



*The Lordship of Christ Over
the Whole of Life*

*An Introduction to the Thought of
Abraham Kuyper*

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- ✧ Abraham Kuyper,
1837-1920
- ✧ Journalist, politician,
educator, theologian
- ✧ Sovereignty of God
over all aspects of
reality



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**"There is not a square inch
in the whole domain of
human existence over which
Christ, who is Sovereign
over all, does not cry:
'Mine!'"**



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“One desire has been the ruling passion of my life. One high motive has acted like a spur upon my mind and soul. And sooner than that I should seek escape from the sacred necessity that this is laid upon me, let the breath of life fail me. It is this: That in spite of all worldly opposition, God’s holy ordinances shall be established again in the home, in the school and in the State for the good of the people; to carve as it were into the conscience of the nation the ordinances of the Lord, to which the Bible and Creation bear witness, until the nation pays homage again to God.”



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- ✧ **"Kuyperian" tradition and "worldview"**
- ✧ **Calvinism as a worldview**
- ✧ **Stone Lectures, Princeton University, 1898**
- ✧ ***Lectures on Calvinism* (Eerdmans 1931)**
- ✧ **Peter S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Eerdmans, 1998).**



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"Two *life-systems* are wrestling with one another, in mortal combat. Modernism is bound to build a world of its own from the data of the natural man, and to construct man himself from the data of nature; while, on the other hand, all those who reverently bend the knee to Christ and worship Him as the Son of the Living God, and God Himself, are bent upon saving the 'Christian Heritage.' This is *the* struggle in Europe, this is *the* struggle in America...."



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"If the battle is to be fought with honor and with hope of victory, then *principle* must be arrayed against *principle*; then it must be felt that in Modernism the vast energy of an all embracing *life-system* assails us, then also it must be understood that we have to take our stand in a life-system of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power. And this powerful life-system is not to be invented nor formulated by ourselves, but is to be taken and applied as it presents itself in history."



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"As truly as every plant has a root, so truly does a principle hide under every manifestation of life. These principles are interconnected, and have their common root in a fundamental principle; and from the latter is developed logically and systematically the whole complex of ruling ideas and conceptions that go to make up our life and world-view. With such a coherent world and life-view, firmly resting on its principle and self-consistent in its splendid structure, Modernism now confronts Christianity; and against this deadly danger, ye, Christians, cannot successfully defend your sanctuary, but by placing in opposition to all this, a life and worldview of your own, founded as firmly on the base of your own principle, wrought out with the same clearness and glittering in an equally logical consistency."



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✧ **"This manifestation of the Christian principle is given us in Calvinism."**

✧ **Calvinism as the subject of his Stone Lectures**

✧ **Calvinism, not as sectarian theology, but as a total "life-system."**

✧ **Six Lectures on Calvinism:**

- 1. Calvinism as a Life-System**
- 2. Calvinism and Religion**
- 3. Calvinism and Politics**
- 4. Calvinism and Science**
- 5. Calvinism and Art**
- 6. Calvinism and the Future**



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✧ **Calvinism meets the conditions of every worldview with insights into the three primary relationships that make up human existence:**

- ✧ **To God**
- ✧ **To humanity**
- ✧ **To the world**



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"For our relation *to God*: an immediate fellowship of man with the Eternal, independently of priest or church. For the relation of man *to man*: the recognition in each person of human worth, which is his by virtue of his creation after the Divine likeness, and therefore of the equality of all men before God and his magistrate. And for our relation *to the world*: the recognition that in the whole world the curse is restrained by grace, that the life of the world is to be honored in its independence, and that we must, in every domain, discover the treasures and develop the potencies hidden by God in nature and human life."



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- ✧ **Worldview conflict in all social and cultural domains, but especially in “science” (German, *Wissenschaft* = scholarship in general).**
- ✧ **The battle *per se* is not between science and religion, but between two competing life systems underlying two distinctive approaches to scientific investigation.**
- ✧ **“Normalists” (naturalism)**
- ✧ **“Abnormalists” (theism)**



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- ✧ "...the difference between the science of the Normalists and Abnormalists is not founded upon any differing result of investigation, but upon the undeniable difference which distinguishes the self-consciousness of the one from that of the other."
- ✧ Because there are two kinds of people, there are two kinds of science.
- ✧ *Palingenesis* (= spiritual regeneration)
- ✧ Theistic science vs. idolatrous science.



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**The "Antithesis" (sharp
distinction between Christian
and non-Christian
consciousness and ways of
life, obedience and
disobedience, etc.)**



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✧ "We speak none too emphatically, therefore, when we speak of two kinds of people. Both are human, but one is inwardly different from the other [because of *palingenesis*], and consequently feels a different content rising from his consciousness; thus they face the cosmos from different points of view, and are impelled by different impulses. And the fact that there are two kinds of *people* occasions of necessity the fact of two kinds of human *life* and *consciousness* of life, and of two kinds of *science*; for which reason the idea of the *unity of science*, taken in its absolute sense, implies the denial of the fact of *palingenesis*, and therefore from principle leads to the rejection of the Christian religion."



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- 1. God's redemptive "grace restores nature" (renews total cosmos)**
- 2. God is sovereign and has ordered all aspects of life by His law and word ("sphere sovereignties")**
- 3. Wholehearted affirmation of the "cultural mandate" in Genesis, showing that God intends the progressive development of creation as a fundamental human occupation.**



An Introduction to the Thought of Abraham Kuyper

- 4.** The notion of *common grace*, which blocks the effects of sin and fosters the development of creation and culture.
- 5.** The concept of the *antithesis*, that the human race is divided between those who acknowledge the redemption and kingship of Jesus Christ and those who do not, and the respective mindsets and ways of life derived from both.



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Two Additional Aspects of Kuyper's Thought:

- 1. Christianity as a complete worldview provided him with an alternative approach to traditional apologetics**
 - ✓ **Rejects piecemeal approach and objectivism of rationalists and evidentialists**
 - ✓ **Recognizes subjective factor in determining what one believes to be reasonable, evidential, and true.**
 - ✓ **Apologetics must be conducted at the more basic level of underlying worldviews.**



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Two Additional Aspects of Kuyper's Thought:

2. **Worldview provided Kuyper with a method for critiquing the scientific and scholarly enterprise, broadly conceived.**
- ✓ **Human reason is NOT neutral in its operation but is conditioned by antecedent assumptions and beliefs (by *a priori* faith commitments).**
- ✓ **Christian scholars bolstered in their confidence to undertake their academic tasks and cultural pursuits on the basis of their theistic and biblical beliefs.**



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Kuyper's Followers and Influence

- ✓ **Neo-calvinists and Kuyperians**
- ✓ **Calvin College**
- ✓ **Institute for Christian Studies**
- ✓ **Redeemer University College**
- ✓ **Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)**
- ✓ **D. H. T. Vollenhoven (1892-1978)**
- ✓ **Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977)**
- ✓ **Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987)**



"Kuyper"

