



The Standard Bearer

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

**Special
Reformation
Issue**

Abraham Kuyper and the Reformation of 1886

Meditation — <i>Abraham Kuyper</i> When What Is Mortal Is Swallowed Up by Life	26
Editorially Speaking	28
Editorial — <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i> "Father" Abraham or The Indebtedness of the PRC to Abraham Kuyper	28
Abraham Kuyper: A Short Biography — <i>Prof. Herman C. Hanko</i>	31
The <i>Doleantie</i> — <i>Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga</i>	33
Abraham Kuyper and the Union of 1892 — <i>Prof. Russell J. Dykstra</i>	36
The Son of God Eternally our Mediator — <i>Mr. Marvin Kamps</i> ...	39
A. Kuyper, Developer and Promoter of Common Grace — <i>Rev. Charles J. Terpstra</i>	42
Do We Hold to Kuyper's View of Presupposed Regeneration? — <i>Rev. James Laning</i>	45
Dr. A. Kuyper, Politician—a Critique — <i>Rev. Kenneth Koole</i>	47
Book Reviews	53



Abraham Kuyper

**Vol. 75, No. 2
October 15, 1998**

For our special Reformation Day issue this year we have chosen the life and work of the Dutch Reformed theologian, Abraham Kuyper. The choice may surprise some. The *Standard Bearer* has been sharply critical of the Abraham Kuyper of common grace.

But there is more—*much* more—to Kuyper than common grace. That “more” explains the reformation of the church in the Netherlands in the late 19th century, a reformation of which many in the Reformed churches in all the world are heirs.

This Kuyper’s sun is in eclipse today. In the Reformed churches, it is almost completely in the shadow of the same Kuyper’s common grace or, worse, the shadow of Arminianism and its daughter, universalism.

While remaining critical of certain aspects of Kuyper’s theology, the *SB* intends to let the light of Abraham Kuyper shine once again.

Two pieces are Kuyper’s own contribution to the special issue. One is a selection from his important work on particular grace, *Dat de Genade Particulier is (That Grace is Particular)*. This book is being translated into English for the first time by Marvin Kamps. The second contribution by Kuyper is a moving meditation on death on the occasion of the death of Kuyper’s wife of 36 years. For permission to publish this latter piece, we are indebted to the William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. It ran originally in Eerdmans’ fine book, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, which will be reviewed in the next issue of the *SB*. (Cover art: courtesy of the Historical Documentation Center for Dutch Protestantism, Free University, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.) □ —DJE

The *Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Prof. David J. Engelsma
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
(e-mail:
engelsma@prca.org)

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR
Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(e-mail: benjwig@juno.com)

BUSINESS OFFICE
The *Standard Bearer*
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778
FAX: (616) 531-3033

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE
The *Standard Bearer*
c/o B. VanHerk
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE
c/o Mr. Sean Courtney
78 millfield, Grove Rd.
Ballymena, Co. Antrim
BT42 3NR Northern Ireland

Meditation*

Abraham Kuyper

When What Is Mortal Is Swallowed Up by Life

For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

II Corinthians 5:4

Given what lies before your eyes at the time of death, you can only say that Death, the fearful enemy of God and man, finally succeeds in swallowing up a life so precious to you.

This was not the first assault. At least it is exceptional when

someone dies who has not been ill before with the fear of death hanging in the sickroom. But those earlier assaults had been turned away. After a night of weeping that made our hearts weak, joy came in the morning. Having reached its apex, the illness subsided again. What an inexpressible luxury, to get a loved one back from the brink of death.

But this time things turned out very differently. Nothing helped.

Nothing was of any use. When that last bit of breath expired it was as if Death mocked you with all your unheard prayers and pointless anxieties. It whispered derisively: “I won; your morning of joy will *never* come.”

And there you stood with broken heart by the deathbed. There lay your deceased, lifeless, inanimate, for all the world as if she had been *swallowed up* by death. Swallowed up—a hard word. De-

* A meditation published by Kuyper in *De Heraut* (a weekly religious periodical) the week after the death of his wife on August 25, 1899.

voured, as if by a beast of prey. All at once, gone: the look of the eye, the sweet words, the warm handclasp, the facial expression. Everything clean gone: cold, withered, somber. Life swallowed up by death.

Those without a choice see it that way. Those who know only this world cannot see it any other way. And let's be honest: in that first hard moment when a shock passes through the heart, the child of God sees it that way too. It is a dreadfully gloomy thing to stare into the dark emptiness of the valley of the shadow of death as we watch a dearly loved one enter there. Death is there, hauling away its prey before our eyes; and we are there, compelled to watch it happen, overcome by pain and helplessness.

But *that* is reality—the bitter reality of death in the visible world. To deceive yourself by hiding that hard reality behind funeral wreaths and flowers, to imagine that you can comfort the bereaved with generalities about God's providential love is cowardice. You're not serious, you lack courage, if you use a blindfold to hide the harshness of death from yourself and others.

You prayed, but God did *not* hear your prayer. Despite your prayer, death won. But is not God almighty? Where is that providential love when He lets death have its way—worse, *sends* it to you and *abandons* your suffering one to it?

No. Say rather that death came on account of sin and by sin. Let your conscience be touched, and acknowledge that God's fearful wrath was at work in that process of dying. That way at least you can tremble before God's holiness. But to babble about providential love when God lets bitter death rob you of the dearest thing you had on earth, when you see a precious life wither, disappear, swallowed up before your eyes—that's lying to yourself. That you cannot do with any sincerity. That is playing with words right up to the grave.

But now comes God's Word which, without in any way discounting the harshness of that reality, turns it around for you. Totally.

To your bodily eye death is what it is and nothing else. But you also have an eye in your soul—an eye that remains stone-blind and sees nothing, not a ray of light, until God turns you around and gives you spiritual eyesight. Then, to your soul's eye a *totally opposite* reality unfolds, a reality which shows you that death does not swallow up life but that in death *what is mortal is swallowed up by life*.

How can that be? No one can unravel that mystery for you. But it can be so and is so *in Jesus*. He, the Marvelous One, took hold of death, forced it to let Him pass into glory, and kept open the road behind Him so that death would also let all His children pass into glory, unhindered and undisturbed.

Life, true authentic life, is too powerful to remain enclosed within this earthly tent. In that enclosure it cannot unfurl its wings. Therefore life must finally slough off that which is earthly and mortal to push on to the higher reaches of its potential. It has to break free from that mortal body. And while it is awful to watch that process of detachment, in this way life gets to where it has to be. Then it unfolds into the fullness of its majesty. Then you realize that, to this end, life first had to swallow up that which is mortal.

Accordingly, to the eye that peers from your soul into eternity, the dead body does not lie in its coffin as a sign that death has finally triumphed but as a sign of life's victory. It is the broken shell—more precisely, it is the brokenness of the shell—which shows that life has now become free and breathes in a higher atmosphere.

The brokenness of the body, which is otherwise hard and cruel, is now the sign of liberation, tangible evidence that life has wrenched itself free from the bonds

of mortality. That act of breaking away from what is mortal so as now to unfold in glory is something your deceased could not accomplish, nor is it something *you* can do when some day you yourself die. It is something your Jesus, the prince of life, accomplished—at least *if* there is life in you and you have been incorporated in Him and His life.

So your deceased does not die here with Jesus standing afar off; your deceased does not now *go to* Jesus. No, He was present in the dying; in fact, He accomplished it. And when death taunted you as though it had won, in that moment your Savior smiled at you and showed you a crown, the palm of victory.

The person alien to this is in a bad way. He who does *not* believe perishes when he dies. Death keeps him in custody. Those who see death thus can speak of consolation and hope only with floral wreaths and empty phrases of self-deception. The recklessness of those who stop their ears to the voice of Jesus, who even try to break down the principle of faith in others is thus appalling. Their awakening on the other side will be lethally dreadful.

Thus, on ordinary days God's children have no idea whatsoever how great a grace has come to them. They may *believe*. They may know that the loved ones they see die have been incorporated into Jesus. Granted, that knowledge does not remove the anxiety of being ill, the harshness of death, the coldness of the grave. All that remains. The sense of loss and abandonment will certainly follow, and the heart's wound will inevitably bleed.

But over and above life in the visible world, with its pain and deep sorrows, stands that other reality which is even more certain than the things that make you weep here. From that reality shine out to you a holy joy and a heavenly peace. This perception can

be so powerful that you may experience the very thing that prompted Paul to write: "...we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8).

Don't say there's something sickly about this language of faith, that a person so minded becomes unfit for his vocation here below. Yes, this charge is on the mark if you merely worship your God and your Jesus as holy beings who exist to help you, to save you, to lead you into eternal life—that is, if *you* want to be at the center of things and construe God's holy ordinances solely in your own interest. But the charge is *not* true if you, along with your dead and those remaining with you, know your-

selves to exist only for God and for his holy name, both in life and in death, here and in the world to come. Surely, He is our Father and we are His children; He is our Master, and we are His servants.

For life is good only so long as we do *His work* here and labor at the task *He assigned us*. But then that is also our imperative calling. Then we are born to serve Him, and born again with no other object but to glorify Him in the Son of His love. He gave us faith not to beatify us but to make Himself great in our salvation. Then our life is the Lord's, whether we remain here or whether we enter eternity.

And then *our* death and the death of our loved ones never

comes except at the moment, and never otherwise than under those circumstances, which He deemed best for the full realization of His counsel and for the praise of His name. Then freely say that the weeping of the evening and the joy of the morning [Ps. 30:5] dwell in the same heart.

The inner life of those who want to live solely for their God is very mixed indeed. There is weeping over the acute pain felt by their wounded heart. But from that same heart also rises the sound of rejoicing and praise for what God prepared for the loved one who went away and for what He left in this life by way of consolation, love, and holy calling. □

Editorial

"Father" Abraham

or

The Indebtedness of the PRC to Abraham Kuyper

Abraham Kuyper is no longer held in high esteem in the Reformed churches. In his day—some 100 years ago—he bestrode the Netherlands like a colossus. He cast a long shadow across much of the Reformed world. That shadow lingered for many years. But today Kuyper the Reformed theologian is rejected, if not despised.

There are still theologians and churches that honor Kuyper the theoretician of a Christian culture, the man of social action, and the successful politician. But no one speaks out in appreciation of Kuyper the Reformed theologian. When his name comes up (as it does this year of the 100th anniversary of his lectures on Calvinism at Princeton Seminary), it is to honor him as a champion of cul-

tural influence and dominion.

The Reformed world acknowledge Abraham Kuyper, if they acknowledge him at all, as the philosopher of common grace. About Kuyper the Reformed theologian they are silent. For them Kuyper is the man of only two books: *Lectures on Calvinism* and *De Gemeene Gratie* (*Common Grace*).

This is a perennial perversity in the church. Luther noted it in his controversy with Erasmus. Men are eager to collect all the dung that they can find in the fathers, while carefully overlooking the gold. Luther was commenting on Erasmus' examination of the church fathers to gather many quotations favoring the free will of the sinner, while ignoring their statements on the enslaved will.

With this article I honor

Abraham Kuyper as a Reformed theologian. His theology, although imperfect, was solid, sound, biblical, and creedal Reformed doctrine. By this theology and on behalf of this theology, Kuyper reformed the church of Christ in the Netherlands at the end of the 19th century. In its fundamentals it was the gospel.

The Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) are indebted to Kuyper the theologian. We might speak of him as "father" Abraham in acknowledgment of the use that Jesus Christ made of him in giving existence and life to these churches.

