

Kuyperania in recent years

Book Title:

Rooted and grounded: The church as organism and institution (Abraham Kuyper)

Going Dutch in the modern age: Abraham Kuyper's struggle for a free church in the Netherlands (John Halsey Wood Jr.)

Kuyper in America: This is where I was meant to be (Abraham Kuyper)

Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist Christian democrat (J.D. Bratt)

Abraham Kuyper: An annotated bibliography 1857–2010 (T. Kuipers)

Wisdom and wonder: Common grace in science and art (Abraham Kuyper)

Review Title:

Kuyperania in recent years

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This article is a review of several books written by Kuyper and about Kuyper in the past two years.

Kuyperania in die afgelope paar jaar. Hierdie artikel is 'n hersiening van verskeie boeke geskryf deur Kuyper en oor Kuyper in die laaste twee jaar.

Introduction

Recent years are proving to be an excellent time for Kuyperania. Several new books have been published recently: three by Kuyper, one collection of articles on and about Kuyper, one massive annotated bibliography of Kuyper's writings, one biography and one on Kuyper's ecclesiology (see References section at the end of this article).

What follows is a review of six of them – as I am one of the co-editors of *On Kuyper: A collection of readings on the life, work & legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (see Bishop & Kok 2013), I shall refrain from further comment on it.

Rooted and grounded

Neo-Calvinists are often accused of minimising the place of the church in the kingdom of God. This certainly was not the case for the founder of neo-Calvinism, Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). Kuyper's first and last articles were on the church. As John Halsey Wood Jr. (2013) notes, the church was the bookends of Kuyper's theological writings. Kuyper was a pastor in a church, led a reform of the Dutch church and wrote his doctorate on Calvin and à Lasco's views of the church. *Rooted and grounded: The church as organism and institution* is his newly translated inaugural speech, delivered to his new congregation in Amsterdam; it develops the idea of the church as institution and as organism. Kuyper (2013:22) always had a deep concern for the church: as he said, the 'church question dominates every other issue'. In a sense, Kuyper turned from studying church history to making church history.

Wood (2013) points out in the 'Introduction' that Kuyper was here addressing two questions: 'What is the church?' and 'What is its position in the emerging society?' These were key issues then and are even more so today.

This lecture was delivered in 1870 when Kuyper was aged 33. (The original Dutch publication is numbered 1870.25 in T. Kuipers's (2011) annotated bibliography.) During this time Kuyper was struggling with the liberalism and modernism that had gripped the Dutch Reformed Church. It was 16 years later in 1886 that he would lead a secession from the National Church and form the *Doleantie*.

The terms 'rooted' and 'grounded' are taken from Ephesians 3:17. He uses these as metaphors for the church as organism and institution respectively. Both are necessary for the church to be church. As Kuyper (2013) puts it in his preface:

Both the denial of the church's characteristic organism and the failure to maintain the church's characteristic institution betray a vacillation in the choice placed before every heart, the choice that at its deepest point exists between 'election' and 'humanism'. (p. xxiv)

For Kuyper the church had to be free: free from money, from state control and ecclesiastical hierarchy. The church is based on God's eternal election; it is not a human creation.

He identifies three competing voices for the way forward: one emphasises the church as organism, the other church as institution; the first so the church can flow out into society and the second to

align with Rome. However, the third way forward is to see church as *both* institution *and* organism: a free church. Both rooted and grounded:

'Rooted and grounded', says the apostle, and thereby declares with equal brevity and succinctness that twofold requirement, that double character trait of the Christian life. Rooted – that is the description of organic life; but also grounded – that is the requirement of the institution. (Kuyper 2013:44)

There is growth and building; planting and organisation: 'From the organism the institution is born, but also through the institution the organism is fed' – both are needed; theirs is a symbiotic relationship.

The Reformed Church is both an organism and an institution. Its foundation is God's word; God's eternal election is its heart and blood. The church is a response to sin. Without sin and the fall there would be no need for the church: 'Leave sin out of consideration, and the church becomes inconceivable, since the world itself would then be the church'.

