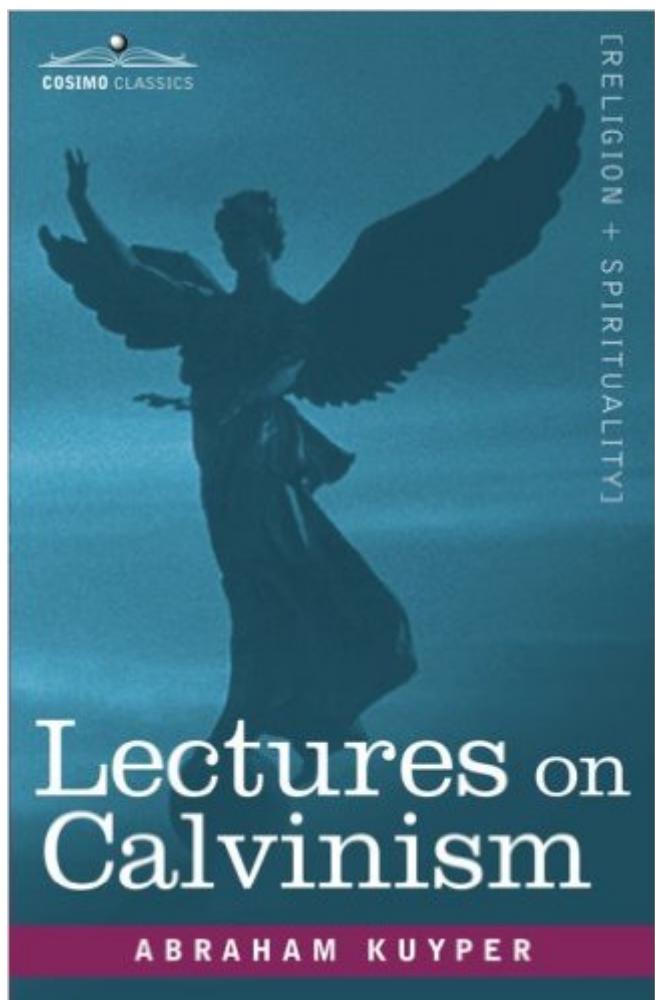


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Lectures On Calvinism, The Stone Lectures Of 1898



Synopsis

This series of lectures was delivered by Abraham Kuyper at the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898. Over the course of the lectures, he discusses Calvinism and the way it pertains to many aspects of life including politics, science, and art. According to Kuyper, Calvinism has a natural affinity for scientific investigation, because like scientific inquiry, Calvinism seeks to unify the cosmos under universal laws. Predestination, he says, proves that a set of laws exist to govern the world, and science is merely trying to figure them out. When it comes to art, Kuyper launches into a defense of Calvinism, which is often maligned as a religion that seeks to stamp out art and its significance. Readers will find here a thorough and elegant explanation of Calvinism and its particular outlook on life. Anyone wanting to know how the religion is unique among the many Christian sects will find it an enjoyable and informative read. Dutch theologian ABRAHAM KUYPER (1837-1920) was prime minister of the Netherlands from 1901 to 1905. He developed Neo-Calvinism, which emphasizes the sovereignty of Jesus over all mental pursuits and supports the idea that there exists a grace given by God to all things in order to sustain the continued unfolding of creation. Kuyper wrote a number of books including Conservatism and Orthodoxy (1870), The Social Question and the Christian Religion (1891), and Common Grace (1902).

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Customer Reviews

Anyone who doesn't read Kuyper is doomed. Not to read him is a serious invisible disease which in time can have terrible consequences. Something similar to a man who has never tasted peaches.