The indebtedness of the PRC to Kuyper is a fact of history. The founding members of the PRC were men and women who were put out of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Many members of the CRC were Dutch immigrants who had

left the apostate national church in the reformation of 1886, the "Doleantie." Kuyper was the leading reformer. Many members of the PRC today are direct descendants of men and women who were delivered from the darkness of Arminianism and modernism into the light of the Reformed faith by means of Abraham Kuyper.

Some years ago I myself stood before a small, red-brick church building in Joure, Friesland. The church belongs to the denomination founded by Kuyper. In this church my paternal grandfather was baptized and then reared until as a young man he emigrated to the United States where he joined the Hope CRC of Grandville in Western Michigan. I thanked God for "father" Abraham on behalf of myself and my own family.

The debt that the PRC owe to Kuyper as a servant of Christ is doctrinal. Because doctrine is the main thing for the church, the debt of the PRC to Kuyper is great.

The members of the PRC themselves may not be aware of their doctrinal indebtedness to Kuyper. Usually Kuyper's name comes up among us as a father of common grace, which teaching we repudiate as erroneous. In addition, Herman Hoeksema seldom indicated his own dependency on the theology of Kuyper. He almost never quoted Kuyper with approval. The many references to Kuyper are critical.

This is unfortunate and misleading. Although Hoeksema corrected, developed, and put his own stamp on the theology of Kuyper, the theology of Hoeksema is essentially that of Kuyper. As Kuyper faithfully confessed and developed the theology of Calvin and the Reformed tradition, on the basis of the confessions, so Hoeksema received and worked with the tradition as it came to him in large part through Kuyper.

Herman Hoeksema was heavily influenced by the theology of Abraham Kuyper.

Early in his ministry Hoeksema readily acknowledged this influence. In the foreword of *Van Zonde en Genade (Concerning Sin and Grace)*, co-authored with H. Danhof in the heat of the common grace controversy, Hoeksema wrote: "The great Netherlands leader (Abraham Kuyper) has written much with which we heartily agree. When we read his *Dat de Genade Particulier is (That Grace is Particular)*, we feel ourselves thoroughly one with him" (p. 9; this and all other quotations from Dutch titles in the editorial are my translation).

In 1930, in an article in the *Standard Bearer* on "Dr. Abraham Kuyper and Common Grace," Hoeksema spoke highly of Kuyper and his theology:

Although we refuse to worship him or to make him the court of last appeal in Reformed theology, as is often done ... and although it is our conviction that he departed from the line of Reformed thinking in his development of the theory of Common Grace; yet, it must not be forgotten that he was instrumental to a great extent in the restoration of Reformed theology (*SB* 6, no. 13 [April 1, 1930]: 304).

What, in briefest summary, is the theology of Kuyper that has come to the PRC by way of Herman Hoeksema?

First, there is the heartfelt conviction (on which everything is staked) that sound doctrine is necessary and primary for the church; that this doctrine is the historic, confessional Reformed truth; that this doctrine is God-centered; and that this doctrine is a system. Herman Bavinck described Kuyper's theology this way:

Avoiding all Apologetics, Dr. Kuyper proceeded in a thetical manner. He chose his standpoint not on the outside but within faith, planted himself squarely on the basis of the infallible Scriptures and the Reformed Confession....

While thus embracing the Reformed doctrine he revives the same in its most strict type. To him the line marked by the names of Calvin, Voetius, Comrie represents Reformed theology in its most correct development. For it is characteristic of the Reformed doctrine, that it deduces all things from God and makes all things return to God. Hence Dr. Kuyper is not satisfied until every dogma has been traced to its deepest roots and set forth in its inner connection with the divine decree.... The various Reformed doctrines are to him ... one world of ideas, one strictly coherent system (cited in L. Praamsma, *Let Christ be King: Reflections on the Life and Times of Abraham Kuyper*, Paideia, 1985, pp. 114, 115).

Second, at its heart this theology is the confession that the grace of God in Jesus Christ is sovereign and particular. The theology of Kuyper (in distinction from his philosophy) is found in his *Dat de Genade Particulier is*; his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism (*E Voto Dordraceno*); *De Leer der Verbonden (The Doctrine of the Covenants)*; and the *Dictaten Dogmatiek* (Kuyper's dogmatics lectures at the Free University).

Dat de Genade Particulier is (Kruyt, 1884) is a grand, moving defense of particular, sovereign grace against the heresy of a universal, ineffectual grace of God in Jesus Christ and His gospel. Kuyper began by explaining the three main texts that open and secret Arminians always raise against particular grace: I John 2:2; I Timothy 2:4; and II Peter 3:9. All have the elect, and the elect only, in view. Mentioning that his own colleagues in the national church cursed him from the pulpit for teaching it, Kuyper insisted that Christ died only for the elect. He also taught that God's grace in the gospel is intended for and directed to the elect alone. God desires the salvation of the elect only.

Kuyper taught eternal, unconditional election accompanied by

eternal, unconditional reprobation. In his *De Leer der Verbonden*, he asserted that one who refuses to confess reprobation thereby refuses to confess biblical election: "Election is always accompanied by its dark shadow. Without confessing reprobation, you also do not confess election. To suppose that you could be able to have the one without the other is playing with words" (in *Uit het Woord*, vol. 2, Kruijt, 1885, p. 320).

For Kuyper the order of the eternal decrees is supralapsarian. This order, he thought, was more biblical, as well as more glorifying to God.

The actual saving of the elect sinner is the sovereign work of God alone apart from any cooperating activity on the part of the sinner. This was Kuyper's doctrine of immediate regeneration. Only the teaching that the Spirit regenerates without the means of the preached Word explains the regeneration—and salvation—of elect infant children of believing parents. But this teaching also safeguards the graciousness of regeneration: the new birth is not at all the work of the sinner himself, is not at all a change dependent on the sinner's faith.

For his confession of God's sovereignty in salvation, Kuyper was "accused . . . of hyper-Calvinism" (Praamsma, *Let Christ be King*, p. 91). Within the Reformed community, this charge is final confirmation that one is, in fact, teaching the gospel of grace (see Rom. 9:19, 20). As is always the case, the slander came, not from avowed enemies of the Reformed faith but from Reformed ministers.

A third vital area of biblical truth in which the PRC have been significantly influenced by Abraham Kuyper is the doctrine of the covenant. In the book, *De Leer der Verbonden*, Kuyper traced the covenant of grace to the triune being of God, thus suggesting that the covenant is a relationship of love and life. On the basis of Romans 5:12ff., Kuyper established that

Jesus Christ is head of the covenant of grace, as Adam was head of the covenant of creation in Paradise. Christ, Kuyper stated, is "Head of the covenant of grace" (p. 197).

Christ's headship of the covenant implies that the covenant of grace is established only with the elect. This follows also from the close relationship between election and the covenant. Election and covenant are not "two (opposite) poles that exclude each other. Rather the covenant of grace is the glorious bed through which the water of life flows to us from the depths of election."

Kuyper vehemently rejected the notion that the covenant differs from election by including the reprobate: The covenant of grace "aims only and exclusively at the elect. No one is a member in that covenant other than the one who receives or has been appointed to grace. The rich, glorious promises that God the Lord has included in His covenant of grace are absolutely not offered upon an uncertain chance, but are applied to the elect children of the inheritance in the light."

To say that in Baptism, according to the Form of Baptism, the promises of eternal salvation are given, personally and essentially, to every baptized child, head for head, is nothing other than a destruction (*vernietigen*), by Arminian poison, of the rich life that fragrantly wafts to you from this formula (pp. 320-326).

This is familiar language to every Protestant Reformed Christian, though he or she may never have read a word of Kuyper.

In 1924, the CRC officially committed itself to the *philosophy* of Abraham Kuyper: the culture-forming, world-conforming theory of common grace. In the person of Herman Hoeksema, it banished the *theology* of Kuyper. This theology now finds a home in the PRC. And hardly anywhere else.

Space would fail me to tell of Kuyper's defense of the antithesis and of his recovery of the autonomy of the local congregation.

What a theology!

This is our debt!

Thank God for Abraham Kuyper the theologian and reformer of the church! □

—DJE

Abraham Kuyper: A Short Biography

Prof. Herman Hanko

Childhood and Youth

Abraham Kuyper was born on October 29, 1837 to Rev. and Mrs. J. F. Kuyper, in the small fishing village of Maassluis, the Netherlands. It was a time of great apostasy in the Reformed Church, and Modernists occupied thousands of pulpits and

all the important posts in the schools. Kuyper's own father was somewhere between liberal modernism and mildly Reformed.

Two reform movements had swept the Netherlands—one a mere gesture towards reformation, the other a genuine reform of the church. The first, called the *Reveil* (Renewal), had spread throughout Protestant Europe, was more humanistic than ecclesiastical, and hoped to bring reformation into the church from within. The second,

Prof. Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

called *De Afscheiding* (The Separation), was led by Hendrik DeCock, and was composed of thousands of godly and pious people who were among the lower classes, whom Kuyper himself was later to call *de kleine luyden* (the little folk). These had separated from the false state church to re-establish the church of Christ. Kuyper was not touched by either movement.

Bram (as he was called) was home-schooled and early learned French and German. He was a promising student from the outset and not only showed an aptitude for languages, but quickly mastered whatever was put in his way. He studied in Middleburg and Leiden when his family moved to these cities to prepare himself for university work. He graduated from "gymnasium" in 1855 and delivered the valedictory address in German on the subject: "Ulphilas, the Bishop of the Visigoths, and His Gothic Translation of the Bible."

His post-graduate studies were in the University of Leiden, a 280-year-old school with an enrollment of about 500 students. All the instruction he received was thoroughly modernistic. He graduated in 1858 *summa cum laude* and entered the Divinity School in Leiden to prepare for the ministry. No wonder that when Kuyper graduated from Divinity School in 1861 and earned his doctorate in 1863 he was a thorough-going Modernist of no use to God or man.

Conversion and Early Ministry

But God had other plans for this young man; he was destined to become one of the greatest and most influential Reformed preachers that either this century or the last has seen. To fashion him in the proper mold required his conversion. Kuyper tells us that three elements played a part in humbling him and bringing him to God.

The first experience took place in his university days and did not bear its fruit till later. While working on an essay which dealt with a

comparison between Calvin's and à Lasco's views of the church, Kuyper could find none of à Lasco's works, though he searched throughout the libraries of Europe. An old minister, the father of one of his liberal professors, had a complete set, perhaps the only one in Europe. Kuyper considered this almost miraculous and a special evidence of God's providential direction of his life.

The second experience was brought about by a complete nervous collapse due to overwork, during which time Kuyper could do nothing but build a model ship and read light fiction. In reading Charlotte M. Yonge's book, *The Heir of Redcliffe*, he was so moved by how God had humbled the arrogant main character of the book that he later wrote: "What I lived through in my soul in that moment I fully understood only later, yet from that hour, after that moment, I scorned what I formerly esteemed, I sought what I once dared to despise."

The third experience took place in his first congregation where were a few genuine Christians. One, a peasant girl of thirty, Pietronella Baltus, refused to shake his hand and explained her actions by telling him that he was unconverted and not fit to be a minister. Kuyper was stunned by this, but had the humility to inquire further from these humble folk, who sent him back to Calvin and the Reformed fathers to learn the Reformed faith.

