

ABRAHAM KUYPER : A CLOSE-UP

A.C. De Gooyer & Rudolf Van Reest
(A Treasury of the Personal and Spiritual Kuyper)



Translated & Edited By:
Jan H. Boer & Frances A. Boer-Prins

An Awesome Abraham

A Close-Up of Abraham Kuyper

By

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ORIGINAL COVER

Abraham Kuyper, the Awesome

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Original title: *Kuyper de Geweldige...van Dichtbij*

Authors: A. C. De Gooyer and Rudolf Van Reest

Publishers: Baarn, The Netherlands: Bosch & Keuning

No publication date is provided, but probably during the 1920s through 1940s

Translators: Dr. Jan H. Boer & Frances Ann Boer-Prins

Cover Art—Artist of original Dutch unknown

Revision of original cover by Cynthia Jenelle Kristiana Boer-Boyd

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2017

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE:

In the first draft of this translation, I translated “*de geweldige*” in the original title with three terms, “the Magnificent, the Awesome, the Terrible,” simply because the word has that broad range of meanings and thus allows it, but even more so, because Kuyper’s personality invites all three. In fact, I would say, it calls for all three! Being an extremely controversial figure, the choice of which meaning you want to assign to him depends on your evaluation and, even more important, your knowledge of the man; some detest(ed) him, while others adore(d) him. Before my first reading, I could not predict which of the three the authors actually meant.¹ However, I am now sure the authors intended “The Awesome.” That is in keeping with the fact that this book is unmistakably of a deservedly hagiographic nature, a happy antidote to all the negatives that have been published about this awesome Abraham. In the title of this translation, I avoid the controversy altogether.

There are many references in this translation to Kuyper’s other publications, including many short and obscure ones. Though these are not referenced in the original, one of the special contributions of this translation is that the URLs of most of these publications are provided in footnotes. This now makes them easily and readily available for readers and researchers. *This feature turns this translation into an important Kuyper resource.*

Please realize that all the footnotes in this translation are the translator’s. The Dutch original of this translation can be accessed at:

<http://www.delpher.nl/nl/boeken/view?coll=boeken&identifier=MMUBVU02%3A000000106%3A00003> as well as:

http://wipfandstock.com/media/wysiwyg/WS_AuthorGuide.pdf

Apart from this digital edition, I expect that this version will eventually also appear on < www.lulu.com > as well as on the Calvin College website Christian Classics Ethereal Library (www.ccel.org).

¹ For “the magnificent,” see paragraph “R” under the heading “What Others Say....” on this same website page.

Foreword

The reader should not expect a biography of Dr. Kuyper in this little book, nor a description of his significance for the Dutch people. If you are interested in these topics, numerous relevant publications have been published over the years so that you have virtually unlimited resources—at least, if you read Dutch!

In this book we turn to the private life of Dr. Kuyper, to his relationships with members of his family and intimate friends. The many anecdotal details that contribute to a more intimate insight into this amazing figure, represent the harvest of many conversations these authors enjoyed with all sorts of people who knew Kuyper personally and who cooperated with us with great generosity.

These people include the following: Ms. Van Deth, Messrs. H. L. Baarbe and M. J. Brusse, as well as the Revs. J. J. Berends, K. Fernhout, J. H. Gunning, C. W. J. van Lummel, J. D. van der Velden and W. F. A. Winckel. We owe them a debt of gratitude for the memories they shared with us either orally or in writing.

The photos that were taken were shared with us by Ms. J. H. Kuyper in that same spirit of deep generosity.

The Authors



Dr. Abraham Kuyper



The Kuyper Family—1885



The Kuyper Family, Including Grandchildren—1907

The Person Kuyper

Someone once said that to be great is to be misunderstood. This may be true, but it is equally true that the people worship their heroes when they recognize themselves in them.

Misunderstood and worshipped--Kuyper experienced both. He has been misunderstood, abused and hated, but just as much worshipped, loved and mythologized—both as the result of his struggles.

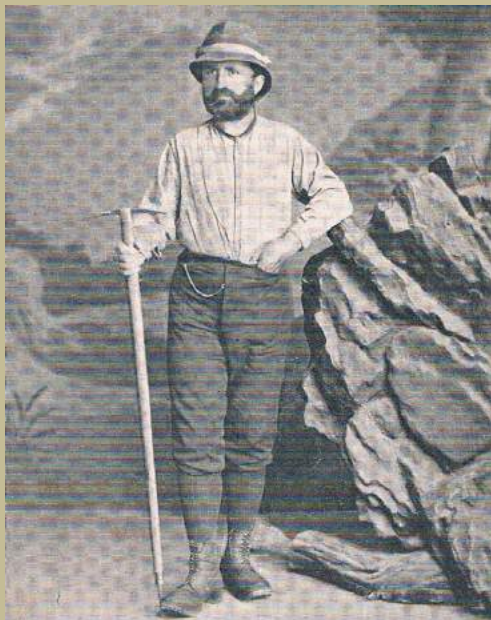
Here's this well-known and typical story about Kuyper, who was also an enthusiastic alpine mountain climber. On one of his mountain expeditions, he rather randomly met another Dutchman. As was always the case with Kuyper, they soon were involved in an animated conversation, while together they continued their climb upwards. The unknown Dutchman amused himself intensely with his brand new partner. At a certain point in time, he suddenly

realized they had not introduced themselves to each other. He gave his name and turned out to be a convinced liberal.

“I am Kuyper...,” said Abraham. The face of the liberal grew into a frown. Appalled, he stood still for a moment. Then he said, “But then I can’t possibly continue this climb with you....” He turned his back to Kuyper and left him behind, dumbfounded.

Kuyper was hated intensely by the liberals of his day. Someone who late in life was converted to Kuyper’s worldview through the latter’s work, wrote earlier, “In my family and environment Kuyper was always painted as dangerous to the state. In this environment of moving unanimity on this point the only difference of opinion was about the question whether this violent and terrible man should be locked up in a prison or in a psychiatric institution.”

In 1882, standing at the graveside of his father in Leiden, Kuyper delivered a vote of thanks in which he said, “May he now be wrapped within the small company of the living with the Lord, our God.” A young man among the crowd asked someone near him about the meaning of these words. “Ah,” the man answered,



Dr. Kuyper, the Mountain Climber

“he’s just talking for the benefit of all these simple people here. It is merely playing the keyboard of the people’s conscience, you understand?”

It is noteworthy that the suspicion that Kuyper himself was not serious about what he said, was common among his liberal opponents, including their leaders. A popular opinion was that he remained a liberal at heart, but had adopted a Calvinist pose in order to gain power. This is the only explanation for the deep animosity towards him; there is no other.

Fortunately, leading newspapers from the left, such as *Het Handelsblad*,” denied such foolishness at the time of Kuyper’s death. Elout wrote in his famous article, “*De groote Klokkenist*,” “It is not acceptable that a life like his would be regarded as total deceit, that he would not have believed his own doctrine, that the person and his utterances would be in constant tension with each other. Such darkness would not have been able to shed so much light and such a duality would not have been able to form such a unity among thousands of others.....”

The daily “*De Telegraaf*” also drew attention to this popular suspicion at Kuyper’s death, only to reject it forthwith with these words,

Neither Kuyper himself nor the place he occupied in the hearts of the people whom he empowered, can be understood without keeping in mind that the sturdy labour of this richly accomplished life was not merely the result of clever manipulation, as Kuyper’s frequent lack of political hindsight would often make us suspect, but that indeed he put his full heart in all of his work. For before anything else, Kuyper was primarily neither a scholar nor a statesman nor even a clergyman. But above all and primarily he was a captive to his own Calvinistic conviction.... Kuyper would never have become what he was because of his scholarship, which, admittedly, was encyclopedic, nor because of his indisputable intellect, if he had not concentrated all these powers on one primary goal, if this genial personality had not been completely subordinated to his conviction and if he had not known of his being caught up in a powerful grip. Here was the stimulant for his untiring labour far into his advanced age: the belief in his divine calling.

It is quite typical of Kuyper's persona that the above is still disputed. It proves how few people knew the real Kuyper. There was often bitter hate against his person and his work.

Another story. When a college student, at the urging of his mother who was an avid reader of Kuyper's *Heraut*, announced at school that he intended to enroll at the Free University, the rector, with tears in his eyes, implored him not to do so. When he asked his pastor during catechism class a question with which he was struggling, "The Free University, pastor, is that a work of God or of humans?" The pastor answered, "That school is neither from God nor from humans; it is from the devil!"

Another pastor who initially was strongly in favour of Kuyper, slowly found this support increasingly difficult. Till one day he pulled Kuyper's portrait from the wall, tore it into pieces and said to his wife, "Mina, I hope that Kuyper will soon go to heaven!"

At the time of tension in the land, during the days of church renewal, it was decided by his family that Kuyper would no longer personally pick up the daily mail from his box, for each mailing would contain an outpouring of hate, personal insults and just filth.

One day a former member of Kuyper's Utrecht congregation returned his portrait along with a ditty rhyming in Dutch:

Bram, at one time I liked you,
But after what you did in Amsterdam,
You no longer have a place in my album.

Furious hate also dripped from the drawings of Albert Hahn, of Braakensiek and of Raemaekers. "Restless scratches with the pencil..." according to his own characteristic way of speaking, a restlessness that in the days when the sword of principle was dulled and the dagger of slander was waved, it degenerated into a venomous passion.

Readers of Kuyper's letter in his bundle of cartoons,² might conclude that he would simply shake all this off and that he would laugh at the playful way in which he squared off with these cartoonists. Kuyper is like a block of granite; all this hostility does not hurt him, some might think. But this would be a big mistake. Here he displays the *public* aspect of his life: A politician must appear like a thick-skinned rhinoceros. He was anything but that!

When he was resting from a deep exhaustion with the Van Deth family in Brussels and was asked, "Are you not annoyed with these cartoons in the papers?" He responded with a clear, "Would you enjoy it? Am I not also but a human being?"

A human being after all? Who would have thought it! "Abraham the Terrible," but also a human being? He was a block of granite, a rock, which even in the most fiery Chamber debates could not be moved an inch. People used to be amazed whenever they saw in an intimate moment that he was indeed also a human person.

A liberal journalist who did not know Kuyper personally, was assigned to cover a meeting in which Kuyper was speaking more intimately with his followers. The journalist was full of admiration: "Kuyper stood up from his chair and held forth with a deeply emotional voice about the love of his people, till the tears came out of his eyes—the old immovable, unemotional Caesar betrayed the heart of a person...."

Ah, yes, the heart of a person! People were amazed whenever they discovered that in Kuyper. "Something childish characterized the great man," wrote Mr. Loeff, when it appeared for the umpteenth time that Kuyper was the victim of his own childish trust in people.

Something childish in Kuyper? Who would expect that?

After all, only a human being, with nothing human foreign to him!

²*Kuyper in de caricatuur*. 100 uitgezochte caricaturen. Met een brief van Dr. A. Kuyper. Met historische notities en een portret (Libellen-Series Nr. 216/217). Translation: *Kuyper in Caricature: 100 Selected Cartoons*. With a letter from Dr. A. Kuyper and with historical notes along with a portrait (Libellen Series No. 216/217). The book you are currently reading is no. 260 in that series.

The (translation of the original Dutch) title of this little book is, *Kuyper the Terrible—A Close-up*. Our intention is therefore to portray Kuyper as a *human* being.³

Memories of Dr. Kuyper

By A. C. de Gooyer

An Expressive Artist

Speaking of Kuyper as a journalist, Prof. van der Vlugt once said in German, “Mr. Organist, wherever you are not, the flutes are silent.” This was his way of saying that Kuyper was not only the great director of the “orchestra of the press,” but he was also a master in playing the music and image-rich Dutch language. That he would not use an irresponsible image should be clear from the following story.

