

The International Kuyper

Christian Courier

March 24, 2014

John Boer

Mike Wagenman's story ("Can Kuyper still speak?" Feb. 10, 2014) about entering the orbit of Abraham Kuyper, the founder of the Reformational tradition that undergirds this paper, is typical of Evangelicals. They are faithful Christians who claim Jesus as their Saviour, but, as they themselves express it, he does not become their Lord until they run into Kuyper's perspective. While many Christian Reformed (CRC) youths yawn when they hear the name of Kuyper, those Evangelicals get excited about him as he leads them into a deeper and more comprehensive experience of the Kingdom of God. I have met and read from and about several people who have experienced such "conversions."

That yawn, by the way, is not found much in smaller Reformed denominations in Canada, which attract many young members to meetings about Christian social concerns shaped by the Kuyper vision. I wonder why? Go to a meeting of ARPA (Association for Reformed Political Action) and you will be surprised at the number of young people actively participating.

It is not only North American *Evangelicals* who experience such Kuyperian transformation and who find him intriguing. Richard John Neuhaus, a prominent American Catholic public theologian, observed that "some of the most provocative and rigorous thought about religion and society" comes from contemporary Kuyperians (*A Free Church; A Holy Nation*, Bolt). When Charles Colson of Watergate fame addressed an audience of seniors at Calvin College some years ago, he waved Kuyper's famous *Lectures in Calvinism* to his audience with great enthusiasm – only to be met with stony CRC silence.

There are any number of *foreign* scholars and students who are also deeply interested in the Kuyperian perspective. During a visit to CRC-land in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the Ghanaian scholar Dr. Kwame Bediako was shown a documentary about Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of America. Afterwards, seminary professor John Bolt, a Canadian, asked him whether Ghana needed its own Jefferson.

Bediako replied, "What Africa needs even more today is its own Abraham Kuyper." Bolt confessed to being "stunned, delighted and mildly embarrassed." And well he might!

After the Kenyan scholar Njaramba Mutua attended a Kuyperian Reformational conference, he commented, "What touched me was the heartfelt desire and the wholehearted determination to establish a relationship between faith with all sectors of life and society. This rich Dutch tradition in which [Christians] everywhere are interested, as this conference clearly indicated, contains the challenge to develop and protect"

Right now, a sizable contingent of South Korean students are studying at a Kuyperian theological school in The Netherlands, there for the specific purpose of learning about Kuyper and his comprehensive approach to society and culture.

A decade ago, the late John Vriend, a translator of Kuyperian literature into English, told me he was receiving so many letters from abroad that expressed interest in Kuyper that he concluded that the century of Kuyper is not behind us so much as before us! May the CRC and its Dutch mother church not be left behind in the dust.