The Preacher

After his conversion, Kuyper became a powerful and effective preacher of the Reformed faith, who was used by God to bring a revival of the Reformed faith to the Dutch church. He was an extraordinary exegete, a forceful orator, and a fearless critic of Modernism. He moved many to love the Reformed faith and he moved many enemies of the gospel to hate him passionately.

His first congregation was the small church of Beesd, from which he moved to Utrecht, a church of 35,000 members and eleven ministers. Here he had his first confrontation with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which was to lead in the future to a split. After three years he moved to Amsterdam, the most influential, the largest, and the most prestigious church in the Netherlands. It had 140,000 members, 136 officebearers, 28 ministers, 10 sanctuaries, and 4 chapels.

Kuyper was not only a superb preacher, but he was also an effective liturgist. His prayers were eloquent and brought God's people to the throne of grace. His reading of Scripture was so powerful that his colleague once said that hearing Kuyper merely read Psalm 148 was clearer exposition than most sermons on it and brought him to tears.

How effective he would have been if he had remained a preacher is impossible to say, but it was a loss greater than can be described that Kuyper resigned from the ministry in 1874 in the interests of entering politics. That marked the beginning of the decline of his effectiveness as a Reformed man.

The Journalist and Writer

Kuyper's works fill a large shelf and are on such a variety of subjects that one marvels at his vast learning and extensive knowledge of almost any subject to which he applied himself. Already while in Utrecht he became editor of *De Heraut* (The Herald), a weekly, and remained in this post till the end of his life. In 1872 he became editor of *De Standaard* (The Standard), a Christian daily newspaper, and he held that post for almost 50 years, until he was 82 years old. He published a *Dogmatics*, a three-volume exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, a three-volume work on "Encyclopedia," a three-volume work on common grace, and hundreds of meditations published in various books. These lat-

ter are some of his finest writings and are still worthwhile reading today.

Kuyper made use of countless illustrations, some of which he used to prove his point rather than illustrate it. But Kuyper's writings have been largely responsible for his influence in Reformed circles to the present.

Church Reformer

After his conversion Kuyper became an implacable foe of Modernism, which had captured the universities and divinity schools and which had sapped the church of its spiritual life. His Reformed preaching and writing had been blessed by God to turn a significant part of the church back to the faith of their fathers. This brought him into conflict with the church.

The first confrontation took place in Utrecht when Kuyper's consistory refused to answer a questionnaire sent out in the place of classical visitation. This refusal aroused the fury of the authorities and was finally to become an issue in the split.

As is so often the case in the church, confessional integrity was also an issue. The church was no longer requiring subscription to the creeds in many instances, but was satisfied with a vague promise "to promote the interest of the kingdom of God in general and especially those of the State Church." Kuyper and the consistory of Amsterdam would have none of this.

Young people who showed in doctrine and walk that they were unbelievers were admitted to membership in the church and the Lord's table. In Kuyper's thinking this was intolerable.

The hierarchy acted against Kuyper and deposed officebearers in the congregation. The result was that about 200 congregations totaling 100,000 people left to form a new denomination called *De Doleantie* (The Aggrieved Ones). In time, also with Kuyper's support,

these people came together with *De Afscheiding* of 1834 to form what is now the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN)—which, though once Reformed, has now become as apostate as the state church in Kuyper's day had ever been.

The Politician

While to some Kuyper's greatest glory came as a politician, it nevertheless remains a fact that Kuyper's involvement in politics did great harm to the cause of the Reformed faith.

Early in his ministry Kuyper had begun involvement in the Anti-revolutionary Party founded by Groen VanPrinsterer. After resigning from the ministry and standing for election to the Second Chamber of Parliament, he, after twice being defeated, was elected in 1874.

He was re-elected a year later, suffered a nervous collapse a second time, which removed him from action for 15 months, returned with renewed energy to re-organize and re-vitalize the party, and finally came to the point where he saw the possibility of becoming prime minister.

To become prime minister, however, was possible only by forming a coalition with the Roman Catholics. The justification for forming such a coalition was in large part the motivation of Kuyper's development of a thoroughly unbiblical and wholly philosophical theory of common grace.

Kuyper's tenure as prime minister was short, but Kuyper the politician and proponent of common grace is the Kuyper remembered and adored.

Kuyper the Educator

Kuyper was always interested in education, Christian education in general, and Reformed higher education in particular. His love for children was great: he cared tenderly for his own children, and he took every opportunity to visit

the orphanage in Amsterdam to spend time with and speak to the children there.

But, although he fought long and hard to make Christian education available to all the common folk whose financial burdens were too great to bear, his greatest achievement was the establishment of the Free University in Amsterdam. This university remains to the present, although it has become a hotbed of liberal and socialistic thought.

It was as an educator that he was invited to Princeton University where he delivered his "Stone Lectures." This year marks the 100th anniversary of those lectures in which his common grace was popularized.

The Christian Man

Kuyper was a godly man who loved and cared for his family. While in Beesd he married Johanna Hendrika Schaay, a girl from Rotterdam. With her he had five sons and two daughters. The life of his covenant family was dear to him; family devotions were held regularly, to which the servants were invited; Scripture was explained and prayers were made; mealtimes were times of discussion, argumentation, fellowship, and laughter. The old year never passed away and the new year never arrived except Kuyper could be found with his family reading Scripture and in prayer. The custom was preserved till the end of his life.

Kuyper was a man of vast learning who knew and spoke many of Europe's languages, who wrote on countless subjects, who lectured and wrote in Latin; but who also was deeply mystical, though in the Reformed sense of the word. No one can read without being moved Kuyper's book: *Nabij God te Zijn*, translated under the title, "Nearness To God."

He was a man of God with many flaws—as we all are. He was often intolerant even of friends

who might disagree. He became increasingly crusty and belligerent with the passing of the years. When he was gently eased aside because the infirmities of old age made his work less effective, he became bitter. But God does not use perfect men in His church, and the Reformed faith owes more to Kuyper than it realizes. It is with sadness that Reformed men see the Kuyper of common grace extolled by today's apostate church, while

the Kuyper of sovereign and particular grace goes unremembered.

He died on November 8, 1920. The funeral, attended by thousands, was simple and without flowers. The climax was the thunderous singing of Kuyper's favorite Psalm, 89:7, 8. On his tombstone were engraved the words: "Dr. A. Kuyper / Born October 29, 1837 / And fallen asleep in his Saviour November 8, 1920." □

Lord. Yet it has never *ruled* as now, never achieved the central importance it has today. Only in our age could it become what it really is. Today it stands at the zenith of its power. ("Modernism: A Fata Morgana in the Christian Domain," in *Centennial Reader*, p. 98.)

Much like the modernists of our day, the modernists of Kuyper's day denied every major doctrine of Holy Scripture. The Trinity was impugned. The deity of Christ was set aside. Jesus' literal, bodily resurrection from the dead the third day was scoffed at. The infallibility and reliability of the Bible was ridiculed. In the area of salvation, predestination, limited atonement, and man's natural depravity were denied by the crassest universalism. Contrasting modernism and the Reformed faith, Kuyper wrote:

In matters of faith Modernism chooses human authority as its starting point, the very thing against which Protestantism raised its mighty protest. It forfeits the right to adorn itself with the honor of the Reformation if for no other reason than that it never knew the desperation, brokenheartedness, and mental anxiety from which Luther cried out to his God. The Reformation sought *redemption* for the troubled heart, Modernism only the *solution* to an ingenious problem. This is why Modernism only knows the reality of visible things and misses the reality of the other kind, which is much higher and much more firmly established, which speaks to us of the 'immovable' kingdom of God even in the fact of sin. ("Modernism: A Fata Morgana in the Christian Domain," in *Centennial Reader*, p. 103.)

In another place Kuyper sketched the main tenets of modernism.

Tell me, with what else but unproven premises and therefore (from their own viewpoint) cheap dogmas does Modernism start in

The Doleantie

Rev. Ron Cammenga

Cracks in the Dike

By mid-nineteenth century there were gaping cracks in the dike of Dutch Reformed orthodoxy. The *Hervormde Kerk*, the state Reformed church of the Netherlands, bore few similarities to the church of the Synod of Dordt that had stood so firmly against the Arminian heresy at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Not only had Dordt been undone, but the Arminianism of the early 1600s had given way to full-blown modernism by the mid-1800s. This was cause for great grief among those still committed to the truths of Holy Scripture and the Reformed confessions. The loudest of the voices raised against the departures of the church was that of Abraham Kuyper—minister, professor, statesman, journalist, pamphleteer, and church reformer.

Kuyper himself had received a thoroughly modernistic education and early in his ministry promoted the tenets of modernism. Recalling the days of his theological

training at the University of Leiden, he wrote:

Orthodox books I neither had nor knew. So it was in those days among the theological students at Leiden. The orthodox faith was presented to us in such a ludicrous, caricatured way that it seemed a luxury and waste of money for students of modest means to spend anything on such misbegotten writings. ("Confidentially," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt, p. 56).

Kuyper was at first a disciple of liberalism, but God in His grace led Kuyper, through various circumstances, out of the wasteland of modernism to the Eden of God's truth. This conversion took place especially during the time of Kuyper's first pastorate in Beesd. From that time forward Kuyper set himself to oppose with all his might the modernism that he was convinced had a stranglehold on the church of his day.

Modernism is not even new. All through the centuries it has brought about sorrow in the church of Jesus and it will continue to ferment till the Day of the

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

all its preaching? Its confession can be broadly sketched as follows: 'I, a modernist, believe in a God who is the Father of all humankind, and in Jesus, not the Christ, but the rabbi from Nazareth. I believe in a humanity which is by nature good but needs to strive after improvement. I believe that sin is only relative and hence that forgiveness is merely something of human invention. I believe in the hope of a better life and, without judgment, the salvation of every soul. ("Modernism: A Fata Morgana in the Christian Domain," in *Centennial Reader*, p. 116.)

This is what it had come to in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands in Kuyper's day.

Coupled with the doctrinal errors rampant in the state church was the grievous yoke of a hierarchical church government. The reform movement under Kuyper, as is so often the case with church reformation, would not only call the church back to the doctrine of the Scriptures, but also restore biblical church government.

The *Hervormde Kerk* was firmly under the control of the state. This was the result of the reorganization of the Dutch church in 1816 under King William I. The Church Order of Dordt had been set aside. The autonomy of the local church had been replaced with synodical hierarchy, the broader assemblies with church boards. The domination of the church by the state made the reform of the church from within well nigh impossible. The liberals occupied the seats of authority and controlled the universities, and an entrenched hierarchy shielded them from church censure.

The Dike Bursts

Matters came to a head for Kuyper and the consistory of the church in Amsterdam in which he served towards the end of 1885 and the beginning of 1886. Kuyper and his consistory insisted on strict con-

fessional subscription among both prospective ministers of the gospel and church members. Agreement, they said, must be expressed with the Reformed confessions. On this basis the consistory refused to accept the confessions of faith of and admit to the Lord's Supper a number of young people.

Voices of protest were raised. The classical board intervened. When pastor and consistory remained adamant in their position the board took action against them. Kuyper and approximately eighty members of the Amsterdam consistory were suspended from office. This took place in December of 1885. Kuyper and his followers appealed to the provincial board of the Dutch Reformed Church. On July 1, 1886 the provincial board issued its decision. The suspension of Kuyper and the other elders of the Amsterdam consistory was upheld. They were stripped of their offices in the *Hervormde Kerk*.

