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Introduction

What is Epistemology, who are the Evangelicals, and why does it matter?

From the earliest days of Homo sapiens to the modern research university, human beings have always craved knowledge. Inquiries about the nature of human origin, meaning, morality, and destiny strike at the very core of humankind's innate desire to make sense of the universe. But how one can know what is true? How can one know anything at all? These fundamental questions are central to the field of epistemology, or the study of knowledge and justified belief. Epistemology concerns itself with the very nature of knowledge, and provides a framework by which people can evaluate what is true.¹ But not everyone has the same epistemological framework. Some place a heavier emphasis on input from sensory experience and observation whereas others claim that reason alone should be the primary basis for justifying beliefs and claims.

Throughout their history in the United States, evangelical Christians have had a peculiar epistemology. Evangelicalism started as a movement within Protestantism that originated as the common name for the Christian revival movements that sprung forth in the 18th and 19th centuries. On one hand, evangelicals have generally believed in the inerrancy of the Bible, Christ's resurrection, and the importance of personally trusting God for eternal salvation.² On the other hand, even with their shared assumptions, evangelicals have always seen themselves as approaching religion and scripture in a deeply scientific way.³ To navigate this seemingly unusual dichotomy between assumptions of Biblical truth and a

¹ The doctrine of inerrancy claims that the Bible is without error, and thus is completely true. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Epistemology" by Matthias Steup, December 14, 2005. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology/>

² George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 2.

³ Molly Worthen, interviewed by Peter Slen, *Book T.V.*, C-SPAN, March 19, 2014. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?318385-2/apostles-reason>

standards of scientific evidence, leading evangelical thinkers employed an epistemological framework based in the works Sir Francis Bacon and a school of philosophy called Scottish Common Sense Realism to argue that that knowledge started with reason, but that a right interpretation of reason would necessarily support their orthodox Christian doctrines.

This evangelical epistemology went largely unchallenged in the United States until Charles Darwin's 1859 magnum opus, *The Origin of the Species*, and other developments of the late 19th, early 20th century started overturning traditional understandings of the Bible and what constituted scientific knowledge. Evangelicals struggled to adapt to the problems posed by modernity, and contentious debate ensued between those evangelicals who wanted to adapt Christianity to the modern age (modernists) and those who felt a turn from orthodoxy was a turn away from God (fundamentalists).

Abraham Kuyper and a Calvinist Worldview

Into these rising tensions stepped Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch political leader, journalist, and theologian who came to the United States offering his theory of a Calvinist worldview to evangelicals struggling with modernity. The overall concept of a worldview originated with the Immanuel Kant, who invented the term *Weltanschauung*, meaning worldview, in his 1790 *Critique of Judgement*.⁴ Kant wrote, "If the human mind is nonetheless to be able even to think the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible, whose idea of the noumenon cannot be intuited but can yet be regarded as the substrate underlying what is mere appearance, namely, our intuition of the world."⁵ Although Kant only

⁴ David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 2.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement: Including the First Introduction*, trans. And intro. Werner S. Pluhar, with a foreword by Mary J. Gregor (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishin Company, 1987), 111-112.

ever alluded to *Weltanschauung* briefly, the word came of age in the early 19th century German Idealist movement and soon was adopted by thought leaders all across Europe.⁶

Abraham Kuyper encountered the *Weltanschauung* concept as a student at the *Leiden Universiteit* in the Netherlands, and combined it with his own Calvinist background.⁷

Calvinism is a complex term, and thus merits a thorough explanation. Generally speaking, Christianity can be separated into four different divisions: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and various Cults. There are detailed historical reasons as to why such divisions exist, but Protestants are typically considered those Christians who are part of the churches that arose from the schism with the Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century, and who believe the five *solas*.⁸ Within Protestantism, there are two primary types of theology: Arminianism and Reformed. The majority of Protestants in the world are Arminians, but historically, both Abraham Kuyper and most of the intellectual aristocracy of the American Protestant church have usually come from a Reformed perspective. Reformed theology is distinct from Arminian theology most

⁶ David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, 3.

⁷ James D. Bratt. *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013), 9.

⁸ Examples of Protestant Churches include the United Methodist Church, The Presbyterian Church in the United States, the Anglican Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Baptist Church. Justin Holcomb explains that the five *solas* are Latin phrases that emerged during the Reformation to summarize the Reformers' theological positions about the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. They are as follows: *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone is our highest priority), *Sola Fide* (We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ), *Sola Gratia* (We are saved by the grace of God alone), *Solus Christus* (Jesus Christ alone is our Lord and Savior), and *Soli Deo Gloria* (We live for the glory of God alone). Justin Holcomb, "The five solas- points form the past that should matter to you" *Christianity.com*, July 13, 2012. <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/the-five-solas-of-the-protestant-reformation.html>

profoundly along five theological points articulated by John Calvin, a 16th century Protestant Reformer.⁹

Therefore, to say Kuyper came to the United States to promulgate a Calvinist Worldview is to say Kuyper presented “Reformed Christianity as a total framework of biblical thought.”¹⁰ He believed Calvinism should extend beyond theology to take its place alongside other worldviews and compete for cultural influence.¹¹ In this sense, Kuyper’s Calvinism comprised the entirety of his public theology, or how he believed Christians should engage with society.¹²

This paper tells the story of Abraham Kuyper’s theory of a Calvinist worldview in the United States. Specifically, after exploring the origins of Kuyperian thought, I argue that Kuyper was initially rejected at Princeton because of a longstanding commitment to “right reason” epistemology that both prevented Princeton theologians from compromising with modernists and encouraged a fundamentalist separatist movement among evangelicals. Additionally, I contend that when evangelicals eventually did embrace Kuyperian thought in the mid-20th century, it represented a profound shift in the way evangelicals engaged with government and society.

Chapter one is an intellectual biography of Abraham Kuyper, seeking to understand who Kuyper was as a historical figure in the Netherlands, the origins of his intellectual contributions and epistemological framework, and how his Calvinist worldview manifested practically in his anti-revolutionary approach to government. Chapter two begins with the

⁹ For an excellent summary of the five points, typically denoted by the acronym T.U.L.I.P., see Geneva College Professor Byron Curtis’ explanation: <http://www.fivesolas.com/tulip.htm>

¹⁰ David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, 9.

¹¹ Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 189-190.

¹² Katie Day and Sebastian Kim, *A Companion to Public Theology*, (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishers, 2017), 2.

end of Kuyper's American tour, explaining that the evangelical rejection of Kuyper's Calvinism was a product of a longstanding intellectual tradition within the movement, and how tradition manifested in the Presbyterian Controversy. Chapter three picks up at the end of the Presbyterian Controversy with a young Francis Schaeffer, explores how Schaeffer revived and popularized Kuyper's Calvinist worldview among evangelicals, and analyzes how Kuyper's Calvinist worldview influenced evangelical public theology.

Chapter 1:

Kuyper Uncovered: Understanding the Roots of Kuyparian Thought

On Friday, August 26th, 1898, at half past two in the afternoon, a late middle-aged, bespectacled Dutchman stepped onto the docks of New York Harbor, greeted by no one. He had travelled nearly 3,000 nautical miles on a luxury passenger liner named the RMS *Lucania*, which featured 450 crew members and 1,900 passengers, nearly all of whom were loud and bothersome. Much like the food onboard, the air in New York was salty and hot, and every service was expensive. A carriage from the boat to the hotel was 7.50 florins (*f*)! An ordinary summer hat, which in Amsterdam would have sold for *f*5, cost a whopping *f*12.50.¹ The night sky and the posh Fifth Avenue Hotel in Madison Square offered no reprieve from the oppressive heat. Unlike the Netherlands' cool summers, the August weather temperature in New York City reached 100 degrees Fahrenheit during the day and a sweltering 93 degrees Fahrenheit at night. Even the light breeze caressing the hotel's seven-story high rooftop garden could not restore the Dutchman's frail constitution. He relied on endless handkerchiefs, multiple collars, and constant fanning to keep cool.²

Despite the lack of a grand welcoming party and the inconveniences of life across the pond, the Dutchman, known in Holland as the Honorable Dr. Abraham Kuyper, was optimistic. After just a week in New York City, he had seen the spark of a country he would later proclaim as “destined in the providence of God to become the most glorious and noble

¹ The US dollar exchange rate for one Dutch guilder at the time was about 40 cents.

² Letter from Abraham Kuyper to Mrs. Johanna Hendrika Kuyper-Schaay, August 26, 1898, in *Kuyper in America*, edited by George Harinck (Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt College Press, 2012), 6-8; Letter from Abraham Kuyper to Family, September 1, 1898, in *Kuyper in America*

nation the world has ever seen.”³ Specifically, on September 1st the site of nearly 400,000 spectators celebrating the victorious 71st Army regiment, just returned from its successful campaign in Cuba, was mesmerizing to Kuyper. He wrote that America “meets my expectations entirely. Far more than in Europe... precious as gold, in my eyes.”⁴

The spectacle of parading patriots, juxtaposed with the unpleasant realities of New York, foreshadowed the remainder of Kuyper’s 5-month American visit. After delivering the first three of his six Stone Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary a month later, Kuyper received “an epistolary bombardment” of letters and speaking requests. Day after day, from morning till evening, Kuyper estimated that he faced audiences of as many as 4000 people, ranging in location from Dutch colonies in the mid-west to the Mohawk Valley in New York.⁵ He impressed laymen and clergy alike, dined with former Presidents, and met with politicians across the country. Kuyper’s first day in New York may not have been all he expected, but at least in many superficial ways, his United States tour was all he could have hoped for.

The Holland Kuyper Left Behind: The Development of Kuyper’s Public Theology

Although the ideas Kuyper articulated in his American tour were delivered to an American audience, they were originally formed in the 19th century Netherlands. It is only against this background that his political ideas can be fully grasped, particularly because

³ Abraham Kuyper, Public Address in Grand Rapids, Michigan as printed in *The Grand Rapids Herald*, October 28, 1898, quoted from John Bolt, “Abraham Kuyper and the Holland-America Line of Liberty,” *The Journal of Markets and Morality* 1, no. 1, (Spring 1998), 35 - 59.

⁴ Letter from Abraham Kuyper to Family, September 1, 1898, in *Kuyper in America*, 9-11.

⁵ Letter from Abraham Kuyper to Family, October 14, 1898, in *Kuyper in America*, 37-40.

Kuyper spent most of his career serving among the Dutch people, not as an isolated theologian in an ivory tower.⁶

Kuyper was born in 1837 on a European continent that was struggling to cope with modernity. Historian Eric Hobsbawm labeled the era “The Age of Revolution” because of the “profundity” of revolutions that occurred throughout the continent, causing arguably “the greatest transformation in human history since remote times.”⁷ Most notably, the industrial revolution that began in Britain and the French Revolution of 1789 ushered in new eras of European society reflecting innovative economic technologies and new, Enlightenment-based understandings of what it meant to think and to govern. These changes were not universally accepted, however, and the whiplash was often painful. By the 1840s, liberal-nationalist revolutions had erupted against old-order governments all over Europe, and in the Netherlands, tensions simmered simultaneously to the rise of the “doctrinaire liberalism” of political reformers championing toothless democratic reforms.⁸ By 1848, William II ordered an overhaul of the Netherlands’ constitution to create a modern Parliament, allowing for direct election of members in both houses of the *Staten Generaal*, who now had the ability to pass and amend legislation. By the time Abraham Kuyper turned 12 years old, the Dutch age of liberalism had begun.⁹

⁶ Peter Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper’s Lectures on Calvinism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 15.

⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution (1789-1848)*, (New York, New York: Random House Publishers, 1962), 1-4.

⁸ Simon P. Kennedy, “Abraham Kuyper: Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Politician and Political Thinker,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 61, no. 2, (November 2, 2015), pp. 170.

⁹ Simon P. Kennedy, “Abraham Kuyper,” 171.

The Réveil Movement and the Importance of the French Revolution

Within the ebbs and flows of the “Age of Revolution,” Kuyper is actually best understood as the chosen son of the Dutch *Réveil*,¹⁰ an orthodox Calvinist revival and anti-modernist political movement inspired by the 1814 Swiss Réveil in the Swiss Reformed Church.¹¹ The Dutch Réveil stood for a vigorous individual piety based on unquestioning faith and strict Calvinist orthodoxy and against the introduction of French Enlightenment rationalism into Dutch religious discourse.¹² The Dutch movement began as a response to the King William I’s absolutist monarchial rule, specifically his subjugation of all National Dutch Reformed Churches (NHK) under the authority of the Dutch State Department of Religion.¹³ The Réveil movement reached an climax in 1834, when Reverend Hendrik de Cock lead a secession from the NHK on the grounds that Dutch government officials had caused “the mutilation or denial of the doctrine of our fathers ... the degeneration of the administration of the Holy Sacraments ... and the near complete absence of church discipline, all of which are the marks of the true church according to our Reformed

¹⁰ Réveil is the French word for “revival.”

¹¹ Robert P. Swierenga and Elton J. Bruins, *Family Quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Churches in the Nineteenth Century*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 13-14.

¹² Justus M. Van Der Kroef, "Abraham Kuyper and the Rise of Neo-Calvinism in the Netherlands." *Church History* 17, no. 4 (1948): 316-34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3160320>.

¹³ Ecclesiastical Consequences: The new NHK leadership forced Protestant congregations to replace their traditional psalters with new hymnals, teach a rational theology emphasizing Enlightenment principles, and tolerate the Roman Catholicism now being preached among the Netherland’s Southern Provinces.

Restoration of William I: After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the Congress of Vienna created the new Kingdom of the Netherlands, combining former Dutch provinces in the North with French territory in the South and appointing William I, the Prince of Orange, as King. As a result, after 1815, the formerly Protestant country now had a Southern population that was both majority Catholic and ethnically French. The Netherlands was divided along these lines until the Belgian Revolution of 1830, when the Southern Provinces broke off to found the Kingdom of Belgium. Donald J. Bruggink and Kim N. Baker, *By Grace Alone: Stories of the Reformed Church in America*, Grand Rapids, (MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 2004. 120-21; Swierenga and Bruins, *Family Quarrels*, 16.