At the handing over of the rectorate of the Free University, Kuyper delivered a lecture with the title “The Blurring of the Boundaries.”⁴ Since he had no time to edit the proofs, he requested his daughters to do the editing for him. He pressed upon their hearts the need to ensure very precisely that no disturbing typos would intrude. It is understandable that the editors felt highly honoured with this weighty assignment. Besides searching for typos, they also searched for potentially incorrect images, which Kuyper had used here generously.⁵ And sure enough, they found something. They read, “And that is when the generation of spiritual amphibians arose, who playfully dove into the depth of the waters of modernity, only to re-appear crawling onto the shore in order to graze in the tender clover fields of pious Christendom.” The daughters drew Kuyper’s

³If the public was amazed at displays of emotion on the part of Kuyper, I am amazed at that public. Kuyper wrote extensive meditational materials in his *Heraut* that, we are told, was avidly read by his followers. In at least some of these meditations, he could be very emotional. See his meditations I translated and published as [The Ascent of the Son - The Descent of the Spirit: 26 Meditations on Ascension and Pentecost](#). Published on this same Kuyperiana page (2014) as well as on: www.lulu.com and www.ccel.org.

⁴Original title: “*De verflauwing der grenzen.*” For an English translation, see James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 363-402.

⁵The original leaves it open whether Kuyper used images generously or even incorrect images. This sentence is an example of the trend towards sloppy sentences found so frequently in Dutch writings.

attention to this sentence, which, according to them, gave evidence of the “blurring of boundaries”⁶ on his part. For which animal is capable of diving into water and then graze on land?

But Kuyper was not shocked in any way about this alleged mistake and answered, “Have you never heard of a hippopotamus?” His daughters had to agree; the image was not wrong.

Another image, used by a member of the Chamber or House of Representatives from The Hague on November 30, 1874, who accused Kuyper of being vague or hazy in his proposals, was beautifully bounced back by Minister Kuyper, who countered,

The Honourable Representative ventured that my proposals, offered in the interests of the working class, were too hazy, nothing but mist and haze. *Accipio omen.*⁷ If you’ve ever been mountain climbing, then you know that there, too, hangs a lot of hazy mist, but mist that turns into scarce rich droplets. Out of those droplets, brooks form and little by little from these brooks eventually rivers are created. In the same way, from the mist that I have here created may droplets form that become a brook and may that brook eventually widen itself into a fresh stream that can carry our social life for a long time to come.

As a Journalist

Whenever Kuyper would pay a visit to the editorial staff of the *Standaard* newspaper, he would shake hands with everyone. He would always address his colleagues with “my boy” and when he’d leave it was always his “Ajuus.”⁸ His meetings with the chief editor, whether at the Kuyper home or during a walk, did not always end without difficult consequences. The staff were usually wary of

⁶Please appreciate the pun in relation to the title of his speech.

⁷Latin for something like “I accept the designation.”

⁸This parting greeting has no English equivalent. According to one website, when Napoleon finally left the Netherlands, people said “Ajuus,” something like “parapluis.” He understood from this that the Netherlands was a lost cause for him, for the Dutch spoke such poor French. He never returned, for a country that speaks no French is not worth accepting as a colony. What this story says about France’s African, North American and Asian colonies is another question.

such meetings, for there was always the chance to receive an assignment that was easy for Kuyper, but not quite so for those receiving it. But Kuyper thought such assignments quite normal. He would meet any objection with the remark, "Give it a try once."

Just before the beginning of a vacation, he turned to the editor of the foreign section, "I've noticed, my boy, that you've been paying attention to that Silver Movement in America.⁹ That's a weighty issue. You should write a few articles about it to make people understand what it is all about. Then, at the end, I will write a final article containing some conclusions."

The editor was more than a little shocked when he heard what his assignment was going to be.

"But professor, I am not involved in that. I don't know anything about it."

"That doesn't matter." Kuyper answered, "First, do some research on the subject. It will work out alright. Ajuus."

Before the editor had even begun his research, the Kuyper article with his conclusions already appeared on his desk. It was placed in the paper after the informative introductory views of the young journalist.

Not long afterwards an expert in coins appeared at the editorial office, who asked for the articles on the American Silver Movement. Full of pride, the editor placed the articles before him. The scholar scoured quickly through them, but almost immediately turned his attention to Kuyper's concluding article and, after a while, said, "I wish that I could write such an article. What do its little misconstructions and mistaken details matter? Kuyper here opens new perspectives and discovers possibilities that have never occurred to me."

The same young journalist colleague of Kuyper tells us that Kuyper frequently offered approval. Notes like: "Proceed as you are" or "You know your stuff; I'm leaving it all in your hands," were not unusual. However, the opposite could also

⁹The Free **Silver Movement** was a political coalition of Western **silver** miners and Midwestern and Southern farmers who supported an inflationary monetary policy by using the free coinage of **silver** for a bimetallic standard for U.S. currency.

happen. It might not be long after an expression of praise, a note would appear like this one, "With your article you have totally demolished the props under the anti-revolutionary constitutional law."

These notes were always written on pages from a notebook. They would always begin with: "Mr. X" and end with the well-known "K." One could always notice directly whether the note had to do with editorial affairs. If not, then the memo would begin with "*Amice*." If it turned out to be a reprimand, which one fellow professor once called "a thunderbolt from Jerusalem," the recipient could immediately read, "Before I go any further, I would like to know...."

But the worst of all was receiving a closed, sometimes sealed, envelope addressed as "the Honourable Mr...," followed by the name with the correct initials of the journalistic sinner. That could bring problems. However, it would often end well if Kuyper gained the impression that the mistake had been made in good faith. Then he would often turn a blind eye to it.

It once happened that a *Standaard* editor in charge of the critical press column, took over an article from one of the provincial anti-revolutionary papers written by Mr. L. W. C. Keuchenius, who attacked Kuyper's politics on a given issue. A liberal paper had tricked the headquarters of the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) to take over that article, "but it would be careful in doing so, for the pious paper took care that the readers would not be made aware of it." This went too far as far as the youthful editor was concerned and he placed it in his press column with a peppery subtitle.

The following morning Kuyper showed up early at the office. He headed straight for the culprit with a terse, "May I speak with you for a moment?" The journalist followed his Chief Editor with lead in his steps to another room. That's where the storm broke loose.

"Why did you place a piece in my paper yesterday in which I am accused of lack of faith?"

"But professor, I could not stand the scoffing of that liberal Arnhem paper. I wanted to show that paper.... You've seen my subscript, haven't you?"

“I want nothing to do with your excuses; it was a mistake.” Then he walked out of the room, apparently furious. But at the door, he waited a moment..., he looked at his colleague and gave him a firm handshake, a greeting that served as notice that the storm had dissipated into a clear blue sky.

Years later, when Kuyper’s handwriting was hardly legible anymore so that there was no printer left who could decipher the regular lines, the same journalist was assigned to copy all the “grand old man’s” work. This was a job far from easy. But he considered it an honourable task, for he was aware that Kuyper himself was proud that this colleague could read his writing, even when the author himself could no longer make sense of his own hieroglyphics. Occasionally it became a matter of guesswork that left the two of them peering at the fine script and deliberating about what it could be saying or what it had to say. Once Kuyper heaved a sigh, “I wish I could write like you” and, “If you can’t read it, I don’t even have to try!”

Kuyper’s Working Style

Kuyper’s journalistic work began on Sunday mornings. That’s when he wrote, for example, his meditations for his paper, *De Heraut* or *The Herald*, which for many people throughout the country, as for him, was read with deep devotion on Sundays.¹⁰ The main articles were written one after another with careful instructions as to when they were to be published. After all, he would write them a half year ahead of time. For some time, he also wrote the national news in *De Heraut*. At that time, his contributions were so copious that they could have issued two editions per week. For *De Standaard* he would also frequently write his articles far ahead of time. When a political surprise made it necessary, he would publish an unexpected article as well, though this was an exception. Those dubbed “*driestarren*” were written every day.¹¹ Corrections were usually made in

¹⁰For additional details of these writings, I refer you to my “History and Nature of Kuyper Meditations Translated, Edited and Introduced by Jan H. Boer” also on this page of the website.

¹¹The reference to these “*driestarren*,” literally translatable as “three stars,” is somewhat explained and demonstrated in the following: Th. Heemskerk, *Een woord over de genummerde driestarren van Dr. Kuyper*. Rotterdam: Libertas, 1915. It can be accessed at < <https://archive.org/details/eenwoordoverdege00heem> >.

the evening, for writing in the daytime was all too often interrupted by colleagues or visiting politicians.

But once Kuyper was sitting at his large desk, he would be totally absorbed in his work and no one, with a rare exception, would be allowed to interrupt him. People who have seen him in this working mode tell us how restlessly his hands would move across the page, writing uninterrupted. Now and then a book would be consulted, but Kuyper was not a detail person; it was the large picture that he would describe. In an unending stream, the words appeared on the paper; those words became complete sentences; the sentences, thoughts, ideas, plans; the latter into instructions. It was admirable how he could write a major article of three voluminous columns without even a single deletion, improvement or even having looked up from his paper for a momentary rest. Kuyper had a firm hand: When he would compare the handwriting from his student years with that of later dates, something he himself enjoyed doing, little difference could be detected. However, for those who were not introduced to these clear letters, it was, as we already wrote, not possible to decipher his script. One day during the time he was Minister in the Government, a Memorandum from the National Printer was returned to him with the request that someone from *De Standaard* come to The Hague to read the Minister's Memorandum.

Whenever Kuyper would begin a larger project, he would begin with research in either his own well-supplied library or some outside place. The number of work

Several disputations were published in which Kuyper's colleagues vigorously, if not bitterly, disagreed with him and openly aired their grievances in such publications as are found on the websites below. Here Kuyper hardly appears "awesome" or "magnificent;" "terrible" might be more appropriate here.

< <https://archive.org/details/deheiligeschrift00gunn> >

<[http://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/results?query=type%3D%22artikel%22+AND+\(%22Een+woord+over+de+genu+mmerde+driestarren+van+Dr.+Kuyper%22\)+AND+\(\(%22Heemskerk%22\)+AND+\(%22Th.%22\)\)&page=1&coll=ddd](http://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/results?query=type%3D%22artikel%22+AND+(%22Een+woord+over+de+genu+mmerde+driestarren+van+Dr.+Kuyper%22)+AND+((%22Heemskerk%22)+AND+(%22Th.%22))&page=1&coll=ddd) >

< https://books.google.ca/books?id=bdXRAAAAMAAJ&source=gbs_book_similarbooks >

days would be determined, the material divided and it would be decided how many hours per day would have to be reserved for this project. Once all that was decided, he would stick to it with iron resolve.

Even during his breaks, Kuyper was methodical. In the summers, he would leave around mid-July, often to high mountainous areas. He always stayed six weeks, conducted no correspondence and received no newspapers. Copies of *De Heraut* were the only signs of life. Even on Sunday mornings during the vacations, he wrote these meditations, searched for the appropriate text from a Bible that was especially procured for this purpose, and which, after years of use, was found full of underlining along with the dates these meditations would be placed.

Kuyper the Wanderer

When you entered Kuyper's study in Amsterdam, via a short, dark hallway, you would notice a series of books that drew attention due to their red spines. They were the famous Baedekers travel guides, of which he owned a large number. They were proof of his wanderlust and his scholarly tourism that for him was both an educational endeavour and diversion.

Kuyper visited many countries. He stayed in the USA, around the Mediterranean Sea, in Germany, France, Belgium, U. K., Italy, Austria-Hungary and Greece. He loved visiting in southern Europe, but no less in the north.

He traveled in Norway and Sweden, not only in order to enjoy the charming beauty of these countries, but also to benefit from the language. Doing so enabled him to write about the works of Reuterdahl, Bring, Eklund and Johanson in his *Encyclopaedia der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*.¹² He never reached Russia. It is not generally known that he was once called to pastor the Dutch church in Saint Petersburg.

A traveling companion tells us about Kuyper during his recreational tours in Switzerland and in Tirol. There wasn't a more jovial, cordial, considerate and more cheerful fellow traveler than he. He would be dressed in the costume of the local

¹²Partial translation in *Principles of Sacred Theology*. Transl. J. Hendrik de Vries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954.

mountain community, be given a backpack and provided with a climbing rope, because he never made use of the rope of his guides. When it came to excursions, he lived by the day and by the inspiration of the moment.

He did not know many of the other travelers he met. He was not easily embarrassed and did not bother with some of the seemingly more foolish local conventions. He was truly *away* or *out* and insisted on his freedom. When it would come to him to dine in a hotel, no matter the dress protocol, he would appear in ordinary sports clothes and did not worry in the least about the curious glances of other guests and moved about as if he were dressed in custom-made evening attire.