Kuyper refused to recognize the validity of his deposition. On Sunday, July 11, 1886, the first Sunday after his ouster from the state church, he preached to the faithful in his congregation in the Frascati auditorium in Amsterdam. The theme of his sermon was "It Shall Not Be So Among You," based on Matthew 20:25, 26. In the sermon he lamented the departures in the state church.

The good are not supported so that evildoers may tremble, but the deniers of the deity of the Lord occupy the seats of honor. Drunkards and fornicators go scot-free, while the faithful witnesses of the Lord are being threatened with ecclesiastical death. Thus the deeply sinful, unspiritual, worldly striving runs its course to its own shame. And what is most appalling of all, the unholy business wraps itself in the robes of piety. ("It Shall Not Be So Among You," in *Centennial Reader*, p. 130.)

In rejection of modernism, Kuyper

insisted that the church must return to Dordt.

For many years did not the Arminian have the upper hand so that the confessor of the free sovereignty of the Lord was almost completely marginalized? Did not the Arminian glory in the fact that the old fable of Dordt had been done to death by the speech of some and the silence of the rest? Were not their voices crying throughout the land: "Though the Lord is powerful, I am the master of my own soul!" ("It Shall Not Be So Among You," in *Centennial Reader*, p. 134.)

The old confession must be revived: "God the Lord is almighty also in the work of grace."

And the oppressive yoke of the ecclesiastical hierarchy must be thrown off. The church must be free, free under Christ to govern itself without the interference of the state.

Brother and sisters, every one of us is jointly responsible for the emergence of alien 'lordships' and 'powers' in the church of God. If the people of the Lord in this city had consistently held high the power of the Lord, had honored all power and government only for the Lord's sake, had strictly maintained the power entrusted to them and not arrogated power that did not belong to them, there would everywhere have been a clear sense of the difference between a false invasive power and the powers instituted by God. ("It Shall Not Be So Among You," in *Centennial Reader*, p. 137.)

The saints who left the state *Hervormde Kerk* under Abraham Kuyper called themselves the *Doleantie*. The Dutch word means "lament" or "grief." The word is expressive of the deep sorrow of these saints over the apostasy in the church of their forefathers. With heavy hearts they found it necessary to leave that institute and through separation reform the church.

Rebuilding the Dike

There were many throughout the Netherlands who were sympathetic to Kuyper and the Amsterdam consistory. As is always the case in church reformation, many disappointed. A number of ministers and theological professors who supported Kuyper, when the break finally came, failed to join the *Doleantie* and remained in the *Hervormde Kerk*. Kuyper's friend and colleague at the Free University, P.J. Hoedemaker, would not support Kuyper in leaving the mother church. Undoubtedly many were motivated by the security of earthly positions and the reluctance to share in the lot of the despised *Doleerende*. Nevertheless the movement grew rapidly. The result was the organization of *Doleantie* churches throughout the Netherlands. These congregations established a new church federation known as the *Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerken*. By 1889 the new denomination included some two hundred congregations, over 180,000 members, and approximately eighty ministers.

From the beginning, Kuyper and the *Doleantie* sought contact with the churches of the *Afscheiding*, the Secession of 1834 that had taken place under the leadership of men like De Cock, Scholte, and Van Raalte. That was natural. They had so much in common. Many of the same doctrinal and church political issues that precipitated the *Doleantie* had been at the heart of the *Afscheiding*. Kuyper worked tirelessly to bring about union. His efforts met with success. In 1892, only six years after the expulsion of Kuyper and his followers from the state church, union was effected. The new denomination took the name *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*.

It took time for the union to become more than merely formal and institutional. Some of the *Afscheiding* churches refused to go along with the joining. They continued as the *Christelijke Gereformeerde*

Kerken. Among the churches participating in the merger, ongoing tensions between the two groups resulted in the formation of "A" churches and "B" churches, often worshiping side by side in the same city. The "A" churches were those of *Afscheiding* extraction, the "B" churches from the *Doleantie*.

The bold stand for the truth taken by Kuyper and the *Doleantie* serve as a model for Reformed Christians today.

Sad to say, Kuyper's legacy is not much appreciated by many in the Reformed churches, even in those churches that he was instru-

mental in founding. If he is remembered, he is remembered as the Kuyper of common grace and the Kuyper of politics.

But there is another Kuyper. The Kuyper who championed sovereign grace against modernism. The Kuyper who refused to knuckle under to ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Kuyper who was willing to jeopardize prestige and position for the sake of truth. The reformer Kuyper. God grant that the legacy of that Kuyper may enrich the Reformed church world until the Christ of Kuyper returns. □

Abraham Kuyper and the Union of 1892

Prof. Russell Dykstra

Brothers, if the Lord Jesus were in our midst, we would not dare to stay where we are. Let us convene this day as if the Lord Jesus really were among us. Thank you, brothers, that you have come here from your cities and villages. You did not say, "Leave those 'Doleantie churches' to rule their own affairs." You did not act that way, but you came.¹

These are the words of Dr. Abraham Kuyper addressed to a delegation of men from the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* (CGK) in 1888. He spoke at a joint conference of theologians from the CGK and the *Doleantie*. The purpose of the conference was to work toward unity, even a union, between the CGK and the *Doleantie* churches. By 1892, the union was a reality, and the two groups of

churches fused into one new denomination, the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN).

The union of the CGK and the *Doleantie* is striking because the churches at large, not to mention the Reformed church world, are more accustomed to church schism and splits than to proper unions. This union is even more striking in light of the diversity that existed between the two groups of churches. How did this union come about? A study of the history indicates that Dr. Abraham Kuyper was a driving force behind the movement toward unity.

As noted above, the two groups were, in many respects, very different. They were different first of all in their relative ages. By the time of the union, the CGK were 58 years old as churches, having been organized out of the Secession (*Afscheiding*) of 1834. The

Prof. Dykstra is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

¹ Quoted in Louis Praamsma. *Let Christ Be King*. (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1985) p. 64.

Doleantie came out of the state church in 1886 and thus were only six years old at the time of the union.

The two groups were different in their origins. The CGK was the result of a secession. Led by such men as Hendrick de Cock, Hendrik Scholte, Simon van Velzen, and Albertus van Raalte, thousands pulled out of the state church (*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, NHK*). The Secession repudiated the state church and labeled it the false church. They viewed the Secession as a work of reformation, where the true church of Christ was reformed, that is, formed again. On the other hand, the *Doleantie* viewed itself as the continuing *Hervormde Kerk* in the Netherlands. They insisted that all the members of the *NHK* were members legally under the consistories of the *Doleantie*. They hesitated calling the *NHK* a false church. They desired to continue reforming the local churches.

The two groups had their own distinct characteristics. Generally speaking, the Secession drew its membership from the poorer members of society, those who were less well educated. In addition to this, the Secession churches were severely persecuted for their stance over against the state church. They also tended to be less precise doctrinally, although they had a leading theologian at the time of the union in Herman Bavinck. The *Doleantie*, on the other hand, appealed to the higher classes of society. The members were often better educated. Their numbers tended to be more doctrinally precise, especially under the leadership of Dr. Abraham Kuyper.

The two churches also had significantly different viewpoints on the matter of the training of ministers. The CGK had established its own theological school at Kampen. They were convinced that the churches must have their own school to train their own ministers. On the other hand, Abraham

Kuyper and other leaders had established the Free University in 1880 exactly for the training of ministers in an institution not governed directly by the church. They considered this necessary in order that theology maintain its high position of scholarship among the other sciences.

There were also serious differences in doctrine in the two churches. These differences included such significant doctrines as the church, baptism, the covenant, and eternal justification.

These real and distinct differences had been the cause of conflict in the past. While the members of the *Doleantie* were still in the state church, they had definitely looked down upon the Secession. They despised these churches and refused to join with them.

Nonetheless, when the *Doleantie* formed, everyone recognized that the two groups also had much in common. In general they had a common heritage in the Reformed faith. They represented the cause of the reformation in the Netherlands. They both maintained the same creeds—the Three Forms of Unity. They maintained the same Church Order, that of the Synod of Dordt. They used the same liturgical forms.

Specifically they shared this important element, namely, they both came out of the state church. Both formed because of apostasy in the *NHK*. Therefore, even though they came into existence under radically different circumstances separated by some fifty years, the Secession and the *Doleantie* were both church reformations.

In spite of the many differences between the two groups of churches, the union was realized, and that within a mere six years after the *Doleantie* churches formed.

Our interest is in the question, What role did Abraham Kuyper play in this union? In a word, it was significant.

First of all, it should be noted

that this union of the *Doleantie* and the CGK was Kuyper's great desire. At the same conference referred to above, he said, "Of the grand wish that we might come to dwell together in one tent, something has now been fulfilled. I had not dared think it: I did not even expect to see it by the time I became an old man. To be on the road to unity already—never, never had I dared predict this. The Lord is amazing."²

Thus he had worked for this union from the beginning of the *Doleantie*. He promoted it in *De Heraut* (*The Herald*). In typical Kuyperian style, he not only advocated the union, he set forth straightforwardly what problems he saw in the CGK which, he maintained, would keep the two parties separate until they were resolved. The synodical convention held in 1887 faced the question of what should be the relationship between the *Doleantie* and other churches that left the *NHK*. It adopted the following advice of the committee of which Abraham Kuyper was the reporter:

Our starting point ought to be the undiminished and resolute confession that all those who are committed to the same confession of the truth and who follow the same church order when it comes to church government, may not, in the long run, remain separate ecclesiastically, and may not rest until all the sons of the same house are again united in a single bond of ecclesiastical fellowship.³

In addition, this convention encouraged individual consistories to "take up contact with the nearby consistory of their churches in order to give expression to fraternal unity in all humility, ... and also assure them of our hearty willingness to walk with them down paths of unity on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order as accepted by both."⁴ Abraham Kuyper was asked to draw up a letter for the consistories' use.

Within a month, Dr. Kuyper had sent out a draft copy to the consistories of the *Doleantie*. It sounds this humble note.

So we have come out [of the *NHK*] as those who left later, and thus as greater sinners. We now turn to you as our brothers to testify that there is great joy in our hearts. We are joyful, because, after a period of sinful waiting that continued too long, our eyes have finally been opened so that we could see that the path down which we were walking led nowhere.⁵

This letter also expressed "the deep desire within us that cries out for the day on which, through God's gracious favor, all the people of His inheritance in this good land may be brought together under one and the same administration of the Word and the holy sacraments." In the letter Kuyper pleaded for "an end to all that must grieve the Holy Spirit in terms of the relationship between us. Let us see to it that a divided life on the part of all the Reformed people in this country is recognized as sin before God." He called on the CGK to join the *Doleantie* "in finding the spiritual maturity of love and mercy, which will in the end break down every barrier and remove every stumbling block."⁶

As one of the deputies appointed by the *Doleantie* convention, Kuyper pressed for a meeting between the deputies and the faculty of the Theological School in Kampen. When this became a reality, Kuyper wrote in *De Heraut*, "May the prayers of the churches now go up without ceasing to the Throne of grace as we plead for the unity of Confessions."⁷ Kuyper frequently expressed this sentiment in *De Heraut*. As editor, he used the paper as a means to promote the union as well as provide information on the progress.

At these meetings between the *Doleantie* men and the CGK men, Kuyper continued to promote

unity. His speeches were powerful and encouraging, and were very well received by the men of the CGK.

Kuyper was active in the writing of documents in the process of unification. He and Dr. F. L. Rutgers were appointed by the first provisional synod of the *Doleantie* (1888) to draft a letter to the synod of the CGK calling for unity.