He would quietly become sadder . . . and, probably, little by little, he would lose his hair.OK, I confess, I've just shamelessly lifted, word for word, Nobel Laureate Pablo Neruda's review of Julio Cortazar (see the entry for Cortazar's *Cronopios and Famas*), just because it's about my favorite comment on any book anywhere, and I think Kuyper's seminal book *Lectures on Calvinism* deserves such. Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* is essential reading for any Christian who wishes to reflect on the relationship of Christian faith to the state, the church, the sciences, the arts, and other spheres and endeavors of life. First delivered as lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary in the last decade of the 19th C., these thoughts of Kuyper, who went on to become the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, have enormous relevance to our day. Contrary to what the title may lead you to think, it is NOT a treatise on Calvinist doctrinal distinctives. It is a study of the beneficial historical effects that the Calvinistic Reformation has had on various areas of endeavor in the societies it has impacted, and why it produced those effects. Anyone who has appreciated the writings of Francis A. Schaeffer will discover in Kuyper an important source of Schaeffer's key ideas. One need not be Calvinist, nor even Christian, to learn through this book something of the factors that have shaped the most positive aspects of Western culture. But, then, that could put such a person in dangerous territory, couldn't it....Kuyper believes that a light was lit in this world some 2000 years ago, and that this light has made its impact felt in diverse areas and in concrete ways, in turn, over the course of Christian history. A torch, once ignited in Jerusalem, has been passed, lighting up in succession various places as well as aspects of life, allowing each to come into their own and realize more fully the potentials God intended for them. The following quote, actually taken from another important work of Kuyper's, will give you a flavor of Kuyper's concept of the historical unfolding of the blessings of the gospel of Christ that is also present in *Lectures on Calvinism*: "Christianity conceals in its womb a much greater treasure of rejuvenation than you surmise. Until now it has exerted its power only on the individual and only indirectly on the state. But anyone who, as believer or as unbeliever, has been able to spy out its secret dynamic, must grant that Christianity can exert a wonderful organizing power on society also; and not till this power breaks through will the religion of the cross shine before the whole world in all the depths of its conception and in all the wealth of the blessings which it brings."

I think it's probably unlikely that anyone will read these lectures by Kuyper and agree word for word with absolutely everything that's in here. There are enough distinctives in Kuyper's thought that make his views somewhat particular, as are the views of everyone. But there is no question that one can surmise from reading this book that Kuyper, philosophically speaking, was a man ahead of his

time. The basic point of this book is to present a Calvinistic worldview that penetrates and transforms all aspects of society - politics, science, the arts, religion, etc. In many ways, such an attempt was, and is, revolutionary by Christian standards. Surprisingly few Christians, either today or in Kuyper's day 100 years ago, think Christianly about things beyond the pale of pure religion or spirituality. Many Christians who are indeed quite Christian in regards to religious beliefs and even personal holiness do not take Christianity beyond these areas into the world and in the world's legitimate disciplines like politics or science. There are several reasons that are regularly given for this, but clearly the most pervasive is that many Christians haven't thought about such things and have unnecessarily limited their ability to transform the world. This attitude is decidedly unacceptable to Kuyper, and this comes through loud and clear in this book. Not only was Kuyper ahead of his time in suggesting a full orbbed Christian worldview in place of a compartmentalized Christianity, but he was also prophetic in laying down a solid framework for comparative religious and worldview studies. Those who struggle with answering assertions which suggest that all religions and worldviews are more or less the same should read Kuyper here. Kuyper is very good in contrasting worldviews, showing them to be incompatible with each other, and forcefully arguing for that worldviews can and should be differentiated from each other on the basis of truth versus error. In particular, Kuyper plunges head first into the modernist craze of his time and calling for a full orbbed Christian rebuttal to modernism that can only be achieved by developing a full-orbed Christian worldview that can compete with modernistic tendencies in science, politics, etc. Not every Christian will agree with Kuyper's views, and not even all self-described Calvinists will either. Calvinism is not monolithic on many of these questions, though Kuyper's views are indeed compelling and often persuasive. I think the biggest compliment this book can be given is that it should raise the consciousness of the Christian reader to think outside his own backyard and yearn to develop his faith into a comprehensive life system which is applicable to any circumstance and any discipline or field of study. Kuyper wanted Christians to expand their horizons and expand their influence by outthinking and outworking their worldview opponents, and this is a message that is every bit as critical for Christians to hear today as it was when these lectures were given 100 years ago.

This classic expression of the Reformed faith offers six lectures on Calvinism delivered at Princeton University, 1898 under the auspices of the L. P. Stone Foundation. Though these lecture were delivered in 1898, what Kuyper (Dr Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was a Dutch Calvinist theologian, philosopher and politician) addresses is still very relevant even after a century. This lectures are not just another set of theology. Dr Kuyper helps us discover the richness of calvinism with respect to

our world view. These lectures include Calvinism with Life System, Religion, Politics, Science, Art and the Future.

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