Kuyper especially enjoyed trekking. He would be a real sportsman and did not accord his fellow travelers the pleasure of discussing politics with him. The professor and minister would withdraw into his shell; here he was the trekker Kuyper. Often ahead of his fellow climbers, surpassing his guides in foot speed or in his quickness of overcoming difficult obstacles—in all of these he apparently never tired.

He found his greatest travel pleasure in the world of glaciers. Extremely careful and not taking any risks, he was completely acquainted with climbing techniques at the highest elevation and would help his companions as if a second guide. On the descent he could run down the mountain, quick as a young man. During the evening, after a trek of eight to ten hours, he still had sufficient energy after supper to take a brief walk through the mountain village and be ready early in the morning for a new journey.

Kuyper at Home

It was Kuyper's habit to enter the family room at nine in the morning. He would wear a gray-brown morning gown with colourful slippers. In his hand he would hold a bundle of letters and a pile of newspapers just taken out of the mailbox, something he would empty himself. His family always heard him coming due to Father's somewhat slouchy gait and the rattling of the letterbox keys.

As Kuyper entered the room, everyone would rise from their chairs and wish him a good morning, often with a quick glance at the letter bundle in the hope there would be something for her or him. The letters would then be handed out, after which Kuyper would withdraw to his study with letters meant for him. It was there that he would take his breakfast. From there on till about 12:30, when it was coffee time in the family room, they would hardly see him. Coffee time was very short, for it coincided with the time for meeting people and the moment a messenger from *De Standaard* would pick up the corrected proofs. These were usually found under the globe in the study. Were there none there, then there were none to pick up. This established custom was once made clear by one messenger to another as follows:

“You see, these are the items, the little papers with writing on the one side and nothing on the other. You see that?”

“Sure.”

“Now then, you must deliver them, for they are for *De Standaard*.”

“Okay.”

“These here are letters. They must also go into the portfolio”

“Sure.”

“And these here you have to throw into the mailbox.”

“Okay.”

“Whatever lies there, lies under the globe and never any other place.”¹³

While the children were still young, coffee time was often used for acrobatic exercises. They took the form of Father carrying his children through the room, a form of recreation which provided him and his children the greatest fun.

¹³Unfortunately, the humour in the conversation cannot be caught by the English, since the speech is in the local regional speech, which is always humorous to the outsider but cannot be translated and retained.

At lunch time, polemics reached their highest between Father and the children. It required great skill to participate in the debate, for one had to be really sure of himself in order not to be defeated by Father in a skirmish in front of the others. Even the most advanced in the Kuyper family seldom succeeded to pin down “the chairman of the table,” to the great amusement of Kuyper, who himself often evoked the war of words.

After lunch the family would take leave of the family room, unless it be possible sometime to enjoy a cup of tea together at eight o’clock. However, this was usually a silent affair, since everyone was absorbed in reading newspapers.

At this time, Kuyper would usually go out for his evening stroll, which he regularly did during his Amsterdam years. The route would take him to Schollenbrug, the Watergraafsmeer or to Zeeburg. No one was allowed to accompany him on these lone walks. Kuyper would use them for his study, for thinking out an article or to solve the issue of the day.

Occasionally throughout the year the entire family would take a walk together in the afternoon to these same places. Kuyper would then undergo a storm of questions from his children and was expected to solve all sorts of issues. He would tell them stories from his youth and discuss burning issues with his children in such a way that even the youngest would understand.

And then there were the feast day evenings in the house, when, for example, someone had a birthday. At such times Kuyper would spend considerable time with his family, as also on New Year’s Eve, when everyone would be home.

Memories by Dr. Johan H. Gunning

“I have always held the highest regard for Kuyper, even though this was not always shared with members of my parental family. Certainly not by those who joined the family early in my life,” as Dr. Gunning told us just before this little book went to press. “I well remember the vehemence of the struggle when I said

with reference to the famous “*lintjeskwestie*,”¹⁴ “I so regret this for the sake of the Kingdom of God.” An acquaintance of ours answered,

“But Johan, what does this man have to do with the Kingdom of God?”

“Quite apart from the estrangement that had developed between them, my father honoured Kuyper and, in spite of the differences of opinion between them, reserved a place for Kuyper in his heart.”

Personally, I’ve had a lot to do with Kuyper over the years. The first time was when I had to deliver a letter from my father to him. Kuyper was a member of the Chamber of Representatives and lived on the Bezuidenhoutschen Street in The Hague. When I was ushered into his room, I saw him with two editors of *De Standaard* with whom he was engaged in a lively conversation about an article in that paper. He offered various suggestions as to its placement and quickly scanned the article, making some corrections here and there. He read the whole document in the blink of an eye and immediately gave his opinion. While he was thus engaged, I noticed that he would constantly pick up a bottle and smell it. This so aroused my curiosity that, when it was my turn and I had handed over the letter, I could not resist asking him about this little bottle.

“My good boy,” Kuyper said, “For three days and three nights I have not slept and I am afflicted by a ‘*tic douloureux*.’¹⁵ This afternoon I have to deliver a lecture in the House and so I need to stay fresh.” This particular lecture turned out to be one of his famous speeches, according to Rev. Gunning. I felt that keeping awake after such a prolonged working period admirable. What a sense of endurance!

Since then, I have not had that much personal contact with him, but we did have extensive correspondence. When I was pastor in Wilhelminadorp, I would write letters from Zeeland province in the *Nieuwe Sprokkelaar*,” a Christian weekly. My

¹⁴This was a case in which Prime Minister Kuyper was accused of corruption. Dutch readers are referred to the following websites for a fuller explanation:

http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/bouw029kron01_01/bouw029kron01_01_0466.php

<http://www.digibron.nl/search/detail/012dce87a48f80297132b8c5/de-lintjeskwestie-van-de-geweldig>

¹⁵**Tic douloureux** or trigeminal neuralgia is a severe, stabbing pain to one side of the face. It stems from one or more branches of the nerve that supplies sensation to the face, the trigeminal nerve.

articles drew Kuyper's attention and he offered me an editorial position at *De Standaard*. He indicated I would be writing under his supervision and receive a good salary. It sounded good to me, but my father did not approve and so nothing came of it. Later I did get "in Dutch" with him occasionally, when, for example, I wrote a critical piece about the history of Israel. He thought it questionable, he wrote me. Nevertheless, I always remained in his good graces and he in mine. Once he requested an opportunity to hold a lecture in the Dom Church in Utrecht.¹⁶ I was the only one in the Council that favoured it.

Regardless how deep the difference of opinion was between my father and Kuyper, on his death bed my father was consoled by Kuyper's writings. In that mood, I wrote Kuyper a letter inviting him to write a letter to my father. He never did, though I do not know why. After I read the notice of Kuyper's death, I thought about my father and said, "Now that they are 'up there,' how these two will shake hands with each other and smile about all the passion with which they treated each other here on earth."

To these personal memories of Rev. Gunning, son of J. H. Gunning, we should add here what Kuyper once wrote after quite a heated dispute with Dr. Gunning, "If tomorrow we do a glacier walk together and our rope broke and we would slide together into an ice crevice where we would surely die, would we not know ourselves to be one in prayer and be reconciled together in the blood of our Lord, embrace each other chest to chest and together descend into the death of frost?" Further, "Isn't it possible to hold different opinions, disagree with your opponent, entertain doubt as to whether his deeds were motivated by the highest considerations, have questions with respect to his words and writings, without failure to thank God for the gift that He gave that person?"

Bibliographic Biography

In a special edition of *De Standaard* that was published to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of this paper and of which only a few copies were printed, the

¹⁶St. Martin's Cathedral, **Utrecht**, or Dom Church (Dutch: **Domkerk**), was the cathedral of the Roman Catholic Diocese of **Utrecht** during the Middle Ages.

late Ms. H. S. S. Kuyper wrote the following biographical biography of her father, in which she wove the titles of his publications throughout the text.¹⁷

“What should we do?”¹⁸ Kuyper exclaimed at the beginning of his career, with his spirit and heart enriched with the treasures that getting acquainted with *Calvin and a Lasco*¹⁹ had bestowed on him. *The Church Visitation at Utrecht*²⁰ and, afterwards, *De Nutsbeweging*²¹ soon provided him with enough work, or, more accurately, engaged him in struggle that soon found its goal and motto in the *liberation of the church*.²² More than once, in the struggle between

¹⁷Since she used the Dutch titles, it is difficult to translate this document with full accuracy. I feel free to take whatever liberties are required, while trying to stay as close as possible to the original. My translation is not likely to adequately reflect the masterpiece Ms. Kuyper produced. I will merely do the best I can without further ado. I will, however, indicate the original Dutch title if I can find it; sometimes I cannot. The original Latin version of this book can be accessed at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/disquisitiohisto00kuyper#page/n5/mode/2up>.

¹⁸*Wat moeten wij doen? Het stemrecht aan ons zelve houden of den kerkeraad machtigen? Vraag bij de uitvoering van Art. 23 toegelicht door Dr. A. Kuyper, V.D.M. te Beest.* Culemborg, A.J. Blom. 1867. Accessible at: <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/broch/akwatmtnwdn.htm>.

¹⁹*Calvijn en a Lasco*. For a 150th anniversary celebration of this book, go to <http://www.rd.nl/kerk-religie/studie-a-lasco-bracht-kuyper-in-londen-1.551125>. For a summary of the book's content, go to <http://www.brill.com/abraham-kuyper-commentatio-1860-young-kuyper-about-calvin-lasco-and-church-2-vols>. The original Latin version can be accessed at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/disquisitiohisto00kuyper#page/n5/mode/2up>

²⁰*De Kerkvisitatie te Utrecht*. This book can be accessed at: https://books.google.ca/books?id=S2dfAAAACAAJ&pg=PA685&lpg=PA685&dq=kuyper+de+kerk+visitatie+te+utrecht&source=bl&ots=3vG_KkqmPn&sig=dRLSo2WJxXgUTB7gyDFKo_cz0qA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjKoMG40JvQAHVly2MKHdaJCL4Q6AEIKjAD#v=onepage&q&f=false

²¹*De "Nuts"-Beweging*. Amsterdam: H. Hoveker, 1869. I do not know enough about this “beweging” or movement to translate the title, but it was one towards which Kuyper was highly ambiguous, both sympathetic and negative. The book can be accessed at < https://books.google.ca/books?id=i3lfAAAACAAJ&pg=PA15&lpg=PA15&dq=nutsbeweging&source=bl&ots=I6pF_RAIRO&sig=bsU5aBgYh4iqmH5c2HiVd4oD5n8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiz17qNgpjQAHLhFQKHSLiAYMQ6AEILjAD#v=onepage&q=nutsbeweging&f=false >.

²²*Vrijmaking der kerk*, a series of articles reprinted from *De Heraut*. Amsterdam: H. de Hoogh, 1869. Can be accessed from: https://archive.org/stream/vrijmakingderker00kuyper/vrijmakingderker00kuyper_djvu.txt.

conservatism and orthodoxy,²³ did a call on the folk conscience²⁴ gather fellow travelers under the raised banner.

Before long he accepts the *struggle about the free control over ecclesiastical properties*²⁵ while *the pearl in the wrong shell*²⁶ has now actually been moved into the appropriate one, with an inscription above its earlier location, warning, “*modernism is a mirage.*”²⁷ That move is further clarified *confidentially*²⁸ for whoever wants to hear it. Since *uniformity is the curse of modern life*,²⁹ Dr. Kuyper

²³ *Conservatisme en orthodoxie: Afscheidsrede uitgesproken in de Domkerk te Utrecht, 31 Juli 1870.* Amsterdam, H. de Hoogh & Co., [1870]. Can be accessed at: <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/prk/akconsorth.html>. Afscheidsrede uitgesproken in de Domkerk te Utrecht, 31 Juli 1870. Amsterdam, H. de Hoogh & Co., [1870]. For an English translation, see James D. Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998 (?), pp. 65-86.

²⁴ *Een beroep op het volksgeweten. Rede ter opening van de Algemeene Vergadering der “Vereeniging voor Christelijk Nationaal Schoolonderwijs”, gehouden te Utrecht, den 18den Mei, 1869.* Amsterdam: B.H. Blankenberg Jr., 1869. Can be accessed at: <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/broch/akvolksgeweten.html>.

²⁵ *Het vrije beheer der kerkelijke goederen.* I have not been able to find a copy of this document.