When (in 1888) the respective synods of the two groups failed to agree on the basis for union, Abraham Kuyper persevered. He wrote up an Act of Union and presented it to the deputies of the CGK for discussion. From the viewpoint of the CGK deputies, the Act of Union seemed to require far too many concessions from them, and too few from the *Doleantie*. The synod of the CGK at Kampen (1889) agreed. It adopted the Act of Union only after significant amendments were made. On the other hand, the *Doleantie* provisional synod of Utrecht adopted the document without change.

Abraham Kuyper promoted the union in other ways. One of the burning issues for the CGK was the matter of the school for training ministers. They resisted the proposal that their school in Kampen be closed or incorporated into the Free University. When a position in faculty of theology became available in the Free University in 1889, Kuyper thought he knew a way to take care of the problem. He pressed for the appointment to go to Herman Bavinck, a professor in Kampen. Although Bavinck eventually declined the position, Kuyper's hope was to bring Bavinck into the Free University, and thus over to the *Doleantie* theological school.

Eventually, the CGK synod of Leeuwarden (1891) adopted a new proposed basis for union. It called for union based on the Three Forms of Unity (the Reformed confessions) and the Church Order of Dordt, 1618-'19. This proposal, along with some specifications on

the practical working out of the union, was brought to the *Doleantie* third provisional synod (The Hague) by appointed CGK deputies. Abraham Kuyper, as president of the synod and member of the negotiating committee that studied the proposal and conferred with the CGK deputies, guided the deliberations carefully and skillfully. Compromise was worked out to the point that the *Doleantie* synod adopted the proposed basis with amendments agreed upon by the CGK deputies.

The final version was adopted also by the CGK synod of Amsterdam in June of 1892, and the union was realized. The GKN was born.⁸ Certain it is that this was the desire of many members and leaders in both the churches. Certain it is also, that Abraham Kuyper, zealous for the unity of the church, was an instrument of God to bring about the union of 1892.

Several observations must be made about this slice of history. First, it is noteworthy and commendable that Dr. Abraham Kuyper and the *Doleantie* sought out the older CGK. This stems from a twofold realization. First, the *Doleantie* recognized that the Secession was a legitimate reformation of the church in the Netherlands. Since the *Doleantie* also considered itself a true reformation, consistency demanded that the *Doleantie*

2 Quoted in Hendrik Bouma. *Secession, Doleantie, and Union: 1834-1892* (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publication, 1995) Translated by Theodore Plantinga. P. 64.

3 Quoted in Bouma, *Union*. p. 31.

4 Quoted in Bouma, *Union*. p. 34.

5 Quoted in Bouma, *Union*. p. 35.

6 Quoted in Bouma, *Union*. pp. 35-36.

7 Quoted in Bouma, *Union*. p. 41.

8 Not all the churches of the CGK agreed to join the new denomination. The "dissenters" held a synod in 1893 and maintained the name of the Secession churches—the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken*. These churches exist to the present day. Eventually they established their own seminary in Apeldoorn. They hold to a conditional covenant, but have some differences with the "Liberated." Their sister churches in North America are the Free Reformed Churches.

churches explore the possibility of unity with the earlier movement. Secondly, this move stems from the confession that the church is one, and must manifest the oneness institutionally, as much as possible.

A second noteworthy feature is that the union was based simply on the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dordt. Even though some significant differences in doctrine existed, these theological issues were not discussed and resolved. Later, the GKN passed judgment on some of the issues in the Conclusions of Utrecht (1905). Yet it was a compromise document and it did not settle the doctrines.

This stands connected to the final observation. The sad fact is that this union really did not work. Although one denomination was forged, the differences between the *Doleantie* and the Secession churches remained. In cities throughout the Netherlands were found 'A' churches and 'B' churches, often existing within the same city. Everyone knew that the 'A' churches were from the Secession, and the 'B' churches were from the *Doleantie*. No 'A' ministers would take a call to a 'B' congregation, or vice versa. They were different in doctrine, preaching, and worship. These differences remained until the time that Dr. Klaas Schilder was deposed by the GKN in 1943, and the GKN "Liberated" was formed. Far and away the majority of the "Liberated" were the 'A' churches of the Secession.

The lesson is plain. True unity is not established merely on the basis of "The Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dordt." This is not to denigrate the unspeakable value of the Reformed creeds—also as "forms of unity." Rather the point is that in the providence of God the truth develops in and through the history of the church. The truth develops *beyond* the confessions – not *outside* the boundaries, understand, but *beyond* in the sense that it is better

defined, becomes sharper, more in focus. To ignore that development and declare merely, "Our basis is the Three Forms," is not realistic.

Significant differences in doctrine have developed since the Reformed confessions were written, and conflicting views on certain doctrines have been proposed within the Reformed camp, all of which are defended on the basis of the confessions. It cannot be, obviously, that two opposite views are both correct. Only one can be. One position stands within the boundaries of the confessions, the other does not. However, when two denominations are considering union,

if they are serious about true unity, they must nail down which position on a particular doctrine they will consider to be within the boundaries of the confessions, and which not. Not to do so is to build schism into the union.

This was not totally overlooked in this process of union in the Netherlands. A few men here and there called for discussions on theological differences. Sadly, these voices were drowned out by the mighty chorus for unity, admittedly, a good and proper goal. But true unity is in Christ, who is the Truth. □

The Son of God Eternally our Mediator

Mr. Marvin Kamps

Dr. A. Kuyper was a master theologian. By means of his writing, lectures, and preaching, the truth of sovereign, particular grace in Christ Jesus for the elect of God was once again restored to the confession and preaching of many thousands in the Netherlands. His work was above all a work of reformation of the church. It was reformation because it was a return to the Scriptures as confessed by the Reformed church. But this was not without a great price that had to be paid by Dr. Kuyper. He had many enemies. He was accounted a "pariah." He was charged with heresy and perversion of the truth, they cut him off from their fellow-

ship, and, what was worse, his enemies denied him the fellowship of the Spirit and brought down on his head the curse.

One of the books published by Dr. A. Kuyper is entitled *That Grace is Particular*. I have been busy for some time with the translation of this work. The Reformed Free Publishing Association has agreed to make this volume of Dr. Kuyper available to the English reader.

In this work Dr. Kuyper exposes the unbiblical character of the doctrine of *Christus Pro Omnibus*, Christ for all. This theology permeated the Reformed church of his day. Kuyper tells us what is meant by this Christ for all: "By 'Christus pro omnibus' is meant, that Christ according to the purpose and extent of His sacrifice, had died for all men, head for head, and soul for soul" (p. 3).

Mr. Kamps is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church.

"...the Universalists, or zealots of general grace, maintain: When Jesus died on the cross, it was God's will and Christ's intention, to bring about the kind of atonement, which if need be was sufficient for all men, and which, offered now in Jesus' name to all men, would be a blessing to so many out of these all, as according to Jesus' intention and expectation desired to accept this salvation; while it remains only unused, by so many for whom it was appointed, of whom Jesus had intended and expected, that they would believe, but who had not done it" (p. 16).

When Kuyper refers to those who defend a "Christ for all" as Universalists, he is not identifying them as those who believe that all will eventually be saved, but as those who claim that Christ died for all. Over against this false doctrine Dr. Kuyper maintained that the Scriptures teach particular grace: "...The Particularists, or advocates of special grace, who maintain, and teach: By the church must be preached to all creatures, that atonement is accomplished through Christ's death for everyone who believes, has believed or will believe; that is, because all believers are elect, only for the elect; not according to the outcome, but according to Christ's intention and God's counsel; and that as concerns application not in regard to possibly but as yet unconverted persons; but on the contrary as concerns application in regard to persons, whom the Lord loves with an eternal love, even before they were born, and whom He 'calls by name.'"

Dr. Kuyper's task was formidable. Humanly speaking we would say impossible. The Reformed church had for many years not received solid preaching on the subject of particular grace. The state church of Holland had been made nearly completely oblivious to what was the truth of the gospel in that regard. The common people had been so misled by the preach-

ers of the day that they just took for granted that God's gospel of grace in Christ, the cross, was for each and every man, that God loved all men in Christ, and that God wanted to save all men head for head. In order to stem the tide and to call the church back to the gospel of Scripture and the creeds would require all the strength and determination and dedication a man could muster. Kuyper says in regard to the church's lack of sensitivity to the truth and the unwarranted criticism that he received for his position that God's grace is particular: "...But how could this be otherwise, with a defense of a portion of the truth, *which now already for fifty years* has not been heard from the pulpits and under foreign influences has died out of the confession of the greater part of the church?" (p. 46, emphasis mine, MK). In other words, even good people of God lacked spiritual discernment and were easy prey for unfaithful men.

But Dr. Kuyper was motivated and inspired by one all encompassing responsibility: "the honor of God's holy name..." (p. 4). The false doctrine of a Christ for all, general grace, or Universalism, for Kuyper was a God dishonoring doctrine which robbed the church of the essence of her calling, that is, to *worship*. How can the believer worship, when the preaching presents a God who cannot accomplish His will, whose Son is made a beggar, and whose grace is made in most instances insufficient to save, or when sinners are made to believe that their salvation is dependent on their own efforts?

In refuting the error of "Christ for all," Dr. Kuyper felt obligated first of all to demonstrate that the texts which the general grace men always present as conclusive proof of their position do not teach what they claim. These texts are: I John 2:2; I Timothy 2:4; and II Peter 3:9. When you someday are able to read this explanation of these texts you will be impressed how com-

pletely Rev. H. Hoeksema's exegesis of these passages echoes that of Dr. Kuyper. When it came to the subject of particular grace, Hoeksema's instruction did not differ with that of Dr. Kuyper. In addition, Kuyper rejects the well-meant offer of salvation theory undeniably involved in the general grace theory as an idea that denies the total depravity of the fallen sinner: "If it is to be true, what 'the proponents of general grace' teach, that, namely, grace is offered to all men, head for head, on the ground that actually and essentially the ransom is already paid for them, then by this it must certainly be supposed, that the sinner, just like he was affected by sin, yet rightly carries in his soul a power, a faculty, and an ability in order also, if that salvation is offered to him, to accept it" (p. 40). And later he concludes: "Because in this situation this is definitely true, that whoever teaches a general grace accepts and supposes in the sinner the faculties by nature enabling him to choose Jesus as his own; and it is true, therefore, that we oppose this doctrine of 'general grace' on the very valid basis, as an idea which fails to appreciate what the Bible has revealed concerning the depth of the corruption of sin" (p. 41).

I could call your attention to many different aspects of Dr. Kuyper's refutation of *Christus pro omnibus*, Christ for all, but I want in some detail to present just two aspects of his masterful defense of particular grace and refutation of general grace. In the first place, Dr. Kuyper made the charge that "general grace" ought to be rejected because: "it is unreconcilable with what the Holy Scriptures reveal to us concerning *the being and the attributes of the living God*" (p. 53). After establishing that even the general grace men have to acknowledge that not all men are in fact actually saved, but that many if not most perish in unbelief and that God knew this fact eternally, Kuyper writes:

Nevertheless, people imagine, write, and preach, that the very same holy, glorious, the all perceptive and insightful God, in connection with the devising of His plan of salvation, had had the will, the purpose, the intention, to let His only begotten Son at Golgotha pay "the ransom" also for all them who would go into perdition.

