

Introduction

“Let my People Go’:

Abraham Kuyper’s Christian-Historical Political Imagination”

*To me there is no past or future in art.
If a work of art cannot live always in
the present it must not be considered at all.*

---Pablo Picasso

*Time present and time past
And both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.*

*If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.*

---T. S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton”

*What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.*

*A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments.*

---T. S. Eliot, “Little Gidding”

In the history of the human quest for liberty, two symbolic events spaced two hundred years apart frame the modern political era. On November 10, 1793, as the Jacobin Reign of Terror was winding down, the Paris Commune of the revolutionary National Convention planned a Festival of Liberty “to celebrate the victory of philosophy over fanaticism.”¹ After seizing Notre Dame Cathedral---rebaptized the “Temple of Reason”---the revolutionaries “dechristianized” the former sanctuary by engaging in a public liturgy that celebrated, in the words of deputy Thuriot de La Rozière, the new “moral order of the Republic, of the Revolution, . . . that will

¹George Lefebvre, *The French Revolution: From 1793 to 1799*, trans. John Hall Stewart and James Friguglietti (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul and New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 78.