Confession.”¹⁴ William I punished the newly formed Christian Reformed Church (CGK) members harshly with police disruption and fines, which caused thousands of Dutch citizens to immigrate to the United States, but did little to stop the CGK from amassing a denomination of over 100,000 members by 1870.¹⁵

However, although ecclesiastical battles may have won the Réveil movement fame, the real driving forces behind the Réveil were the political thought leaders who transformed the movement’s Calvinist spiritual principles into a philosophy of government. These leaders, who still claimed membership in the Réveil, were an entirely different group from de Cock’s Seceders: less concerned with individual religious conversion and more focused on countering the rise of liberalism and secular humanism in the Dutch agora. Political Réveilers saw the rise of French Revolutionary ideals as a threat to the authority of Christianity in the public sphere; they believed secular humanism, naturalism, and rationalism were cancers that would lead to dictatorship and, even worse, to communism.¹⁶ The “father of the Dutch Réveil,” Willem Bilderdijk laid the foundation for a Christian political response by mixing Réveil sentiments of pietism and Calvinism with his own romantic nationalism to support a divine-right theory of monarchy and oppose the Enlightenment social-contract theory.¹⁷ Bilderdijk’s leading protégé, a poet named Isaac Da Costa, applied Bilderdijk’s teaching by publishing fulminations against the liberalization of

¹⁴ “Doctrine of our fathers” refers to Orthodox Calvinism. John Bolt, *Bavinck on the Christian Life: Following Jesus in Faithful Service*, (Wheaton, IL : Crossway Publishing, 2015). 5-6.

¹⁵ Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. 14.

¹⁶ Guillaume Groen Van Prinsterer, “XV: Conclusion,” in Harry Van Dyke, *Groen Van Prinsterer’s Lectures*, Number 45.

¹⁷ Darryl Hart writes, “Bilderdijk’s interpretation of Dutch history espoused a divine-right theory of monarchy, including the place of the House of Orange in the glory of the Netherlands, and refuted social-contract theories that laid the basis for democratic society.” Bilderdijk opposed William I’s absolutism and reorganization of the church, but he still believed William I had some authority rule, and at the very least, was better than social-contract theory. Darryl Hart, *Calvinism: A History*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 2013. 230-231.

Dutch society and claiming any rebellion against a divine monarchy was a rebellion against God.¹⁸ Da Costa was also later a close personal friend to Abraham Kuyper, who often invoked Bilderdijk in public speeches and prayers.¹⁹

The Anti-Revolutionary Party and the Rise of Abraham Kuyper

Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, who was also a protégé of Bilderdijk's, began in the 1840s to coalesce Réveil thought into a Parliamentary political caucus called the “anti-revolutionaries.”²⁰ The name anti-revolutionary came his colleagues' opposition to the “political and social systems embodied in the French Revolution.”²¹ Groen wrote that the Revolution caused “general disorder” because of its “disrespect for the essential laws of humanity and the systematic overthrow of the social order.”²² Groen led his anti-revolutionaries in the Dutch Parliament for over twenty years, turning the movement into a political force by the 1860s. Groen rejected both conservative and liberal labels, often butting heads with both ideologies in the *State Generaal*, because he saw the anti-revolutionaries as an innovative movement that challenged traditional partisan lines.²³

¹⁸ Darryl Hart, *Calvinism: A History*, 231. For examples of fulminations, see Isaac Da Costa, “Objections to the Spirit of the Age,” 1823.

¹⁹ Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 344-345.

²⁰ Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. 62.

²¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto*, in Abraham Kuyper Collected Works of Public Theology, ed. Harry Van Dyke, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press), 2015. § 5.

²² Quoted in Kennedy, “Abraham Kuyper: Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Politician and Political Thinker,” 172.

²³ According to historian Henry Van Dyke, to Groen, “The 'conservative right' embraced all those who lacked either the insight, the prudence, or the will to break with the modern tenets yet who recoiled from the consequences whenever the ideology was practiced and implemented in any consistent way... Groen called for a rejection of the entire available spectrum of political positions, calling for a "radical alternative in politics, along anti-revolutionary, Christian-historical lines.” In Guillaume Groen Van Prinsterer, *Groen Van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution*, ed. and trans. Harry Van Dyke (Jordan Station, Ontario: Wedge Foundation Publishing, 2017). 3-4.

In fashioning the anti-revolutionary philosophy, however, Groen sometimes interpreted Réveil writings loosely. He understood the limitations of applied political theory and was heavily influenced by non-Réveil political thinkers, most notably Edmund Burke. For example, Groen famously annotated all eight volumes of *The Works of Right Honorable Edmund Burke*, frequently quoted Burke in his political treatise *Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution*, and regularly repeated Burke's assertion that a "religious war" against French Enlightenment ideals must be fought, "A holy war for religion, morality, property, order, [and] public law."²⁴ In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke famously argued against both the divine right of kings and the moral goodness of revolutions to depose kings, advocating instead for gradual constitutional reform.²⁵ Groen probably drew on Burke's ideas when he shifted the antirevolutionary position from a Réveil-inspired, divine right monarchism to a stance favoring a constitutionally limited monarchy. Perhaps most importantly, Groen took from Burke the principles that wisdom from forefathers applies to present-day society and that opposing Revolutionary ideals is both a political and religious struggle.²⁶ In fact, the Burkean influence was so strong over anti-revolutionary thought that the movement would later have to defend itself against critics who saw it as a poor imitation of Burke's ideas.²⁷

It was into this late 1860s, post Réveil, antirevolutionary world that Groen invited a promising young Dutch Reformed minister, Abraham Kuyper, who at the time was a humble pastor in the small town of Beesd. The two met through mutual acquaintances, and struck up

²⁴ Martin Fitzpatrick and Peter Jones, *The Reception of Edmund Burke in Europe*, (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing), 2017. 165.

²⁵ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790. 14-17.
<http://pinkmonkey.com/dl/library1/ref.pdf>

²⁶ Fitzpatrick and Jones, *The Reception of Edmund Burke in Europe*, 165.

²⁷ Kuyper, *Our Program*, § 12.

an epistolary friendship almost immediately. To Kuyper, Groen was more than just a mentor and friend; he was an personal confidant, hero, and father figure who profoundly shaped Kuyper's intellectual development. To Groen, who was growing older by the late 1860s, Kuyper was to be the heir of the Réveil and antirevolutionary tradition. Groen educated Kuyper using a reading list steeped in antirevolutionary thought, which included a mixture of Réveil thinkers, such as Da Costa and Bilderdijk, and leading conservatives such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Edmund Burke, Friedrich von Gentz, Karl Ludwig von Haller, and Heinrich Leo.²⁸ Groen groomed Kuyper to take over the antirevolutionary movement: he coaxed Kuyper into public life, and beginning in 1872, gave him the editor-in-chief job at *De Standaard*, the official newspaper of the anti-revolutionaries. Groen subsequently convinced Kuyper into a run for Parliament in 1874, when Kuyper became the second youngest member of the *Staten Generaal*.

Kuyper eventually founded the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) in 1879, which was the first formal political party in the history of the Netherlands. Kuyper's ARP was the culmination of nearly a century of Dutch history. His political manifesto, *Ons Program* (Our Program), in 1879 served as a guide for the formal establishment of the ARP, revealed that Kuyper's political theory was a blend of Réveil Pietism and Calvinism mixed with anti-revolutionary thought and classic Dutch pluralism. *Ons Program* was attempting to construct a Christian political vision that was different from the platform of liberals who took their cues from the enlightenment.²⁹

²⁸ James Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. 71; Kuyper, *Our Program*, § 12.

²⁹ Harry Van Dyke, "Introduction" in Kuyper's *Our Program*. It also worth nothing that Theologian Greg Forster compared Kuyper's *Ons Program* to Burke, calling Kuyper's manifesto "equally profound and equally consequential" to Burke's *Reflections*.

Because Kuyper's intellectual development unfolded in the context of both the ministry and the public square, Kuyper's political theory became an inextricable part of his Calvinist public theology. Kuyper described the ARP as both a party of opposition and alternative to existing political platforms. In one sense, the antirevolutionaries aimed to combat "something offensive, something that clashed with what is just and sacred."³⁰ That "something" was Modernism, a term Kuyper used distinctly from "modernity," as Peter Heslam explains, to describe a concept consisting of "three primary elements: the principles of the French Revolution, pantheism, and the theory of evolution."³¹ Kuyper claimed that these elements "form together a life-system which is diametrically opposed to that of our fathers."³² He cared most about French Revolutionary principles, calling Modernism "the daughter of the French Revolution."³³ As translator Harry Van Dyke explains, "To be antirevolutionary was to be uncompromisingly opposed to 'modernity' -- that is, to the ideology embodied in the French Revolution and the public philosophy we have since come to know as secular humanism."³⁴ But the "modernity" of the French Revolution was only one leg of the Modernist stool.

³⁰ Kuyper, *Our Program*, § 5.

³¹ Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 96.

³² It is no coincidence that Kuyper frequently placed Modernism in opposition to "our fathers" in a very similar way to that of Réveil leader Hendrik de Cock's declaration that Dutch government officials were destroying the doctrine of our "fathers." See footnote 16. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 19.

³³ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 33. In Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 96.

³⁴ Kuyper gave a thorough explanation of what he meant by these principles in his *Ons Program*: "What we oppose is 'the Revolution,' by which we mean the political and social system embodied by the French Revolution ... What we combat, on principle and without compromise, is the attempt to totally change how a person thinks and how he lives, to change his head and his heart, his home and his country -- to create a state of affairs the very opposite of what has always been believed, cherished, and confessed, and so it leads us to a complete emancipation from the sovereign claims of Almighty God. The French Revolution was the first and most brazen attempt of this kind ... As an idea, the Revolution turns everything topsy-turvy...in this way it severs the ties that bind us to God and his Word, in order to subject both to human criticism. Once you undermine the family by replacing it with self-chosen (often sinful) relationships, once you embrace a whole new set of ideas,

The other two legs, pantheism and evolutionism, did not appear as much in Kuyper's major speeches and writings, but were closely related to each other and equally important in defining the Modernist enemy Kuyper's ARP was formed to defeat. Paul Tillich has called Pantheism an "abused term," because many Protestant theologians of Kuyper's era often discussed it, and accused German Idealist philosophers of it, without ever explicitly defining what they meant.³⁵ Kuyper was similarly vague, but in his 1892 *Vrije Universitat* Rector Speech titled, "The Blurring of Boundaries," he argued that pantheism began with the elimination of differences between "between God and the world, between time and eternity" and ended with the worship of progress.³⁶ Without any boundary separating God and man, there was no real right or wrong, and God was "dissolved in our human life... with the point of gravity now on the human side."³⁷ Pantheism, therefore, melted transcendent norms of morality into the subjective will of the powerful, or in France's case the people, which Kuyper stressed to have practical applications for the Dutch polity, church, and individual.³⁸

Evolution, representing the third leg of the Modernist triad, was one of the applications of Pantheism. Kuyper described evolution as a "genuinely pantheistic notion," and depending on context, he called it "one of the richest thoughts of pantheism,"

rearrange your notions of morality, allow your heart to follow a new direction—once you do this the Encyclopedists will be followed by the Jacobins, the theory by the practice, because "the new humanity" requires a new world." Abraham Kuyper, *Ons Program*, § 5. Harry Van Dyke, "Introduction" in Kuyper's *Our Program*

³⁵ Paul Tillich, *Perspectives on 19 and 20th Century Protestant Theology*, ed. By Carl E. Braaten (London, UK: SCM Press, 1967), 94-95.

³⁶ Abraham Kuyper, "The Blurring of Boundaries" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James Bratt, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company). 372, 375.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 381.

³⁸ A traditional definition of pantheism comes from pantheist philosopher Baruch Spinoza, who wrote, "God is one, that is, only one substance can be granted in the universe. Whatsoever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived." In other words, God was one with every material thing in existence; there were no boundaries separating the two. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. by R.H. Elwes (*Project Gutenberg*), 2013. Proposition XIV, Corrolary I and Proposition XV. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3800/3800-h/3800-h.htm>

“pantheism’s legitimate daughter,” or a “poisonous slime upon the shore... left behind by the pantheistic stream.”³⁹ But judging from Kuyper’s 1899 speech titled, “Evolution,” his concept of evolution was more what historians label “evolutionism” today, meaning it transcended the scientific applications of Darwin’s findings to embody something larger. Evolution claimed to offer an explanation for the whole of existence and, applied socially, a principle for setting the course of politics and law. Therefore, from Kuyper’s perspective, evolution was an essential component of the Modernist worldview. Taken together, these three legs created an all-encompassing worldview that Kuyper’s ARP was destined to fight, principle against principle.

But the ARP wasn’t content to just fight Modernism; it was committed to providing an alternative vision for the future. The ARP was “at heart a militant party, unhappy with the status quo and ready to critique it, fight it, and change it.”⁴⁰ If the ARP was a militant party at heart, its soul was found in Calvinist orthodoxy. Kuyper’s ARP offered to replace existing Enlightenment frameworks of governing with a new, Calvinist vision for what the Netherlands should be. Kuyper argued that Orthodox Calvinism was really a coherent life and intellectual framework, with direct applications in politics, science, art, philosophy, and law.⁴¹

Kuyper’s fundamental thesis, the rallying cry of the ARP, and the entirety of Kuyper’s public theology can be summarized in his declaration, “There is not a square inch of the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all,

³⁹ Abraham Kuyper, “Evolution” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James Bratt, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998). 414. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 106.

⁴⁰ Abraham Kuyper, “Evolution,” 106.