²⁶ *De perel in verkeerde schelp: Dr. Pierson's jongste gidsartikel, 1871.* Accessible at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/eenperelinverkee00kuyper/page/40/mode/2up>

²⁷ *Het modernism een fata morgana (op het christelijk gebied).* Accessible at: <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/broch/akfatam.html>. English translation by James D. Bratt (ed.), “Modernism: A Fata Morgana in the Christian Realm” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998 (?), pp. 87-124.

²⁸ *Confidentie: Schrijven aan den weled. Heer J.H. van der Linden.* Amsterdam: Höveker & Zoon, 1873. This document is accessible at: <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/broch/akconfid1.html>. English translation by James D. Bratt (ed.), “Confidentiality: Narrative of Kuyper's Conversion,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1870, pp. 45-64.

²⁹ *Eenvormigheid, de vloek van het moderne leven: Lezing, gehouden in het Odéon te Amsterdam, 22 April 1869.* Accessible at <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/broch/akeenv2.html>. English translation by James D. Bratt (Ed.), “Uniformity: The Curse of Modern Life,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 19-44.

demanded *liberty*³⁰ for every form of development, taking care that *unity*,³¹ which is the only way to power, is not endangered by it. *Calvinism, its origin and guarantee of our constitutional liberties*³² sets its stamp on *our house*,³³ while it also serves to spark the struggle about *the school question* and encourages us to formulate *our programme*³⁴ in which we affirm our principles over against those of *Liberals and Jews*,³⁵ Catholics and socialists. But the Calvinism of previous centuries must also be cleansed of oblivion and misunderstanding. *The Leiden professors*³⁶ are restored to honour and after the *revision of the revision legend*,³⁷

³⁰*Vrijheid: Rede der bevestiging van Dr. Ph. S. Van Ronkel, gehouden den 23 Maart, 1873, in de Nieuwe Kerk te Amsterdam.* Amsterdam: H. de Hoogh, 1873. This document can be accessed at: <https://veiling.catawiki.nl/kavels/4511929-religie-abraham-kuyper-vrijheid-1873>

³¹*Eenheid: Rede er bevestiging van Ds. Van Son, gehouden 31 Augustus, 1873, in de Nieuwe Kerk te Amsterdam.* Amsterdam: H. de Hoogh, 1873. This document can be accessed at: https://books.google.ca/books?id=w5NVAAAACAAJ&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=kuyper+eenheid&source=bl&ots=p0pgGwLppS&sig=03S5Gx73wDnX8x2J4JrSIW_5-7U&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiZy8vQvJzQAhULhIQKHavdD_gQ6AEIQjAI#v=onepage&q=kuyper%20eenheid&f=false

³²*Het Calvinisme oorsprong en waarborg onzer Constitutioneele Vrijheden: Een Nederlandsche gedachte.* Amsterdam: B. van der Land, 1874. This document can be accessed at: <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/broch/akcvoor.html>. An English translation is that of James D. Bratt (Ed.), "Calvinism: Source and Stronghold of Our Constitutional Liberties--History and Principles of Calvinist Political Conviction," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 279-322.

³³*Ons Huis.* Amsterdam: H. de Hoogh, 1873. This document can be accessed at: <https://ia800300.us.archive.org/14/items/onshuis00kuyper/onshuis00kuyper.pdf>

³⁴*Ons Program.* Hilversum: Hoveker & Wormser, 1907. This document can be accessed at: http://www.dbnl.org/arch/kuyper002onsp01_01/pag/kuyper002onsp01_01.pdf

³⁵*Liberalisten en Joden.* Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1878. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/liberalistenenjo00kuyper> The English translation is by Jann Schlebush, *Liberalists & Jews*, translated from *De Standaard*. Amsterdam: J. H. Kruijt, 1878. This work can be accessed at: <http://ironink.org/?p=4554>

³⁶*De Leidsche Professoren en de executeurs der Dortsche Nalatenschap: Verweerschrift.* Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1879. This document can be accessed at: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=K4IVAAAACAAJ&pg=PA34&lpg=PA34&dq=de+leidse+professoren&source=bl&ots=Twq22egzjg&sig=izsfefbcaxXEeQZnrj2AnvYQXNg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwui1anQnZ3QAhVIIIQKHVB2BT8Q6AElSjAG#v=onepage&q=de%20leidse%20professoren&f=false>

³⁷*Revisie der revisie-legende.* Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1879. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/revisiederrevisi00kuyper>

it appears that the *Calvinism and revision*³⁸ that intends to oppose Calvinism cannot co-exist.

True, more than once his *prayer for a double correction*³⁹ was rejected by his straying brothers, but *strictly speaking*⁴⁰ Kuyper was more concerned to protect *sphere sovereignty*⁴¹ than on countering the false opinions of others, as, for example, *contemporary Scripture critique*.⁴² *Ex ungue leonem*,⁴³ even with its claws receded, remains fearful to the lion. Though the prospects of the students of the Free University were not bright, the example of the fathers such as *Franciscus Junius*⁴⁴ and *Gijsbertus Voetius*,⁴⁵ spurred them on to persevere. The

³⁸*Calvinisme en revisie*. Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1891. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/calvinisemeenrevi00kuyper>

³⁹*Bede om een dubbele "corrigendum" aan Dr. A. W. Bonsveld*. Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1880. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/bedeomeendubbelc00kuyper>

⁴⁰*Strikt genomen.* "Het recht tot universiteitstichting". Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1880. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/striktgenomenhet00kuyper>

⁴¹*Souvereiniteit in eigen kring: Rede ter inweiding van de Vrije Universiteit, 20 October, 1880*. Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1880. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/souvereiniteiti00kuypergoog>. English translation "Sphere Sovereignty: Inaugural Address at the Free University—The Summa of Kuyper's Thought" in James D. Bratt (Ed), *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 461-490. An online version is accessible at: http://www.reformationalpublishingproject.com/pdf_books/Scanned_Books_PDF/SphereSovereignty_English.pdf. Transl. George Kamps.

⁴²*De Hedendaagsche Schriftcritiek in haar bedenkelijke strekking voor de Gemeente des levenden Gods Rede bij het overdragen van het rectoraat der Vrije Universiteit gehouden den 20sten October 1881*. Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1881. This article can be accessed at: <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/broch/akhedscrit.html>

⁴³*Ex ungue leonem ofte Dr. Doedes' method van symbol-uitlegging op een enkel cardinal punt getoetst*. Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1882. This article can be accessed at: <http://www.digibron.nl/search/detail/43afdb69eb070bf74658b54d1cf31a80/ex-ungue-leonem-ofte-dr-doedes-methode-van-symbool-intlegging-op-cen-enkel-cardinal-punt-geoetst/5>

⁴⁴D. Francisci Junii, *Opuscula Theologica Selecta*. Amsterdam: 1882. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/opusculatheologi00juni>.

⁴⁵*Gijsbertus Voetius--Voetius' Catechisatie over den Heidelbergschen Catechismus. Naar Poudroyen's editie van 1662 op nieuw uitgegeven, bij ons publiek ingeleid, en met enkele aantekeningen voorzien door Dr. A. Kuyper*. Rotterdam: Gebroeders Hoge, 1891. 2 delen, 598, (2) 599-1227. This document can be accessed at: http://www.antiqubook.com/search.php?action=search&author=Gisbertus+Voetius&l=en&owner_id=-csmx&sort_type=asc&sort_order=author_name+asc%2C+title_first_word&page_num=2.

struggle of the people of the Transvaal in South Africa, memorialized in the *Plancius lecture*,⁴⁶ led to similar discussions: Better to separate *iron and loam*⁴⁷ for good than that iron would not dare to exist independently without the assistance of loam.

Much was attributed to Kuypers during his career that he *neither meant nor said*,⁴⁸ especially when, after *the threatening conflict*⁴⁹ about the church, *the conflict had arrived*.⁵⁰ *The shrugging off of the yoke of the synodical hierarchy*⁵¹ was

For information in English, see J. A. B. Jongeneel, "The Missiology of Gijsbertus Voetius: The First Comprehensive Protestant Missiology of Missions." *Calvin Theological Journal* 26, no. 1 (1991): pp. 47-79. This article can be reviewed at:

<http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/t-u-v/voetius-gijsbertus-gijsbert-voet-1589-1676/>

⁴⁶*Plancius-Rede*. Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1884. This document can be accessed at:

<https://archive.org/details/planciusrede00kuyp>

⁴⁷*Ijzer en leem—Rede ter inleiding op het gebed voor de enige hoogeschool hier te lande die op God's Woord gegrond staat*. Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1885. This document can be accessed at:

<https://archive.org/details/ijzerenleemredet00kuyp>

⁴⁸*Bedoeld noch gezegd: Schrijven aan Dr. J. H. Gunning*. Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1885. This document can be accessed at:

<http://www.delpher.nl/nl/boeken/view?coll=boeken&identificatie=MMUBVU02%3A000009557>

⁴⁹*Het dreigend conflict: Memorie van de gevolmachtigde commissie uit den Amsterdamse kerkeraad ter voorlichting der gemeente in zake de attesten voor de commissie gesteld*. Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1886. This document can be accessed at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=tnxWAAAaAAJ&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=kuyper+heterdreigend+conflict&source=bl&ots=rtdirmjGaU&sig=xpL7YRQ9Nst4FGbn-KABocC_RNU&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi3wa_Lw5_QAhVD5GMKHdIfCvIQ6AEIjAB#v=onepage&q=kuyper%20het%20dreigend%20conflict&f=false

⁵⁰*Het conflict gekomen: Complot en revolutie*. Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1886. This document can be accessed at:

<https://archive.org/details/hetconflictgekom00kuyp>

⁵¹*Afwerping van het juk der synodale hiërarchie*. Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1886. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/afwerpingvanhetj00kuyp>

taken seriously, especially after *Dr. Kuyper before the Synod*⁵² had spoken his *last word to the conscience of the members of Synod*⁵³ without success.

As a good friend, Kuyper has brought *Calvinism and art*⁵⁴ to the podium and further proved in many ways that Calvinism does not hide *the secret of real study*⁵⁵ from its sons.

*Honour is delicate.*⁵⁶ Thus when an attacker is also *imprecise*,⁵⁷ Kuyper, no matter how peace loving in his heart, knows the art of sharpening his sword like a knight. His *recommendation in the House*⁵⁸ from two periods, are definitely not of the least importance for their great motions in the social sphere, as for example, the

⁵²*Dr. Kuyper voor de synode: Een bijdrage tot de kennis van onze synodale organisatie.* Amsterdam: J. A. Wormsel, 1886. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/voordesynodeeene00kuypp>.

⁵³*Laatste word tot de consciëntie van de leden der synode door de vervolgde leden van den kerkeraad van Amsterdam.* Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1886. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/laatstewoordtotd00kuypp>.

⁵⁴*Het Calvinisme—Zes Stone lezingen.* Amsterdam: 1899. This document can be accessed at: http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/kuyp002calv01_01/index.php. English translation--*Lectures on Calvinism: Six Lectures Delivered at Princeton University under Auspices of the L. P. Stone Foundation.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931, 1994. Translator not indicated.

⁵⁵*Scholastica of 't geheim van echte studie.* Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1889. This document can be accessed at: https://books.google.ca/books?id=UBRpAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=kuyper+het+geheim+van+echte+studie&source=bl&ots=AmSXVaDFWF&sig=r4hrFFdz37jfl0xD78CW9EATzw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwje147p7p_QAhWj0FQKHZM3APgQ6AEIKjAD#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁵⁶*Eer is teer: Tegen Mr. W. H. de Beaufort's gidsartikel "De deputatenvergadering."* Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1889. This article can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/eeristeertegenmr00kuypp>.

⁵⁷*"Onnauwkeurig?"—aan "Het vaderland" in zake Mr. W. H. Beaufort's verweerschrift.* Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1889. This document can be accessed at: https://books.google.ca/books?id=DIRVAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA4&lpg=PA4&dq=kuyper+onnauwkeurig&source=bl&ots=dmyxeagyBz&sig=iNYiCOBKhcY2eql0y_7opH98hM&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEWiX35HWuqDQAhWChlQKHbpAD_4Q6AEIIDAB#v=onepage&q=kuyper%20onnauwkeurig&f=false.