Teaching, therefore, that God the Lord had fully known: "They cannot be saved!" and that the very same God nevertheless had made a plan of salvation as if He could really save them; as if their salvation certainly was conceivable; and as if He imposed it then, according to the intention of His plan, for the salvation actually of all.

Two representations which of course absolutely exclude one another and which cannot for a moment co-exist, not even in the lucid mind of a man; not to mention then the being of God.

In this way is set forth the possibility in the being of God, that He, the Holy One, would have devised something approximately in this manner: "They will certainly perish; but who knows, I want still with all my heart to save them all; let me act a moment as if I did not know that they will die in their sin, and set for a plan of salvation then, wherein I for a moment set aside my divine thoughts and forget what I still know and see."

... The issue is God's essential attribute....

And because the doctrine of general grace says to us: God certainly knew from eternity, for example, that Judas would not be saved, and yet God had thought in connection with the devising of His plan of salvation: who knows whether something will not come or happen whereby he is indeed saved; and for that reason God has had in His plan and Christ has had in His death the intention, for example, really and of a truth to pay the ransom price for Judas also.

We very earnestly resist that notion, and do so with all the strength that is in us. This idea infringes upon the Godhead in the

divine being. This abolishes God's essence in the divine being (pp. 55-57).

Dr. Kuyper also demonstrated that the doctrine of general grace is a denial of God's attribute of righteousness:

Yes, with nearly all God's attributes, which by the Holy Scriptures are shown to be in the divine being, this doctrine of general grace collides. For example, to mention only one, with his inviolable and unimpeachable righteousness.

Everyone will agree with this, that in an obvious way nothing

more contradicts every conception of righteousness, than that you nevertheless refuse to let the slave go freely, for whom the ransom is paid.

And yet, if Jesus has, even as men pretend, fully paid the debt, the ransom, for every person, and the proponents of Universalism for all that acknowledge themselves, that, yes, let us in deep sorrow acknowledge, that the majority die in their sins, how would you then be able to maintain the righteousness of a God, who first allowed the ransom for the lost to be paid, and then counts the sin against them nonetheless, as if this were not paid? (p. 59).

(to be cont.) □

A. Kuyper, Developer and Promoter of Common Grace

Rev. Charles J. Terpstra

The legacy left by Dr. Abraham Kuyper to the Reformed faith and churches is for the most part a great and beneficial one. A significant exception to this is Kuyper's development and promotion of the doctrine of common grace. As much as we appreciate what Kuyper gave to the Reformed churches, including our own, in many areas, we must criticize, condemn, and cast away his teaching on common grace.

It is no secret that the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) have their origin in a rejection of the doctrine of common grace as it was officially adopted by the Chris-

tian Reformed Church (CRC) in 1924 (the "Three Points of Common Grace"). The PRC have always maintained that God has but one kind of grace, viz., His saving grace in Jesus Christ, and that this grace is particular, i.e., only for those whom God chose in Christ in His eternal decree of election. It is our position that God never has or shows any grace to the reprobate wicked, for they are outside of Christ and as such are the objects of the holy hatred of God and under His just wrath. The good gifts God bestows on the unbelieving reprobate do indeed reveal the inherent goodness of His being. But they are also expressions of His sovereign displeasure with and disfavor toward the ungodly, serving to leave them without excuse as they despise and abuse God's gifts,

Rev. Terpstra is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan

and thus to increase their condemnation.

What is of interest to us in this special issue devoted to Dr. A. Kuyper is the fact that the CRC inherited much of her doctrine of common grace from Kuyper. Not indeed all of it, for the CRC went beyond Kuyper in some aspects of its teaching on common grace. But much of her doctrine is rooted in Kuyper's development of common grace. That is of interest to us, we say, because an understanding of Kuyper's doctrine will better enable us to understand the CRC's doctrine. At the same time it will lead us to see that a rejection of the doctrine of common grace as adopted by the CRC means a rejection of its source in Kuyper.

Kuyper's Development of Common Grace

As a Reformed church theologian, Kuyper well knew and properly held to sovereign particular grace. Standing on the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions, he believed and taught that God's saving grace in Jesus Christ was only for the elect. He referred to this as God's "special" grace. He even reserved a special word in the Dutch for it — *genade*. He was adamant that this saving grace is in no sense common or general, i.e., for all men. It is limited to the elect by God's sovereign decree and by Christ's atoning death. And this grace is limited in the preaching of the gospel. The preaching is an expression of God's favor only to the elect, and, in fact, through the preaching God gives grace only to them. In this respect Kuyper's teaching on common grace is markedly different from that which the CRC adopted in 1924. She went beyond Kuyper in her first point of common grace, teaching that even God's saving (special) grace is common in that in the preaching of the gospel God shows His favor (grace) to all who hear, elect and reprobate, believing and unbelieving. This Kuyper rejected.

But Kuyper did believe and teach that besides God's special grace for His elect He has a common grace for all men. He used the Dutch word *gratie* to distinguish it from saving grace. The doctrine of this "grace" Kuyper developed in his three-volume work, *De Gemeene Gratie (On Common Grace)*, published in 1902-1904. (Excerpts from this work have recently been translated into English and published in the fine volume *Abraham Kuyper, A Centennial Reader*, edited by James D. Bratt; Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.)

Ironically, Kuyper developed his views on common grace in connection with two solid Reformed doctrines, the absolute sovereignty of God over all things and the total depravity of mankind through the fall of Adam in paradise. These, he said, form the basis for God's general favor to all men. Because God rules over all creation and all men, He gives them grace to live in His world and carry out their calling. And because man is radically and totally depraved, God shows all men favor by holding their sin in check so that they are able to live together in society and so that His church can live and grow in the world.

But Kuyper's motivation for developing the doctrine of common grace was not solely theological; it was also very practical. For one thing, he sought to answer the growing effects of modernism in the church-world. He noted that modernism had a broad vision of the world and for the world, but that this vision was grounded in humanistic rationalism. He wanted the Reformed faith to have the same broad vision, but to be grounded in the sovereign work of God. Common grace gave him the answer, he thought. Further, Kuyper had become involved in a political career in the Netherlands and needed some justification for his programs and for his cooperation with other religious and secular groups in these programs. Again, common grace provided

him the support he needed, he believed. Still more, in connection with these two things, Kuyper had developed a growing aversion for what he believed was an "Anabaptist" spirit in the churches of the Netherlands. There were Reformed Christians who believed that being true to the Reformed faith meant living a godly life of separation from the world. That meant no cooperation with the world in any realm, whether it be labor, religion, or politics. Kuyper's common grace sought to reprove this narrow view of the Christian's life in this world and create a full-orbed world and life view.

The doctrine of common grace which Kuyper developed and promoted consists of two main elements, a negative element and a positive element. The negative is God's favorable restraint of sin in the wicked. Kuyper taught that because of the Fall man is totally depraved, given over to all wickedness in nature and in deed. If this sinfulness is not held in check, man will quickly destroy himself and there will be no human race. But this would make the development of creation, mankind, and the church impossible. For this reason God bestows on all men a certain grace which restrains their wickedness, preventing them from being as wicked as they could be and from walking in all the vile sins they would. This restraint of sin in man is not just external but also internal. God by His Holy Spirit works in the wicked, even in their hearts, holding them back from sin. Because of this "grace," the wicked can live together in society, creation is prevented from being ruined by mankind, and the church can live and grow in the world among evil men.

But Kuyper did not stop with this merely negative element. He went on to teach that there is a positive element in God's common grace to all men. By means of common grace the natural man can also do good and positive things in this

world. He becomes creative and can develop the powers in God's creation for good and useful purposes. He uses his God-given abilities and God's creation gifts for the benefit of mankind. He is able to fulfill the original "cultural mandate" of Genesis 1:26-28. He can develop a culture that is good before God, approved by Him and pleasing to Him. This is, to be sure, not saving good but only civil good. Nevertheless, it is real good, because it is the fruit of God's general grace working in him. It is another irony in Kuyper's teaching that he believed that man's ability to develop himself and his world under God's common grace would nevertheless ultimately result in the development of the anti-Christian kingdom. The fruit of God's general grace to men is the greatest kingdom of evil in the history of the world!

An important implication of this common grace teaching of Kuyper is that the Christian who is saved by God's special grace can and ought to cooperate with the wicked who is benefited by God's common grace. There is a close relation between these two graces according to Kuyper. Not only does common grace make it possible for believers to live among the wicked, but it also makes it possible, even obligatory, for them to join with the wicked and work together for the development of a creation culture that glorifies God. This was in fact the vision that Kuyper had for the Netherlands in his political career. And it was the vision he had for the whole world, as God's common grace worked universally in every nation among all peoples.

Kuyper's Influence on the Reformed Churches

Kuyper's teaching on common grace has had a powerful and wide influence on the Reformed church-world. This influence is not restricted to the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, where Kuyper's work and writings were obviously

known and widely accepted. It has spread throughout the world, wherever Dutch Reformed churches have been established and have done mission work, and wherever those in the Kuyperian tradition have established Christian schools. Perhaps especially in North America (the U.S. and Canada) Kuyperian common grace has had a major impact. Many of those who immigrated to North America from the Netherlands during this century came with a firm belief of common grace as defined and developed by Kuyper. These immigrants further disseminated his views when they arrived in these new lands. Ministers promoted it via the pulpit and catechism room. Church members advanced it via discussions and the spread of his writings. And Christian school teachers taught it and applied it to the children in the classroom.

This is how the common grace of Kuyper found its way into the CRC. In her three points of common grace adopted in 1924 the CRC reflected the influence of Kuyper. Particularly in her second and third points is this revealed. In her second point the CRC stated her belief that there is a "restraint of sin in the life of the individual man and in the community.... God by the general operations of His Spirit, without renewing the heart of man, restrains the unimpeded breaking out of sin, by which human life in society remains possible." This is Kuyperian common grace pure and simple. Thus also in her third point the CRC expressed her belief that "the unregenerate, though incapable of doing any saving good, can do civil good." This too is nothing but Kuyper's doctrine. And the CRC has continued to develop and promote this teaching throughout her history. It is the doctrine that dominates her theology and practice. And, sad to say, it has borne an evil fruit in her midst. Because of her adoption of common grace the

CRC has steadily departed from the historic Reformed faith and practice. Due to her belief in God's general favor toward and good work in the world she has imported the "blessings" of higher criticism of the Bible, evolutionism, feminism, unbiblical divorce and remarriage, rock music, and movies.

But the influence of Kuyper's common grace was made in North America also through a personal visit he made to the U.S. in 1898. That year he was invited to present the Reformed worldview in a series of lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey. He gave six lectures, known as the "Stone Lectures on Calvinism." In these lectures Kuyper defended a Calvinistic worldview based on his doctrine of common grace. Not only were these lectures influential when he gave them, but they have continued to be so due to their publication and wide distribution in this country and beyond. This year, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of these lectures, Kuyper's worldview of common grace was celebrated and praised by many in the Reformed camp (see Prof. D. Engelsma's recent editorials in the *Standard Bearer*).

Because of this wide acceptance and appreciation of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace, it has become the prevailing view in most Reformed and Presbyterian circles. This is the doctrine that accounts for the efforts to redeem all of culture for Christ, including the most pagan parts of it. This is the teaching that accounts for the efforts to bring the kingdom of Christ here on earth and make this world a better place for all. This is the doctrine that accounts for the efforts to cooperate with the world of unbelief to achieve these goals. This is the doctrine that prompts Christian college graduates to teach in public schools to help unbelievers be good citizens, to infiltrate Hollywood to make better movies, and to enter politics to work for the im-

provement of society. This is the doctrine that accounts for the church's attempt to make herself more relevant to the world by importing drama and dancing and contemporary music into the worship of God.