Kuyper (2013) is opposed to the one-man (and it usually is a man) ministry:

The office of pastor-teacher, as it has developed during the course of the present century as a result of idle overseers and a lethargic church, would be well suited in a church that could be

only an institution, but it is completely out of place in the church of the Lord that, as a living organism, is herself consecrated to the ministry of the altar. One who holds office must be rooted in the priesthood of the church. Apart from that intimate relationship, the office becomes domineering. (p. 29)

He places a strong emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. For the church to be truly an institution and organic the role of the institutional leaders must be to equip the church as organism to be able to do the works of service in the marketplace, in the classroom, in business, in politics, in the laboratory.

Table 1 shows some of the images, metaphors and illustrations that Kuyper uses to show the link between organism and institution.

Rooted and grounded: The church as organism and institution is an important book that helps to show the importance of ecclesiology in Kuyper's theology.

Going Dutch in the modern age

Kuyper's (2013) view of the church is also the subject of John Halsey Wood Jr.'s (2013) PhD thesis. This has now been published by Oxford University Press as *Going Dutch in the modern age*. Wood opens the book with Kuyper's panel-

TABLE 1: Images, metaphors and illustration used by Kuyper to show the link between organism and institution.

Rooted (Organism)	Grounded (Institution)
Church as a body	Church as a house
Church grows	Church is built
Church is one loaf dough that rises according to its nature	But nevertheless kneaded by human hands
The church is a ... multitude of priests, legitimated through birth	But consecrated through anointing
A bride brought forth by the father	But accepted by choice
A people finally that indeed sprouted from the living trunk	But nevertheless organised with wisdom and guided by self-motivation
Eden is planted	But mankind will cultivate it
Crops grow by organic power	But a human hand prepares a fertile soil, tames the wild acreage
The church is an organism because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She bears a unique life within herself and self-consciously upholds the independence of that life over against the old life • She lives according to her own rule and must follow her own vital law • What will later unfold from her buds is fully supplied already within her seed. 	-
-	Largely neglected for a century
-	Provides analysis and arrangement
-	An organisation is needed to regulate the mandate for everything that happens in the name of everyone
From the organism the institution is born	Through the institution the organism is fed
-	No nurture where there is no regularity, no nursery where there is no order
-	Feeds and expands the organism
The nourishing source for the stream	But the institution is the bed that carries the current, the bank that borders its waters
-	Only through the institution can the church offer us that unique life sphere ...
-	Preserves discipline and justice, and is nevertheless flexible, tender, and supple ...

sawing (*panelzagerij*) incident: Kuyper breaking into a church. Some saw this as an ‘illegal power grab’ others as a legitimate act of defiance against an overreaching Constitutory board. The panel-sawing incident was the result of Kuyper and others being suspended by the Classical board and it ended in the formation of a secession, led by Kuyper, from the Dutch National Church. Wood’s book seeks to understand Kuyper’s theology of the nature of the church. It is a history of Kuyper’s church doctrine placing it in a clear cultural and historical context. He attempts not only to hear what Kuyper said about the church but also what he did regarding the church. So the panel-sawing incident is an apposite start.

Wood (2013) takes its ‘controlling methodological questions’ from Troeltsch, who uses the typology church–sect–mysticism to describe ecclesiology. Wood uses these in an attempt to analyse Kuyper without attempting to fit him into these categories.

He seeks to build upon Jasper Vree (see, amongst others: Vree 1998), Van Leeuwen (1946) and Zwaanstra’s (1974) work on Kuyper’s ecclesiology. Vree (1998:86) remarked of Kuyper that he ‘continually adapted his ideal of being church according to (changes in) reality’. Wood has shown that this is the case and also that Kuyper’s public theology adapted as his views of the church changed.

Wood’s (2013) final chapter is a *tour de force*. All the pieces of the previous chapters on the French Revolution, a believer’s church, his baptismal theology and his proposals for church and state are brilliantly drawn together. Although the focus has been on Kuyper’s ecclesiology, it is through this lens that his public theology is seen.

