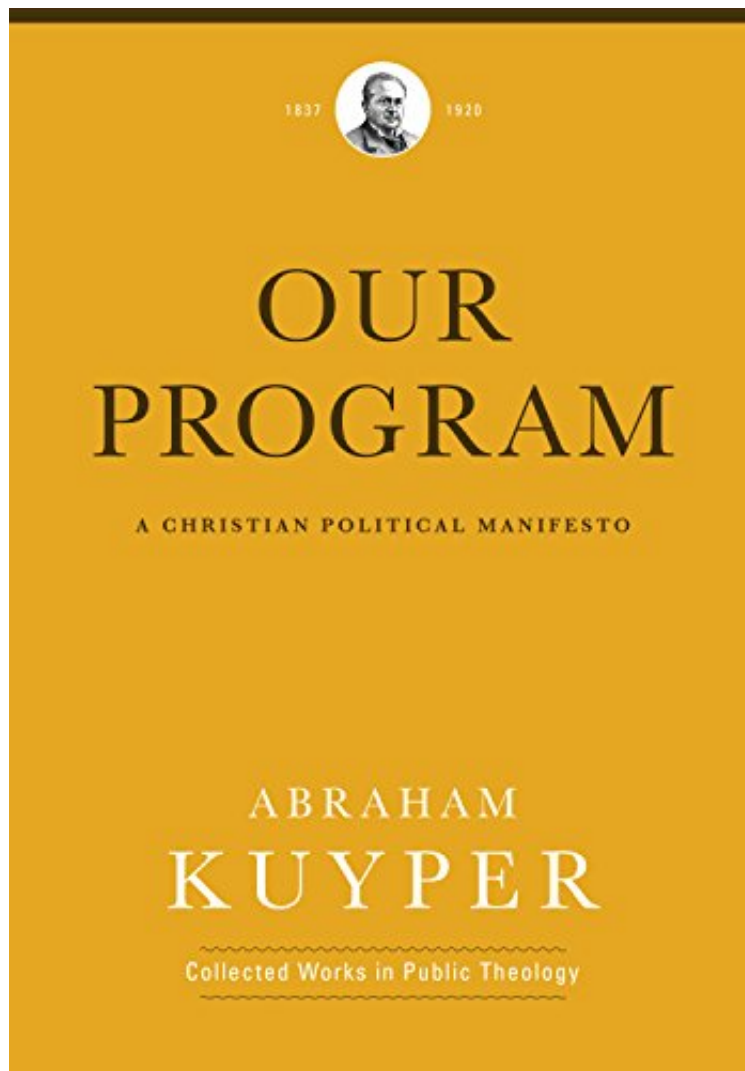


(Ebook free) Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto (Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology)

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Abraham Kuyper
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Abraham Kuyper : Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto (Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto (Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Our Program, by Abraham Kuyper By James B. Pate Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was a Dutch minister, a member of Parliament, and a prime minister. He also founded the Free University in Amsterdam. Many Christians have quoted his statement that There is not a square inch in the whole

domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: Mine! Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto is a collection of articles that Kuyper wrote about the anti-revolutionary movement, of which he was a significant part. Kuyper in this book presents his Christian political philosophy and proposes guidelines on how society can address certain issues. Harry Van Dyke, the book's editor and translator, provides an introduction that gives the reader a summary of Kuyper's political thought and historical context. Throughout the book, there are footnotes that provide historical background or inform the reader about what Kuyper is addressing. One can get the impression that Kuyper was walking a fine line, or was trying to balance out different perspectives. On the one hand, he did not support a secular humanist sort of state, which was why his movement was anti-revolutionary: it rejected the secularist legacy of the French Revolution. On the other hand, Kuyper supported the separation of church and state and opposed theocracy, for he feared that the church being the government would corrupt the church. Overall, Kuyper believed that godly principles should govern society, but he seemed rather inconsistent about how one should determine what those godly principles were. He argued that natural religion—God's revelation through nature and conscience, which is available to everyone, including non-Christians—should be what informs government policy. At times, however, he appeared to go further than that, arguing that the Netherlands should respect its Christian heritage and that the Bible is the true source of a definition of justice. One can guess about how Kuyper held together this apparent tension. He states in one passage that Christians should try to persuade the larger society, so he may have believed that society should at its bare minimum yield to natural religion, but should be willing to go further, if enough people accept that. Alternatively, Kuyper may have thought that the Bible itself presents natural religion as the proper guide for society. Kuyper supported freedom of conscience. He himself did not appear to be a pacifist, but he respects the right of conscientious objectors. At the same time, he does not take his support for freedom of conscience as far as many Americans might in the twenty-first century. He supports allowing an atheist to testify in court, but the atheist has to have somebody vouch for his character. He presents Islam and paganism as religions that society should challenge. Kuyper would not be the first person to have noble ideals, while making some exceptions to them. There are many occasions in the book when Kuyper can be quite detailed in his proposals. He is specific about how society can counter prostitution, for instance, or how it can honor Sunday. Kuyper also has specific proposals about the structure and decorum of government, both national and local. There were times when I thought that Kuyper should be more specific about what checks and balances should exist to prevent a leader from abusing his or her power. Kuyper expresses support for a constitutional monarchy, and yet he is also rather critical of a republic, saying that a republic may lead to party conflict within the Parliament. Kuyper is not against the existence of Parliament, though. Kuyper's preference is for the Netherlands to have a godly monarch like William of Orange, but what if the monarch or Parliament is unjust, or ungodly? Often, Kuyper was saying that leaders should behave in a certain manner, but what would legally guarantee that they would behave that way? Kuyper did say that people should resist the government, if the government fails to respect the independence and domain of different institutions (i.e., localities, families, etc.), and he presents a decorum for how to do so. Also, Kuyper offered specific proposals about how elections can be implemented so as to respect the rights of the minority. Perhaps Kuyper thought that these proposals would provide proper checks-and-balances. Kuyper does express sensitivity to the poor and the marginalized. While he was highly critical of public schools because of their secular nature, he still supported ways to help the poor to receive an education. Kuyper defends the Netherlands' colonization, and yet he opposes exploitation of the colonies' resources; he advocates that the Netherlands serve its colonies. Critics may understandably see Kuyper's approach as condescending to the colonies, or they may hold that it falls morally short of the policy of not colonizing at all. They would have a point, and yet Kuyper does deserve credit for wrestling with the humanitarian implications of policies. Van Dyke in the introduction states that Kuyper considered himself to be a liberal in the anti-revolutionary movement, one who supported civil liberties, and yet Kuyper was open to learning from the conservatives, who believed in a stronger state. That could be one factor that accounts for some of the tensions within Kuyper's thought: Kuyper wants to support freedom, and yet he also agrees with the conservatives in their emphasis on tradition. There are passages in the book that are beautiful. For instance, Kuyper defends the sovereignty of realms, talking about how God has played a special part in those realms' history and development. Those looking for a thoughtful and edifying discussion of political philosophy from a Christian perspective will find that in the book. But the book is not entirely that, for there are huge parts of it that are technical discussions about the issues of the day, such as public hygiene. The technical parts of the book may be interesting to historians or people with a historical interest, from an antiquarian perspective. Many readers' eyes may glaze over those parts, though. There were parts of the book that were rather elliptical: one would have to know the historical background to understand what Kuyper was saying. In many cases, the footnotes were helpful. In some cases, there were not footnotes, or the footnotes talked more about names, dates, and events, which did not shed much light on Kuyper's discussion. I received a complimentary review copy of this book from the publisher, in exchange for an honest review.

What are the political and social implications of the gospel? In Our Program, Abraham Kuyper presents a Christian alternative to the secular politics of his day. At that time, the church and state were closely tied, with one usually

controlling the other. But Kuyper's political framework showed how the church and state could engage with each other while remaining separate. His insights, though specific to his time and place, remain highly relevant to Christians involved in the political sphere today. This new translation of *Our Program*, created in partnership with the Kuyper Translation Society and the Acton Institute, is part of a major series of new translations of Kuyper's most important writings. The *Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology* marks a historic moment in Kuyper studies, aimed at deepening and enriching the church's development of public theology.

