



THE KUYPER NEWSLETTER

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OUR READERSHIP

The responses to the first issue of The Kuyper Newsletter have been encouraging. When a few of us began talking, a year ago, about publishing a newsletter of this sort we had no idea whether our project would elicit a favorable response. It now appears that our efforts are meeting with some approval. The KN is being distributed to approximately 400 people, many of whom have expressed considerable enthusiasm for the venture.

Who are our readers? Our correspondence, and a perusal of our subscription lists, indicates that our readership falls under, roughly, three categories. First, there are Christian people who have great affection for Kuyper and his views. Kuyper talked much of attracting "the little people," de kleine luyden, to his cause. This was for him no idle wish. He communicated well with "ordinary" Christian believers (as illustrated in John Jansen's "Vignette" in this issue). And this attraction continues. It is not uncommon to hear Calvinists from Dutch-immigrant families say, "My grandfather was a farmer, and an ardent admirer of Kuyper," or "My mother loved to read Kuyper's devotional writings." Some of our readers have an interest in Kuyper which has been transmitted to them primarily by way of Kuyperian affections among de kleine luyden.

A second group is motivated by interests which are primarily scholarly in nature. Our readership includes historians, political scientists and other scholars, representing a variety of non-Christian and Christian viewpoints, who for one reason or another have an interest in Kuyper-related matters.

Finally, there are those who combine Calvinist religious loyalties with scholarly pursuits. In the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, Africa and elsewhere there is a growing community of Reformed scholars who are interested in working out the implications of the kind of "world and life view" associated with the Kuyperian tradition.

We hope to be able to serve each of these groups. Of course, not every item which appears in each issue of the KN will have equal appeal to all of our readers. But it is our intention that the continuing exchange of information which takes place in these pages will serve as a rallying point for those who are, for various reasons, interested in "Kuyperiana."

We welcome suggestions and brief items for publication. It is our intention to

publish the KN two or three times a year. Calvin College has graciously agreed to fund the project, so for the time being the newsletter is being sent free to all who request it.

The Kuyper Newsletter is edited by D.W. Jellema and Richard Mouw, both of Calvin College, and Rockne Mc Carthy, Dordt College. All correspondence should be sent to: The Kuyper Newsletter, Department of Philosophy, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

Richard J. Mouw, Calvin College

FLASH-BACKS

In addition to its front-page logo, the Newsletter plans to carry a column entitled "flash-backs." Under this rubric we will feature political cartoons selected from the Kuyperiana collection highlighted in the first issue. As the first such exercise in public satire we offer the following:

Pharmacopoea neerlandica.

Linse in de Ned. Spect., 29/7 '01.



APOTHEKER K.: 'n Schoone combinatie!
Sacch. christ.-hist. 2, Pulv. cath. 3,
Acid. democr. 1, Sulph. anti-rev. 8,
aqua neutralis 80. Hoe kan ik hieruit
een krachtig medicament maken?

This political cartoon appeared in The Netherlands Spectator of July 29, 1901. Its author is Linse. In Kuyper's opinion The Spectator presented better political

cartooning in its day than many other Dutch publications. He based this judgment on a healthy sense of serious insight which colored its journalistic humor. His only criticism was that The Spectator lacked an outstandingly creative artist, whose drawings would speak for themselves.

In this scenario we meet Abraham Kuyper the political pharmacist. The parliamentary elections of 1901 had brought the Anti-Revolutionary Party to a position of national prominence. Kuyper himself became prime minister of the Dutch government. As chief statesman he had reached the peak of his political career. It was not, however, an unmixing blessing. For he was obliged to work out his program through a coalition cabinet, representing a wide spectrum of political outlooks, a situation which lasted until 1904.

In this political cartoon Linse expresses his skepticism concerning the stability of Kuyper's coalition government. The reins of state were in the hands of the leader of a Christian minority party. Was unity of purpose and a coherent public policy possible?

Linse pictures Kuyper as political druggist stirring up a dubious apothecary mixture. As he stands there behind the counter with a faraway, visionary look on his face, Linse puts into Kuyper's mouth the following words:

A beautiful combination! Christian-historical Saccharin--2 parts; catholic pulverizer--5 parts; social-democratic Acid--1 part; anti-revolutionary Sulphur--8 parts; aqua neutralis--80 parts. How can I come up with strong medicine out of such a mixture?