⁴¹ James Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, XX.

does not cry, mine!”⁴² Kuyper was against a theocracy; in fact, he was totally against the idea. But his school of thought and policy concerns were postured towards the overarching goal of ensuring the Netherlands “shall not be placed in a hostile position over against the living God.”⁴³

It’s important to note that Kuyper was very careful to distinguish his ARP and thought system from what he called “counterrevolutionaries.”⁴⁴ Counterrevolutionaries were far-right conservatives and Dutch Catholics who opposed revolution in favor of a return to the pre-revolutionary status quo.⁴⁵ In the context of the French Revolution, Kuyper claimed a counterrevolutionary would have supported a coup d’état and a return to monarchy.⁴⁶ He argued that counter-revolutionaries “are bent upon the violent destruction of that which exists by virtue of history,” or opposed to the natural progressions of history for the sake of an idealized past that no longer exists.⁴⁷ Author Mariëtta van der Tol further explains, “Counterrevolutionary voices took issue with the Ni Dieu, ni maître maxim of the French Revolution, but according to Kuyper, without providing a viable alternative for political thought.”⁴⁸ They were uncompromisingly opposed to modernity like the ARP, but instead of

⁴² Abraham Kuyper, “Sphere Sovereignty,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James Bratt, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.), 467.

⁴³ Under Kuyper, the ARP bucked traditional political labels and focused on three primary concerns: the plight of minorities, education, and the power of the central government, Kuyper, *Our Program*, § 11.

⁴⁴ Kuyper, *Our Program*, § 83.

⁴⁵ James W. Skillen and Rockne M. McCarthy, *Political Order and the Plural Structure of Society*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 236.

⁴⁶ Kuyper, *Our Program*, § 83.

⁴⁷ Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: The Origin and Safeguard*, 673.

⁴⁸ “Ni Dieu, ni maître” means “Neither God nor master.” Mariëtta van der Tol, *Raising the Ante*. Comment Magazine, September 1, 2016. <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/4923/raising-the-ante/>. Comment magazine is a publication edited by famed Calvinist philosopher James K.A. Smith, which is devoted to “renewing North American social architecture.” The magazine bases part of its editorial vision around the Abraham Kuyper’s public theology. <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/about/>

offering a new vision, counterrevolutionaries opted for the old order or, if necessary, a separation from the new order.

Over the next two decades, Kuyper was remarkably successful in his leadership of the ARP. After winning a major political victory by securing government funding for religious schools, Kuyper founded the *Vrije Universitat* (Free University), a Calvinist school where Kuyper served as Professor of Theology. He also united a coalition of Catholic political parties with his own ARP to win a majority in the *Staten Generaal* in 1894, setting himself up for a run at Prime Minister over an Antirevolutionary/Catholic government.⁴⁹

Kuyper's Magnum Opus: The Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology

In the latter years of the 1890s and before Kuyper's trip to the United States, he spent much of his time writing his magnum opus: *The Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology And Its Principles*, a three-volume masterwork that functioned as a history of theology, a defense of Calvinism, and an articulation of Kuyper's own epistemology.

Kuyper's epistemology was particularly important because it was the foundation on which he built his public theology, and ultimately, his antirevolutionary approach to government. His epistemology included what was arguably his greatest contribution to the world, the concept of antithesis, a pluralistic theory of human knowledge. He had been trained in the tradition of Johann Fichte and German Idealism while in school at Leiden Universiteit, which in addition to his Reformed background, taught him to "maintain the

⁴⁹Kuyper was briefly voted out of office in 1896 because of his opposition to popular suffrage legislation. During his time away, he maintained his public profile as Chair of the Dutch Circle of Journalists and focused on academic work. He did not run for elected office again until 1901, when he was appointed prime minister of the Dutch cabinet.

autonomy of the spiritual over against the material” at any philosophical point of departure.⁵⁰ He therefore broke from classical Christian epistemology, which started from the Thomism of the Catholic Church to argue that right reason, revealed through philosophical proofs for God, led to truth.⁵¹

Kuyper instead developed his own, Reformed epistemological framework that argued faith in God was the starting assumption for all knowledge and truth. He invoked the metaphor of a building to explain:

That this is not generally so understood [that faith in God is the base of knowledge] can only be explained from the fact that, in the search after the means at our command by which to obtain knowledge, the investigation is abandoned before it is finished. The building is examined, and its foundation, and sometimes even the piles underneath, but the ground on which the lowest points of these piles rest is not explored.⁵²

The “ground on which these piles rest” was crucial to Kuyper’s entire public theology and antirevolutionary political thought. He argued that knowledge began with faith, not with reason. And by faith, Kuyper did not just mean belief in the divine or in Jesus Christ. He contended that every person had to have faith in something, whether science or a religious figure, in order to obtain any certainty of belief.⁵³ Therefore, Kuyper argued that the opposite

⁵⁰ The German Idealists were reacting against the idea that Newtonian conceptions of mechanistic science captured the true nature of reality. They did so, mostly, by how they conceived of “the self” and how “the self” understood the world. Self-consciousness was the key to reality. Fichte was a prominent Idealist who argued that the fundamental characteristic of self-consciousness was moral consciousness. Therefore, the best way to understand the reality was in moral terms, which Kuyper then interpreted through a Reformed Christian lens. Arthur S. Holmes, “A History of Philosophy: German Idealism,” lecture at Wheaton College. May 14, 2015. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, 32.

⁵¹ Thomism was the philosophical school of Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic theologian. Thomism is most commonly associated with empiricism today, but it also heavily emphasized rational reason. Perhaps Aquinas’ most famous, the theory of natural law, argued that humans must use reason to derive natural law from basic goods we all share. See Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen, *Aquinas Among the Protestants*, for an excellent historical analysis of how Protestants began to adopt Thomism in their own theologies.

⁵² Abraham Kuyper, *The Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology and Its Principles*,” trans. Hendrik de Vries, (New York, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons Publishers, 1898). 129.

⁵³ Abraham Kuyper, *The Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology and Its Principles*,” 125.

of faith was not knowledge, but reason, and thus that knowledge could only come from faith or reason.⁵⁴ But reason could not be the “ground on which these piles rest” because it also relied on faith, such as faith in faculties, reliabilities of senses, or quality of research. Therefore, faith was the only way a person could be certain about anything, to go “from phenomena to nounema,” at all because faith did not rest on any other entity.⁵⁵

Kuyper’s Reformed epistemological framework, that faith in God was the basis for all knowledge and truth, became the foundation of his response to the *fin de siècle*. This was revealed explicitly when, later that year, Kuyper left the Netherlands to give the Stone Lectures in the United States.

Why Kuyper Visited the United States

But why would Kuyper leave the Netherlands for an extended trip to the United States when he had just published the *Encyclopedia* and was at the height of his powers? He had three main priorities: personal health, political gain, and the promotion of modern Calvinism.

To any observer of Kuyper’s career, it was no mystery how he had run his health into the ground. His title of “God’s renaissance man” was certainly well deserved.⁵⁶ However, after a stress-induced nervous breakdown in February of 1876, Kuyper began a tradition of taking an annual two-month vacation abroad to regain his strength. Kuyper’s America tour

⁵⁴ John Grosvenor Shortt, “Towards A Reformed Epistemology and Its Educational Significance,” diss. *University of London Institute of Education*, 2016, 2-3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 2.

⁵⁶ Nickname taken from the title of a Kuyper biography by James Edward McGoldrick.

in 1898 was a continuation of that health pattern, although Kuyper expected to stay in America for three months instead of his normal two.⁵⁷

Kuyper also believed that he could use his American tour to advance his political ambitions back in the Netherlands. As early as 1873, a year after becoming editor of *De Standaard* and a year before his election to Parliament, Kuyper's biographer P. Kasteel observed, "The new republic of the United States drew Kuyper's heart and head more than old Europe ... his political exertions were even based on what he judged to be the situation in America. He confessed a 'near fanatic sympathy for the life now full-blown in America,' since the 'free life of free citizens' appeared to him as the fruit of Calvinism."⁵⁸ Kuyper believed that America could be the full embodiment of a Calvinist worldview, an exemplar of principles advocated by his ARP. It is also noteworthy that Kuyper ran successfully for Prime Minister of the Netherlands in 1901, and most likely assumed a successful report from his American tour would lend legitimacy to his political message. He hoped to portray the United States as a "living advertisement" for the ARP: a land of piety, prosperity, and freedom because the United States was grounded in Calvinism.⁵⁹

However, the most compelling reason for Kuyper's American visit was to introduce his theory of a Calvinistic worldview. By the 1890s, Kuyper was already well known in the United States within Dutch communities in the Midwest⁶⁰, and had a reasonably high profile

⁵⁷ George Harinck. *Kuyper in America*, (Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt College Press, 2012). iii.

⁵⁸ P. Kasteel, *Abraham Kuyper* (Kampen: Kok, 1938), 289 in John Bolt, "Abraham Kuyper and the Holland-America Line of Liberty," *The Journal of Markets and Morality* 1, no. 1, (Spring 1998), 37.

⁵⁹ James D. Bratt. *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 261.

⁶⁰ Kuyper was particularly popular among members of the Dutch Christian Reformed Church in the Midwest, many of whom were descendants of Réveil immigrants fleeing persecution from William I. The CRC was critically important in keeping Kuyperian thought alive in the United States, even when Princeton theologians initially dismissed it.

among leaders in the Presbyterian Church (USA).⁶¹ Kuyper's Presbyterian connection was largely due to the work of Geerhardus Vos, a former colleague at *Vrije Universiteit*⁶² and Benjamin B. Warfield, editor of Princeton's *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*. Beginning in 1893, Vos translated works by Kuyper for publication in *The Review* and explained Kuyper's importance to colleagues like Warfield and Princeton President Francis L. Patton.⁶³ Warfield even wrote a glowing, biographical introduction to the *Encyclopedia*, calling Kuyper "the most considerable figure in both political and ecclesiastical Holland" and encouraging publishers to translate more of Kuyper's writings into English.⁶⁴ Therefore, when the Princeton faculty voted to both award Kuyper an honorary doctoral degree and invite him to deliver the Stone Lectures in 1896, it seemed, if not an official endorsement of Kuyper, at least a general acceptance of his ideas.

The Stone Lectures

When Kuyper arrived in Princeton, his expectations were similar to that of a commander giving a call to arms against rising Modernist forces. He wrote to his family, "I am discovering more and more ... it was most necessary that I came ... the backsliding lies hidden behind a façade and is on the point of breaking through ... They [his Princeton audience] do not see the danger, but remain silent. This in particular gives me a sense of mission."⁶⁵ More than anything, Kuyper hoped his Stone Lectures would inspire the

⁶¹ James D. Bratt. *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 261.

⁶² Translated "Free University," Kuyper founded it in 1880.

⁶³ George Harinck. *Kuyper in America*, iv.

⁶⁴ Benjamin Warfield, "Introduction" in Abraham Kuyper, *The Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology and Its Principles*, trans. Hendrik de Vries, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons Publishers, 1898. Xxi, Xviii-Xix.

⁶⁵ Letter from Abraham Kuyper to Family, October 14, 1898, in *Kuyper in America*, 37-40.

Reformed elite at Princeton to adopt his new conception of Calvinism.⁶⁶ Calvinism was an all-encompassing worldview, more than just Reformed doctrinal teachings and methods of church order, that he believed was the only way to defend the Christian tradition. Grounded in his epistemological framework that assumed faith in God as the true base of knowledge, Kuyper wanted to convince Princeton that Calvinism should frame the way the church should engage with the world in every conceivable way. Kuyper was proposing an epistemological revolution.

Therefore, standing at the pulpit of Princeton's Miller Chapel on October 10, 1898, Kuyper used his first Stone Lecture to explain Calvinism as an all-encompassing worldview. He began his lecture with a rallying cry. "The storm of Modernism has now arisen with violent intensity," he proclaimed, "and has since spread like a cancer, dissolving and undermining all that stood firm and consistent before our Christian faith."⁶⁷ Kuyper identified Modernism as a threat because its triad of Enlightenment ideals, pantheism, and evolution offered a coherent worldview, which provided a naturalistic explanation for all human existence rather than divine revelation.⁶⁸ He said:

"Two life-systems⁶⁹ 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 Song 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..."⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 224, 238-243.

⁶⁷ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism: Six Lectures from the Stone Foundation Lectures Delivered at Princeton University*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010. 5.

⁶⁸ Abraham Kuyper, *De Standaard*, 9 December 1892

⁶⁹ Kuyper used "life system" as an imprecise equivalent of the German term *Weltanschauung*, a term coined by Kant in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, which as Peter Heslam explained, "Was used to denote a set of beliefs that underlie and shape all human thought and action." Kuyper used the phrase "life system" interchangeably with "life and world view" throughout his lectures. Peter Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 89.

⁷⁰ Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 5

Kuyper's answer to Modernism was to fight principle against principle, to recognize Modernism as a worldview and to take an offensive stance with a worldview "of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power."⁷¹ Kuyper contended the only "decisive, lawful, and consistent defense for Protestant nations against encroaching, and overwhelming Modernism" was his Calvinist worldview.⁷²

Kuyper's framing of Calvinism in the United States, as a response to Modernism, was nearly identical to how he framed the ARP in the Netherlands. Anti-revolutionary political thought was just one pillar of his public theology, but it represented what he believed a Calvinist worldview would look like if Christians engaged society on a political level. Kuyper was the heir of the Réveil movement, a tradition where political ideology and ecclesiastical doctrine were two sides of the same coin. To him, because of their worldview, Christians around the world must offer an alternative vision for the sociopolitical order. His Calvinist worldview took particular shape in the Netherlands because of the ARP, but as he made clear throughout his Stone Lectures, he intended his conception of Calvinism to be a blueprint for Christian political engagement in the United States as well.

Antithesis

Kuyper's greatest intellectual contribution to public theology was the idea of antithesis, which he discussed in detail in his fourth Stone Lecture, *Calvinism and Science*.⁷³

The principle of Antithesis meant a fundamental division between a Christian and a non-

⁷¹ Ibid, 5.

⁷² Ibid, 6.

⁷³ Peter Heslam explains that by the word "science," Kuyper meant "the whole of human knowledge, including the humanities. Kuyper's usage, instead, was equivalent to that of the German *Wissenschaft* or the Dutch *Wetenschap*, the term he used in the Dutch edition of the Stone Lectures." In Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 169-170.

