



# THE KUYPER NEWSLETTER

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## ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF KUYPER'S A.R.P.

The Anti-Revolutionary Party was one hundred years old on April 3, 1979. On that day officials from both the Dutch government and the ARP placed a wreath on Kuyper's grave; a bust of Kuyper was also unveiled, to be displayed in a lobby of the Parliament buildings.

During that same week the ARP sponsored a week-long symposium at a hotel near The Hague. Approximately sixty persons attended, coming from fifteen countries. Among the participants were scholars as well as representatives from various political movements associated with "Christian Democratic" politics.

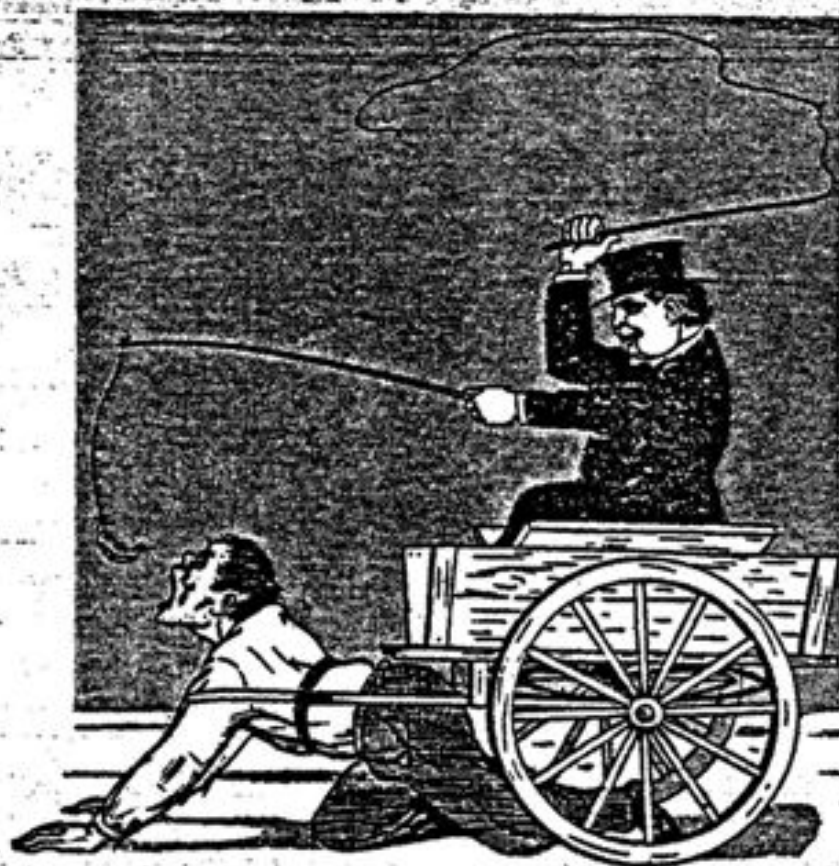
The proceedings of this symposium have been published in an English-language edition: Christian Political Options, published by AR-Partijstichting, Dr. Kuyperstraat 3, The Hague, The Netherlands. The volume includes essays and reports dealing with a variety of topics: education, broadcasting, the welfare state, and so on. There are also extracts from the dialogue which took place in response to some of the papers and reports.

Of special interest to readers of this Newsletter is the historical survey of the ARP--with some fascinating comments regarding the forces which shaped Kuyper's thinking--by Professor D. Th. Kuiper of the Free University. The paper by Calvin College's H. Evan Runner is also noteworthy; after an historical overview; Runner speaks with frankness and sensitivity about some of the challenges to Kuyperians which are presented by the current merger of the ARP into the Catholic-Protestant "Christian Democratic" party (CDA).

This volume is "must" reading for persons who are interested in Kuyper and/or the Christian Democratic political movement.

RJM

## DE SLUWE VOERMAN.



Albert. Hahn.