Gordon Spykman, Calvin College

A KUYPER VIGNETTE

I was baptized in the Gereformeerde Kerk in Vleuten. Abraham Kuyper was a household word in my family. Still today my library includes some fifteen of his published volumes. My parents and grandparents were proud to number themselves among Kuyper's "kleine luyden" (his little people).

When I visited family members in Holland in 1975, my aunt had just read a novel about the "doleantie," the difficult years that attended the separation of the Gereformeerden Kerken in Nederland. The trilogy is by P.A. De Rover, De weg der kleine mensen (Den Haag: J.N. Voorhoeve, 4th printing, n.d.), a novel I also bought and read. In that novel a young girl, Lizabeth Tromp, found not only a job but a spiritual home as a maid in the Abraham Kuyper household. Later, when she was to be married, the Kuypers gave her an old family Bible with copper clasps. In the flyleaf the following inscription was written in Kuyper's handwriting:

To Lizabeth Tromp, who for ten years was our good, loyal and reliable maidservant, and who was bound to our family as a member, this old family Bible is presented on her bridal day as a remembrance and token of esteem. As master and mistress and handmaid we have all found how much sin can mar but also how much God's grace, through the power of the Word, makes right. May the power of that Word go with her in her married life and may God the Lord reward her in her husband and home, and, if it please Him, one day in her chil-

dren, for what she has done for us, for our home and our children, in the fear of His Name.

Dr. A. Kuyper
Mevr. Kuyper-Schaay

Why did this so intrigue us? My grandparents Hölischer cherished their old family Bible with copper clasps. That Bible survived the war years and is now in a cousin's home in Voorburg. And that old Bible has an inscription by Abraham Kuyper which is identical to the inscription cited in the novel--except that it is addressed to my grandmother, Anna van den Broek. She had served in the Kuyper home for a decade prior to her marriage to my grandfather Hölischer on 14 September, 1883.

How did the inscription find its way into the novel? A news clipping, "A Late Reminiscence of Dr. A. Kuyper," appeared in the Zeister Kerkbode after my grandfather's death. That clipping includes the inscription.

John F. Jansen,
Austin Presbyterian Theological
Seminary, Austin, Texas

ABRAHAM KUYPER: IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

In the troubled year of 1886, as is little known, Abraham Kuyper briefly considered the possibility of leading an emigration to the United States. His son, Fred, did in fact emigrate and settle in Chicago. Abraham Kuyper, we know, did not follow him to the New World. An explanation for that may be embedded in the advice he received from Rev. N.M. Steffens, who, while teaching religion at Hope Academy in 1886, wrote:

I can understand how you may think that it might be better to lead your Reformed people to Africa or North America, but don't give it serious thought. There is little in American to offer hope, even thought I would personally love to have you and your people among us.

I know the strife is fierce, but you have a better prospect for success in the Netherlands than here in America. We are on a path here which you would have to struggle against.

I say it confidentially, but it is true, that in the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches of American the modern and conciliatory spirit is spreading quickly. When you try to oppose this spirit, the columns of the newspapers are closed to you. Not long ago I attempted to get something printed in the New York Observer in an effort to oppose distortions of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith caused by the new evangelical methods, but the door was closed. Thus it is so, that as foreigners, the Hollanders can exercise little influence over the theological developments of the nation. They are either lost within the nation, or they remain strangers--protesting against all things American.

Fred, Kuyper's son, attempted to leap directly into the American mainstream and hoped to become a business man in Chicago. Steffens wrote frequently of Fred's activities and provided his father with a lengthy analysis of the young man's dilemma in 1888. "Last fall," Steffens wrote:

Your son visited us and we enjoyed his company very much. He has many talents. I am very sorry, though, that there is no available work for him in this small town (Holland, Michigan). I have also tried to guide him into a proper church affiliation, but without much success. As is the case with other young men of his social standing, he is in a difficult position in America. He is not at home among the immigrants because his education and social position is too distant from theirs. From a theological perspective, however, the American influence is not good for him. The revival method of the evangelicals is not suited to him, and the more elite social circles are as aristocratic here as in the Netherlands--so it is very difficult for your son to find his way here. But, he is a real American at heart, and with God's help all will go well for him.