Christian worldview. Indeed, all of science was separated according to this worldview division. A Christian was simply of a different nature than a non-Christian because the Christian mind had been regenerated from its depraved state⁷⁴ by God while the other had not. Therefore, antithesis argued that Christians and non-Christians had “different starting points, and because of the difference in their nature they apply themselves differently...and view things in a different way... They are not at work, therefore, on different parts of the same house, but each build a house of his own.”⁷⁵

Kuyper’s use of a building metaphor to describe antithesis was striking because it was the same metaphor he used to describe his own epistemology. Antithesis was an epistemological concept because it concerned the ground, not the foundations or the building. To further illustrate antithesis, suppose a natural biologist who, having researched the behavior of cells, concludes the cells’ behavior as having occurred as a result of random events. Kuyper would say that the Christian biologist could observe the same cell behavior and infer that the behavior was designed and purposeful.⁷⁶ Both scientists used equally rational methods of inquiry, but they reach separate conclusions because of their assumptions of what is true are totally different.

Sphere Sovereignty

Antithesis applied in society, however, had to account for a variety of non-Christian worldviews, which resulted in the cornerstone of anti-revolutionary political thought: the theory of sphere sovereignty. Sphere sovereignty was a proposal to construct a polity of true

⁷⁴ See the Calvinist doctrine of “Total Depravity.”

⁷⁵ Kuyper, *The Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology and Its Principles*,” 155.

⁷⁶ Example cited from Kennedy, “Abraham Kuyper: Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Politician and Political Thinker,” 178.

social and political pluralism by organizing societal structures that were ignored by Enlightenment social contract theory. In his third Stone Lecture, *Calvinism and Politics*, Kuyper argued that society was comprised of preordained, separate spheres, including family, commerce, art, and education, that were equal under God. Each of the spheres was respectively sovereign, meaning the spheres “do not derive the law of their life from the superiority of the state, but obey a high authority within their own bosom; an authority which rules, by the grace of God, just as the sovereignty of the state does.”⁷⁷ In other words, each sphere should obey its own laws and exist in harmony with other spheres, without assuming superiority or inferiority.

Furthermore, the spheres of society were not to be subsidiaries of the state; they had no other authority than God in fulfilling their purposes. Instead, Kuyper asserted that the state’s role should be limited to upholding justice within and between the different spheres, intervening only as a last resort.⁷⁸ But it was not just the state that was limited, all spheres, including the church, family, and school had limits to their authority.⁷⁹

Apart from the horizontal architecture of society, Kuyper also interpreted his theory of sphere sovereignty to mean that people of different worldviews could naturally establish their own religiously affiliated institutions in their own spheres.⁸⁰ Kuyper’s own ARP was strongly affiliated with Calvinism, as was the newspaper he edited (*De Standaard*) and the University he founded (*Vrije Universitat*). He believed that religion was different from the church, which meant, “The Anti-Revolutionary Party was not the institutional Reformed

⁷⁷ Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 90.

⁷⁸ Ray Pennings and James Brink, *Sphere Sovereignty 101*, Comment Magazine, August 1, 2005. <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/202/sphere-sovereignty-101/>

⁷⁹ Kennedy, “Abraham Kuyper: Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Politician and Political Thinker,” 176.

⁸⁰ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Abraham Kuyper on the Limited Authority of Church and State,” *Georgetown Journal of Law & Public Policy* 7, no. 1 (Winter 2009), 116.

Church in politics; it was Reformed people acting politically. The topic of church and state is not to be identified with the topic of the role of religious conviction in the sphere of politics.”⁸¹ Therefore, not only should society be organized to give different spheres equal authority, but people should be free to build institutions within the spheres that reflect their worldview.⁸² As long as a school meets the educational standards of the education sphere, it should be funded by the state just like any other school.

Expectations and Reality

The initial response to Kuyper’s Stone Lectures could have hardly been any better. Peter Heslam notes that four leading Protestant Journals gave Kuyper’s Stone Lectures positive reviews, even the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*.⁸³ Benjamin Warfield wrote that in the Lectures Kuyper expounded “with the utmost breadth and forcefulness the fundamental principles of Calvinism,” and becoming “one of our own prophets, to whose message we have a certain right.”⁸⁴ Kuyper even spent an additional month in the United States because demand for him, following the Stone Lectures, was so high.

However, despite the large crowds, glowing reviews, and extensive press coverage, the heart of Kuyper’s American tour, his effort to promulgate a new conception of the Calvinist worldview, was hardly an instantaneous success. Granted, Kuyper’s already high standing in the Dutch American enclaves in the Midwest and his influence in the Christian

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The anti-revolutionary vision for politics was different from a theocracy, primarily because it advocated for such a limited role for government. According to the ARP, the government should only intervene in pluralistic spheres as a last resort. Its only other duties were to keep individuals safe. Additionally, Kuyper was outspoken in his rejection of theocracy, and the ARP itself originated with Réveil thinkers who opposed absolutist monarchy.

⁸³ Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 256.

⁸⁴ Benjamin Warfield, “Introduction,” in Abraham Kuyper, *The Works of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), xxv – xxxiv. Cited from Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 252.

Reformed Church, the same denomination founded by immigrants fleeing William I, certainly grew as a result of his visit. Even today, Kuyper is seen as a consequential thinker in American evangelicalism, the founder of neo-Calvinism who has enjoyed significant influence in evangelical Christian scholarship. And yet, it is clear Kuyper's 1898 American tour, specifically his famed Stone Lectures, had little immediate impact on the leading American theologians whom he hoped to influence. Kuyper's fame today in American Reformed circles is surprising when compared to his reception by the late 19th century Presbyterian establishment at Princeton, who viewed Kuyper "as a momentary celebrity -- a Renaissance man of prodigious energy and talents, but not a lodestar for the future."⁸⁵

For Princeton to reject Kuyper seems counter-intuitive. Kuyper was a renowned scholar and public intellectual steeped in the same tradition of Princeton Theological Seminary. He was facing, in the Netherlands, many of the same struggles with liberalism and modernity that Princeton was facing in the United States, and his Calvinist worldview offered conservative evangelicals a viable defense. Princeton seemed to endorse Kuyper in almost every way, from writing introductions to his books to publishing his work to giving him an honorary doctorate. Why, then, did it take a generation for Kuyper's ideas to gain traction in mainstream American evangelicalism, even at Princeton, an institution steeped in the Calvinist tradition?

⁸⁵ James D. Bratt. *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013. 261, 278.

Chapter 2:

The Rejection of Kuyperian Thought: The Resilience of the American Intellectual

Tradition and the defenestration of Old Princeton Theology

The America Kuyper Encountered

Kuyper's ideas were formed within the environment of the 19th century Netherlands, but he delivered his Stone Lectures to a Princeton audience immersed in the cultural tumult of the late 19th century United States. Expansion of electricity, petroleum, and steel products, innovative manufacturing practices, and new transportation networks highlighted what historians have labeled as the "Second Industrial Revolution." Furthermore, mass urbanization and immigration of European migrants coming to American shores disrupted population demographics. Urban centers such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, and New York went from housing 20% of the American population in 1900 to 50% by the year 1920 as "the sense of community, accountability, and homogeneity, so familiar to the nineteenth century rural Americans, gave way to the heterogeneity and anonymity of the city."¹

Paralleling changes in industry and population was a significant rise of liberal Protestant theology. Conservative evangelicals unfortunately referred to this liberal theology as "modernism."² This was not the all-encompassing concept of Modernism espoused by

¹ James T. Patterson, *America in the Twentieth Century: A History* (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 1976). 25-28.

² In this strict theological sense, I use "modernism" somewhat anachronistically here because it was a term that first rose to prominence through Fundamentalists, which did not emerge as a movement really until the 1910s. It is important to note that the rise of theological modernism in the United States was not the same the Modernism to which Abraham Kuyper referred in his Stone Lectures. Kuyper's Modernism was an all-encompassing worldview similar to his own Calvinism. The Fundamentalist "modernism" was a much narrower label placed on liberal theologians. I also differentiate the Fundamentalist's "modernism" from Kuyper's "Modernism" through capitalization.

Abraham Kuyper, the modernist theological movement instead was supposed to be an intellectual rescue mission. Advances in science -- like Charles Darwin's 1859 publication of his theory of evolution -- challenged the Christian narrative of biblical creationism. William James claimed that practical results mattered the most in determining right and wrong, and romantic movements in literature were glorifying the goodness of the human soul in ways that did not comport with the doctrine of original sin.³ In response to these changes, liberal theologians increasingly agreed on the necessity of revising traditional Christian doctrine to adapt to the modern age. They accepted new patterns of thought as truth, and thus ironically took on Darwin's "adapt or die" mantra in order to save the intellectual reputation of American Protestantism.

Modernist theology, therefore, favored a "discarding of the whole traditional 'religion about Jesus'" in favor of adopting "the religion of Jesus."⁴ Modernist theologians disagreed as to exactly what "the religion of Jesus" should mean, but the one principle that brought the movement together was a shared recognition that the present had become permanently detached from the past.⁵ In this sense, modernist scholars in America were decades behind

³ See James' anecdote of a squirrel and a tree in the beginning of his second lecture on pragmatism. William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, Lectures at Harvard University, 1907. Lecture II. Referencing romantic movements, Molly Worthen points to the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Friedrich Schleiermacher. For example, Coleridge wrote, "Life is the one universal soul which, by virtue of the enlivening Breath and the informing Word, all organized bodies have in common, each after its kind... God transfused into man a higher gift... a soul having its life in itself. 'And man became a living soul.' He did not merely possess it, he became it. It was proper being, his truest self, the man in the man." For a man being a man to be the truest form of himself violated the Reformed doctrine of original sin, which claimed that all men have sinned and are unclean after the Fall of Adam in Genesis. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection, and the Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, (London, UK: George Bell and Sons Publishers), 1884. 4. Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 21.

⁴ Eldred C. Vanderlaan, *Fundamentalism versus Modernism*, (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company), 1925, 4.

⁵ Patrick Daniel Jackson, "Lost: American Evangelicals in the Public Square, 1925-1955. *Doctoral Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Vanderbilt University in History.*

liberal theologians in Germany, who, facing the philosophical revolutions of Kant and German Idealism, had been treating the Bible primarily as a falsifiable historical text since the late 18th century.⁶ Kuyper had actually studied in modernist theology under Jan Hendrik Scholten at Leiden University, but rejected it soon thereafter. However, over the course of the 19th century, theologians from institutions such as Oberlin College, Union Theological Seminary and the University of Chicago adopted this method, known as higher biblical criticism, by applying literary analysis, comparative linguistics, and archaeological findings to the Bible.⁷ The modernist movement was a loose confederation of liberal minds, but because inerrancy was central to evangelical doctrine, the collective modernist embrace of higher criticism inflamed conservative-liberal tensions within the evangelical church.

The Princeton Kuyper Encountered

Many in Kuyper's Princeton audience (1898) were well aware of these developments. As early as 1870, Princeton Professor of Systematic Theology Charles Hodge warned:

The minds of men are unsettled; multitudes are drifting away from the faith of their fathers; the profoundest verities of the Word are questioned.... The moral, political, and social world is astir... A new era of thought, of investigation, of doubting, or testing everything has dawned... Error is rife, and science, falsely so called, is arraying itself against the truth.... The agencies of hell and of an ungodly world are leagued in every conceivable form to lead men astray.⁸

Even as the Princetonians showed alarm and a willingness to speak out against the changes of modernity, they still enjoyed a place of prominence as thought leaders of a Reformed

December, 2012. 11. <http://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu/available/etd-11202012-102226/unrestricted/Jackson.pdf>

⁶ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 27.

⁷ Longfield, *Presbyterian Controversy*, 12-14.

⁸ Charles Hodge and Lyman Atwater, "The Presbyterian Church -- its Position and Work, *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (January, 1870), 146.

evangelical population that, despite the rise of secularization and modernism, was quite strong.⁹ Of the millions of conservative evangelicals across the United States, historians estimate that by 1870, Calvinists made up 30% of all evangelical Protestants and sponsored 42% of America's Theological institutions.¹⁰ Therefore, a strange dichotomy of sorts existed between a modernizing United States and the Reformed world of Princeton. As immigrants brought practices and customs into the country, Reformed evangelicalism remained a dominant culture force. As theology became isolated from American universities and professions were specialized, the Calvinists remained leaders in higher education. As a result, Kuyper's audience was both weary of modernity, and also justifiably confident that their message and tradition could continue to dominate the American marketplace of ideas well into the Progressive Era.

This Princeton strategy was both to simultaneously admit that American culture was drifting away from its traditional moorings and also to claim that America would come to accept the Reformed theological position. Benjamin Warfield and John Gresham Machen, stalwarts of the Princeton tradition, taught that Christians could influence cultural life simply by maintaining sound, Calvinist theological doctrine, not necessarily trying to reshape the cultural institutions and arrangements.¹¹ This confidence that Reformed theology would naturally win the battle of ideas did have some connection to eschatology; postmillennialists at Princeton such as Warfield believed a spiritual golden age would eventually come, in which every knee would bow and every tongue would confess to the lordship of Christ

⁹ Gary Scott Smith, *The Seeds of Secularization: Calvinism, Culture, and Pluralism in America*. 2.

¹⁰ Philip Schaff and Samuel I. Prime, eds., *History, Essays, Orations and Other Documents of the Evangelical Alliance* (New York: Harper and Row, 1874), 752-754. In Smith, *The Seeds of Secularization: Calvinism, Culture, and Pluralism in America*, 12-13.

¹¹ See Benjamin Warfield, "The Millennium and the Apocalypse" (1904) *Biblical Doctrines* (New York, 1929), p. 662-663 and John Gresham Machen, "Christianity and Culture," *Princeton Theological Review* XI (January, 1913), 1-15.

before His triumphal return. But not every Princetonian shared Warfield's interpretation of Revelation.

