



**Mouw, Richard J.**

***Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction***

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

*Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction* is exactly what the title says. Richard J. Mouw (President and Professor of Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA) has taken his appreciation for Kuyper and turned it into a book that will satisfy readers not overly interested in checking Kuyper out for themselves while whetting the appetites of readers who are. Before reading this short book I fell into the first category; after reading it I can say I'm in the second.

The book is divided into two sections. The first section "Kuyper on Theology and Culture: An Overview" tells the story of Kuyper the theologian, politician, social activist, and disciple of Christ. Mouw writes both journalistically and anecdotally in these chapters as he gives a general sketch of Kuyper's position on a number of issues, e.g., his views on discipleship in every arena of life to include politics, or his unabashed Calvinism, which he considered superior to all other religions and Christian traditions. Along the way Mouw offers notes about his personal experiences in encountering and appropriating Kuyper.

The second section "Kuyper for the Twenty-First Century" shifts gears from the descriptive task and focuses on how Kuyper's many ideas and insights can be applied to a modern context. Mouw is appreciative of much of Kuyper's thought, such as a recognized commonality between

Christianity and Islam (even though Kuyper considered Islam a false faith), which is necessary for stimulating dialog between Christians and Muslims today; or Kuyper's insistence that the kingdom of God is larger than the church, which demands action and obedience beyond the church's walls; or his views on the Spirit's role in the Christian life, which would provide a more robust pneumatology for the Reformed faith.

For all of Mouw's appreciation he is not uncritical in this section. He suggests that Kuyper was too polemical and not ecumenical enough. Mouw thinks that Bavinck makes for a good *via media* here; he can still be robustly Calvinistic while appreciating what others have to offer without being overly polemical. One area in which Kuyper should be rejected wholeheartedly is his racism, i.e., in seeing blacks as inferior beings. Mouw is not shy in saying that Kuyper was just plain wrong here and he doesn't bother to attempt to defend Kuyper as a product of his time. Mouw would also like to see the church play a larger function in "cultural obedience" than Kuyper had initially envisioned.

With scant footnotes scattered about and no indices whatsoever this is certainly not a reference work, but it does deliver on being a short introduction, and while Mouw admittedly doesn't cover anywhere close to all the areas and topics that Kuyper's life and work touched, he does write about those that had the greatest impact on him and that he feels could have the greatest impact on the world today. I heartily recommend this to those interested in Kuyper and I look forward to the engagement it receives from those already familiar with the subject matter.