(Het Zondagsblad,  
21-5-'05.)THE SLY CARTMAN

Kuyper believed, politically, that left is left, and right is right, and ever the twain do meet. They have a common origin in the Enlightenment spirit of the French Revolution. Moreover, though they travel different routes in getting there, ultimately they also converge in their common support of the modern absolute state. Therefore, as leader of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, he committed himself to forging programs of public policy which could stand as a Christian alternative to conservatism, liberalism, and socialism. For these are little more than shifting positions on the same spectrum of secular ideologies.

Our western world is strongly conditioned, however, to pressing every position into the mold of either *laissez-faire* individualism or collectivist socialism. Understandably, therefore, antagonistic cartoonists tried invariably to paint Kuyper's politics into one or another of these two undesirable corners. At the hands of some satirists Kuyper was lampooned as a misguided leftist; at the hands of most, however, as a disguised conservative. This is the role ascribed to Kuyper in this print.

Kuyper heard the Biblical principle of reformation as an urgent call to social reform. Accordingly he backed legislation to improve the conditions of working people, including wage benefits, pension funds, and accident insurance for downtrodden laborers in Dutch society. As with many pioneering spirits, however, Kuyper's proposals appear to have been ahead of his times. In conservative quarters he was often accused of socialist tendencies, while leftist-orientated commentators often charged him with ulterior motives.

In this political cartoon, the artist is Albert Hahn, whose talent Kuyper held in high esteem. A perennial critic of Kuyper, Hahn interprets his "progressive" measures for social legislation as a "conservative" ploy. Kuyper's platform is little more than an artificial public display of social concern designed to conceal his real inclinations. He is out to use the working class to advance his own political ambitions, parading a public image of social sensitivity as a foil to mislead his gullible followers. Dangling the "carrot" of social legislation before the deprived masses, Kuyper proceeds to crack the whip mercilessly over the heads of the oppressed, driving them onward as they help him along to his self-appointed political destiny.

Gordon J. Spykman, Calvin College

#### A NOTE ON EMILE BOUTMY

Rockne McCarthy's article on mediating structures (Vol. 1 No. 1) stirred back to life some of the concerns and issues raised in the research I have done on Emile Boutmy (1835-1906), a French contemporary of Abraham Kuyper who was concerned about the collapse of such structures in the storm of the French Revolution. He set about through political education to train his countrymen to handle a political system devoid of such structures. In that effort he established a school, the École libre des sciences politiques, in 1872, and later a scholarly review, the Annales des sciences politiques. The school eventually dominated the training of diplomats and government officials, though absorbed into a government-directed educational system after World War II, an ironic development since Boutmy fought against government-monopolized education.

Working from the racial and psychological methodology of Hippolyte Taine, his mentor, Boutmy published several studies on the Anglo-Saxon political tradition, believing that England with its slow, complicated political evolution and its interplay of local and central institutions could teach the French much, especially with the latter's tendency toward either anarchy or tyranny, tendencies inherent in a centralized, radical democracy, a position toward which France was rapidly moving.

Boutmy believed that the value of studying the English and American political traditions lay in developing among the French an understanding of the working of historical process, an understanding that would help correct the excessive and abstract rationalism of the French Revolution and allow the natural, intermediate bodies to flourish once again.

Such, in essence, was the message that Boutmy propagated in his writings and through his school. Associated with him was a circle of French educators and statesmen, among them, for example, Edouard Laboulaye, Albert Sorel, Élié Halévy, and Leon Say. It

appears that the work of these men in taming French democracy has not been adequately assessed, perhaps because their work was institutionalized in education and bureaucracy and historical scholarship has focused more on the polarization of French politics into left and right occurring at that time. At any rate this segment of French intellectual effort, contemporary with Kuyper, deserves to be part of the effort about which McCarthy was writing.

Interestingly, back in December, 1978, Lewis B. Smedes issued a call similar to that of McCarthy's in a Reformed Journal editorial on another of Berger's books, Facing Up To Modernity. That editorial should not be forgotten in this discussion.