⁵⁸*Eenige kameradviezen uit de jaren 1874 en 1875.* Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1890. This article can be accessed at: http://www.dbnl.org/arch/kuyp002eeni01_01/pag/kuyp002eeni01_01.pdf.

one about *manual labour*.⁵⁹ Bit by bit did the children of *Separation and Doleantie*⁶⁰ begin to sense their common interests.

The desire for *blurring of the boundaries*⁶¹ between these spiritual children of Kuyper begins to play an important role in his life. The ripe fruits of a life dedicated to the promotion of Calvinism, is being carried into the treasury of the Reformed worldview *e voto dordraceno*.⁶² And notwithstanding his great love for and interest in the ordinary people, as, for example, shows up in *model for pension arrangement*;⁶³ in *the social question and the Christian religion*,⁶⁴ which have to take each other in consideration at every front. Kuyper, in guiding all into

⁵⁹ *Handenarbeid*. Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1889. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/handenarbeid00kuyper>. English translation: "Manual Labor" in James D. Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 231-254.

⁶⁰ *Separatie en Doleantie*. Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1890. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/separatieendolea00kuyper>.

⁶¹ *Verflauwing der grenzen: rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit op 20 oktober 1892*. Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1892. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/deverflauwingder00kuyper> and <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/broch/akverfl.html>. English translation: "The Blurring of the Boundaries" in James D. Bratt (ed.), *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 363-402. For accolades about Bratt's Kuyper reader go to: <http://www.eerdmans.com/Products/6906/abraham-kuyper.aspx>.

⁶² *E voto dordraceno: toelichting op den Heidelbergschen Catechismus*. Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1894. This document can be accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/evotodordracenot03kuyper>.

⁶³ ***Proeve Van Pensioenregeling Voor Werklieden En Huns Gelijken***. Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1895. This document can be accessed at: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=tghWAAAACAAJ&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=kuyper+proeve+voor+pensioenregeling&source=bl&ots=l7bVtEYLF&sig=JGnobJlkdHTPKUe1cNHqurUmki&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiljeWdwqLQAhWF11QKHUHIAOc4ChDoAQgyMAU#v=onepage&q&f=false>

⁶⁴ *Het sociale vraagstuk en de Christelijke religie: Rede bij de opening van het Sociaal Congres op 9 november 1891.* Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1891. This document can be accessed at the following URLs: https://archive.org/stream/openingsredevoor00zeed/openingsredevoor00zeed_djvu.txt. <http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/nl/geheugen/view?coll=ngvn&identificer=IISG01%3AADV10173706>. The English versions (note the plural) of this book are already listed under the entry "James Skillen" on this same Kuyperiana page. The Jellema version can be accessed at: http://www.reformationalpublishingproject.com/pdf_books/Scanned_Books_PDF/ChristianityandtheClassStruggle.pdf

a democratic direction, seeks to avoid all the deep waters where *democratic cliffs*⁶⁵ threaten shipwreck.

A Kuyper Close-Up

By

Rudolf Van Reest

A Warm Heart

Those who have had personal association with Kuyper may be considered specially privileged. They have seen the *person* Kuyper. Oh, to be sure, also his flaws, often very childish flaws—a great person does not lose his child-like heart!—but more than anything else in the revelation of his powerful and warm personality.

The theological students from the first days of the Free University have indelible memories of this association. He lived intimately into the lives of his students. One day, one of his students began to suddenly spit blood and died not long thereafter. It was impossible for Kuyper to give his normal lecture(s) on the day of the funeral of this young student. The entire day he stayed in his room with his housecoat on and was so upset that he could not do any of his work.

Another time, his students were deeply moved by a prayer he offered on behalf of a student who was to undergo throat surgery. The prayer was for a successful operation, for the young man's purpose was to enhance the quality of his

⁶⁵*De Christus en de sociale nooden en democratische klippen*. Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1895. This document can be accessed at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=JlxVAAAACAAJ&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=kuyper+democratische+klippen&source=bl&ots=uyKRmi1rMu&sig=oAgG0huBiwEellrdPjdCnEu8tKw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjvx_S0wKPQAhXLqVQKHUYuvAuw4ChDoAQg5MAc#v=onepage&q&f=false AND <http://ia601404.us.archive.org/10/items/dechristusendes00kuyper/dechristusendes00kuyper.pdf>.

preaching in the future. His association with his students was of a highly confidential and intimate nature.

A Prophetic Insight

Once Kuyper told his students in the course of an intimate conversation that he lived in the unwavering conviction that God had laid it on his shoulders to accomplish four things. In the first place, he believed he would in his lifetime succeed that the Free University would be officially recognized. Secondly, he would be given the privilege of completing his *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*. Thirdly, he would be given the opportunity of presenting his students with a complete *dogmatics*. Fourthly, he would be privileged to bring about the equalization of public and private, including religious, education. He mentioned all these things when he was still at the beginning of his career.

Kuyper achieved all these four points that could be considered his life programme. His *Encyclopedia* appeared; his *Dogmatics* for his students were completed; the degrees granted by the Free University received recognition; the equalization between public and private education was achieved.

Like every genius, Kuyper had far-sighted vision. At a time no one could foresee it, he once said to Professor de Savornin Lohman, "Within three years you will be the Minister of Internal Affairs. Lohman laughed unbelievably and responded, "That I must first see!" The prediction literally came true.

Another time it happened that Kuyper foresaw the future with profound insight. It was during the darkest of days for the Christian minority when Kappeyne de Copello had formed the Government and Christians were oppressed. Kuyper was at the royal palace, *Het Loo*, with a delegation to offer a petition of the people to King Willem III. Because only a few days prior, Kuyper had published something that had made the King unhappy, he was not allowed in with the delegation. He was taking a walk in the palace grounds with one of his friends, who asked him, "Will the King listen to us or will he sign the law?"

Kuyper answered, "He will sign the education laws of Kappeyne, but I predict that within ten years a conservative Ministry will be in power in The Hague." His

friend laughed about this baseless optimism. However, that's exactly how it happened. In 1889 Mackay formed the Government. It can be understood that a man who so strongly believed in his calling and victory, would have an amazingly animating influence on his environment. How often did he not direct individuals in a few words the way they should go?

The Organizer

Kuyper once gave a young preacher in the province of Zeeland, a fellow traveler of his, the advice to study the commentary of Vitranga on Isaiah and, in the second place, to make sure he would fully understand the decisions of the General Synod of Dordt 1618 and 1619. Later, this theologian would look back with gratitude to this advice, for it became of great usefulness in his pastoral work. Somewhere along the line, he found himself in a somewhat mystical congregation where he was accused of emphasizing the covenant instead of election. During a congregational membership meeting, in order to counter one of his well-read members, he read to him from the work of the remonstrant Hessing. The pastor, thanks to Kuyper's advice, was able to stand up to him.

This same pastor in Zeeland, due to his theological studies that preoccupied him, avoided practical politics completely. When national elections were approaching and things became tense, he was assigned to organize the riding of Goes. In that capacity he asked Kuyper why the candidature of Baron Van Lijnden van Sandenburg was undesirable and even impermissible. He soon received a detailed letter from the great man with no less than twelve propositions. After reading those proposition, he, who had not read a paper for a whole year, was completely updated and thus enabled to take up the leadership in this election campaign.

The same preacher also experienced the following so typical of Kuyper. A member of his church came to Kuyper with the complaint that the council of the parish within the borders of which he lived, would not give him permission to attend a

church in a neighbouring parish that was only five minutes from his house, while the other was a half hour away.⁶⁶ He asked Kuyper for his opinion.

“Look,” was the answer, “for whom are you? For Pelagius or for Augustine?”

“Why, Professor, for Augustine naturally!” the man said.

“Now. Pelagius favoured free will, but Augustine, a bound will. If you are for Augustine, then you must also consider yourself bound to the decisions of the council to which you belong.”

Professor and His Students

It is understandable that students who studied under such an amazingly energetic professor had to work hard. He knew them all personally and was acquainted with their study habits. He insisted strongly on the knowledge of proof texts for the loci in Dogmatics, preferably in the original language. This surfaced especially during exams. There was this one student who had prepared for this by writing out the full texts in notebooks and then to rehearse them from time to time. The time for the exam arrived. The student thought, “Let the professor just ask me about these texts!” But during the oral private exam of almost two hours, Kuyper asked him about a text only twice. The student was surprised, but later it became known that Kuyper was fully familiar with the study habits of all his students. At that same time, he sent a student home with the instruction,

“Young man, go and take three months to learn those texts!”

It was difficult to play tricks on Kuyper during an exam. Sometimes it would be possible to do so with Professor Hoedemaker to ask a counter question during the exam. One might ask, for example,

⁶⁶To appreciate the issue, the parish model must be understood. The church had divided the country into parishes with definite borders. All members within a given church jurisdiction were obligated to attend that particular church and it took a council decision to allow someone to regularly attend elsewhere.

“Professor, may I ask you what you mean with that question?” The professor was good natured enough to give further explanation, something that took up a few precious exam minutes.⁶⁷

One student tried this trick on Kuyper. He asked during an exam,

“Professor, may I ask you what you meant by this question?” Kuyper gave him a scathing look and said in Latin,

“I am the one to ask questions. You just respond!”

Unforgettably beautiful were his lectures in Dutch literature. Kuyper judged that students at the Free University had little awareness of the liberal arts. For that reason he himself gave lectures in Dutch Literature, Aesthetics and Linguistics. His lectures were highly noteworthy. He himself had become an expert in Dutch Literature in an unbelievably short time.

In a preliminary exam, he asked a student who was not known to be one of the most ambitious,

“Young man, tell me when Dirck Raphaelsz Camphuysen lived.” The student had no idea and tried to rescue himself by saying, “In the neighbourhood of sixteen hundred, Professor.” Kuyper gave him a penetrating look and said,

“We don’t divide history into neighbourhoods. Please tell me when this poet lived.” The student sat there with his mouth full of teeth.

It was a pleasure to hear Kuyper lecture. His style was luxuriant and rich, full of expressive images, a clear stream of water that, like glass crystal, would just flow on and on.... But his students had one objection: He spoke way too fast so that they could not take adequate notes. So they agreed amongst each other that when he went so fast again, a student in the front row would ostentatiously lay down his pen or pencil and all the rest would follow his example at the same time.

It happened as agreed. Kuyper looked through the room surprised and asked,

⁶⁷On a personal note, when I had to defend my doctoral thesis at the Free University, I had been warned about a certain professor and advised to respond to him with a counter question for that very reason and it worked!

“What’s the problem, gentlemen, too fast?” The lecture proceeded, but now Kuyper went very slowly, annoyingly so. It was as if all the words needed to be spelled out. It no longer captivated or grabbed them. All excitement and glow had vanished. This was no longer Kuyper!

It did not last long. After a while he resumed at his old speed. He had once again entered his subject and was captivated by it himself. The students breathed with relief. Never again has even one single student ever complained about his speed again!

Unforgettable also was the first impression Kuyper made on a young teacher, who wanted to take an admission exam with a view to enrolling at the Free University. He wanted to attend such an exam a year before he would come just so he would have an idea as to how this went. He traveled to Amsterdam and was admitted into Kuyper’s office, but Kuyper had little time and wanted to keep it short.

“What do you need?” he asked. The young teacher asked his question. Kuyper shook his large head and said,

“That’s not possible. Admissions exams are not public.” But as he noted the disappointed face of the young man, he continued,

“But you can attend one, but then you have to do the exam yourself. Then you’re there.” The young man looked at him astonished.

“But Professor, that’s not possible. I am not at all prepared. I haven’t counted on this at all. Besides, one needs to know some Hebrew as well, something about which I have done nothing so far.” Kuyper shrugged his shoulders and said,

“Oh, that Hebrew. Go to town and find an Amsterdam Jew to talk about Hebrew. Then, by tomorrow you will know enough for the exam!” But the young man did not dare to take this one. Then Kuyper continued,

“You know what? First go to my colleague Woltjer and ask him for advice.” The young man left and went to Professor Woltjer. Woltjer laughed when he heard the story. He said,

“Kuyper is a very smart man, but you better not follow up on this advice. Go home and I will send you a list of items you need to know for an admission exam. Work for another year and then next year you will probably be admitted.” He followed this advice with good result....