Rather, the underlying principle of Princeton's conception of culture was that of a "right reason" epistemology, a combination of classical Christian epistemology and evidentialism that started from an assumption of biblical inerrancy and belief that knowledge began with reason, not faith.¹² It was this right reason epistemology, bolstered by Princeton's elite cultural status and grounded in the American intellectual tradition, which inspired Princeton's confidence in Reformed theology amidst a changing American culture. Furthermore, a fixation on this right reason epistemology encouraged Princeton theologians to dismiss Kuyper's all-encompassing Calvinist worldview. Even though Kuyper's ideas spoke to the problems conservative evangelicals were facing at the end of the 19th century, his different epistemology did not persuade Princeton theologians. Right reason epistemology informed the Princeton response to modernity, and caused Princeton theologians to reject Kuyper's battle strategy against Modernism.

Princeton theologians' right-reason battle strategy against the developments of modernity, particularly their intention to focus on maintaining orthodox understandings of Calvinism, would ultimately prove to be a failure—with enduring consequences for conservative evangelicals across the United States. The Princeton rejection of Kuyperian

¹² Warfield used the phrase "right reason" in a theological context when he argued that rational faith must have "cognizable ground in right reason." Warfield most likely took the phrase from Aristotle, who used the phrase "lex caelistic" to combine conception of law and "right" morality. The Aristotelian idea went that if every person possessed both an innate sense of right and wrong and an ability to reason, that all people should agree on what was "right reason." Benjamin Warfield, "Apologetics" in *The New Schaff-Hezog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macaulay Jackson (New York: Fund and Wagnals Company), 1908. 235; Louis I. Bredvold, "The Meaning of the Concept of Right Reason in the Natural Law Tradition," *University of Detroit Law Journal* 36, no. 2 (December 1958): 120-129.

Calvinism would prove to be costly, both in the ivory towers of religious academia and in conservative pulpits across the United States.

Why Princeton Mattered

Kuyper could not have picked a better podium from which to proclaim his message of a Calvinist worldview than Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS). But to fully grasp the significance of PTS in the conservative evangelical world, it is imperative to first understand that higher education has always been a cornerstone of the Presbyterian Church.¹³

Emphasizing education was one of the primary ways Presbyterians distinguished themselves from other Protestant denominations, and Princeton Theological Seminary, as the leading center of Presbyterian thought, was a crown jewel of the Presbyterian denomination.

Furthermore, although not the largest denomination, the Presbyterians had a surprisingly large influence across the United States. By the turn of the century, Presbyterian membership and leadership were generally educated, articulate members of the middle and upper classes

¹³ From the origins of Presbyterianism in the sixteenth century, one of the tradition's distinguishing characteristics has been its priority on higher education. This emphasis goes back to the Protestant reformer John Calvin, an intellectual godfather of Presbyterianism who viewed education as the best way to develop leadership for the church. He thought the church should be a *schola dei*, a school of God. When Presbyterians began immigrating from Scotland and Ireland to the United States in the late 17th century, one of their first organizing steps in was to found Princeton as an institution to train Presbyterian ministers. In 1812, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church decided Princeton University was no longer serving the church as it should. As a result, the Assembly founded Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS) as a separate institution, making PTS the second oldest theological seminary in the United States. By the start of the Civil War, Presbyterians were responsible for founding over a quarter of all colleges in the United States, and even today, the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities (APCU) boasts over 50 active member institutions. Duncan S. Ferguson, "The Centrality of Education in the Reformed Tradition." *Unbound: An Interactive Journal of Christian Social Justice*, February 18, 2015. <http://justiceunbound.org/carousel/the-centrality-of-education-in-the-reformed-tradition/>
Princeton University Staff. "Ashbel Green, 1812-1822." *The Presidents of Princeton University*, November 26, 2013. <https://www.princeton.edu/pub/presidents/green/>
Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities Staff, "Being 'Presbyterian Related.'" February 2013. http://www.presbyteriancolleges.org/being__presbyterian_related_.

that played such a large role in forming American evangelicalism, Bradley Longfield explains, that “In many ways the Presbyterian Church can be seen as representative of the mainstream denominations in America.”¹⁴

As a result, Kuyper’s audience at Princeton specifically played a crucial role in influencing Presbyterian pastors, and in turn, congregations. This was because the Presbyterian tradition of emphasizing education led to an ecclesiological structure that empowered seminary graduates over non-seminary graduates.¹⁵ The only people in a Presbyterian Church who were certified to preach or administer sacraments were seminary-educated men. Ordinary ruling elders and deacons helped oversee church governance, but their status as elected laymen (without seminary degrees) rendered them subordinate. As a result, in the early 20th-century Presbyterian Church, seminaries were incredibly powerful. With few exceptions, only their students could preach across the country. In addition, seminary faculty wrote the curriculums that shaped ordination exams and taught pastors what to preach.¹⁶ Princeton Theological Seminary was, by far, the oldest and most prestigious seminary in Presbyterianism, and therefore PTS exerted wide influence over the entire denomination.

¹⁴ Bradley Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernist, and Moderates*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4.

¹⁵ For example, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) made an important distinction between the role of teaching elders (pastors) as opposed to ruling elders or deacons. Teaching elders, as Princeton theologian Samuel Miller explained, were “ a special type of ruling elder who had the sole responsibility of “ministering in the Word and Doctrine” and “dispensing the sacraments” to Presbyterian congregations. Churches could only formally appoint teaching elders who had “received a bachelors of arts degree, or its academic equivalent, from an accredited college or university ... [who] had completed at least two years of study in a theological seminary,” and who had passed rigorous ordination exams. Samuel Miller, *An Essay on the Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church*, (London, UK: Whittaker & Co. Publishers), 1842, 14.; J. Gresham Machen, “The Form of Government” (1941), in *The Standards of Government Discipline and Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: Committee on Christian Education), 1965, 19.

¹⁶ Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church*, (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics), 1996. 584.

But PTS influence also extended to Christians outside the Presbyterian Church. Princeton theologians were the foremost thought leaders in late turn-of-the-century Reformed evangelicalism, largely because PTS trained far more church leaders (across multiple denominations) than any other American seminary, and because they were able to articulate a coherent Calvinist tradition using the language of mainstream American intelligentsia.¹⁷ As Mark Noll explains, Princeton theologians “exerted a wide influence in American intellectual life” because they “spoke the language of the American intellectual marketplace so effectively that the marketplace could not but pay attention.”¹⁸ For Kuyper to have little impact on Princeton in 1898, “the academic citadel of American Presbyterianism,” was essentially to be relegated to the outskirts of mainstream, conservative evangelicalism.¹⁹

“Right Reason” Epistemology

Princeton theologians’ right reason framework derived from the predominant American intellectual tradition. George Marsden proved that the nineteenth-century American intellectuals relied on two primary paradigms: Baconian Science and Scottish Common Sense Realist Philosophy (SCSR).²⁰ Under Bacon’s method of induction, which employed a system of observations and classifying facts to conclude general patterns, anyone “could ‘scientifically’ prove” the authenticity of Christianity as articulated in the inerrant

¹⁷ By 1912, Andover Theological Seminary was the only other graduate school of theology in the United States that even remotely approached Princeton’s enrollment numbers (4,500 to 5,742 student at Princeton.) However, Andover’s influence was mostly limited to Protestant missiology, and never had the same impact as Princeton within the evangelical movement. “Theological Seminaries,” *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (1908-1912), XI: 350, 374. Found in Mark A. Noll. *The Princeton Theology: 1812-1921*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1983. 19.

¹⁸ Mark A. Noll. *The Princeton Theology: 1812-1921*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1983. 11-14.

¹⁹ Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. 261.

²⁰ Patrick Daniel Jackson, *Lost: Evangelicals in the Public Square*, 28.

word of God.²¹ But to scientifically prove the Christian faith would also be to take Bacon's assumption of scientific realism, that the scientific process was completely objective, purely empirical, contained no presuppositions, and could reach universal conclusions about the nature of reality.

Scottish Common Sense Realism, on the other hand, argued from the Baconian scientific tradition to claim that scientific reason could provide a foundation of common knowledge. This knowledge was accessible to any rational person capable of sensory experience, and was to be the basis for philosophical theology, apologetics, or even the development of society. Therefore, the Scottish realist tradition said that if science can provide realities, it is only the basis of those realities that argument could be made for the existence of God. Patrick Daniel Jackson summarizes it well when he writes, "In late nineteenth-century America, then, Christianity wasn't merely common sense. It was good sense, philosophically sound and scientifically falsifiable."²²

Kuyper was never seriously exposed to the Scottish tradition in the Netherlands, but through Princeton Theological Seminary, Common Sense Realism became dominant philosophy in American evangelicalism. In fact, it was Princeton President John Witherspoon who is widely credited with originally bringing Scottish Realism to the United States in 1768 and shaping the PTS philosophy curriculum around it.²³ A century later in 1871, leading Princeton Professor Charles Hodge wrote famed *Systematic Theology*, which was both the most famous book ever written in the Princeton tradition and also treated theology as a branch of legitimate science. Historian Sydney Ahlstrom even claimed that Hodge's entire

²¹ Patrick Daniel Jackson, *Lost: Evangelicals in the Public Square*, 28.

²² *Ibid*, 29.

²³ Daniel Craig Norman, "John Witherspoon, Common Sense, and Original Sin," diss. Reformed Theological Seminary, June 2006. 4.

understanding of the nature of man came was based on Scottish Realism, and that the influence of SCSR was “diffused throughout” all three volumes of the *Systematic Theology*.²⁴

In the tradition of Bacon and Reid and Hodge, the Princeton theologians therefore were bound to a Baconian view of science and a Scottish Realist understanding that knowledge started with reason. If all people could grasp the objective truth of God, and the knowledge of that truth was provable through Scottish empiricism and Baconian induction, then it follows that all people, using a “right reason” should encounter God. There, then, should be no major distinction between worldviews of Christians and non-Christians. If God is objective truth, then Christianity should be able to win the battle of ideas on reason alone.²⁵

Warfield summarized the Princeton position on faith and reason well when he wrote:

It is the distinction of Christianity that it has come into the world clothed with the mission to *reason* its way to its dominion... Christianity makes its appeal to right reason, and stands out among all religions, therefore, as distinctively ‘ the Apologetic religion.’ It is solely by reasoning that it has come thus far on its way to kingship. And it is solely by reasoning that it will put all its enemies under its feet.”²⁶

Reason alone was not sufficient for salvation; a person could not be argued into heaven, and like Kuyper, Warfield and his colleagues also believed in both the inerrancy of scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit to move people’s hearts. But even still, the right reason epistemology concluded that reason could reveal God to all people. If reason was universal to all humans, and reason reveals God’s existence, all humanity can use reason to know the truth of God.²⁷

²⁴ Sydney Ahlstrom, “The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology,” *Church History* 24, no. 3 (1955): 266.

²⁵ George Marsden, “The State of Evangelical Christian Scholarship,” *The Reformed Journal* 37, no. 9, (September 1987), 157.

²⁶ Warfield, “Introduction,” 29.

²⁷ Owen Anderson, *Reason and Worldviews*, (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2008). 23.

The Role of Apologetics

The principle of right reason epistemology undergirded Princeton thinkers' emphasis on apologetics. But to Abraham Kuyper, apologetics were much less important—and this difference helps clarify the contradictions between these dueling epistemologies.

Owing to his Reformed epistemology, Kuyper believed God's regeneration of man created an "irreconcilable conflict between the inner world of [the] heart and the world outside" that rendered apologetics effectively useless because, as previously mentioned, a converted Christian would necessarily have an entirely different perspective on truth.²⁸

Warfield actually described Kuyper's logic well when he wrote:

"The convictions of the Christian man ... are not the product of reasons addressed to his intellect, but are the immediate creation of the Holy Spirit in his heart. Therefore, it is intimated, we cannot only do very well without these reasons, but it is something very like sacrilege to attend to them. Apologetics, accordingly, is not merely useless, but may even become noxious, because [it tends] to substitute a barren intellectualism for a vital faith."²⁹

Kuyper believed the apologetics espoused by Warfield and other faculty at Princeton Theological Seminary would not help in the war against Modernism. Kuyper saw traditional Protestant apologetics as limited and myopic, focused on defending small victories on non-essential theological topics at the cost of losing the overall intellectual war. He wrote, "I never placed apologetics in the foreground. The best generals always taught that in a severe war one perishes as soon as he stands on the defensive alone... the apologists [have] no strategic scheme at all."³⁰ Kuyper even boldly proclaimed in his first Stone Lecture that

²⁸ Benjamin B. Warfield, "Introduction," in Francis Robert Beattie, *Apologetics or the Rational Vindication of Christianity*, Richmond, VA: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1903. 24.

²⁹ This quote was Warfield's attempt to summarize Kuyper's views on apologetics. Warfield, "Introduction," 20.

³⁰ Abraham Kuyper, "Use and Abuse of Apologetics," *The Bibliotheca Sacra*, 65 (April 1908), 374.

“apologetics have advanced us not one single step” in the struggle against Modernism.³¹

Apologetics were not just superfluous to Christian understanding; they assumed a defensive position that weakened the Christian position against Modernist attacks.

Warfield’s right reason framework, on the other hand, yielded a much different perspective that saw apologetics as an important part of the Christian faith. Warfield trusted apologetics to establish Christianity as the only true religion.³² If reason could reveal the truth of God to all people, then Christian apologetics was the system of methods by which the church could communicate its reasoning. In this role, as historian Owen Anderson explained, “apologetics laid a foundation on which theology is built, and the entire structure of theology was determined. The function of apologetics was especially the establishment of a foundation on which the work of theology could be built.”³³ Warfield saw apologetics as completely useful and as a major tool for “Christianizing the world.”³⁴

The Presbyterian Controversy

The rift between Kuyper and Princeton over apologetics helps explain what would happen later at Princeton during the Presbyterian Controversy of the 1920s and 30s. But in the years immediately following Kuyper’s Stone Lectures, tensions between conservative evangelicals and liberal Protestants rose. Outside of Princeton, evangelicals began to coordinate a response to modernist theology. In 1910, evangelical theologians pamphlets titled *The Fundamentals*, which tried to defend Christian Orthodoxy, and were sent to pastors and missionaries around the world to try and unify evangelicals.

³¹ Kuyper, *Stone Lectures*. 5

³² Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology*. Vol. 9 of The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927–32). Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 9.