Louis J. Voskuil, Covenant College

#### KUYPER'S DEVOTIONAL WORKS - AN OVERVIEW

The books cited below constitute an initial listing of those translated works of Abraham Kuyper which catalogers classify as "Mediations" and, by extension, his works on feast days and on family life. Sometimes the line is hard to draw between, say, his books called "Bible Studies" and devotional works. The list designates books which, for the most part, are fairly brief and self-contained; To Be Near Unto God (676 pages in Baker's 1979 reprinting) is an exception. The list should be regarded as tentative, subject to refinements of definition and content. Suggestions are welcomed.

#### Devotional Works Translated

In de Schaduwe des doods, 1893.

In the Shadow of Death, tr. John H. De Vries, 1929, Eerdmans.

Als gij in uw Huis Zit: Meditatieën voor het huislijk saamleven, 1899.

When Thou Sittest in Thine House, tr. John H. De Vries, 1929, Eerdmans.

Zijn Uitgang te Jerusalem, 1900.

His Decease at Jerusalem: Meditations on the Passion and Death of Our Lord, tr. John De Vries, 1928, Eerdmans.

Vrouwen uit de heilige schrift, No date.

Women of the New Testament, tr. Henry Zylstra, 1933, Zondervan.

Women of the Old Testament, tr. Henry Zylstra, 1933, Zondervan.

(Published separately)

In Jezus Ontslapen, 1902.

Asleep in Jesus, tr. John Hendrick De Vries, 1929, Eerdmans.

Vier uwe Vierdagen, 1903.

Keep Thy Solemn Feasts, tr. John H. De Vries, 1928, Eerdmans.

Nabij God te Zijn, 1908.

To be Near Unto God, tr. John H. De Vries, 1925, Macmillan.

Practijk der Godzaligheid, 1909.

The Practice of Godliness, tr. Marian Schooland, 1948, Eerdmans.

Voor een distel een mirt, 1891.

Reflections on the Sacraments, one section of which "The Implications of Public Confession," was translated by Henry Zylstra, 1934, Eerdmans.

I have spent fruitful hours browsing through these meditations. One must say at the outset that, though Kuyper's subjects are timeless, his style is of his age and takes some getting used to--though that may well be a matter of translation. Marian Schooland's translation of The Practice of Godliness, for example, is more idiomatic and contemporary than that of John Hendrik De Vries, as is Henry Zylstra's work. Kuyper's style is simple, the thoughts deliberately neither profound nor complex. But the essays are insightful, and one often comes upon real gems--e.g. his exposition of the thought, (in To Be Near Unto God, p. 170) that the particular route by which a soul makes its approach to God differs according to the temper and disposition of the individual. Although the ideas emanate profoundly from the spiritual life of the believer, the expression is somewhat abstract, somewhat objective, rather than emotionally subjective. I myself find that refreshing.

Kuyper understood life's ambiguities, and pointed out how practical concerns can overwhelm genuine fellowship with Christ. He warns against the evils of sterile orthodoxy, of setting our stakes in this life too deep, of that pursuit after worldly goods which weakens character and diffuses personality. He pleads for spiritual integrity. He often uses a dialectic approach; thus, a Christian must be a child of his time in his witness and prophetic stance, but he must also guard against an uncritical acceptance of his age.

I should like to emphasize particularly the book To Be Near Unto God, in Baker's noteworthy reprint. This book of almost 700 pages embodies much of Kuyper's devotional thought. He has written brief essays on such subjects as prayer, the urgency of the times, the need for Christian courage, the Christian graces, the search for God, fasting. What gives them their unity in this volume, as the title suggests, is the soul's search for God, and God's search for the believer, in the close communion that a spirit-filled believer so eagerly wishes and experiences with his Lord.