Indeed, Kuyper's doctrine of common grace has had a tremendous impact on Reformed faith and practice. But not for good, we are convinced.

Our Rejection of Kuyperian Common Grace

Subjecting Kuyper's doctrine of common grace to the test of Scripture and the Reformed confessions, we believe that it fails miserably and must be rejected. We cannot in this article demonstrate this contention, but the PRC have repeatedly pointed this out in her writings. (If our readers are interested in reading more on this, we will be happy to send materials on request).

It is our firm conviction that this doctrine of common grace usurps a position above the truth of sovereign particular grace, burying it and destroying it in those churches that hold to it. We believe that Kuyper's doctrine carries with it a blatant denial of the truth of the antithesis between the church and the world and leads inevitably to full-blown worldliness in practical living. It creates a dualism in the work of God, teaching that God really has two great works going on in the history of the world: the work of the redemption of the church by special grace and the work of the redemption of society by common grace.

The weight of history also supports this criticism. The one hundred plus years of Kuyperian influence by means of this doctrine have not resulted in the strengthening of the Reformed faith and practice but in its severe weakening and demise. The Reformed churches are not better because of Kuyper's teaching, but worse. Reformed Christians are not spiritu-

ally richer because of Kuyper's views, but profoundly poorer. There has been no solid development of Reformed doctrine due to the doctrine of common grace. There has been no real growth in spiritual godliness because of the teaching of common grace. Quite the opposite. There has been departure from the most fundamental of Reformed doctrines. There has been a growing worldliness and ungodliness in Christian living.

Which is also why the PRC reject Kuyperian common grace. It is a serious error which has produced corrupt fruits. Instead of being praised and promoted by Reformed Christians, the doctrine of common grace needs to be rebuked and rooted out of the Reformed faith and practice. Who will stand with us in doing this as we strive to be faithful to the God of sovereign, particular grace? □

Do We Hold to Kuyper's View of Presupposed Regeneration?

Rev. James Laning

Many times we in the Protestant Reformed Churches have been accused of holding to Kuyper's false doctrine of presupposed regeneration. Many say that since we tell all our children that God loves them and that Christ died for them, we are presupposing that all our children head for head have been chosen by God and are actually in the covenant of grace. Although some who accuse us of this are simply taking a delight in falsely representing us, there are others who do not really understand what Kuyper's view actually was, and how our view is to be distinguished from his. This is what we intend to set forth in this article.

Kuyper's View of Presupposed Regeneration

Kuyper's view consisted of two parts. First, he maintained that we

are to presuppose that all infant children of believers are actually in the covenant. Secondly, he taught that this presupposition is the basis upon which we baptize them.

How We Are to View Our Children

What did Kuyper mean when he said that we are to presuppose that all children of believers are actually in the covenant? He did *not* mean that Scripture teaches that all children of believers are actually saved. Repeatedly he made clear that he was not saying that God saves all children born to believing parents. Godly parents, he said, cannot know with certainty that all their young children are actually regenerated. But, he went on to say, they do "presuppose the possibility"¹ that all their children are saved. And, presupposing this, they view and speak to all their

Rev. Laning is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

¹ The Dutch here is *de mogelijkheid onderstelt*. The translations of the Dutch in this article are my own.

children as though they have been chosen by God and regenerated.² They tell them that God loves them, and that they belong to His covenant people.

Kuyper illustrates his position as follows. A gold miner treats everything that might contain gold as though it *was* gold, even though he knows that later only a fraction will be found actually to be gold. Similarly, says Kuyper, we are to treat all our children as though they were actually children of God, even though we know that later we will find out that many were not.

To prove his position he cites Article 17 of the First Head of the Canons of Dordt, which states that godly parents ought not to doubt of the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in their infancy. The church, he argues, confesses that *many* of these children are saved, but not that all of these head for head are saved. But even though we do not know for certain that a particular child is saved, we are to suppose that he is saved, and are to think and speak of him this way.

The Basis for Infant Baptism

Secondly, Kuyper maintained that this presupposition of regeneration is the basis upon which we are to baptize our children. His argument goes like this. The sacrament of baptism, for the infant of believers as well as for the adult believer, is a seal of the righteousness of faith. Since this seal serves to strengthen the faith of the infant being baptized, it must be the case that faith is already present in the infant before the sacrament is administered. When an adult believer is baptized, his *conscious* faith is strengthened. Although the infant does not have conscious faith, he does have the *power* of faith, and it is this power of faith that is strengthened in the infant by the

sacrament. Since this faith must be present in the infant before the sacrament of baptism can strengthen it, the church can baptize infants only on the ground of the presupposition that God has already worked this faith in the child's heart and has regenerated him.

Our View Over Against That of Kuyper

Kuyper was striving to counter the error of many in the church of his day who were presupposing that their children were unregenerate until they grew up and it was clearly manifested that God had performed a work of grace in them. Although we agree with Kuyper that this is a serious error, we disagree with his doctrine of presupposed regeneration which he set forth over against this error.

How We Are to View Our Children

We are not to presuppose that all our children head for head have actually been regenerated. As Rev. Herman Hoeksema was wont to say, we cannot presuppose to be true that which we know from Scripture is not true. Scripture makes clear that not all of our physical children are children of the promise, but rather that there are Esaus born into the sphere of the covenant (Rom. 9:6-8).

Some may argue that Kuyper merely meant that we are to view all our young children as regenerated, until they show themselves to be otherwise. Insofar as Kuyper meant this, we do indeed agree with him. We regard our young children to be children of God, unless they grow up and clearly manifest themselves not to be. In other words, we view them just as we view everyone else in the congregation. We regard all members in a true church to be children of God. We think of them as such and treat them as such. We do this even though we know that there are al-

ways reprobate in the sphere of the covenant. Viewing the members of the church individually, we regard each of them as a child of God, whether he be an infant or an aged saint, unless he clearly manifests himself not to be. But, viewing the congregation as a whole, we do not presuppose that all in the instituted church, head for head, are regenerated children of God.

But what, then, are we called to *believe* with certainty with regard to our children? What are we called to hold to be certainly true? We are called to believe that all our *real* children, the children of the promise, are elect of God, and that God regenerates them normally when they are very young, in their infancy or even in the womb. These are the children we are speaking about when we read the Baptism Form, which says that all the sins of our children have been forgiven, and that they are "sanctified in Christ." We are speaking of our real children when we say this, the children that have been born again by the power of God's unconditional promise.

Some may question our referring to our elect children as our real children. But we find this truth taught, among other places, in Genesis 22:2. There God referred to Isaac as Abraham's *only* son, even though he also had Ishmael as a son. We find this same truth taught in Galatians 3:16, 29, which says that Abraham's seed was only Christ, and those who are in Christ. Applying this to us, we can say that our real seed consists only of those who are in Christ.

The Basis for Infant Baptism

We do not baptize our children on the basis of our own words, but on the basis of the Word of God. If we presuppose something, that presupposition is our own words, not the Word of God. But if we are to do anything good, it must proceed from faith, from a faith that is firmly based solely on God's Word.

² *E Voto Dordraceno* (Kuyper's commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism), III, p. 21.

According to the 91st Answer of our Heidelberg Catechism, for the baptizing of our children to be a good work, it must proceed from faith, must be done according to the law of God, and to His glory. Infant baptism, just like any other good work, must proceed from a certain faith, a faith which is firmly based, not on man's presupposition, but solely on God's infallible Word. The specific Word of God upon which baptism is based is the unconditional promise of God to establish His covenant with us and our *real* seed (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39). Our activity of baptizing our infants proceeds from a faith in this unchanging promise of our covenant God.

Since this promise of God is not only for us, but also for our children, we are commanded to baptize them in the name of the triune God. This means our activity of baptizing our infant children proceeds from faith in God's promise and is done according to God's law.

We must not baptize our children, or do anything else, on the basis of an uncertain presupposition in our mind. We must baptize our children on the basis of the promise of God, according to the law of God. Only then will the baptizing of our infant children be done also for the glory of God, and the edification of His covenant people. □

Dr. A. Kuyper, Politician — a Critique

Rev. Kenneth Koole

Dr. Abraham Kuyper was a theologian, a theologian of the "first water" as they say; but he was also a politician, and in his day in the Netherlands it could be argued he was the foremost politician in the land. In fact a case could be made that, in terms of time and energy, not theology but politics became the primary focus of Kuyper's life. Not, you understand, politics rather than Christianity (there is no question concerning Kuyper's sincere and Reformed Christianity), but politics more than theology. Nor can there be a question that Kuyper's theol-

ogy (Calvinistic) had tremendous impact on his political perspective; but the question and concern is, to what extent did his political involvement and commitment affect at last even his theology? In the end, we are convinced, far too much.

Kuyper did nothing by halves. When he threw himself into politics he did so with greatest energy, as is evidenced not only by his becoming editor-in-chief of *De Standaard*, but his turning this weekly Christian into a daily newspaper. This required no small commitment on Kuyper's part, considering that he continued as editor-in-chief of the weekly religious periodical *De Heraut* at the same time.

The Reverend Abraham Kuyper entered the political arena

earlier than one might think. At the age of 33 (1871) he "stood" for office (while minister in Utrecht) and at the age of 36 was elected to the lower chamber of the Dutch Parliament. Already in the late 1860s he was corresponding with Groen van Prinsterer, his political mentor and founder of what was known as the "Antirevolutionary Party" (originally the least significant of the four main parties in the land). The party was so named in reaction to the anti-religious and revolutionary spirit that just decades earlier had spawned the anarchy of the French Revolution, and which, Groen was convinced, now threatened the Netherlands.

In our assessment of Kuyper's involvement in politics we lay aside the question of how justified a minister of the gospel is in resigning from the active ministry in order to serve in political office. Due to Dutch law, Kuyper had to do precisely that. Dutch law forbade ministers active in the office from holding political office at the same time, so Kuyper resigned from the active ministry, sought emeritation, and was counted as such from that point on.

Nor do we criticize Kuyper simply because he was active in politics and sought office in government. In the Christian life certainly there is room for more political involvement than simply being registered to vote, going to the voting booth, and voting against the candidate one thinks poses the greatest threat to life, liberty, and the pursuit of godliness. The indisputable fact is that in both the old and new dispensations many a god-fearing man involved himself in government, functioning in various offices in the land, whether as prince under Pharaoh, as adviser to Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, or as a judge and a prince in reformation Europe, or even as duly elected member of the parliaments and congresses of the later western world. Kuyper counted himself as one in the line of such illus-

Rev. Koole is pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

trious and conscientious men. And so he became involved in the hurly-burly of politics.

Kuyper's perspective was, it is not enough simply to protest evil legislation and complain about bad laws and policy once they are in place; rather we are to be actively involved in government and politics, and attempting to set the agenda to begin with. There is some truth to that.

Kuyper's pull towards political activism was understandable. His beloved Netherlands was at a crossroads of national policy. It was a nation more and more faced with a thorough-going modernism and with the pernicious spirit of "revolution" (a spirit that was intrinsically anti-religious and anti-authoritarian). Detesting such a spirit Kuyper determined to be actively involved in doing what he could to prevent this spirit with its laws from dominating Dutch government and life. He would do what he could to set Calvinistic, biblically-based policy in its place. A praiseworthy and honorable intention, to say the least.

