

CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR

IVP Academic editor David Congdon asks author Craig G. Bartholomew about his new book, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction*.



AUTHOR
CRAIG G.
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IVP EDITOR
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How did you first become interested in the thought of Abraham Kuyper?

BARTHOLOMEW: While working as a pastor in South Africa I developed a relationship with numerous professional Christian artists. A movement developed and we connected with Kuyperian philosophers, theologians, and artists at Potchefstroom University. Dr. Elaine Botha, then head of the department of philosophy, introduced me to Kuyper and the Kuyperian tradition. As an Anglican evangelical amidst apartheid South Africa this made a profound impression on me and began an exploration of this tradition. I experienced Kuyperianism as “mission on steroids” and it helped me to see the comprehensive scope of the gospel, an emphasis desperately needed by South African evangelicals at the time.

What is the biggest misunderstanding about the Kuyperian tradition?

BARTHOLOMEW: In 1987 George Marsden wrote of the triumph—or nearly so—of Kuyperian presuppositionalism in the evangelical (academic) community in America. While I think this is true, it remains at a very general level of worldview. Partially this is a result of much of Kuyper’s corpus being in Dutch. Wonderfully, we are now at the tail end of a major translation project

of Kuyper’s works and some twelve volumes are in the pipeline for publication by Lexham Press. Doing the research for my forthcoming book has alerted me to the depth and range of Kuyper’s thought and of his successors, and not least in theology (Kuyper’s doctorate was in theology). The biggest misunderstanding, I suspect, is that Kuyper is not really known, and certainly not in his richness as an exegete, theologian, public thinker, and practitioner. *Ad Fontes* (to the sources) would solve this, and wonderfully there will soon be no excuse!

Why do you think Kuyperian thought is especially relevant today?

BARTHOLOMEW: Kuyper lived and wrote when the post-Enlightenment tradition was sweeping across Europe, a time of unprecedented change. Indeed, he studied under the first major proponents of historical criticism in the Netherlands. We are now at the other end—in my view—of what Kuyper saw gathering momentum around him. Kuyper was no traditionalist for the sake of being a traditionalist, and he sought to conserve the essentials while adapting the

Reformed tradition holistically to the challenges of his day. As the DNA of modernity has started to unravel in late modernity, Kuyper’s thought becomes remarkably relevant in myriad ways. Amidst the multiple challenges of our day in the church and the world, some of which Bob Goudzwaard and I address in our forthcoming book with IVP Academic, *Beyond the Modern*

Age, I cannot think of a more fertile thinker to draw from in so many different areas.

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