³³ Anderson, *Reason and Worldviews*, 23.

³⁴ Benjamin B. Warfield, “Review of H. Bavinck’s *De zekerheid des geloofs*” (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Publisher, 1901) in *Princeton Theological Review* 1 (1903): 138-143.

Historian Bradley Longfield ranks Harry Emerson Fosdick's "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" sermon (1922) as another key point in coalescing the Fundamentalists into an actionable movement.³⁵ The liberal minister's impassioned plea for the "cause of magnanimity and liberality and tolerance of spirit" among Fundamentalists, who he believed by then were "attempting to drive out . . . men and women of liberal opinion" from the evangelical church.³⁶ Longfield notes, "If Fosdick's words had stayed inside the walls of the First Presbyterian Church, reaction might have been minimal; but such was not the case."³⁷ With Fosdick's permission, Rockefeller family public relations director Ivy Lee printed over 100,000 copies of the sermon and distributed them across the country. Fosdick never intended the sermon to divide his audience, but Fundamentalists took his words as a declaration of war.

As the clouds of controversy billowed throughout the first decades of the 20th century, the theologians within the ivy towers of Princeton began to face their own version of the modernist threat. In the first few years of the twentieth century, Princeton theologians maintained the same confident expectation of their own ideological dominance they had exhibited before. When Warfield ended his term as Principal of the PTS faculty in 1902, the Presbyterian General Assembly created the position of PTS President and appointed former Princeton University President Francis L. Patton to the role. Patton was out of the same, Old Princeton line of Common Sense Realism and Baconian empiricism that Warfield had

³⁵ Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 10.

³⁶ Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Sermon at First Presbyterian Church, New York. Pg. 1-2.

<http://baptiststudiesonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/01/shall-the-fundamentalists-win.pdf>

³⁷ Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 10.

championed. He carried on the right reason tradition and expressed his confidence that “if Christendom shall have one unanimous faith, it will be the Calvinistic faith.”³⁸

However, when Patton retired in 1914, the Princeton Theological Seminary Board of Directors made two significant decisions that would shape the Presbyterian Controversy at Princeton: J. Ross Stevenson was appointed the new PTS president and J. Gresham Machen was officially ordained as a teaching elder at the Seminary. The appointment of Stevenson marked a new direction for Princeton, as its conservative theology increasingly diverged from Modernist factions in the Presbyterian Church. Stevenson was hired because he was willing to compromise evangelical principle if it meant more unity with Presbyterianism; a trait that made him deeply unpopular with Fundamentalist members of the Princeton.³⁹

Yet at the same time the Princeton Board of Directors appointed Stevenson to try and bring Princeton from Warfield and Patton’s conservatism into the mainstream of moderate Protestantism, the Board of Directors ordained J. Gresham Machen as a teaching elder within the seminary. Machen is widely seen as the most important Fundamentalist voice in the Presbyterian controversy, and perhaps even in the United States, because he was a brilliant polemicist and the last major figure in old Princeton theology.⁴⁰ As Bradley Longfield wrote, “Machen unquestionably saw himself as heir to the Princeton tradition, and in the 1920s and 1930s he was determined to defend it against all opponents.”⁴¹ A student of Princeton stalwarts Warfield, Patton, and Charles Hodge, Machen fully subscribed to the right reason

³⁸ “Calvinistic” here referred to traditional Reformed Calvinism, not the worldview espoused by Kuyper. Francis L. Patton, *Speech at the Annual Dinner for the Princeton Club in New York*, March 15, 1888, 5, quoted in Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 52.

³⁹ Norman E. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy: 1918-1931*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954), 139.

⁴⁰ Jack Bartlett Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: A Historical Approach*, (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 363.

⁴¹ Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 52.

epistemological framework that saw reason as the foundation for all truth.⁴² Machen, like the Princeton greats who had come before him, believed that Christianity's "best credentials," as Warfield might say, were its ability to use reason and logic to promote itself above other religions and help people seek truth in God.⁴³

When controversy between Fundamentalists and Modernists began to erupt in the Presbyterian General Assemblies of the 1920s, Machen became the figurehead and lead polemicist of the Fundamentalist movement. His approach to attacking Modernism was shaped by his right reason epistemological framework, which meant there could only be one correct way of considering Christian truth. He believed, "The true way in which to examine a spiritual movement is in its logical relations; logic is the great dynamic, and the logical implications of any way of thinking are sooner or later certain to be worked out."⁴⁴ That's why, instead of seeing Modernist theology as misguided attempts to protect Christianity from modernity, Machen led his Fundamentalist Princeton colleagues in arguing Modernism was an entirely different religion within the Presbyterian Church. He wrote:

"Two mutually exclusive religions are being propagated within the Presbyterian church, as within other 'evangelical' churches. One is the great redemptive religion known as Christianity; the other is the naturalistic or agnostic modernism represented by Dr. Fosdick and by many Presbyterian ministers. If one of these is true the other is false. It is, therefore, quite intolerable that both of them should be propagated by the same funds and with the same endorsement of the same organization ... It is high time that all mental reservations, all 'interpretations' which really are thoroughgoing contradictions of perfectly plain documents, should be abandoned and that there should be a return to common sense and common honesty."⁴⁵

⁴² Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, 325.

⁴³ Benjamin B. Warfield, "Introduction," in Francis Robert Beattie, *Apologetics or the Rational Vindication of Christianity*, Richmond, VA: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1903. 22.

⁴⁴ Machen. *Christianity and Liberalism*, 172-173.

⁴⁵ J. Gresham Machen. *Christianity and Liberalism*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company), 1923. 168-170.

Machen came from the Baconian and Scottish tradition that saw “right reason” as the basis of knowledge and assumed Christianity could be proved scientifically. He, like other Princeton theologians, was also confident that the Reformed Princeton tradition would win any objective battle of ideas. Consequently, Machen could not accept new thinking as new truth, as a Modernist would, because to him there existed only one, scientific truth. Therefore, modernist theologians who bent their views on the inerrancy of the Bible to accommodate higher criticism, or adjusted their belief in creationism to accept Darwinian evolution were “intolerable” and could not be unified with Princeton. Machen argued Modernists must “return to common sense,” the epistemological framework he and his Princeton predecessors avowed.⁴⁶

Eventually, after years of conflict, heresy trials, and even a Supreme Court case, the Presbyterian Controversy essentially ended in 1929 when Machen, and a number of other Fundamentalist professors, resigned their posts from Princeton, unable to compromise with the unity-focused administration.⁴⁷ A right-reason epistemology did not allow for compromise, because there was only ever one truth. Machen and his dissidents hastily formed Westminster Theological Seminary in the Fall of 1929, which taught right reason epistemology and Reformed, conservative evangelicalism. By 1935, Machen had helped form a new denomination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

⁴⁶ J. Gresham Machen. *Christianity and Liberalism*, 168-170.

⁴⁷ The Supreme Court case has been famously titled the “Scopes Trial,” in which former Presidential Candidate and ardent Presbyterian fundamentalist William Jennings Bryan prosecuted high school teacher John T. Scopes for teaching Darwin’s evolution in a public school. The case took place in 1925, and although Bryan technically won, but Scopes was let off on a technicality. Edwin H. Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Orthodox Presbyterian Church Publishers, 1992). 64-72.

Chapter 3:

The Revival of Kuypertian Thought

J. Gresham Machen's moves to withdraw from Princeton (1929), to found The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (1935), and to establish the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (1936) effectively ended the Presbyterian controversy. His dramatic retreat from the mainstream Presbyterianism demonstrated that a "right reason" epistemological framework could not reasonably co-exist with any other system of knowledge or truth. There was only one, living truth, and so continued fellowship in what had become a modernist denomination was intolerable.¹ By the 1930s, it was clear that many fundamentalists felt they had a duty to separate from modernist theology.²

Francis Schaeffer: The Separatist Fundamentalist

It was in this school of separatist fundamentalism that a young Francis Schaeffer was indoctrinated, and thus it is only out of the ashes of the Presbyterian controversy that Schaeffer's career can be properly understood. Born on January 30, 1912 to a nominally religious family in working-class Philadelphia, Francis Schaeffer never planned to attend university.³ His father Franz, a first-generation German immigrant, prized the economic reliability of a manual trade, and so young Francis took practical shop classes and intended to pursue engineering.⁴ But in 1929, an accidental encounter with philosophy changed his life.

¹ Mark Taylor Dalhouse, *An Island in the Lake of Fire: Bob Jones University, Fundamentalism, and the Separatist Movement* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press), 2012. 52.

² Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing), 2008. 12.

³ Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry: The Life and Times of Francis and Edith Schaeffer*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books), 1981. 53.

⁴ Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry: The Life and Times of Francis and Edith Schaeffer*, 53.

After a mix-up at the local bookstore, Schaeffer began reading a Greek myths and philosophy, where he encountered intriguing philosophical questions juxtaposed with answers he found unsatisfying.⁵ Deeply perturbed, he read the Bible cover to cover, in which he found the rational answers he sought, and this ultimately led him to Christian conversion at a tent revival meeting less than a year later.⁶ From the very beginning, the foundation of Schaeffer's faith was his conviction that the Bible was a philosophical text with broader application to life's toughest questions.

If Schaeffer was already oriented towards Fundamentalism in 1929, it was his wife who led him irreversibly down the fundamentalist path. When Schaeffer saw Edith Seville, it was love at first sight. The two met at a Presbyterian youth meeting in 1932 when they both jumped at the opportunity to defend their evangelical perspectives against a liberal Unitarian pastor.⁷ In some ways, Edith was way out of Francis' league. She was the erudite, cultured daughter of college-educated missionaries in China while Francis, the working-class son of a janitor, "had a rough exterior and was prone at times to coarse behavior and a violent temper."⁸ But what immediately drew the two together was their devout commitment to Reformed Presbyterianism, which Edith already understood through a fundamentalist lens.⁹ Edith was well read in the writings of fundamentalist leaders like Machen and Robert Dick Wilson, who joined Machen in leaving Princeton for Westminster. Francis and Edith even spent one of their first dates reading Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism* together.¹⁰

⁵ Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry: The Life and Times of Francis and Edith Schaeffer*, 51.

⁶ Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*, 2-3.

⁷ Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry: The Life and Times of Francis and Edith Schaeffer*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books), 1981. 131.

⁸ Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*, 8.

⁹ Hamilton, "The Dissatisfaction of Francis Schaeffer," *Christianity Today*

¹⁰ Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*, 7-8, 11.

Westminster Seminary, Van Til and Presuppositionalism

Westminster, which became Francis Schaeffer's new seminary home in 1935, was the 1929 creation of J. Gresham Machen and other disenfranchised Princeton professors who separated from the mainline Presbyterianism after they had lost the Presbyterian controversy. It was at Westminster Seminary that Francis studied the teachings of Machen's biblical inerrancy and first encountered Abraham Kuyper's Reformed epistemology via the presuppositionalism of Cornelius Van Til.¹¹

The son of a Dutch dairy farmer who immigrated to the United States at age ten, Van Til was chosen by J. Gresham Machen after the Presbyterian controversy to become a professor at the newly established Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929. Van Til, owing to his Dutch heritage and scholarship in Calvinism, was the leading figure that kept Abraham Kuyper's ideas alive in the United States after they were initially rejected at Princeton. He introduced Schaeffer to Kuyperian thought at Westminster, and their frequent correspondences throughout both their careers demonstrate Van Til's lasting influence.¹² If Rookmaaker and L'Abri represented Schaeffer's new, culturally engaged line of thinking, Van Til was the remnant of separatist fundamentalism that never left Francis Schaeffer.

Van Til was famous for developing of a school of thought called presuppositionalism. Presuppositionalism maintained that a fully accurate worldview must presuppose God and the inerrant Bible as the only basis for knowledge and truth before engaging with reason or evidence. False worldviews, on the other hand, were founded on a commitment to the "creature more than the Creator," and thus presupposed an incoherent set of humanistic

¹¹ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 210.

¹² Schaeffer acknowledged the importance of Van Til to his thinking in a letter to Colin Duriez on June 16, 1972. Van Til died (1987) only three years after Francis Schaeffer (1984), and so their careers often intersected.

assumptions about the world.¹³ To Van Til, a Christian's presuppositions of God and the Bible were his "unquestioned assumptions" about the universe.¹⁴ For example, he frequently made such claims as, "Not a single fact can be known unless God is known;" "God's existence cannot be proven, but everything proves the existence of God;" "Christians have nothing in common with non-Christians;" and "the non-Christian knows nothing."¹⁵ If scientific evidence of philosophical reasoning contradicted the Bible or an orthodox view of God, Van Til dismissed that evidence and philosophy out of hand.

In this sense, Van Til's presuppositionalism took Kuyper's Reformed epistemology and theory of antithesis to their logical ends. Kuyper argued that God and the Bible were the sources of all knowledge and truth, and that the difference between Christians and non-Christian worldviews was fundamental and irreconcilable. Van Til merely developed those points into a line of apologetic reasoning, which might have been Kuyper's own apologetic theory had Kuyper seen any use for apologetics. Van Til's presuppositionalism was inextricably linked to Kuyper's Reformed Epistemology and antithesis, but clearly Van Til saw value in debating with non-Christians where Kuyper did not. Either way, presuppositionalism was based on Reformed Epistemology and antithesis. It would be

¹³ Greg Bahnsen, ed., *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 1998), 566, 627. Van Til quoted from Romans 1:25.

¹⁴ Phrase admittedly taken out of context but describes presuppositions very well. Molly Worthen, "The Evangelical Roots of Our Post-Truth Society," *The New York Times*, April 13, 2017.

¹⁵ It's important to acknowledge here that some defenders of Van Til have claimed his work has been vastly misinterpreted, and will cite quotes from Van Til encouraging dialogue between Christians and non-Christians. This is more due to the fact that Van Til often struggled to properly communicate his ideas or use terms properly. He was, very clearly, a distinguished scholar and philosopher of merit, but perhaps due to the sheer volume of his work, he often made contradictory statements. However, mainstream historical analysis of him and his work clearly place him as a separationist, and the connections between Van Til and Kuyper are so strong that the quotes provided clearly represent the spirit of his work. Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing), 1932. 212-213 K. Scott Oliphint, "What is Presuppositional Apologetics?" lecture at Westminster Theological Seminary, March 10, 2014.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mk1XYkNJlI>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mk1XYkNJlI>
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impossible to accept presuppositionalism without a Reformed Epistemological framework or antithesis.