Abraham Kuyper was trained as a theologian and self-trained as a political thinker and organizer. This comprehensive *Program*, which Kuyper crafted in the process of forming the Netherlands' first mass political party, brought the theology, the political theory, and the organizational vision together brilliantly in a coherent set of policies that spoke directly to the needs of his day. '*Ons Program*' / *Our Program* served for decades as an inspiration to Kuyper's followers and set a high standard for his opponents to match. For us it sets out the challenge of envisioning what might be an equivalent witness in our own day.--JAMES D. BRATT, Professor of History, Calvin College, Author, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* It is a scandal and a disgrace that we have all read Burke's response to the French Revolution, but few in the English-speaking world have read the equally profound and equally consequential response of Abraham Kuyper--a response that has at least as much to say to twenty-first-century readers as Burke's. It has been truly said that America never produced a really great political philosopher and has had to borrow them from Europe; Kuyper deserves a place beside Locke and Tocqueville as a titanic European intellect whose thought can help us understand the American experiment in religious liberty and constitutional democracy. In this book Kuyper lays out the intellectual architecture of what we now call 'sphere sovereignty,' staking out a democratic and republican alternative both to aristocratic traditionalism and to the implicitly totalitarian logic of secularism. Kuyper's rare talent for simultaneously giving due weight to the claims of both revelation and human culture uniquely equips him to explore the central paradoxes of modern politics: that religious freedom can be justified only on the assumption that we are responsible to God and that the state can rightfully rule over its subjects as individuals only if it acknowledges that it is in turn ruled by them in their social capacity as an organic community and culture. Kuyper's application of his political theology and philosophy to the particular situation of his own country in his own time illustrates how these paradoxes play themselves out in practice in ways that cast an invaluable light upon the problems of our own time and place.--GREG FORSTER, Director, Oikonomia Network; Visiting Assistant Professor of Faith and Culture, Trinity International University Though *Our Program* is a work of its time rather than a work of enduring theological significance, this translation is to be warmly welcomed because of the new insight it gives English readers into the extraordinary mind and times of Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper's 'antirevolutionary' vision, worked out here at length, provides an illuminating historical lens through which to see contemporary debates between Christianity and secularism.--GORDON GRAHAM, Henry Luce III Professor of Philosophy and the Arts, Princeton Theological Seminary This early work of Abraham Kuyper was the intellectual basis for the first Christian political party in modern democracy and presented a new, modern way of doing politics. *Our Program* illustrates how Kuyper turned politics from an elite business into a public affair, how he changed the public involvement in politics from a single issue activity into permanent action, and how he challenged liberal politics based on reason and consensus by introducing a debating culture in parliament based on conflicting worldviews. It is amazing how relevant this monument in political history still is. Read it and you will be encouraged to make your voice heard!--GEORGE HARINCK, Professor of History and Archivist, VU University Amsterdam Abraham Kuyper ranks as one of the most important Christian intellectuals of the modern era, not least because he represents an unusual blend of theological orthodoxy and cultural progressiveness. His writings cover not only the church but spheres such as politics, education, scholarship, journalism, and the arts. He was also actively involved in these spheres, sparking developments that have long outlasted him. His influence continues to grow worldwide as more of his works are translated from Dutch. An English translation of Kuyper's political manifesto *Our Program* is long overdue and will be welcomed by scholars and practitioners alike. It unlocks some of the key ideas of Kuyper's creative genius.--PETER S. HESLAM, Director, Entrepreneurial Leadership Initiative, University of Oxford, Senior Member, Trinity College, University of Cambridge Even though modernity has discredited itself morally, despite its merciful insights by common grace, Kuyper outlines a biblically Christian alternative, or at least the beginning of one, for those who are searching down various postmodern trails and finding only greater despair and false promises. In this 1879 manifesto, Abraham Kuyper offers a biblically Christian understanding of political life that attempts to remedy what is still our crisis: the failure of modernity to satisfy the human spirit and its propensity to establish monstrous tyranny. If modernity, despite by common grace its merciful insights, has discredited itself morally, Kuyper outlines a biblically Christian alternative, or at least the beginning of one, for those who are searching down various postmodern trails and finding only greater despair and false promises. We can be grateful to Harry Van Dyke for making this translation of *Our Program* available to our generation.--D. C. INNES, Associate Professor of Politics, The King's College Coming so soon after the publication of James Bratt's magisterial biography of Abraham Kuyper, readers will welcome this new translation of the great Dutch statesman's seminal foray into political theory and practice. Although some elements of

the Anti-Revolutionary Party's Program are obviously dated and culturally specific, there is much here that is surprisingly current, given the striking parallels between Kuyper's world and our own. Christians in the English-speaking world seeking wisdom for their own political efforts would do well to read *Our Program*.--DAVID T. KOYZIS, Professor and Chair of Political Science, Redeemer University College

Abraham Kuyper's *Our Program* has been much quoted by those who share his convictions about the lordship of Christ over all times, places, things, people, and societies. It is, therefore, a real advantage to see a capably translated and helpfully introduced edition of the whole document appear in English. For those concerned about Kuyper's own historical situation, as well as about contemporary social and political controversies, this edition should be a real boon.--MARK NOLL, Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History, University of Notre Dame

About the Author

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was a leading Dutch figure in education, politics, and theology. He was a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, was appointed to Parliament, and served as prime minister. Kuyper also founded the Free University (VU) in Amsterdam, a political party, and a denomination, in addition to writing on a dizzying array of subjects.

Harry Van Dyke was born in Rotterdam, Holland, and at the age of twelve moved with his parents and six siblings to Canada. He earned a BA at Calvin College and a DLitt at the VU University Amsterdam. He has published a score of articles, numerous translations, and a book, *Groen van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution* (1989), besides editing anthologies of the writings of S. U. Zuidema and M. C. Smit.

For twelve years he served as research fellow and instructor in theory and philosophy of history at the VU University Amsterdam, then taught history at Redeemer University College for twenty-three years. Since his retirement he has given direction to the Dooyeweerd Centre for Christian Philosophy and has been involved in several translation projects. He and his wife have two adult daughters and two grandchildren. They reside in Hamilton, Ontario, where they are members of a local Christian Reformed church.