests, whereas cartoonists attacked without apology. Still, precisely this proved to be an added benefit to me since by means of cartoons I was able to understand my opponents, even at points where they failed to understand me. So strategy-wise this was often of great value to me."

Kuyper believed that political cartoons must serve the cause of public justice defending the cause of weak minorities over against the oppressive power of majoritarian rule; else hence, he notes, partly with tongue in cheek, "it always disturbed me that our Dutch cartoonists invariably directed their attacks at the leaders of the minority. To preserve their reputation I was convinced that this had to come to a halt. Therefore in 1888 I did everything within my power to reduce the political friends of these cartoonists to a minority party. When this happened, then for the first time our (Dutch) cartoons could take on a healthy appearance with real character. Once again in 1901 I tested this idea, when my opponents drew their swords in a deluded sense of power. And success came to me a second time. Now that in 1905 my opponents put forth every effort to regain the majority, and succeeded in this, I decided once again to do everything possible in the 1909 elections to give back to our Dutch cartoonists their place of honor as representatives of the minority party." (In 1909, the "Christian Coalition" won a decisive victory.)

But win or lose, Kuyper adds a final playful thought. "Personal, political, cartoons are often designed to put one out of the way as a statesman. After, say, ten years of pursuit they should have succeeded in putting me out of commission. Judged by such artistic standards, I should have been politically dead long ago... Yet I sus-

tained all these attacks, even though they assaulted me from all sides... And now near the end of my seventies one might have every reason to believe that all this incessant mockery would have paralyzed me.. "Long before eighty I should have fallen flat on my face. But look! I'm still standing." "After all the obstinacy with which people pursued me through the years, you must allow me just a little opportunity to glory. The cartoonists have criticized me so steadily with the stylus that now for once my friends among the cartoonists must allow me to get even with the pen."

Gordon Spykman, Calvin College

### KUYPER AND SOUTH AFRICA

There is important work waiting to be done on the influence of Kuyper's thought on the South African situation. As is well known, his stance was strongly pro-Boer; thus, for example, in his Stone Lectures he directed the attention of his American audience to the example of the Afrikaners:

The struggle of the Boers in the Transvaal against one of the mightiest powers must often have reminded you of your own past. In what has been achieved at Majuba, and recently at the occasion of Jameson's raid, the heroism of old Calvinism was again brilliantly evident. If Calvinism had not been passed on from our fathers to their African descendants, no free republic would have arisen in the South of the Dark Continent. This proves that Calvinism is not dead - that it still carries in its germ the vital energy of the days of its former glory.

(Lectures on Calvinism, p. 40)

It would be interesting to have a compilation and analysis of Kuyper's numerous but scattered references to South Africa.

Of even greater interest, however, is the question of how Kuyper's own theological and political views were received and implemented in South Africa - quite apart from what he himself might have explicitly thought of developments in that country. There is a growing body of literature which refers to the influence of Kuyperian ideas among the Afrikaners. For those who might wish to pursue this topic, we will note a few English language references here.

In The Church Struggle in South Africa (Eerdmans, 1979), John W. de Gruchy, a South African Congregational theologian, offers an excellent overview of South African church history, with special attention to the relationship of the churches to racial developments. In discussing the Dutch Reformed churches, de Gruchy notes a tension between Kuyperian "neo-Calvinism" and the Reformed pietism represented by Andrew Murray. De Gruchy discusses the ways in which Kuyper's thought influenced the ideology of the Nationalist party.

On the relationship between Kuyperianism and Nationalist policies, T. Dunbar Moodie's The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion (University of California Press, 1975) is an indispensable study. Moodie traces the Afrikaner

notion of a "national covenant" to Book III of Calvin's Institutes. He then goes on to analyze at great length two competing streams of Afrikaner political thought: Kuyperianism and the ideology of the South African "neo-Fichteans." Chapter Four, "Dutch Reformed Theology and the Afrikaner Civil Religion" will be of special interest to Kuyper scholars, although references to Kuyperian themes are to be found throughout the whole book. W.A. de Klerk also devotes several pages to Kuyper's influence on Afrikaner political thought in his The Puritans in Africa: A Story of Afrikanerdom (Rex Collings, 1975).

