

The Grave of Johanna Hendrika Kuyper: The Trail of Abraham Kuyper in a Swiss Village

J. Visscher¹

Johanna Hendrika Kuyper, the wife of Abraham Kuyper, found her final resting place in 1899 in the Swiss village of Meiringen. Church bells ring in the streets of the place, a touristic mountain village in Swiss Berner Oberland.

Surprisingly, the yard of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Saint Michael shows traces of Dutch influence. In a prominent place one finds the grave of the wife of Abraham Kuyper, also known as “Abraham the Awesome,”² the famous statesman, journalist and founder of the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party. The grave is surrounded by an iron fence.

A few Dutch lines are still legible on the weathered tombstone:

“Here rest the physical remains of Mrs. Johanna Hendrika Kuyper, born in Amsterdam as Schaay, died on August 25, 1899, at the age of 57. Justified by faith, she had peace with God.”

Kuyper, a lover of the mountains, stayed in the Alps more than once in order to recover his strength.

Johanna died after she fell sick in a local Swiss hotel. The Sunday after her death, Kuyper preached in the village about Hosea 14:10:

Who is wise? He will realize there things.
Who is discerning? He will understand them.
The ways of the Lord are right;

¹J. Visscher, trans. Jan H. Boer, *Reformatorsch Dagblad*, January 29, 2010. Original title: “Spoor van Abraham Kuyper in Zwitserland.”

²Translator: The title in its original Dutch is “*Abraham de Geweldige*.” That’s an ambiguous name that can be translated both positively and negatively. For an explanation of my choice of “Awesome” I refer you to my Translator’s Note in my translation *Abraham Kuyper: A Close-Up*. This is found on the same page as the article you are currently reading.

the righteous walk in them,
but the rebellious stumble in them.

No, custodian Ulrich Abplanalp (56) cannot say just exactly who this Abraham Kuyper was. He does know that every year various Dutchmen visit the grave, while some lay flowers.

During the summer, the church allows Dutch visitors to hold services in the Dutch language. The average attendance is around seventy. During the off-season around forty locals worship there, a number that dwindles during hot days.

This grave of Johanna is not in the best of shape. During the spring of 2009, Custodian Ulrich pointed to the many cracks and even crevices in the stonework and commented, "This grave really needs to be restored."