Leaving the United States

Presuppositionalism would become a major part of Schaeffer's message later in his career, but while he was still at Westminster, Schaeffer remained in the throes of separatism. The major problem with separatist fundamentalism was that it knew no bounds. Soon enough, fundamentalists were beginning to separate from one another. For example, in 1937 Carl McIntire, a former student of Machen's and a separatist exemplar, broke off from Westminster to found Faith Seminary when Machen died.¹⁶ Francis and Edith, who had their own complaints with Westminster, formally embraced separatism by following McIntire. Schaeffer biographer Barry Hankins observes that Schaeffer "never lost the separatist tendency that developed within fundamentalism and that was part of the split from Westminster. For the rest of his life, Schaeffer believed it was important to stay clear of theological modernism and to battle it wherever and whenever possible."¹⁷ Schaeffer would graduate from Faith Seminary and pastor various separatist fundamentalist Presbyterian churches for the next decade before joining another separatist institution, Machen's Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.

In 1948, Francis Schaeffer moved his family to Western Europe as missionaries to a continent reeling from World War II. The Schaeffers went as change agents, to help nurture an international arm of the separatist fundamentalist movement.¹⁸ But it was Francis, nearly

¹⁶ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 210.

¹⁷ Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*, 15.

¹⁸ Hamilton, "The Dissatisfaction of Francis Schaeffer," *Christianity Today*

two decades later in 1965, who returned changed, armed with a developed epistemological framework that he believed could reshape American evangelicalism.¹⁹

“There are no Atheists in Foxholes” (1948 - 1964)

The next sixteen years after the Schaeffers’ departure to Europe were among the most consequential in Francis’ life and in the history of American evangelicalism. After the second World War and against rising Cold War hysteria, interest in religion soared across the United States. This was not a revival on the order of the Great Awakenings, but after a decade of waning piety during the Great Depression, post-War Americans invested in religion like never before. From 1940 to 1960, the percentage of self-identified “church members” increased from 47% in 1940 to 63.3% in 1960.²⁰ It was America’s new suburban middle class, which by 1960 made up nearly 60 percent of the American populace, who drove the post-War religious revival.²¹ Their interest in Christianity was partly an echo of “foxhole religion,” because former soldiers comprised a sizable portion of the new middle class, and religion was deeply embedded in mid-century American military culture.²²

But the post-War revival was more than just the church attendance of newly converted veterans. Owing to Cold War anxiety over the ideological threat of Communism, Americans now had substantial geopolitical incentive to identify as Christian. In fact, by the time Francis Schaeffer took a brief speaking trip to the United States in 1954, the social critic

¹⁹ Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*, 15.

²⁰ Martin Marty, *The New Shape of American Religion*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers), 1959. 15.

²¹ William Henry Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2003. 107.

²² Michael Snape, "GI Religion and Post-War Revival in the United States and Great Britain." In *Secularization and Religious Innovation in the North Atlantic World*, edited by David Hempton, and Hugh McLeod. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 221.

Will Herberg argued that religion had replaced ethnicity as the primary source of identity in the United States.²³ When asked to state their religious preferences in 1955, a remarkable 95% of Americans “chose to identify themselves as Protestants, Catholics or Jews,” meaning that virtually the entire American people regarded themselves, to some extent, as a belonging to a Judeo-Christian religious community.²⁴

Presidents Truman (1945-53) and Eisenhower (1953-61) were particularly influential in encouraging religious conformity during the Cold War by describing America as a Christian nation fighting against atheistic Communism.²⁵ It was as if manifest destiny had been revived, but now with the goal of spreading democracy and liberty to the entire the world. In a 1944 public address to the American troops in Europe, Eisenhower anticipated later Cold War rhetoric when he declared:

The Allied soldier sees himself as a defender of those great precepts...preached by Christ and exemplified in the way of life for which all true democracies stand. He sees this conflict as a war between these great principles and the forces of human greed and selfishness and love and power today typified by Nazism, Fascism, and Shintoism... The Allied soldier is not often articulate in his profession of Christianity; but he is risking his life to uphold Principles that are implicit alike in Democracy and Christianity: principles of justice, liberty and right among men of all stations, everywhere.²⁶

Soviet Communism made the similar claims of historical inevitability to the United States, but instead of a Christian God, Communism was grounded in materialist philosophy. Karl Marx famously proclaimed that the rise of the proletariat was inevitable, and that the

²³ By “primary source of identity,” Herberg meant the way in which the largest number of Americans chose to identify. Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1955), 35.

²⁴ It is worth mentioning that over 90% of respondents identified as Protestants or Catholics. Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, 59.

²⁵ Dianne Kirby, “The Cold War and American Religion,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. May 2017. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.398

²⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “The Allied Soldier and Religion,” *The Link*, March 1944, 66. in Michael Snape, “GI Religion and Post-War Revival in the United States and Great Britain,” 230.

communist movement would eventually abolish all religion and morality.²⁷ To stand for American democracy was to stand for Christ—and any American who sympathized with Communism risked being accused of treason.²⁸

The Neo-Evangelicals and the Rise of a Christian Worldview

American politicians framed the Cold War as a moral struggle between conflicting worldviews. They were joined by a growing number of moderate fundamentalists who were frustrated with the doctrine of separatism, but were still “eager” to defend a Reformed interpretation of the Bible.²⁹ This network of “neo-evangelicals,” including leaders such as Billy Graham, Carl F. H. Henry, and Harold J. Ockenga, were determined to make evangelicalism relevant again in mainstream culture and theology by establishing a network of neo-evangelical institutions³⁰ and promulgating a Christian *Weltanschauung*, (translated loosely as worldview).

Carl Henry, the founding editor of the *Christianity Today* magazine, which was effectively the leading voice of the neo-evangelical movement, championed the concept of a Christian worldview among the neo-evangelicals. Henry wrote in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947):

²⁷ Karl Marx, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” Marx/Engel Selected Works, Volume One. (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 1969. 21, 26.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

²⁸ The Communist Party in the United States was actually an important political organization during the first half of the 20th century, advocating on behalf of workers and civil rights and boasting nearly 100,000 members. But the “red scare,” the McCarthy witch-hunt, and general anti-leftist hysteria decimated the party after World War II.

²⁹ Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 26.

³⁰ A few notable examples of neo-evangelical institutions include: InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (1941), the National Association of Evangelicals (1942), National Religious Broadcasters Association (1944), Fuller Theological Seminary (1947), the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (1950), Campus Crusade for Christ (1951), and *Christianity Today* (1956).

If historic Christianity is again to compete as a vital world ideology, evangelicalism must project a solution for the most pressing world problems. It must offer a formula for a new world mind with spiritual ends, involving evangelical affirmations in political, economic, sociological, and educational realms, local and international. The redemptive message has implications for all of life.³¹

Henry's conception of a worldview came from an intellectual lineage originating with Scottish theologian James Orr, who he and other neo-evangelicals encountered as students under philosophy professor Gordon Clark at Wheaton College.³² Orr preached a "christocentric" approach to worldview that stressed the reality of Jesus and the truth of the gospel.³³ Orr and Clark argued that an evangelical must be committed to a unique view of God, man, sin, redemption, and human destiny, focusing on Christianity as a complete system of belief.³⁴ This became the heart of the new evangelical message, that God and the inerrant Bible had something to say for every facet of an individual's spiritual and physical life.

Evangelicals and Conservatives

Just as Communism pushed American politicians towards public proclamations of Christian piety, the Cold War milieu pushed neo-evangelical leaders towards an affiliation with a new movement of conservatives who were also championing the importance of a coherent *Weltanschauung*.³⁵ By merging their attack on theological liberalism with a criticism of political liberalism, neo-evangelical leaders asserted their claim to political

³¹ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1947), 68.

³² Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 30.

³³ David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, 8, 12.

³⁴ James Orr, *A Christian View of God and the World as Centering in the Incarnation* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1893), 4.

³⁵ Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 63-66.

relevance in Cold War America.³⁶ No one did this more effectively than Billy Graham, the public face of the neo-evangelical movement and a close advisor to Both President Eisenhower, who frequently colored his evangelistic crusades with Cold War political rhetoric.³⁷ Preaching to millions of people across the United States, Graham claimed that the Soviet Union was the great, anti-Christian enemy foreshadowing the end times predicted in Ezekiel 38-39.³⁸ Communism was “masterminded by Satan himself who is counterfeiting Christianity,” Graham thundered in one sermon.³⁹ Elsewhere, Carl Henry and his editors at *Christianity Today*, Molly Worthen observes, “toed the conservative line on every significant political and theological issue.”⁴⁰

Separating from Separatism at L’Abri

When Francis Schaeffer arrived in Boston to speak at Harvard University in 1964, he was far from the angry fundamentalist pastor who railed against neo-evangelicals for their unwillingness to separate from mainline Protestantism.⁴¹ His time in Europe, during the rise of the neo-evangelicals, had allowed him to analyze his own beliefs outside the furnace of separatist fundamentalism and to make connections between his life-long fight against liberal

³⁶ Axel R. Schäfer, *Counterculture Conservatives: American Evangelicals from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press), 2011. 42-43.

³⁷ For a comprehensive analysis of Graham’s relationship with Eisenhower and Dulles, see Jay Douglas Learned, “Billy Graham, American Evangelicalism, and the Cold War Clash of Messianic Visions, 1945-1962.” PhD diss. University of Rochester, 2012.

³⁸ According to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Billy Graham “preached the Gospel to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history -- nearly 215 million people in more than 185 countries and territories...hundreds of millions more have been reached through television, video, film and webcast.” <https://billygraham.org/about/biographies/billy-graham/>

³⁹ Billy Graham, “Communism and Christianity.” Sermon given in Little Rock, AR, USA - 1953. <https://billygraham.org/audio/communism-and-christianity/>

⁴⁰ Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 66.

⁴¹ Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer*, 25.

theology and wider intellectual currents.⁴² He grew tired of constant infighting among separatists, and concluded that mankind had fallen so far from God's grace that instead of separating, true Christians should re-engage with the world.⁴³ In 1955, Francis officially left the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions, cutting formal ties with separatist fundamentalism.⁴⁴ Schaeffer had separated from the separatists.

He and his Edith stayed in Europe, however, this time basing their missionary operation out of their home in the Swiss Alps, nicknamed L'Abri, or "the shelter."⁴⁵ L'Abri was a compound that simply offered warm hospitality and spiritual conversation to any willing visitor with a thirst for answers to life's toughest questions. Outcasts of the mid-twentieth century western world, from homosexuals and liberals to drug addicts and communists, were welcomed at L'Abri. Francis Schaeffer's daughter, Priscilla, described the atmosphere at L'Abri well when she said, "There wasn't anybody that I couldn't bring home -- no matter how eccentric, how rebellious, how blasphemous as long as they had an interest [and] liked talking."⁴⁶ The Schaeffers had always felt called to evangelism, but L'Abri was a physical representation of their new, culturally engaged framework for conducting mission work. In Schaeffer's own words:

At L'Abri, I listened as well as talked. I learned something about twentieth-century thinking, in many fields, across many disciplines. Gradually, people began to come from the ends of the earth -- not only students but professors. They heard that L'Abri was a place where one could discuss the great twentieth-century questions quite openly.⁴⁷

⁴² Ibid, 42.

⁴³ Charles S. Broomfield, "Francis A. Schaeffer: The Force Behind the Evangelical Takeover of the Republican Party in America." PhD diss. University of Missouri-Kansas City. 2013. 39.

⁴⁴ Colin Duriez, *Francis Schaeffer: An Authentic Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008). 132

⁴⁵ Colin Duriez, *Francis Schaeffer: An Authentic Life*, 128.

⁴⁶ Colin Duriez, *Francis Schaeffer: An Authentic Life*, 128.

⁴⁷ Francis Schaeffer, "Why and How I Write My Books," *Eternity*, March 1973, 65.

As L'Abri steadily grew in popularity, awareness of Francis Schaeffer and his unique approach to ministry grew among American neo-evangelical elite. *Time* magazine published a full profile of L'Abri in 1960, Billy Graham and other celebrities visited, and Francis received invitations to speak at elite universities all across Western Europe.⁴⁸ He was not yet an established presence in American evangelicalism, but in L'Abri, Francis had a vehicle by which his star could rise in Europe.

L'Abri was also significant in shaping Francis' intellectual development. For the first time in his adult life, Francis was spending considerable time with people who were not a part of fundamentalism or the evangelical world.⁴⁹ Young people, particularly European college students, were well represented among L'Abri guests, and played a crucial role in introducing Schaeffer to the popular culture and thought.⁵⁰ Despite his rising fame as a public intellectual, Schaeffer was never an "academic" by traditional standards. Most of his information and knowledge of opposing worldviews came from his seminary education, conversations at L'Abri, and reading popular media, not active reading of contemporary philosophy or thought. He was also intensely interested in art, because he believed an understanding of art was crucial to understanding a culture.⁵¹ His biographer Barry Hankins writes, "Schaeffer was a voracious reader of magazines and the Bible, but some who lived at L'Abri and knew him well say they never saw him read a book...it appears highly likely, therefore, that Schaeffer learned western intellectual history from students who had dropped

⁴⁸ Time Magazine, "Religion: Mission to Intellectuals," January 11, 1960.

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,894666,00.html>;

⁴⁹ Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer*, 42.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 43.

⁵¹ Colin Duriez, "Francis Schaeffer and Hans Rookmaaker," in *Francis Schaeffer: An Authentic Life*, (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books), 2008.

out of European universities.”⁵² Christian philosopher Thomas V. Morris similarly comments, “It is my opinion that Dr. Schaeffer is the modern, college-level counterpart of the old evangelical pamphleteer. His style and treatments are popular rather than philosophically rigorous.”⁵³ Francis Schaeffer was no intellectual slouch, but his thought framework must be understood through the people with whom he personally interacted.