There has been a tendency to look at either Kuyper’s ecclesiology (Europe) or at his public theology (North America). Wood (2013) has bucked the trend: a North American looking at ecclesiology. What Wood does, however, is to show that the two are intertwined. Kuyper’s ecclesiology arises out of his public theology and his public theology arose out of the ‘church question’: How do we make a private church public? Kuyper developed a public theology only after the formation of his secession church – he did not need one until then.

Wood provides an excellent analysis of Kuyper’s understanding of the nature and mission of the church. Considering the book is a published version of his PhD thesis, it is remarkably accessible and readable. It will be indispensable for all who want to know more about Kuyper and the church.

Kuyper in America

Kuyper was obviously a multi-faceted character. He has been described as ‘an opponent of ten heads and a hundred hands’ (‘Biographical note’ in Kuyper 1931:iii). Harinck’s edited important little book, *Kuyper in America: This is where I was meant to be*, gives us glimpses of Kuyper’s human side (see Kuyper 2012).

Kuyper visited America in 1898 to deliver the Stone lectures and receive an honorary doctorate from Princeton. Peter Heshlam (1998) has looked in detail at the background of the lectures and his visit; here we have Kuyper’s perspective. What are presented are Kuyper’s thoughts and feelings during that five-month visit conveyed through the letters that he wrote to his wife and children whilst he was away.

This book is a translation of the 2004 Dutch book *Ik voel steeds meer dat ik hier zijn moest: Amerikaanse brieven van Abraham Kuyper aan zijn vrouw en kinderen (1898)*.¹ This slim volume contains the 22 letters written to his family.

It is part travel journal, part insight into his views of America, part insight into his own thoughts and feelings. We also experience the loneliness and separation he feels from his family. Several of the letters start with how upset he feels at the lack of letters from them: ‘That was quite a disappointment this week not to hear anything from home’ (Kuyper 2013:19, letter 5) and ‘... I still have not received a word from home whilst in America’ (*ibid*:22, letter 6).

Numerous times Kuyper (2013) writes positively about the United States of America, though he does not seem enamoured of most of the food! We are also given glimpses into the state of his health. He continually reminds his family that he is getting older – he turned 61 during the trip – and that his health is not what it used to be; we have numerous mentions of his dental problems, his diarrhoea (he is that open!) and how he is coping (or not) with the unusual September heat wave.

Dagmare Hounier, with help from Harry Van Dyke, translated the letters. I cannot comment on the accuracy of the translation, but it certainly reads well and smoothly in the English.

The book is well illustrated with photos of his ship, his wife, Gerhard Vos, B.B. Warfield, the places he stayed and several newspaper clippings. There are useful footnotes; these help fill out the details often implied in the letters and provide brief biographical notes of the people he mentions.

The letters are sandwiched between a name index and a helpful introduction by Harinck. There is also the travel schedule.

All in all, this book provides a fascinating insight into the mind of Kuyper.

Abraham Kuyper

Another fascinating insight into Kuyper is provided by Bratt’s (2013) biography. The publishers have described this as the first full-scale biography in English. Although it is certainly not the first English biography, it is without doubt the most definitive one to date.

We have been reasonably served with Kuyper biographies, ranging from the hagiographic (e.g. Vanden Berg 1960, a

1.This is 2004.03 in Kuipers’s (2011) annotated bibliography.

translation from the Dutch) and under-critical (Praamsma (1985) – another translation) to the over-critical (e.g. Koch's (2006) – this has yet to be translated). Bratt (2013) steers a middle course. The first book-length biography written in English was by McGoldrick (2000): *God's renaissance man* drew largely upon Vanden Berg (1960) and Praamsma (1985) and focuses primarily on Kuyper's theological views. Bratt's perspective is wider.

The chapter titles give some flavour of the scope of Bratt's (2013) biography and of Kuyper's life and influence; these include: political theorist (*ibid*:ch. 7); Church reformer (*ibid*:ch. 8); Theologian of the church (ch 9); Theologian of culture (*ibid*:ch. 10); Christian democrat (*ibid*:ch. 11). Inevitably, a 450-page book will have its limitations. I would have liked to have seen a little more on Kuyper as founder of the Vrije Universiteit (VU University). The VU University and education played a key role in Kuyper's strategy and this, it seems to me, is slightly downplayed in Bratt's approach.