Later, when the same young man attended lectures with Kuyper, the Professor asked unexpectedly,

“Say, Mister, read us this verse in John in the Greek Testament.” It was this very morning that the student had received his new Greek Testament from the book seller. The wrapping had not yet been cut off. Kuyper, who saw everything, asked,

“Mister, first give me an answer to this question: What is the relationship between a theological lecture and a Greek Testament that is still unwrapped?” The student solved the riddle in the Senate Chamber and the Professor was satisfied.

On a certain afternoon, Kuyper entered the lecture hall with a very disturbed face. He could look dark, but this afternoon his massive face was really somber. He lectured for a few minutes, when he suddenly stopped and burst out,

“Yes, gentlemen, at this very moment they are busy at another place in Amsterdam to build prophet graves. During his life they abused Bilderdijk and would not offer him a professorate. Now, fifty years after his death he is being restored to honour that should have come to him during his life. It was in 1881, thus fifty years after Bilderdijk’s death, that the liberals organized a memorial in his honour.” After he had expressed his grief, his face slowly cleared up....

The following story shows how cleverly he could associate with his students. It was customary for Professor Kuyper to lead a debating class every two weeks. The students had to take turns defending a number of propositions, first over against fellow students and then against the Professor himself. The propositions had to be approved by Kuyper ahead of time. One student submitted four propositions. Kuyper checked them out and commented, “That looks pretty good, except for that second one; you will lose that one.” The student did not

understand the reason for this. Kuyper had no more time and needed to go. He said to the student, "Come and walk with me." The student came along and thought, "This is a great opportunity to learn what is wrong with my second proposition." But as soon as Kuyper realized that the student planned on thus using the occasion, he shook his hand and said, "Alright, young man, I am going in that direction." Taken aback not a little, the student stopped and Kuyper went his way. Indeed, he ended up dropping his second proposition.

Kuyper was always unique in giving corrections, even with respect to his own children. One of his sons attended a high school at Zetten. He had a deep desire to go to America and there develop his career. He had already intimated his desire several times, but without success, for Papa apparently wanted his son first to complete his study at home.

Frits, the son, would repeatedly talk to his fellow students about wanting so badly to go to the far west and become an American. They convinced him to write one more friendly but insistent letter to his father with the request for permission to go to America. Frits did. In his letter he reminded his father that he did not have the same gifts as his father did and that he would probably end up being a village preacher somewhere in the Netherlands and that people later would disparagingly say,

"Isn't he the son of that famous Kuyper? Well, he sure did not accomplish much!"

Frits and his friends with excitement awaited the answer from Amsterdam. Now Zetten did not have a post office, but a few days after Frits had sent his letter, a notice arrived from the Hemmen post office that a package had arrived for him from Amsterdam. He and his friends marched to Hemmen with hearts full of expectation, for whenever a package arrived for a student, that was a real event for both him and his roommates. The package was opened in Frits' room, but they looked in vain for a letter from father. Instead, there were two other items. The first was a large, sweet anise bread so popular with the Dutch; the second, a winter vest. These were two objects that said a lot more than even the longest letter could possibly have said. The bread was to keep Frits sweet; the vest served

to tell him “First do one more winter in the Netherlands.” It would take Frits a long time before he again broached the subject with his father.

Kuyper could also be infinitely naïve. As well known, Kuyper was an exceptional wordsmith. Constantly there flowed from either his lips or from his well-formed pen, words and sentences that would become winged words on the lips of the people. We think of, for example, such expressions as “*Eer is teer*,” or “*Het boetekleed ontsiert den man niet*,” and “*Wierook bedwelmt*.”⁶⁸ His “*The art of playing the keyboard of the folk conscience*” became a popular expression.

Some students at the local University of Amsterdam, upon reading this last Kuyperian expression got the idea of playing a trick on the professor. It was a well-known tradition in those days for students to engage in “*moeren*.” The practice consisted of nocturnal walks through the city and, with a screw driver, unscrew objects from shops, doors, facades and window or door frames that would draw attention. They would take them to their room.

Now there hung a gigantic gloved, varnished hand on the façade of the Huff shop, a well-known men’s clothing store along the Nieuwendijk. It was a huge fashionable glove with a golden cufflink. The students dislodged this glove from the façade and packed it neatly to forward it to the Kuyper address at Prins Hendrikkade 173. Of course, Kuyper had no idea as to its origin. In his naiveté he assumed that it was prepared by some admirer or friend. It was accompanied with a short letter that read something like,

“Honourable Professor Kuyper! Herewith we are pleased to send you a hand that is big enough to play the keyboard of the folk conscience!”

Kuyper thought it a cute gesture and placed the hand on a corner of his desk. But imagine his amazement when a few days later a detective came by with the request to take the golden hand away. The police had become aware that the hand was stolen from a façade along the Nieuwendijk.

⁶⁸“Honour is fragile.” “The robe of penance does not disfigure the man.” “Incense stupefies.”

The students also found the dinners and the teas Kuyper offered interesting. These were monthly events in which the prof always revealed himself to be a real housefather. During one of these dinners, as Kuyper served up the soup, he suddenly asked one of the students,

“Mister A..., what’s the word for “soldier” in Hebrew?” This incident betrayed his constantly engaged spirit.

Whenever he sensed the need for it, Kuyper would also contribute to the manners of his students. At one meal, when one of the students had not shaved himself totally clean, Kuyper asked him,

“Do you have a knife?” The student looked at his plate and said,

“Oh, yes. Thank you Professor.” Kuyper continued with,

“Okay, but I actually mean razor knife....”

Kuyper loved having his students attend these events with their fiancés, if they had one. True to his habit, Kuyper himself would cut the meat and place the slices on the guests’ plates. One day, one of the girls who was slightly built, gave a worried glance at the large slice of meat on her plate. She asked the prof to give her a smaller piece, but he replied,

“No, absolutely no, for you especially need this urgently!”

Somewhat later, he asked her from where she derived the courage to want to be a preacher’s wife. She looked at him with surprise and asked,

“Just what do you mean by that, Professor?”

“Well,” Kuyper responded, “a pastor’s wife needs to accompany her husband along his shepherd’s journey. That would include cooking soup for the sick, visiting pregnant women and caring for young babies, etc., etc.”

The girl looked at her fiancé, terrified. She had never realized that all of this came along with being his wife. Kuyper continued along the same pattern and when

he, according to his own opinion, had driven her far enough into a corner, he said,

“Ma’am, in barracks here in The Hague officers constantly check on their soldiers on duty. How would you like it if one officer would say to his wife,

“Dear, now you should go and inspect the watchmen. I’m going to relax here at home.”

“I would say, Professor, that officer is not fit for his work.”

“Precisely, that’s how it is. As to you, once you are in the parsonage, make sure your husband always has a comfortable home, that you keep him fit for his difficult work, create a restful atmosphere in the house. That way you will help the congregation the best.” The young lady once again felt at ease.

At another time, he said to the students at his table,

“Whenever you place your wife above your calling, you will need to blush every time you meet a priest or a curate on the street.”

Kuyper could be very fatherly for his students when they were not well. A student with a sore throat lodged at his place. That evening, before he retired, Kuyper personally gave him medicine.

Kuyper as a Human Being

Kuyper used to pay a lot of attention to his physical wellbeing. He would often follow one diet or another in order to keep in good condition. He did not neglect his physical upbringing.

Once a young pastor of athletic build visited Kuyper for an important conversation. Kuyper said to him,

“Wait a minute. First something else. I have here a pair of handles that I want you to stretch as far as possible.” The handles were tied to each other with strong springs. The astonished pastor succeeded, which gave Kuyper great pleasure.

“Look,” he said with a child-like joy, “you are the first who is able to copy me!” From here on he paid full attention to the matter that brought that pastor to begin with.

Whenever people who only knew the public Kuyper had the privilege of meeting him at home, their first impression was always one of amazement. That’s when they met the *person* Kuyper. A journalist who once met Kuyper during the morning, something that seldom happened, because Kuyper saw no one in the mornings, tells us,

“When I saw him, I found him, the Awesome with his sturdy powerful build, in a sport undershirt. I got the impression of a tiger in a housecoat.”

Interesting is the story the famous journalist Brusse tells us:

“When I was a boy of about fifteen and a high school student in Amsterdam, I had the pleasure of once talking personally with Kuyper. I had the passion, learned recently from the English, to collect signatures of celebrities. I got a lot of pleasure from this hobby. The booklet with its now yellow pages and fading ink has often served me as a talisman that opened many doors for me. I had great respect for this awesome man of the masses. I heard my father, a fiery liberal, talk about Kuyper with great enthusiasm. It was in the days of the struggle over the Nieuwe Kerk, the sawing through of the church door, etc. Every evening the newspapers were full of Abraham’s heroic deeds. A wonderful figure for a boy who loved romantic dreams about heroes!

“So I wrote a short letter to Kuyper, asking whether I could have a moment to speak with him. I received his permission. But my spunk slumped fast when I stood in front of the large door of the house on the Prins Hendrikkade. I expected soon to see a “fine” orthodox preacher. I imagined an image much like the type you see in cartoons: “something” tall, pale, skinny, dressed in black church attire, a high hat with a mourning band, an umbrella under one arm and a clerical collar around his neck. I trembled on my feet when the door opened.

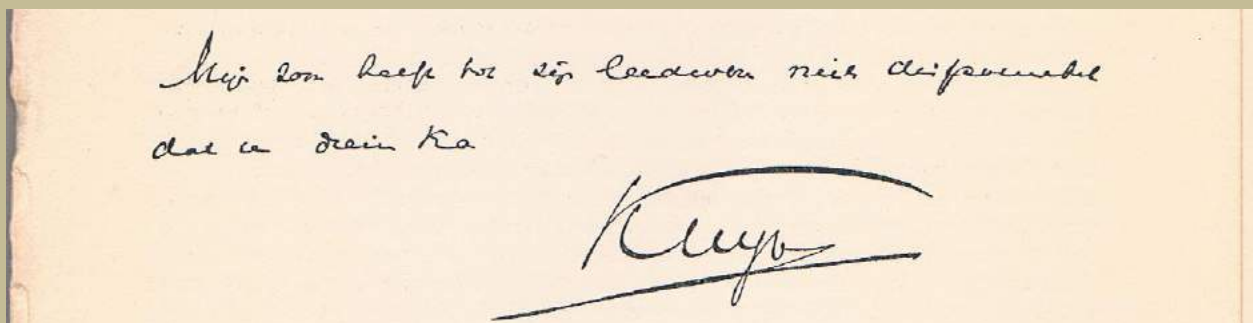
“But what I saw then is something I will not forget in all my life! A short corpulent athletic figure with a black hairdo topped with a red Turkish fez, cloaked in a light

chequered jacket, wearing a silk vest embroidered with florals, his feet in a pair of slippers stitched with gold.

“I thought I was at the wrong address and was at the home of a theatre director. But I soon realized that this was indeed Kuyper himself! With my little celebrity booklet in hand, stuttering, I told him what brought me. He took the booklet, paged through it somewhat and found the name of the rector of our school, a member of the city council, etc. He gave me a mischievous look and then said with a friendly voice,

“But young man! I don’t belong to this category. Surely, I am not a celebrity? It would not be fitting for me to classify myself among these people. I would like to help you, but can’t do this.” But when he saw my disappointed face, he continued, “But perhaps I can find a way to help you out. I have some friends who cut my signature from my letters to them. I promise you that I will ask my son this afternoon, for he has occasionally received a letter from me.” He then asked me what I wanted to do with my life and added, pointing at the ships out there in the harbour, ‘A stout Dutch boy should actually become a seafarer.’

“During my walk back home, I had second thoughts and figured that his son would not have received letters from his father with his official signature. I could not understand how that could be. However, the puzzle was solved that very evening when I received a postcard with Kuyper’s signature under a message from him.⁶⁹



Kuyper’s Signed Postcard

⁶⁹The writing is illegible to me.

Till this day, I faithfully save this card with his robust signature in my celebrity album.”

Brusse has yet another interesting story about a meeting with the “grand old man.” As journalist, he had been out on the streets a couple of days and nights in the infamous Zandstraat neighbourhood of Rotterdam with people from Jeruel.⁷⁰ He recorded his experiences of Rotterdam nightlife and the work among prostitutes in a brochure. His publisher advised him to ask Kuyper to write an introduction. So he wrote Kuyper a letter and inserted the letter with the manuscript and sent it on its way. A few days later it was all returned to him with a short letter in which Kuyper wrote that he could hardly be expected to write an introduction to this document. Brusse had sent him the wrong document! In place of the Jeruel brochure, he had sent him another manuscript that was all ready for the press under the title “Behind the Coulissen,”⁷¹ a booklet about life in the theatre. Kuyper had immediately sensed the mistake and gave it a humorous treatment.

