

Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life. Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the Twenty-First Century. Edited by Luis E. Lugo. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Mich., 2000. Softcover, xviii & 385 pp.

Although Dr. Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was a man of his time, we can still study his works with great profit. In February, 1998 nearly five hundred people gathered at Princeton Theological Seminary for the centennial celebration of his famous Stone Lectures on Calvinism, which attracted widespread attention and gave the impression that the United States was at the eve of a great awakening of Calvinism. In these eloquent and powerful lectures Kuyper, Holland's foremost orthodox Reformed church leader, gifted orator, formidable theologian, outstanding journalist, innovative politician, and founder of the Free University of Amsterdam, summarized a concise summary of his ideas for a foreign audience. He made a deliberate and thorough case for Calvinism as a comprehensive worldview and way of life, insisting that it was in direct antithesis to the ideas and principles of the modern world. He rejected the compartmentalization of spiritual life from other aspects of life, both private and public. He believed that it is a serious error that Christianity has, or should have, no implications for every day living, or that it pertains only to private spiritual yearnings. He championed a public, antiseccularizing, world-transforming Christianity. This is the promotion of the Christian worldview that is so central to Kuyper's international legacy and importance. Christians who are drawn into political, educational, and economic debates in our secular society often draw from the insights of Kuyper. Although the devastating secularization process has prompted a marked departure from Kuyper's legacy in the Netherlands, interest in his thought is growing elsewhere, including North America. Christian professional networks, which have begun to articulate the distinctiveness of the Christian worldview, and evangelical thinkers such as Charles Colson, Mark Noll, and Ravi Zacharias come to mind. No wonder new books about Kuyper, his life and thought are still published.

*Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the Twenty-First Century* edited by Luis E. Lugo. Lugo, formerly professor at Calvin College, serves to bring Kuyper not only to the attention of the world of scholars but also to show how fruitful he can be in stimulating Christian thought at the dawn of the twenty-first century. A product of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship in collaboration with Princeton Theological Seminary and the Center of Public Justice, it is a collection of essays contributed by 22 scholars of notable different persuasions who participated in the 1998 Princeton conference. After an introductory section on Kuyper's life and times, the volume takes up questions ranging from "Prospects for a Christian Social Philosophy in a Shrinking World" by M. Elaine Botha, "Is Blood Thicker Than Justice? The Legacy of Abraham Kuyper for Southern Africa" by H. Russel Botman to "Why Kuyper Now?" By James W. Skillen. As I was reading the essays, I wondered why some of them were included in the book. Several essays are profound and helpful for scholars who wish to dialogue with the thought of Kuyper, others seem to have either an axe to grind or view Kuyper through their own worldview lenses. Since it is impossible to evaluate all the essays, I will focus on a few contributions written from various perspectives. John Bolt, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, in his superb and thoughtful essay, "Abraham Kuyper, Leo XIII", Walter Rauschenbusch, and the Search for an American Public Theology" demonstrates how Kuyperian Calvinism and Roman Catholicism were able to

dialogue and cooperate politically to promote a Christian social justice agenda. In the same year that Pope Leo XIII issued his encyclical *De Rerum Novarum* dealing with the social question, the Dutch Calvinists held their Social Congress," opened in 1891. Its opening address was by Kuyper entitled "The Social Question and the Christian Religion." Bolt also shows that the American, Walter Rausenbush was an articulate spokesman for a Christian response to the economic plight of the working poor in the rapidly industrializing and urbanizing world of the late nineteenth century. Elaine Storkey, until recently, the Director of the Institute for Contemporary Christianity in London, in her fine essay "Sphere Sovereignty and the Anglo-American Tradition" argues that the principle of sphere sovereignty still offers a valuable framework for our understanding and ordering of human institutions and can serve both as critique and as foundation for contemporary thought and action. In *Globalization, Regionalization, and Sphere Sovereignty*, Bob Goudzwaard, Professor of Economics at the Free University of Amsterdam, takes note of some of the destructive tendencies of Western leadership. His critique is largely based on Kuyper's view of creation ordinances of stewardship and justice. In her essay, "The Carrot and the Stick: Kuyper on Gender, Family and Class", Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, Professor of Psychology and Philosophy at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pennsylvania, views gender relations strictly from a perspective of justice. According to her, Kuyper, as seen through her feminist coloured lenses, is "paternalistic." For example, although Kuyper counteracted unjust treatment of women in society, the preclusion of women from the roles of pastor and elder, and even limiting the kind of work they can do as deacons, is proof of his unjust treatment of women in the church. But she offers no Biblical support for her charge. In his outrageously revisionist essay, "The African and African-American Understanding of Our Common Humanity: A Critique of Abraham Kuyper's Anthropology", Peter J. Paris, Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary, is beholden to the radical liberation movement that identifies the wealthy Western nations and the capitalist system as the seedbeds of racism. He accuses Kuyper of upholding Arian racial superiority linked with Social Darwinism. And he called upon the Princeton Theological Seminary to publicly disassociate itself from the anthropological understandings of Abraham Kuyper. Paris says that if "he can be listed among the best of nineteenth-century Calvinist theologians, Kuyper's perspective must be regulated to the trash bin of history." He paints a pristine picture of Africa, reconstructing its history, ignoring the fact that slavery existed in Africa long before the colonial period. Why doesn't he rebuke the Islamic government in Sudan, which threatens its Southern Sudanese Christian and Animist citizens with genocide? Why is he silent about the terrible tribal conflicts which tear apart several African nations? In other words, I believe that Paris' essay is an affront to the legacy of Kuyper. In his essay, "The Clash of World Religions in the Emerging Global Society", M.Thomas Thangaraj, Professor of World Christianity at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, does not interact at all with Kuyper when he gives the impression that all religions are equally valid ways of approaching the divine and finding fulfillment in life. How different from Kuyper! He posited the antithesis between Christianity and other religions. He taught that there is a sharp division between the regenerated and the non-regenerated, between truth and falsehood. Hence, in obedience to the Lord's Great Commission and to the glory of God, the church must send missionaries. To enhance the mission endeavours of the Gereformerde Church of the Netherlands, Kuyper wrote an influential report on missions, which was accepted by the Synod of Middelburg in 1896.

*Religions, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the Twenty-First Century* is written by scholars for scholars. From this perspective, is a welcome addition to College and University Libraries. However, some essays should not have been included since their authors don't interact with Kuyper but have used the conference to promote their own agenda.

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