In his introduction Bratt (*ibid*:xxv) notes that Putschinger gave him some advice: 'First you'll love the man, then you'll detest him, finally you'll understand him. Then you're ready to write'. Bratt has gone through those stages and has a realistic view of the man: a 'great man but not a nice one' (*ibid*:xxi). This puts Bratt in a good place to write about Kuyper.

Bratt (2013) does an excellent job of placing Kuyper in his cultural and political context. He examines many of Kuyper's influences and explores the parallels between Kuyper and his contemporaries. Bratt draws upon many of the key Dutch works by Kuyper and others. There is a 14-page index and the bibliographic notes stretch to 44 pages. Particularly helpful are the descriptions and evaluations of Kuyper's writings, especially those not yet translated. Bratt is very good at placing these in their cultural milieu.

One frustration was the way the references have been done – there are no footnotes or endnotes, but a brief bibliographic essay for each chapter at the end of the book, this makes finding the source of a quotation rather difficult, though it does have the advantage of not breaking up the text with references.

The book is eminently readable. If you want to know more about Kuyper, this is perhaps the best place to start. I shall certainly be returning to it again and again. Bratt notes that it has taken many years to complete – it has been worth the wait!

Abraham Kuyper: An annotated bibliography

Abraham Kuyper: An annotated bibliography is the first full bibliography of Kuyper's work. It was originally written in Dutch by Kuipers (2011) but translated by Clifford Anderson for publication in English. Each entry is dated and numbered. The information for each entry comprises: title, place, publisher, year, the number of pages, size, edition, the

print run, the date of the preface, the name of the translator, where appropriate, as well as several paragraphs giving the background and overview of each piece. It strives to be as complete as possible, identifying all of Kuyper's printed works, the exceptions are the articles in *De Heraut* and *De Standaard*. If these were included, it would probably double its already massive 756 pages. Web articles are not included; neither are print-on-demand books.

If *Rooted and grounded* were included, the entry would look like this:

2013

Translations

.01 *Rooted & grounded: The Church as organism and institution*
Grand Rapids, MI, Christian's Library Press 2013. xxv + 45 pp.,
21.4 × 13.6 × 0.8 cm – £3.29/\$4.99.

Translation of: 1870.25.

Translator: Nelson D. Kloosterman.

Preface by translator: undated.

Preface by Kuyper dated: Amsterdam, 10 August 1870.

Run: unknown.

Published: 8 April 2013.

Binding: paperback.

ISBN: 978-1-938948-53-4.

On the translator, see 2011.01 (below).

Christian's Library Press is an imprint of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty. This was first published as a kindle e-book (23 March 2013) and then as a paperback. It contains a translator's preface, and a foreword and introduction by John Halsey Wood Jr. The cover was designed by Sharon VanLoosenoord. It was edited by Chris Robertson, Timothy J. Beals and Donna Huisjen.

It is a translation of Kuyper's inaugural sermon given in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam on 10 August 1870.

The book has an inscription: 'For Dr. Rimmer de Vries'.

Some items are listed as 'n.v' (*non vide*, not seen), but these are few and far between. This volume is an invaluable tool for Kuyper researchers.

It includes a foreword by Harinck, a chronology of key Kuyper dates – which strangely omits any family dates such as births or marriages.

Wisdom and wonder

Another book translated too late for inclusion in this bibliography is *Wisdom and wonder: Common grace in science and art* (Kuyper 2011). This is the first fruits of a major project to translate Kuyper's *De gemeene gratie* by the Common Grace Translation Project. Organisations working together on the Project are the Acton Institute and Kuyper College together with Calvin College, Fuller Theological Seminary, Mid-America Reformed Seminary and the Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College.

In *Wisdom and wonder: Common grace in science and art* there is a helpful introduction by Vincent Bacote and a translator's preface by Nelson Kloosterman. It obviously does not appear

in Kuipers's bibliography, but if it did, its entry might look something like this:

2011

Translations

.01 *Wisdom & wonder: Common grace in science & art.*

Grand Rapids, MI, Christian's Library Press 2011. 191 pp., 21.4 × 13.6 × 0.8 cm – £10.07 (pbk)/ \$24.99 (hbk).