Brusse sent Kuyper his apologies and in response received an invitation to visit Kuyper to talk about this Jeruel project. It was then that Brusse got to know the famous man better. Enjoying a cup of tea, Kuyper talked about the work of that midnight mission. That conversation was soon turned into a lecture, during which Brusse with increasing amazement became acquainted with the encyclopedic knowledge Kuyper displayed on a subject that was not among his expertise. The end of the story was that Kuyper did not write that introduction.

During the course of the above conversation, however, Kuyper told Brusse that he had become acquainted with the work of the Salvation Army in Brussels. He had been approached by an Army officer and agreed to accompany him to one of their meetings. There he kneeled on the “sinners’ kneeling bench” right among

⁷⁰The name Jeruel occurs only once in the Bible. It's the name of a wilderness called the “wilderness of Jeruel.” Jeruel might originally have been a town or settlement.

⁷¹*Achter de Coulissen.*

other sinners and confessed his sins right there and then. Kuyper simply commented, “Why should I not be able to do this like anyone else?”⁷²

There was a third time that the two lives intersected, though somewhat marginally. Brusse had gone to the small Dutch island of Marken to do research in preparation for a book he planned to write. From experience, Brusse knew that the best method to get to know the locals was to go live there and be completely submerged in their lives. But that was not that easy. The “Markers” were suspicious of this stranger in his “long trousers.” They sensed he wasn’t one of them and thus did not give him entry into their lives. Somewhat discouraged, Brusse took the ferry home to spend the weekend there. It happened to be the Sunday that Professor Kuyper was to preach in the Marken church.

As Brusse told the story later, the people had told Kuyper that a stranger had moved onto the island, but they would rather see him leave. They did not trust him and did not know what he was really after. Kuyper asked for the man’s name and when he heard that it was the popular journalist Brusse, he smiled and assured the people that they could give him their full confidence. Brusse would produce a good book about the island.

When Brusse arrived back on Monday and stepped off the ferry, he did not know what on earth had happened. They literally received him with open arms. As if a miracle had happened, the ice was suddenly broken and the people gave him their complete trust. Even the women came to him for advice—and he received material for his book. One single word from the mighty Kuyper had turned the attitude of the entire island upside down.

Kuyper’s Radiating Influence

The positive influence that radiated from Kuyper’s personality must have been amazing. At the beginning of his career, there once was an elders’ conference in Amsterdam’s Frascati Theatre.⁷³ A certain clergyman from Delft decided to

⁷²This story confirms my description of Kuyper as “Father Abraham—the most unashamed and unabashed ‘Evangelical’ of all Kuyperian writers!” See the closing line of my Introduction to Abraham Kuyper, *The Ascent of the Son—The Descent of the Spirit*, p. 15. Right here on this page of the website.

⁷³This theatre still exists at Nes 63 in the city’s centre.

attend the event along with two of his elders. One of his elders was a follower of Hermann Kohlbrugge,⁷⁴ whom it took much effort to convince him to come and listen to Kuyper in the Frascati. Kuyper was in charge and began with the singing of Psalm 42, which he then read in such a powerful awe-inspiring way that this Kohlbruggian was immediately convinced and whispered to his pastor, “This work must be from God.”

Well known also is the overwhelming impression Kuyper made when he read Psalm 27 at the graveside of Keuchenius. Similarly, many remember the impression he made with his reading of Psalm 68 at the opening of a Meeting of Representatives:

14 When the Almighty scattered the kings in the land, it was like snow fallen on Mount Zalmon. 15 Mount Bashan, majestic mountain, Mount Bashan, rugged mountain, 16 why gaze in envy, you rugged mountain, at the mountain where God chooses to reign, where the LORD himself will dwell forever? 17 The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord has come from Sinai into His sanctuary.

This was at the time the liberal press mocked the little company of Kuyper’s “*kleine luyden*” in the spirit of Sanballat in Nehemiah 4, “What do those feeble Jews want?” The timbre of his powerful voice, full of melody and inspiration, towed all who heard him along.

Similarly, the way he treated his fellow travelers and supporters often made such an unforgettable impression on them that stayed with them for all time and about which they would speak of forever with great appreciation. An example is what happened at the famous Synod of 1892, when the merger of the *Gereformeerden* (Reformed) and the *Christelijke Gereformeerden* (Christian Reformed⁷⁵) took place. One of the youngest members of the Synod offered tough opposition against some expressions found in a concept decision proposed by Kuyper. He strained the patience of the totally exhausted President to its extreme. The latter had not been to bed the previous night, for he had laboured on his proposal throughout the entire night. In this exhausted condition, a very

⁷⁴Hermann Friedrich Kohlbrugge (1803-1875) was a theologian of Dutch-German origin who was controversial with the ecclesiastical establishment, but popular with the people. He once preached in the Zuiderkerk in Amsterdam at the invitation of Kuyper for a full two hours with 3,000 in his audience.

⁷⁵ Not to be identified with the North American denomination of that name.

sharp reaction escaped Kuyper. The youngerish representative had long forgotten the incident, but when Kuyper unexpectedly met him in the hallway during a recess, he laid his hand on the man's shoulder and grabbed his right hand to his great embarrassment in order to ask him forgiveness for his outburst, adding his apology, saying that he had been irritable due to his sleepless night. Thus Kuyper won the heart of this young pastor by way of his child-like manner, more than hours-long speeches could possibly achieve.

Moving also was the way in which Kuyper and Rutgers supported each other at this same Synod. They had gone through much struggle in the context of liberating the church. They were called all kinds of epithets: "David and Jonathan," "Head and Hand," sometimes "Right-and Left Hand." However, these comparisons and metaphors applied to either one, was never decided. But which one of the two earned first place became clear in a very interesting way, when Kuyper was reading his report to the Synod. He constantly hesitated in his reading his own illegible script. Professor Rutgers, who stood behind him and read over Kuyper's shoulders, helped him several times with his reading difficulty. But after he repeated this several times, Kuyper was fed up and, thrusting the document in Rutgers's hands, exclaimed,

"Here, Rutgers, you do it! I can't make it out." Under the great hilarity of the Synod, Rutgers read the handwritten manuscript as if it were printed!

These two great men treated each other in child-like fashion. When the Synod of Dordt met and they had dinner in Hotel Ponsen, a few younger delegates sat on the outside patio. Around the corner but near them, Kuyper and Rutgers sat together and the young men unintentionally became witnesses to the simple child-like way in which Kuyper and Rutgers treated each other. The two had apparently agreed that Kuyper would keep silent during the rest of the meeting and Rutgers would do the talking. Suddenly, Kuyper said,

"Hey, Rut, tomorrow I'm going abroad." Rutgers asked

"Why are you leaving? Synod is not yet finished." Out of character and slightly irritated, Kuyper responded,

“Why should I stay any longer? I am not speaking anymore, but if I stay I will not be able to keep my mouth shut.”

“But you’re staying,” insisted Rutgers.

“I’m going!” repeated Kuyper.

“You’re staying here. You’re not going until Synod is over.” Kuyper grumbled something inaudibly, but the end of the story was that Kuyper stayed!

Under the Shadow of World War I

This writer—Rudolf van Reest—remembers very clearly the one time he experienced Kuyper nearby. The great man was already in the last years of his life. It was 1915, the second year of World War I. It was known that this world war made a tremendous impression on him. That showed up at the following occasion. The Young Men’s Society of Kralingen, “The Sower,” held their 25th anniversary. The Board came up with the brave plan to invite Kuyper to deliver the celebratory speech, but they did not think they had much of a chance, for if Kuyper did this for them, he could not turn down others!

Against all expectation, Kuyper agreed. What a pleasant surprise this was! The Board immediately began to develop all kinds of plans. They would rent the largest meeting hall in Rotterdam and decided on a hefty admission fee. The library of the society and its treasury would do well. No matter how high an honorarium Kuyper would request, they would still come out royally.

Kuyper had written that two representatives of the Board should come to The Hague to discuss the terms. That was a weighty happening for the two who received the honour. They would later tell the story of the visit in vivid description. Kuyper, dressed in a heavy house coat, received them in his study. It soon became clear that the old man had seen through these young men. His terms were clear enough indications.

He did not want an honorarium, but he had to be brought back to The Hague by car, for the proofs for *The Heraut* were waiting there for corrections. He stated this as a kind of aside. In addition, this was to take place in the smallest church

building in Kralingen, which had a capacity of around 800, while they could use only the main floor; the galleries were to remain empty. No fees were to be charged and only the members of the society, their families and supporters were allowed to attend. In order to cover expenses, a voluntary collection would be taken in flat plates. And Kuyper would speak for precisely one hour. Those were the terms.

Their financial daydreams proved to be a mirage, *fata morgana*, to stick to Kuyper terminology! They soon got over their disappointment. Kuyper was coming; that was the main issue! In order to prevent an avalanche of invitations from Young Men's Societies, Kuyper had to find a special motivation for accepting the one to Kralingen. He did this as follows. When a couple of Board members met him at the station, he asked them in the car when Kralingen was annexed by Rotterdam. Fortunately, one of them had the answer.

Once he stood at the lectern—he refused to use the pulpit—he told them that he was especially impressed with the church in Kralingen that she had not followed the lead of the Rotterdam City Council and allow herself to be annexed to the Church of Rotterdam but remained the independent Church of Kralingen. And with that, he began to castigate the Dutch fashion to turn their larger cities into “world class” cities. He pointed out that the real world cities were not really all that large but tended to maintain the independence of their suburbs. He took Brussels as an example of one that kept its suburbs intact as an ideal to be followed.

So the youth of Kralingen could thank the maintenance of the independence of the Church of Kralingen that Kuyper stood before them. Then he began his speech to the youth, a speech that made an unforgettable impression on all who heard it. It became very clear that evening that the world war had put great pressure on his phenomenal spirit. He said he did not want to establish the custom to wish other jubilee celebrations and Young Men's Societies that they might in the future celebrate their fortieth or even sixtieth anniversaries. That would not fit well with the church's prayer of all the ages: “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!” The Church must be an advent church. Then he predicted that there would be a new war in

Europe before 1940 that would even be more murderous than the current one of 1914, just like that one was more terrible than that of 1870. But through all of this the quick return of Christ would be realized. We were all, young and old, deep under the impression of these highly serious words. This was an hour never to be forgotten.

At his departure still one cute story. In his speech he had said as an example that he preferred a bouquet of flowers of one single colour more than a multi-coloured one. But the Board of the Society was not aware of this and handed him a bouquet of several colours. But Kuyper knew the solution. His Rotterdam grandchildren were in the council room to greet him. So he divided the bouquet into single colours and gave each of the children a mono-coloured bouquet! Then the 78-year old man hastily took off to The Hague in order to work on the proofs of *The Heraut*. He was busy with the series "The Doctrine of the Last Things."⁷⁶

Kuyper as a Person

What a privilege it must have been to have experienced him as a human being, as a person! What a mysterious power radiated out from him into his immediate environment. And what a foolishness it is, for those who have known him as a person, to ask whether he had been serious and meant what he said, wrote and did, or whether it all flowed out of his insatiable thirst for power. In this context we wish to add still a few more traits to the image that has already risen before our eyes from all the foregoing personal memories of the man who was misunderstood by so many.

Kuyper often spent parts of his vacation in Brussels, in the home of the family Van Deth. Mrs. Van Deth shared with us the following from her many memories, that probably better explain the mysterious power of Kuyper's life than all the foregoing. She wrote:

⁷⁶This was the series that eventually was posthumously turned into a two-volume tome called *Van de Voleinding*. Kampen: Kok, 1929.

Dr. K. usually spent his long vacation in the mountains. During his return he would sometimes spend a few days in Brussels and then often would visit the old gentleman Van Deth, who was one of his best friends.

He helped us in making plans for our honeymoon, but for the Chamonix⁷⁷ part he entrusted us into the care of Francois Mugner, his own guide. On our tours with this powerfully-built and cheerful man we talked a lot about Dr. K. He himself had come to the Saviour through Dr. Kuyper. Sometimes these two would spend weeks together, times that, Mugner told us, always constituted blessings for him. The guide described Kuyper as both a jovial and serious man.