One English language South African Journal, the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, frequently publishes articles in which the Kuyperian influence is discussed. For example, in the June 1977 issue, Methodist theologian Charles Villa-Vicencio discusses the relationship between Kuyper's theory of "sphere sovereignty" and Afrikaner "civil religion", and D.F.M. Strauss discusses Kuyper's contributions to South African Calvinist theology.

All of the Commentators mentioned here are South African. In contrast to North America, the thought of Abraham Kuyper is, in South Africa, an item of ecumenical concern, discussed by scholars from various denominational groups, as well as by non-Christians. The impression given by this literature is that an understanding of the Kuyperian influence in South Africa is crucial for a thorough grasp of South African political, and inter-racial, life.

Needless to say, many non-Afrikaner, and some Afrikaner, South African assessments of Kuyperian thought are rather negative. Kuyper's terminology and concepts have often been used to defend racist policies. It is easy to understand, for example, how someone who believes that the creation-order is divided into unique spheres, such as church, home and state, might extend this thinking in the direction of the strict separation of races and ethnic-cultural groups. But this step seems more compelling on a psychological level than a logical one.

The time seems ripe for supplementing South African assessments of Kuyperian influence on Nationalist ideology with North American evaluations. For those scholars who are willing to take up the task, the above-mentioned works are a good place to begin.

Richard Mouw, Calvin College

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES (on materials in English)

1. H. Zwaanstra, "AK's Conception of the Church," Calvin Theological Journal 9:2 (1974), 149-181.

A thorough summary study, stressing K's ideas on the church as organism. Many interesting points.

2. C.M.E. Kuyper, "AK: His Early Life and Conversion," International Reformed Bulletin 5 (1960).

A familiar story, told effectively.



3. A.N. Nichols, "The Educational Doctrines of AK: An Evaluation," (Australian Journal of Christian Education, 18 (1975), 26-37.
4. ---"AK: A Summons to Christian Vision in Education," Ibid, 16:2 (1973), 78-94.

Two introductory accounts for an Australian audience, dealing with K's career and ideas as they relate to the need for Christian education.

5. J.C. Vander Stelt, "K's Semi-Mystical Conception," The Idea of a Christian Philosophy (Essays in Honour of D.H. Th. Vollenhoven), Toronto (Wedge Publishing Foundation), 1973: 178-190.

K's thought was influenced too much by scholastic, intellectualistic, semi-mystical tendencies, which lead to some untenable dualities.

6. J. Klapwijk, "Calvin and Neo-Calvinism on Non-Christian Philosophy," Ibid., 43-61.

Includes a discussion of K's stress on the antitheses as well as on common grace, and the tension between the two. Also some interesting material on Groen van Prinsterer.

7. M.P. Fogarty, Christian Democracy in Western Europe, 1820-1953: University of Notre Dame Press, 1957.

Contains discussions of K, the ARP, and the Calvinist labor movement, as examples of a wider "Christian Democratic" movement in Europe. The Dutch Calvinist effort is "one of the most successful and in many ways most instructive political, economic, and social movements to be found anywhere in the Christian world." (p. XV) Interesting perspective, many leads for further research.

8. J.P. Windmuller, Labor Relations in the Netherlands: Ithaca (Cornell University Press), 1969.

Includes much scattered material on the Calvinist labor movement, (CNV, etc.), which grew up in the context of K's social thought.

9. M.R. Langley, "The Witness of a World View," Pro Rege (Dordt College) 8:2, 1979: 2-11.

Able sketch of the life and thought of K's mentor, Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876).

Note: More entries next time. Contributions to the Bibliographical Notes are most welcome.

Dirk W. Jellema, Calvin College