Translation of: 1905.21.

Translator Nelson D. Kloosterman.

Preface by translator: 16 August 2011.

On the cover: Foreword by Gabe Lyons and Jon Tyson,

Introduction by Vincent Bacote.

Run: unknown.

Binding: Hardback

Published: 10 November 2011.

ISBN: 978-1937498962

Binding: Paperback

Paperback: 15 November 2011

ISBN: 978-1937498900

The translator, Nelson Deyo Kloosterman (Calvin Theological Seminary, MDiv, 1975; Theologische Hogeschool van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, Kampen, ThD, 1992), serves as Ethics Consultant for Worldview Resources International, St John's Indiana, USA. He is the co-translator of the forthcoming *Common grace* and *Pro rege* for the Common Grace Translation Project.

This is the first published part of the Common Grace Translation Project. It is a translation of *De gemeene gratie in wetenschap en kunst*. These were originally a separate edition of the final ten articles of the common grace series by Kuyper published in *De Heraut* from 5 May to 14 July 1901. The chapters deal with common grace in science and in the arts.

This book was first published in Dutch in 1905 as a supplement to *De gemeene gratie*.² These chapters had been accidentally left out by the publisher of the three volumes that comprised Kuyper's newspaper series on common grace from *De Heraut*³ and so were published separately.

The book is in two parts: Part 1 on science and Part 2 on art. The original title of the book was *De gemeene gratie in wetenschap en kunst* (*Common grace in science and art*). The difference with which science and art are treated is marked. In the science chapters there is much emphasis on two kinds of knowledge, two kinds of people – the antithesis; but this is largely missing from the section on art.

The pivotal chapter is the one on education. It acts like a hinge joining the chapters on science to those on art. The key focus in that chapter is the need for and the role of a Christian university. Kuyper was writing this series between 1895 and 1901. Uppermost in his mind would have been the education issue and the events that led to the founding of the VU University in

2.1905.21 in Kuipers's (2011) annotated bibliography.

3.The three volumes were: *De gemeene gratie. Eerste deel. Het geschiedkundig gedeelte* (1902.13); *De gemeene gratie. Tweede deel. Het leerstelling gedeelte* (1903.13); *De gemeene gratie. Derde Deel. Het practische gedeelte* (1905.08) (see Kuipers 2011). The three volumes covered historical, dogmatic and practical aspects of common grace. A partial translation is found in Bratt (1998).

1880. Here he is underlining the need for Christian education, an education that would prevent a public-private divide which leads to a schizophrenic Christianity.

Interesting is the difference Kuyper places on the level of science – he seems to be adopting Warfield's position – in that the so-called higher sciences, the social sciences, are more influenced by subjectivity than the lower mathematical and physical sciences.

The emphasis on the consummated kingdom in the discussion on art is another important emphasis of Kuyper's. Beauty has been affected by the fall, but common grace has preserved us from a complete loss of beauty. In the kingdom of glory there will be a higher degree of beauty; it will be restored and more. Art foreshadows and provides us with prophetic glimmerings of the New Jerusalem. It provides a form of bridge between the now and the not yet of the kingdom.

In particular, the book is about the role of common grace. It has a number of important aspects that Kuyper (2011) elucidates. In particular:

- it restrains the fall and tempers the curse
- it preserves us from a complete loss of beauty
- it assures the independence of art
- it offers strengthening of the revelation to the heart
- it is a form of mediated wisdom that lies between acquired knowledge and instinct
- without it, non-Christian science would provide us with misleading information.

This is an important work of Kuyper's. It is an important work for today. It reinforces the role of common grace and shows that science and art are important aspects of our Christian discipleship. Discipleship is not meant to be a part-time activity, something that we do on weekends and in our leisure time; discipleship is about redeeming all of life. As Kuyper (2011) puts it, 'thinking is a spiritual activity'.

Conclusion

These books all provide insights into the polymath and multi-faceted person who was Kuyper. The key theme that arises from these books is how important the church question was to Kuyper, and Wood (2013) has shown that it was the church issue that shaped his public theology.

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Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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