Steve J. Vander Weele, Calvin College

#### KENNETH McRAE ON SOCIETAL PLURALISM

Kenneth D. McRae, of Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, has an interest in pluralism not limited to his area of expertise, the Swiss and Belgian political systems. As editor of a 1974 work entitled Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies (McClelland and Stewart publisher), and again in his 1979 Presidential Address to the Canadian Political Science Association ("The Plural Society and the Western Political Tradition," Canadian Journal of Political Science XII: 4, December, 1979), he demonstrates a remarkable understanding of Western political thought and its bias against societal pluralism.

In Consociational Democracy, McRae briefly traces how and why he came to recognize the shortcoming of a Western political tradition which did not recognize the normative character of a plural society. In the traditional political thought of the English-speaking world, for example, appeals to the majority principle result in a political culture biased against the full structural recognition of the rights of minorities--whether based on religion, language, or race. Indeed, the majoritarian political ideology of liberal democracy is, according to McRae, "the damnosa hereditas of Anglo-American democracy and Lockean political theory and liberal society."

This thesis is further developed in McRae's Presidential Address. "Western political thought in general has shown little understanding or respect for the cultural diversity of mankind and has made scant allowance for it as a possible concern of government." Centralizing and homogenizing ideologies have so shaped political doctrines and institutions that in the mainstream of Western thought there is little normative thinking about societal pluralism. Even in those cases where a degree of pluralism has come to characterize a society, there is evidence to suggest that in the beginning this was more the result of pragmatic adjustments to the fact of diversity than a fundamental commitment to the principle of a plural society.

McRae concludes that political theories envisaging a genuine pluralism have been notable chiefly by their absence in mainstream Western political thought. But is there any evidence, he asks, "of other streams, of lesser channels...where different and possibly more interesting life forms may be discovered?" He continues (*italics ours*): "Have we, under the 400-year old spell of national sovereignty, unwisely neglected other sectors of Western thought that are more relevant to societal pluralism?... Should we devise an alternative curriculum in political thought that would stress Althusius over Bodin,...Acton over Herbert Spencer, Abraham Kuyper over T.H. Green, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer over Marx and Engels? In short, have we been studying the wrong thinkers, and even the wrong countries?"

RMCC

#### SPHERE SOVEREIGNTY - STRATEGY OR IDEAL?

In a recent paper ("Historical and Sociological Development of the ARP and CDA"--see p. 1 above), D. Th. Kuiper seems to suggest that Kuyper's adherence to the doctrine of sphere sovereignty was a pragmatic device which allowed him to adjust his thought to the realities of a secular society and at the same time salvage as much as possible of the essence of a "theocratic ideal." In this interpretation, "sphere sovereignty" was more a strategy to guarantee social space for Christian institutions to carry on the ultimate goal of re-creating a Christian society, than it was a fundamental recognition that in a fallen world the norms for public justice demand the recognition of a confessionally plural society. For those interested in K's political thought, the paper is important, and raises questions which should be examined.

RMCC

NOTE ON A RE-ISSUE

The only biography of K in English is that of Frank Vandenberg (1960), long out of print. It is now available, in paperback as well as hard cover, from Paideia Press (St Catherine's, Ontario); 282 pp, \$4.95.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON MATERIALS IN ENGLISH

21. E.H. Kossman, The Low Countries, 1780-1940: Oxford University Press, 1978. An excellent and detailed (789 pp.) study on political and other developments in the Netherlands and Belgium. Some treatment of K and Groen, but valuable especially for giving the context in which they worked. Further perspective is provided by the constant comparison with Belgium. Noteworthy and extensive bibliography.

More bibliography in the next Newsletter. Contributions are invited.

DWJ

The Kuyper Newsletter appears roughly three times a year. Editors are D.W. Jellema and Richard Mouw, of Calvin College, and Rockne McCarthy of Dordt College. For the time being, a subscription is free, due to Calvin College's gracious agreement to fund the project. All correspondence should be sent to: Kuyper Newsletter, c/o Department of Philosophy, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.