Whether Steffens' optimistic assessment was accurate or not, we don't know, because references to Fred's American experience dropped from the correspondence after 1892. Perhaps one of our readers knows the whereabouts of Fred Kuyper's descendants. If so, please contact the Newsletter.

Herb Brinks, Calvin College

The Steffens letters are in the Kuyper collection at the Free University in Amsterdam. Copies are in Heritage Hall, Calvin College.

KUYPER ON COVENANT AND POLITICS

Temple University's Center for the Study of Federalism has given birth to a subsection called "Workshop on Covenant and Politics." The purpose of the Workshop meetings and publications is to explore the significance and influence of the covenant idea on political life and thought. In a recent meeting of the Workshop in Philadelphia (February 27-29, 1980), I had the opportunity to present a paper entitled "From Covenant of Grace to Tolerant Public Pluralism: The Dutch Calvinist Contribution." The thinking of Abraham Kuyper figured prominently in the paper.

The main purpose of the paper was to show that although the disestablishment of churches in modern states has been accomplished chiefly through a secularization process that has rejected biblical, covenantal thinking, that process has not been universal. The nineteenth-century Dutch Calvinists, especially Kuyper, began to articulate a view of public pluralistic tolerance on an explicitly biblical, covenantal basis.

Kuyper "unconditionally disapproved" the burning of Servetus in sixteenth-century Geneva, but he did so "not as if it were the expression of a special characteristic of Calvinism, but on the contrary as the fatal after-effect of a system, grey with

age, which Calvinism found in existence, under which it had grown up, and from which it had not been able entirely to liberate itself." (Lectures on Calvinism, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961, p. 100.)

With his doctrines of common grace and sphere sovereignty, Kuyper began to work out an understanding of the state's identity and responsibility before God such that neither ecclesiastical control nor confessional uniformity were required to assure the state's covenantal meaning.

Kuyper rejected the meaning of secularization as a process whereby humans attempt to create life in this world apart from God on the basis of their own claims to autonomy. But he accepted the secularization process in the sense that non-ecclesiastical institutions and communities (such as the state) should come out from under ecclesiastical control and become free to discover and fulfill their own God-given, covenantal obligations and purposes.

The conception of tolerant public pluralism which Kuyper began to articulate was not the consequence of a departure from the Covenant of Grace but rather the consequence of a commitment to the Covenant of Grace. But the Covenant of Grace had to be reinterpreted to free it from Constantinian chains and to connect it more closely with God's creation ordinances.

James W. Skillen, Dordt College

VU magazine is a monthly publication of the Free University, Amsterdam. It is a general interest magazine with articles, interviews, reports on university affairs, on noteworthy dissertations, etc. It is illustrated, well-edited and always interesting. A regular feature is two pages which reproduce articles from Kuyper's newspaper De Standaard. The most recent issue (Vol. 9, #3, March 1980) excerpts articles which appeared in March, 1880. There are reports on a war in Afghanistan, an expedition to explore the Sudan in Africa, English complicity in the opium trade with China, and the "Jewish question" in Germany. Three brief reports deal with events in Russia: an assassination attempt, a dynamite explosion in a monastery in Kiev, a spy murdered in the Winter Palace. A fourth report on Russia places much of the blame for the Nihilist movement and the revolutionary spirit among youth on the press and on the schools. There is also an interesting report on the women's suffrage movement in U.S. The growing influence of women in the U.S. is attributed to the fact that most school teachers are women.

Kuyper's Standaard, judged by these excerpts, was anything but parochial in its interests. And the events which made news in 1880 are surprisingly similar to those of 1980.