Kuyper reserved his shorter vacations for Brussels. For years, father Van Deth was the friend with whom he would take walks and discuss many things. Later, the son would take Deth's place. I remember very vividly that Kuyper stayed so young and strong that our ten-year old son said one day, "Once Papa is no longer strong enough to walk with Dr. K., I will become his friend." That's indeed how things looked at the time. Dr. K stayed young, jovial and strong.

In the Bois de la Cambre is a deep valley with a narrow trail that runs from one top to the other. Kuyper always wanted to compete with us and the children in running towards the top and usually he would be the first to reach it.

Every afternoon around two o'clock he would take a walk at a fast pace. He would keep an eye on his watch and knew exactly how long each street or lane would take. He enjoyed having company on his walks, but he preferred that you would just walk along without talking. So, without much conversation but still intimate. He had a need for someone who would think along with him, which, given the sphere around him, was not all that difficult. The basic tone of his thoughts was always gratitude to God. He

⁷⁷Chamonix was/is a ski resort on Mt. Blanc.

was always thankful to God in the smallest details of his life, his energy and his happiness. One day I served him a cup of tea in the morning and he said,

“I have been dreaming of the sun, the moon, the stars and the earthly globe. On that globe there was a tiny black spot. I looked at it and wondered what that would be. Then I heard a voice that said, ‘That is you, a bug, a tiny little being, but God loves you.’”

After some very difficult disappointing days in politics, he came to us. Usually he would lodge in hotel Metropole, but this time he was too exhausted and stayed with us. He still had a lot of work to take care of. Each morning he would again sit at his desk and work and work.... Sometimes his head was very tired, but if he had no choice but to continue, he wanted a pail with ice cold water next to him with a large sponge in it and I would have to cool off his head by constantly placing a cold sponge on it. Sometimes the steam would rise from his poor tired head. During the following nights he would not be able to sleep, but he remained patient. At seven o’clock in the morning he would wait for his cup of tea. Should we ask, “Did you sleep well?” he would always answer, “No, not yet.” But then, one early morning we heard his voice singing a stanza from Psalm 3:

I laid me down and slept;
I woke, for I was kept
In His divine protection;
The Lord was at my side,
My succour He supplied,
Whatever my affliction.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ An older version of Psalm 3:2 in *150 Psalmen: Proeve van een nieuwe berijming*. This is the equivalent stanza in the *Psalter Hymnal* of the Christian Reformed Church in North America is Psalm 3, but Hymn no. 5:3, of both the 1934 and 1959 versions.

From then on the renewal of his strength began and a few weeks later he was able to return home full of good courage.

He frequently experienced disappointments, even from friends. What really bothered him was when, during his time as Premier, his friends would ask him for a job for a son or nephew or friend. He personally never wanted to profit from his position. He was happy when others showed him their love.

We have occasionally teased him about this and would say,

“You would give as much as ten guilders for a friendly word.” He would then answer in a child-like simplicity,

“Yes, but I am already so happy that you guys like me.” That man, who was almost idolized in those days, asked only for a bit of genuine friendship and love.

He once brought us a letter of congratulations for his appointment as Premier for us to read. An elderly lady who used to serve Mrs. Kuyper as a nanny for her children, wrote him a fond congratulations that ended with this wish:

“Pastor, you used to say to us in former days: Do not become proud if things go well with you later. Now I come to you without pretension to tell you: Do not become proud now that you will become Premier. We will ask God to keep you humble.”

How often I have found Dr. Kuyper on his knees by his bed! Even during the last summer of his life, when his spirit had weakened greatly, his table prayers remained clear and child-like. It was always in a spirit of “Father, You are there again to bless us!” ...that spirit of thankfulness and trust. During those last months he would sometimes kneel by his chair for two hours and pour all his grief and sorrow out to his Father.

All those years that we had the privilege of knowing him we felt that he had an intimate relationship with God. He did not rest until he was assured that our hearts belonged to the Saviour. One time I had a long conversation with

him about “our principles.” To my shame, he said, “Are you sure things between you and God are in order? Has Jesus brought you to God?”

He could speak with great admiration about God’s works in nature. As his meditations in *De Heraut*, so were his life and his person. That’s where he expressed himself the deepest about his spiritual life. The deep love that characterized him flowed out from that. Wherever the children of God read his spiritual meditations, it would echo in their hearts. When on the jubilee of the *De Standaard* he said, “The sweet aroma of human grace intoxicates or makes one drunk,” he felt himself surrounded by that deep love.

When Kuyper came home the evening that the *jus promovendi*⁷⁹ of the Vrije Universiteit had been granted, his daughters and two friends, of which I was one, were waiting for him in his study. I will never forget how he then said, “This is God’s work! He knelt with us and poured out his heart with an unforgettable prayer of thanksgiving.”

Mrs. Van Deth also sent us a letter she received once from Kuyper on her birthday. It was during the year that her little son died. To demonstrate Kuyper’s handwriting, we reproduce it for you in the original on the next page.

We include the transcription for we fear that most of our readers cannot decipher Kuyper’s hieroglyphics.

March 29, 1914—

Dear Nelly; no one more dear. You yourself know very well how closely I feel myself attached to you. Though my work does not allow me to let you hear from me every birthday, this time it is a great pleasure for me to send you a first short word. Naturally, there is and must be much thankfulness and praise in your soul for the many, a great many blessings, that your faithful God allowed you and to enjoy this day with husband and children in

⁷⁹The right to give academic degrees.

29.3.14

Lieve Kally, mijn liever. Je weet zeker hoe nauw ook in me steeds aanwezig
de gevoelde, en ik geloof mij wel eens niet, dat ik ik alle jaardig, en me kon laat,
betreft in i me leef en sen of je kan en de woerje. te dan trost een, want met alle, en
hal. maar a in daer a lof i p teel op en in je, ja ael die ja Trau for p' moe luit
in, ell. moe i ma - hont, i wistend. Wel van te senich geef, - boude en de senne
stege, na je i jaer a met de Nederland moerj smale, ma. in te lo, nael weg na
en de jeut op zult a me, a de, de smat. a raad. a je, a a beaafte teel en
op leep, a je la vool, in veel rijke in ne tempereerke, vor je leet van
je niet je aen en leetje om je hal in kee vleeje, op de beuf, a in kee vleeje

gevoelde teel op je geel. Naer van kee stele en som te da leing i een veel ryke
- jeleerje, en je leifje op an a ken na a te. Vor kee i n je raou me een veel
enplegejebeel a kee hant. Naer je a maer kee raoujeen kee. die en vooje h en
a auel h me volder keeje i a a leud ag, Naer van a by kee de vaer. lea
en je leef i a leegje, i a jeen, i a raou. Euee, kee Kally, kee i raouje en
auee an. Je weet je Maer kee kee a je leef. Je maer je eoe jeen ule aoe,
auee i on kee je beke a je maer a je soe je kee leud, of by je i me kee je
leefje moe, ule a. Je an ni auee jeen. kee je kee je in, an a je in a jele
geleu. Keer on a kee je je jeen en. E kee jeen ake an je kee je
steer. onleijje a a kee je leefje kee je me je maer a kee

Kuyper's Letter to Ms. Van Deth

March 29, 1914

comfort. And then to add all the fellowship that you enjoy in grace with our Saviour.

However, this cannot prevent, especially on such a happy day, that the pain in a grieving soul, the sorrow, the pain in the mourning soul is revived. You must feel how much better it would have been if your dead Bram were to embrace your neck along with all the other children and to feel the kisses of child-like love pressed onto your face. But for him it is not all that somber. The sweetheart is now much richer and happier than your love could give him here on earth. For him there is no sorrow but only the angelic jubilation in the heart. He is now receiving and drinking with full delight from the hand of his Saviour and his heavenly Father, what you could never have given him.

And now, dear Nelly, there is just one further consideration: You have to love your Bram more than yourself. You have to bear your own loss, because it is better for him this way. And you need to ask your God and Saviour that He lead you into this higher love. In this respect, may the year you are now entering be a year of prayed-for happiness. Pass on my felicitations also to Willem. And no matter what happens to you, may you be assured of the sincere love of your sympathetic friend,
K....

Such tenderness! What a love for his friends do these words express. Here you see Kuyper as a person, as a human with a great and rich heart. It is understandable that those, who do not know the power of personal faith, seek another power source for a figure like Kuyper. Anyone who has done these things *must* have been driven by a tremendous energy. Well, they have sought it in an alleged forced desire for power for which he allegedly welcomed all means available.⁸⁰

The Secret of His Life

The secret of Kuyper's life cannot be understood in that way. Kuyper was a man of prayer. Mrs. Van Deth's stories are moving, but others have also seen the praying Kuyper. A housemaid of the family had this to say:

⁸⁰A recent example that I am reading right now and, I must say, with great admiration, but which is definitely tainted with that difficulty is Jeroen Koch, *Abraham Kuyper: A Biography*. Amsterdam: Boom, 2006.

“After each meal I and the other girl would be called in and then we would kneel together with the entire family to pray, but only Kuyper had first read from the Bible to us.”

Those prayers of Kuyper were always gripping. It was never just a grind or a show of clichés. Without fail he would have the right word for his thought. Someone who had participated in the family prayer just once, exclaimed,

“Who can pray like Kuyper? It was almost as if he carried our souls right up to the throne of God.”

When Kuyper once spent a few days with a family in the north of the country, when it was time to leave, he asked all members of the family to kneel with him, whereupon he presented a touching prayer to God for all the needs of the family, from the oldest, who was the father of Kuyper’s brother-in-law, to the baby in the crib. Such prayer for all who were kneeled with him was a holy habit of his which he never neglected. In the mornings he would pray for his wife that she may receive strength and wisdom for the daily routine tasks of the family, for the servants who supported her and for each individual in the group.

When he received a call to a church in Oosthem, Friesland, he struggled with God for light on the issue. He even prescribed a fasting and prayer day for his family, in which everyone in the house was happy to participate. Kuyper would then draw the drapes of his study in order to approach God in the dark. After some time, he called his wife—and the struggle was over. He knew what he had to do.

But Kuyper could also struggle with God by himself, outside of his family prayers. His trusted servant girl told us,

“When pastors come into his study early in the morning, he wants to be alone. I knew he would kneel to pray. I would leave until he was finished.”

On a certain day, a boy from *De Standaard* stood at Kuyper’s study door to pick up copy for the paper. He clearly heard someone speak and waited, thinking Kuyper had a visitor. After he had waited a long time, he knocked on the door, but received no answer. Carefully he pushed a curtain away from the door and saw

Kuyper on his knees in conversation with God, struggling for the land and its people, pleading for forgiveness for all the sins of the nation, including his own.

An English lady who once visited the family, later wrote how Kuyper's table prayers moved her. The beautiful intonation of his voice gripped her.

"I myself am English and Catholic; I hardly know any Dutch, but the beauty and the solemnity of his prayers as he sent them up with child-like simplicity and piety, with folded hands and closed eyes, at the head of his own table—all these belong to the great religious experiences of my life."

One of Kuyper's graduates, later a doctor in theology, tells of his great teacher, how he had known him as professor, as house father, as party leader, as journalist, as member of the House, as member of the Cabinet, as orator, and as author. And then he continues, "I have seen him and heard him, but nothing has ever made greater impression on me than when he with his family, bowed before God in deep humility. He could place himself on a pedestal and was indeed placed on high pedestals—and he could descend very low. Never will I forget how he once bared his heart to me, a young student who had paid him a visit after he recuperated from a sickness. Like friend to friend. With all of his greatness of stature, he had a child-like heart, sometimes naïve. He feared no man, but for God he could bow so deeply, so humbly, so tenderly, so child-like, so pleading, so imploring as I have never heard before. I wish one thing for those who accuse Kuyper of haughtiness and dishonesty, namely that they would once hear Kuyper pray, whether alone or with his family....

Here lies the secret of the amazing life of Dr. Kuyper. When you want to understand Kuyper as statesman, as theologian, as leader of his people, you have to know him as a human, as a person. If the genuinely human traits that we have described here of this awesome man have contributed to that end, then the goal of this booklet has been achieved.

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