The question arises, however, whether politics will allow such idealistic intentions to survive, that is, in any functionally useful way; or, if you will, how long can one resist the temptation of political "necessity," which invariably means compromise in the interests of attaining one's cherished legislation and advance in power? The ideal is one thing; the actual involvement in politics to achieve "Christian," biblically consistent legislation has proved to be quite another.

Politics, it has been said, is "the art of the possible." How true. As a Christian one might propose a piece of legislation of the highest ideal, but what is really "possible" (garnering enough support and votes to enact it) is another thing altogether. Political savvy bows to "reality" (what is "possible" in present circumstances), and satisfies itself with this "less than we

would like, but better than nothing at all" mentality. Policy becomes entangled with "reality," and legislation is the result of negotiation with those who expect some considerations in return.

This is what faced congressman Kuyper, and later, from 1901 to 1905, Prime-minister Kuyper. And this is what opened him to criticism from within the Reformed camp in his day, and, we are convinced, legitimately so.

We do not take issue with the commitment Kuyper and the Anti-revolutionary party had to setting right various social wrongs (evils), but with how in the end they determined to go about it. They had many legitimate concerns, chief amongst which were the "school-issue" and the grievous abuse of the common workingman (and of "working children" in particular).

Dutch government was dominated by the Liberal party. This party enacted legislation which made it all but impossible to establish Christian schools, levying a tax on every home for the support of the government-run (public) schools, and providing no support for the non-public schools. While such policy is not by any means foreign to us in America, the simple fact is that the great majority of Reformed households in the Netherlands were simply too dirt poor to support the government-controlled schools and finance their own as well. The economics of public policy forced many to educate their children in schools that were becoming more anti-biblical and anti-authority all the time. This injustice was the original issue behind the formation of the Antirevolutionary party.

And because the Liberal party derived support mainly from the middle to upper class, it was little interested in extending voting rights beyond that of property owners. It was a party that had little regard for the plight of the common working man, for what happened to him and his family

when injury or sickness disabled him, and for that matter for the plight of working children, many of whom worked 60-70 hours per week at the most minimum of wages. A voice for the disfranchised was necessary! Who can fault a man like Kuyper for raising his powerful voice and sharpening his eloquent pen for such. We do not!

But...! But what happens when for all your righteous, crusading zeal you and your party do not have the votes—when, though there be much sound and fury, next to nothing is accomplished? And then consider that just across the aisle may sit men who in certain vital areas share common concerns, but are a world apart theologically and have their own agenda in other social areas as well, yet whose support would give you the majority in parliament, yes, turn you into a force to be reckoned with! Such was the case for Kuyper and his party. The smaller Roman Catholic party offered just such a golden opportunity. They too, for instance, wanted their constituency to be free from carrying a double financial burden when it came to education and their own schools. Surely, if legislation dear to one's own heart had any hope of being enacted, a political union with such was the only way to accomplish it.

And so it happened. By 1887 the Antirevolutionary party had become large enough to convene a national, pre-election convention. Power, that golden apple of all but irresistible appeal, political power to govern the nation, stood almost within their grasp. It was this gathering that

received overtures from the Catholics, which at one stroke brought the two parties much nearer together. It was now distinctly possible for the leaders to provide a basis for co-operation by perfecting a mutually acceptable agreement.

Calvinist and Catholics? What a team!

What was it, then, that produced *rapprochement*? Simply this. Neither party had, or could in the foreseeable future expect to have, a majority in the Second Chamber of Parliament. If they were to achieve any legislative success, they must practice a policy of mutual assistance. They must inexorably cooperate. The exigencies of the political situation drove them together and made joint ventures mandatory. Cooperate or fail! (F. VandenBerg, *Abraham Kuyper*, pp. 147-149.)

This "unholy alliance" sent tremors through the Reformed camp. Kuyper certainly was not alone in promoting this union, but it fell to Kuyper almost alone to justify the coalition from a biblical perspective; he had to justify it to his own conscience, which (I am convinced) vexed him, and to the Reformed community that was the grass roots of his party's support. This he did, of course, in his theology of common grace. He developed his justification in a series of articles in *De Heraut* that ran for some six years, from mid-1895 to mid-1901. No less sympathetic biographer than L. Praamsma, in his book *Let Christ Be King*, heads his treatment of this stage in Kuyper's life as "A Shift in Emphasis" (chapter 13). Politics had affected Kuyper's theology, and in a profound way.

I call common grace Kuyper's "theology" because common grace becomes a primary revelation of the very character and virtues of God, and of God as He especially wants to be known by the unbelieving, rebellious, yet not-so-revolutionary-as Kuyper's-party-at-first-declared, human race. In short order this theory was seized upon by Reformed theologians dazzled by the scientific "discoveries" and culture of the age, and this common grace, rather than antithetical, saving grace, became the primary revelation of the being and virtues of God. Kuyper, who set out as theologian, and even politician, of the

antithesis, lost this emphasis in his grasp for political influence. We rue the day. And for all Kuyper's energetic involvement in political reform and social action, is the Netherlands today any better for it? Is the Reformed church? What enduring good remains of Kuyper the energetic, and in the end, compromising social-reformer? But the consequences of his attempt to justify his course of action lives on with us to this day. It is a bitter fruit.

What happened to Kuyper is not without precedent in church history. One is reminded of Solomon and his expedient alliances, of Jehoshaphat joining forces with Ahab, and of Hezekiah and the Babylonians. Men of spiritual stature all, beneficial to the church, but apparent political exigencies proving to be a fatal flaw. The problem is not a matter of wanting to do the King's business in the realm of government, it is a matter of with whom you are willing to try to do it.

We mention one other "evil" (danger) that faces Christians who become deeply embroiled in politics in order to press their Christian agenda, which "evil" Kuyper's involvement in politics served to underscore. Men who identify with the same Reformed and Christian faith will inevitably disagree on some political policies, legislation, or strategy, and sometimes vigorously. There are fallings out. The public disagreement and criticism between "Christian brothers" easily lends itself to becoming an occasion for the world and the enemies of righteousness to glory in the perceived disunion and divi-

sion even amongst *these Christians*. "And we (the world) should become one with these Christians who obviously cannot even get along with each other! And they preach forgiveness and love!" The testimony of the unity of the believers in Jesus and biblical truth is seriously compromised.

Such divisions and disagreements showed themselves in Kuyper's party again and again, Kuyper himself often taking the lead due to his forceful character, and also because he had pen and press so readily available. When he was bypassed by his party as prime minister in 1908 (due to his age and inflexibility), sorely hurt, in print Kuyper called into question the motives of Christian brothers, and subjected most of his own party's policies to sharp criticism. A sharp rejoinder highlighting all of Kuyper's perceived character flaws and questionable tactics over the years followed. A most unedifying (but deliciously savory) display of any "Christian" spirit (F. VandenBerg, *Abraham Kuyper*, p. 251). How the enemies of righteousness lapped it up! And Kuyper, the leading preacher and spiritual figure in Christ's church besides! To his credit, Kuyper later with grief apologized in print. But the damage was done. The hurly-burly of politics is a most seductive and dangerous mistress.

If anything, the Reverend Dr. A. Kuyper's political career underscores the truth of the King's words, "Not by might, nor by (political) power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

Indeed, by any measure a giant, yet sadly flawed. □

Book Reviews

Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism, by Peter S. Heslam. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1998. x + 300 pages. \$28.00/£18.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor]

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Abraham Kuyper's Stone Lectures on Calvinism at Princeton Seminary, Eerdmans has published a superb, provocative, ground-breaking analysis of these

lectures. Standing outside the controversy over the doctrine of common grace that has raged in the Dutch Reformed churches, British scholar Peter S. Heslam offers an unbiased judgment on Kuyper's lectures and the philosophy of a common grace worldview that they propound.

The result must be highly disconcerting to the theologians, educators, scholars, and churches that have swallowed the philosophy of the *Lectures on Calvinism* hook, line, bait, and sinker.

In the lectures, Kuyper intended to oppose modernism as it took form in the French Revolution and laid claim to all of human life. Over against modernism Kuyper posited Calvinism, not as a theology but as a philosophy of "common grace." The lectures were about "worldviews" (Kuyper used the terms "life-system" and "life and world view"). Kuyper proposed Calvinism as a worldview inasmuch as Calvinism supposedly includes the doctrine of common grace as a fundamental teaching. By common grace Kuyper meant a grace of God working in all men to restrain sin in them and to enable them successfully to carry out the "cultural mandate" of Genesis 1. This grace empowers the ungodly to create good culture. It also authorizes, indeed commands, believers to cooperate with the ungodly world in establishing good culture.

Knowingly or unknowingly, Heslam passes a devastating judgment upon the lectures and their common grace philosophy. Common grace is, at the most, an incidental element in the theology of Calvin and the Reformed tradition. Kuyper's common grace radically

reinterprets the whole of Calvinist theology. In the interests of common grace, Kuyper was forced to downplay the doctrine of predestination. Common grace left Kuyper wide open to theistic evolution as the explanation of the origin of the universe (Howard Van Till's *The Fourth Day* is a sequel to the *Lectures on Calvinism*). Common grace stands in irreconcilable conflict with the truth of the antithesis; common grace is a bridge from the church to the ungodly world (and from the ungodly world to the church): "Common grace ... (provided) ... the necessary bridge across the gap created by the antithesis between the world corrupted by sin and Christ's work of re-creation" (p. 269).

Although cautiously, Heslam concludes that Kuyper's worldview of common grace has been "successful in its practical consequences" (p. 270). Would he reflect on the cultural condition of the Netherlands and on the spiritual condition of Kuyper's Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and Free University?

Heslam's fresh, informative account of Kuyper's life includes a hilarious description of Kuyper's behavior on the platform at Princeton when he was receiving an honorary degree. An English scholar, who was also receiving a degree, recorded his astonishment at Kuyper, who "looked like a Dutchman of the seventeenth century."

He (Kuyper) told us he was a Calvinist; that he had been persecuted by anti-Calvinists—this itself sounded like the language of another age. All the good in America had its root in Calvin-

ism.... The Continental States had sympathized with Spain. Not so the Dutch Calvinists. "We have not forgotten our contest with Spanish tyranny; we fought it for a hundred years.... Neither England nor the United States would have been free but for Dutch heroism. Spain has in all countries and in all ages been a curse to the world...." This was the tone of the whole speech. There was not a word of flattery to America. One felt as if the seventeenth century had visibly risen upon us to give the last curse to Spain (p. 65). □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Justification By Faith

Prof. David Engelsma, Speaker
Prof. of Dogmatics and O.T. Studies
in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

B.J. Haan Auditorium
on Dordt Campus
Sioux Center, Iowa
November 6, 1998
7:30 P.M.

Come hear this Reformation doctrine expounded with special attention given to the Roman Catholic-Evangelical Accord.

We invite you to attend and bring a friend!

Sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Churches of Hull and Doon, IA and Edgerton, MN.

NOTICE!

With thanksgiving to God the congregation of the Loveland, Colorado Protestant Reformed Church extends a cordial invitation to the celebration of our 40th anniversary, to be held, the Lord willing, October 30, 1998, in conjunction with a Reformation Day lecture by one of our former pastors, Prof. D. Engelsma. Along with time to reminisce, a dinner will be served, followed by a program of thanksgiving and praise and lecture, and including a time of fellowship afterwards.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him" Psalm 34:8.