Johan G. Westra, Calvin College

MARTYN LLOYD-JONES ON KUYPER

Free Church preacher and leader, well-known evangelical, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones is featured in the 2/8/1980 Christianity Today, interviewed by Carl Henry. In the

course of a sometimes gloomy discussion ("I'm afraid I see nothing but collapse... there now looms either dictatorship or complete chaos"), Lloyd-Jones mentions Kuyper in passing. The Christian should engage in politics, he says, but should never claim that his position is the Christian political view: "That approach was the mistake of Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper placed himself in a compromise position: a Christian minister becoming prime minister and then needing to form a coalition with Roman Catholics and claiming Christian sanction for specific political positions."

Dirk W. Jellema, Calvin College

EVOLUTIONISM

Ilse Bulhof's 1972 essay on the reception of Darwinism in the Netherlands (see note in Bibliography) is especially valuable for putting K's views on the subject in a more general context. Concentrating on his 1899 speech on Evolutie, she also concludes that "among religious responses to Darwinism, K's was doubtless the most creative one." He distinguished sharply between "evolutionism" as a weltanschauung which was notably anti-Christian, and the evolutionary hypothesis; he was relatively open to ideas of creative evolution; he linked Darwinism to Liberal economic thought. The essay should interest many KN subscribers.

Evolutie is indeed still worth examining. (K elsewhere rejects creative evolution; it could have been, but the Bible says it was not: Any specific references from readers we'd be glad to note). His strong linkage between Darwinism and secularized capitalistic thought is noteworthy. He almost seems to suggest that the need for a justification of unrestricted capitalism produces Darwinism, and that the scientific evidence is almost irrelevant to its wide acceptance. It would be interesting to compare K and Marx on the "neutrality" of science in the age of capitalism: both saw it as open to question, for different reasons.

Dirk W. Jellema, Calvin College

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES (on materials in English)

10. D. Oppewal, The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement: Grand Rapids (Calvin College), 1963. A monographic treatment, including an able summary of the influence of K's thought on the "parent-controlled" school system associated with the Christian Reformed Church.
11. G. Stob, "The Christian Reformed Church and Her Schools," ThD Thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1955. A massive (469 pp.) study, including a detailed study of the arguments aroused in the CRC by K's educational ideas and insistence on parental control (rather than church control) of lower education.
12. E. Troeltsch, The Social Theory of the Christian Churches, 2 vol., tr. by O. Wyon: New York, 1931. This classic study is worth noting here because of its frequent reference to K as an able leader of what Troeltsch calls "Neo-Calvinism."

13. J.G. Westra, "Confessional Political Parties in the Netherlands, 1813-1949," PhD Thesis, Univ. of Michigan, 1972. A massive (470 pp.) study, including a major treatment of K and the Anti-Revolutionary Party. Valuable and detailed account.
14. J. Van Lonkhuizen, "AK, A Modern Calvinist," Princeton Theological Review 19 (1921): 131-147. Worth noting here as a memorial to K, written after his death, giving an account of his life and thought, by a Dutch-American follower.
15. F. Vandenberg, AK, Grand Rapids (Eerdmans), 1960. The only biography in English. Popular, reliable, straightforward, hero-worshipping.
16. D.W. Jellema, "K's Visit to America in 1898," Michigan History 42 (1958): 227-237. Deals with K's Varia Americana and his sometimes interesting impressions of the USA.
17. idem, "A.K.'s Attack on Liberalism," Review of Politics 19 (1957): 472-485. Treats K, especially as a critic of secularized capitalism.
18. J.W. Skillen, "The Development of Calvinistic Political Thought in the Netherlands With Special Reference to the Thought of Herman Dooyeweerd," PhD Thesis, Duke University, 1974. Includes lengthy discussions of Groen and especially of Kuyper as part of the background material. Good treatment of K's political ideas.
19. B. Ramm, Special Revelation and the Word of God, Grand Rapids (Eerdmans), 1961. Stresses K's emphasis that revelation is both propositional and experiential, thus furnishing an alternative to both "fundamentalism" and "encounter-theology." Ramm works from this to develop a viable view for today.
20. I. Bulhof, "The Netherlands," in T.F. Glick, ed., The Comparative Reception of Darwinism, Austin (Univ. of Texas), 1972. See note elsewhere herein.

To be continued. Contributions welcomed. Note: these are generally available through University Microfilms in Ann Arbor.

Dirk W. Jellema, Calvin College