Rookmaaker and Dooyeweerd

No person influenced Frances Schaeffer’s intellectual development at L’Abri more than Hans Rookmaaker, a student and later professor in art history, who shared Francis’ interest in Christianity and culture. Edith Schaeffer wrote, “A small blaze had started as two minds set each other on fire,” to describe their first meeting at the International Council of Christian Churches in 1948, an instant connection punctuated by Rookmaaker’s remark that “These people in here...don’t understand anything. But you and I, we can talk and understand each other.”⁵⁴ Rookmaaker quickly became a lecturer at L’Abri, and even formally opened his own Dutch branch of L’Abri in 1971. He and Francis enjoyed a deep “spiritual unity,” and their frequent discussions on “faith, philosophy, reality, art, and the modern world” profoundly shaped each other’s perspectives.⁵⁵

Rookmaaker connected Schaeffer to Kuyperian thought via another path, this time through work of Free University professor Herman Dooyeweerd, whom Rookmaaker followed closely ever since he started reading Dooyeweerd while imprisoned at a Nazi

⁵² Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer*, 43.

⁵³ Thomas V. Morris, *Francis Schaeffer’s Apologetics: A Critique*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987). 12.

⁵⁴ Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry*, 285.

⁵⁵ Hans R. Rookmaaker, *Art and the Public Today*, second edition (Huémoz-sur-Ollon, Switzerland: L’Abri Fellowship, 1969).

concentration camp.⁵⁶ Dooyeweerd was the leading Neo-Calvinist thinker in the Netherlands, and his books *The Roots of Western Culture* and *In the Twilight of Western Thought* applied Kuyper's Reformed epistemology and theory of antithesis to show how philosophy had impacted contemporary culture. He joined other thinkers of the early 20th century who believed Western civilization was experiencing a profound crisis, and in line with Kuyper, blamed the philosophy of secular humanism for cultural decline.⁵⁷ Secular humanism, which Kuyper addressed earlier as the principles of the French Revolution, was a worldview that claimed man as the center of the universe and reason as the foundation of knowledge and truth. It operated from materialist perspective that made gods out of human ideas, such as historicism, socialism, liberalism, and vitalism.⁵⁸ Historicism was the most dangerous of these ideas because it argued reality was nothing more than a historical process, which meant "Everything is relative and historically determined, including one's belief in lasting values."⁵⁹ He referred to Nazism as an "unspeakably bloody and reactionary regime" and "the degenerate spiritual offspring of modern historicism."⁶⁰

This attribution of Nazism and the decline of Western civilization to historicism and secular humanism also demonstrated Dooyeweerd's close connection to Kuyper. It was

⁵⁶ Hans was fluent in the Dutch Reformed tradition of Abraham Kuyper and Groen Van Prinsterer, so much so that he was later appointed the inaugural department chair of art history at Kuyper's Vrije Universiteit, and is credited with popularizing Kuyper's thinking on cultural engagement throughout western Europe. Peter S. Heslam, "A Theology of the Arts: Kuyper's Ideas on Art and Religion," published in C. van der Kooi and J. de Bruijin (ed.): *Kuyper Reconsidered: Aspects of his Life and Work*, VU Uitgeverij - Amsterdam, 1999. 13-29

⁵⁷ The decline of Western civilization was evidenced by major events such as World War I, the Great Depression, Nazism, World War II, and the Stalinists, but also by previously mentioned trends towards secularization and modernization. Other notable thinkers who wrote on the decline of the west via philosophy included Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1926) and Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1934).

⁵⁸ C.T. McIntire, "Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of History," in *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America), 1985. 3.

⁵⁹ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*, (Toronto, CA: Wedge Publishing Foundation), 1945. 61-62.

⁶⁰ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 86.

Kuyper who had boldly proclaimed in his first Stone Lecture that a Calvinist worldview was “not to be invented nor formulated by ourselves, but is to be taken and applied as it presents itself in history.”⁶¹ Kuyper saw Calvinism as “rooted in the past” and created as “the fruit of a work of God in the heart, or if you like, an inspiration of history.”⁶² Fundamental to the legitimacy of an all-encompassing Calvinist worldview was that its essence originated long ago:

In its deepest logic Calvinism had already been apprehended by Augustine; had, long before Augustine, been proclaimed to the City of the seven hills by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Romans; and from Paul goes back to Israel and its prophets, yea to the tents of the patriarchs.⁶³

Kuyper had communicated his Calvinist Worldview, which was grounded in Reformed Epistemology and produced his Anti-Revolutionary perspective, as more an everlasting truth than a novel invention. Historian John Bolt argues that his “national mythopoetic Christian-historical imagination,” which projected Calvinism backward into history, was key to the success of his message.⁶⁴

Therefore, one of Dooyeweerd’s most significant contributions to Kuyperian Calvinism was not just to blame secular humanism for the decline of western culture, but to situate it against a Calvinist worldview throughout modern history. If non-Christians, or those on the other side of antithesis, believed that humans had “given up the belief in imperishable norms and principles” in order to hold that humans are merely determined by historical processes, then “Western civilization had lost its fundamental sense of direction

⁶¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Stone Lectures*, 4.

⁶² *Ibid*, 16, 22.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 35.

⁶⁴ John Bolt, *A Free Church, a Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper’s American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans), 2001. 6.

and its faith in abiding truth.”⁶⁵ The world wars, miseries of capitalism, and other social crises were really problems of spiritual and epistemological foundations, in which mankind had forsaken God in favor of historical inevitability. Dooyeweerd contended that if all people would “surrender” to God and his inerrant word, problems caused by secular humanism and its “isms” would evaporate, and mankind would be united under a “higher standpoint.”⁶⁶ The answer to the decline of the West was a turn to God as the creator and ultimate source of unity.⁶⁷

Schaeffer’s Return and the Revival of Kuiperian Thought

When Francis Schaeffer had moved his family to Switzerland in 1948, he believed he would lead a movement of separatist fundamentalism in Europe. But after a formal break from separatist fundamentalism, hundreds of conversations with secular young people, a friendship with Hans Rookmaaker, and his first forays into public intellectual work, Francis Schaeffer returned to the United States a changed man.⁶⁸ His new message represented an attempt to “fuse” Hans’ “Dutch Christianity” with Schaeffer’s “Anglo-Saxon Christianity” in order to “to make them into something new.”⁶⁹

But their “something new” was really just the revival of Kuiperian thought in the United States. When Harold O.J. Brown, who had first met Schaeffer as a college student

⁶⁵ *Het Vaderland* (November 28, 1936) quoted in Herman Paul, “Who Suffered From the Crisis of Historicism? A Dutch Example” in *History and Theory*, 49(2) May 2010. 24. C.T. McIntire, “Dooyeweerd’s Philosophy of History,” in *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*, 3.

⁶⁶ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*, 12.

⁶⁷ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 29-30.

⁶⁸ Schaeffer had made trips back to the United States before, most notably to give a series of lectures at Wheaton College, but not with the status and permanence with which he returned in 1965. He still maintained residence at L’Abri for quite some time, but 1965 marks the point where he began to become a recognizable figure in the United States. Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer*, xiii.

⁶⁹ Colin Duriez, “Interview with H.R. Rookmaaker,” in Hengelaar-Rookmaaker, editor, *Our Calling and God’s Hand in History: The Complete Works of Hans Rookmaaker*, Vol. 6, 150-153.

visiting L'Abri, invited Schaeffer to speak at Harvard in 1965, Schaeffer came armed with his Westminster conception of presuppositionalism and his L'Abri notion of philosophy and culture. Barry Hankins describes the scene in Cambridge, Massachusetts vividly as about thirty Harvard students were awed by Schaeffer's intellectual arguments from a Christian perspective, despite his appearance as "a European cosmopolitan."⁷⁰ The students at Harvard, and soon after students at evangelical bastions Wheaton College and Westmont College, were similarly impressed. Many had never seen an evangelical thought leader so fluent in art and culture, dressed in "Swiss hiking knickers," and yet so articulate in his arguments for a Christian worldview.⁷¹ By 1965, Schaeffer was 53 years old, but his stardom and ministry in the United States was only just beginning.

Over the next few years, Schaeffer toured the United States giving lectures as a celebrity of the neo-evangelical movement. Like Dooyeweerd, he attributed the "pervasive emptiness of modern, secular life" to the philosophy of secular humanism. He contended, "The consensus of our society no longer rests upon a Christian basis, but upon a humanistic one. Humanism is the man putting himself at the center of all things, rather than the creator God."⁷² It is no coincidence that Schaeffer's diagnosis of social ills mirrored that of Dooyeweerd. Rookmaaker himself claimed *Escape from Reason* was Schaeffer's version of Dooyeweerd's *In the Twilight of Western Thought*.⁷³ Dooyeweerd himself was applying Kuyper's own ideas that society was in a struggle between competing epistemologies and worldviews, and so Schaeffer was transitively doing the same.

⁷⁰ Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer*, 76.

⁷¹ Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 211.

⁷² Francis Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason*, vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 195.

⁷³ Hans Rookmaaker, "A Dutch Christian View of Philosophy," In *Our Calling and God's Hand in History: The Complete Works of Hans Rookmaaker*, Vol. 6 (Carlisle, Piquant, 2003), 179.

Additionally, Schaeffer further borrowed from Kuyper by prescribing a Christian worldview and by taking up Van Til's presuppositionalism. In fact, Schaeffer recommended that a Christian worldview rooted in Christian presuppositions was the only realistic answer to secular humanism.⁷⁴ In *The God Who Is There* he explains:

The Christian system (what is taught in the whole Bible) is a unity of thought. Christianity is not just a lot of bits and pieces — there is a beginning and an end, a whole system of truth, and this system is the only system that will stand up to all the questions that are presented to us as we face the reality of existence.⁷⁵

Schaeffer's language here was remarkably similar to Abraham Kuyper's own description of a Calvinist worldview as the only worldview "of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power."⁷⁶ Schaeffer also, like Kuyper, recognized the importance of epistemology in combatting secular humanism, claiming "epistemology is the central problem of our generation... the so-called 'generation gap' is really an epistemological gap, simply because the modern generation looks at knowledge in a way radically different from previous ones."⁷⁷

Schaeffer and the Religious Right

Schaeffer was highly effective in moving readers to action. Ronald A. Wells compares Schaeffer's style to that of old Calvinist pulpits from centuries past, with denunciations of moral corruption mixed in with appeals to a return to faith.⁷⁸ But Schaeffer's interest in battling humanism, like Kuyper's, extended far beyond church halls and into the public square. His vision was to transform the idea of a Christian worldview into

⁷⁴ Francis Schaeffer, *He is There and He is Not Silent*, vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 279-280.

⁷⁵ Francis Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason*, 221.

⁷⁶ Kuyper, *Stone Lectures*, 5.

⁷⁷ Francis Schaeffer, *He is There and He is Not Silent*, 305.

⁷⁸ Ronald A. Wells, "Schaeffer on America," in Ronald W. Ruesegger, ed., *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Academie Publishers), 1986, 234.

that could capitalize on the momentum of the rising conservative evangelical movement and challenge the prevailing culture.

By the late 1970s and the early '80s, Schaeffer was a full-fledged celebrity in evangelical circles, appearing frequently in such venues as Pat Robertson's "700 Club" and Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church.⁷⁹ Schaeffer's talk of an all-encompassing Christian worldview, epistemological conflict, and cultural decline caught the attention of the conservative evangelicals at a time when they were in need of a unifying theme. Under his influence, a large number of fundamentalists, realizing the futility of separatism, began to embrace the neo-evangelical message of cultural engagement.

Schaeffer's videos on abortion and cultural crisis were circulated across the country, and his book *A Christian Manifesto* (1981) was hailed by Falwell as "probably the most important piece of literature in America today."⁸⁰ Falwell went so far as to purchase tens of thousands of copies of the book and distributed it on his television show, "The Old Time Gospel Hour."⁸¹ Schaeffer's writings in turn inspired some of the best selling publications a burgeoning movement labeled the "Religious Right," including Tim LaHaye's famous tract, *The Battle for the Mind* (1980) and John Whitehead's controversial book, *The Second American Revolution* (1982).⁸² In just a few years, Schaeffer's channeling of Kuyper through talk of worldviews and cultural decline had inspired the Religious Right with a new sense of mission: a mission to transform America.

⁷⁹ Daymon Johnson, "Reforming Fundamentalism in America: The Lordship of Christ, the Transformation of Culture, and Other Calvinist Components of the Christian Right," *Doctoral Dissertation submitted to the faculty of Florida State University*, 1994. 94.

⁸⁰ James Sanford, *Blueprint for Theocracy*, 21.

⁸¹ Kenneth Woodward, "Guru of Fundamentalism," *Newsweek*, November 1, 1982.

⁸² Daymon Johnson, "Reforming Fundamentalism in America," 85.

Conclusion

The story of Kuyperian thought in the United States is the story of American evangelicals' struggles with modernity and engagement with society. Kuyper came from a tradition where political action and theology were inextricably linked. His Reformed epistemology was the basis for his public theology, which then informed his political theory and anti-revolutionary approach to government. In the same way, Schaeffer's adoption of Reformed epistemology, through Dooyeweerd's critique of culture and Van Til's presuppositionalism, influenced his message of a coherent, Christian worldview. Schaeffer influenced an entire generation of evangelicals away from the throes of separatist fundamentalism and into a new, public facing approach to government.

Schaeffer has been called the "intellectual father" of the Religious Right because his message laid the foundation for the movement that has come to dominate modern American politics.⁸³ But Schaeffer's primary messages of cultural critique and worldview came from Abraham Kuyper, who gives historians a new avenue by which to understand the rise of the Religious Right. Furthermore, as Americans now grapple with the polarized "post-truth" climate of modern politics, questions of epistemology and the history of ideas are as salient as ever.⁸⁴

⁸³ Daymon Johnson, "Reforming Fundamentalism in America," 99.

⁸⁴ Molly Worthen, "The Evangelical Roots of Our Post-Truth Society," *The New York Times Sunday Review*, April 13, 2017.

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