Journal of Markets & Morality
Volume 21, Number 2 (Fall 2018): 241–258

Tocqueville and Kuyper on the Problem of Poverty in Modern Society

Li Ma
Henry Institute, Calvin College
*Jin Li**
Calvin Theological Seminary

In this article, we compare Tocqueville and Kuyper regarding their treatments of poverty as a social problem in modern society. As social thinkers, they both observed poverty as a phenomenon embedded in unprecedented structural changes in Europe after both the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. As statesmen, they both spoke publicly concerning legal and private charity, and they discussed human dignity, morality, and social solidarity. Coming from different theological and political traditions, however, Tocqueville and Kuyper proposed different solutions. Tocqueville warned that state legislation has worsened the situation, locking the poor into perpetual poverty and loss of freedom and dignity. Kuyper stressed the causes and impact of the French Revolution. Not disapproving of legal charity completely, Kuyper placed the role of the state into its God-ordained sphere of sovereignty. By framing human value and dignity into an eternal perspective, Kuyper also proposed means within the church to foster solidarity between rich and poor.

The Spirit of Capitalism and Poverty

During the nineteenth century, after the social tumult of the French Revolution, Western civilization underwent a transformation. Europe transitioned from an agrarian and feudal society to an industrialized and urbanized capitalist system.[1] After the role of the church in society had been substituted by nation states, the core values and ethos of Western civilization's religious beliefs were replaced by interest-driven desires. Economic activities became the center of social life, as economic historian Karl Polanyi insightfully points out: "All types of societies are limited by economic factors." Furthermore, they are based "on a motive

only rarely acknowledged as valid in the history of human societies."[2] Economic gains were "certainly never before raised to the level of a justification of action and behavior in everyday life."[3] Max Weber associated this with the "spirit" of capitalism, an ethos with social consequences.[4] He claimed that this "system of market relationships" forced the individual to "conform to capitalist rules of action," or else the worker "will be thrown into the streets without a job."[5]

Poverty in modern society was more related to social structural changes, and Western civilization has also adopted measures to alleviate poverty. One method is through state legislation. Academic disciplines such as political economics emerged.[6] Unfortunately, Polanyi claims that these types of legislation have been ineffective. He criticizes the Speenhamland Law, which was an important amendment to the Elizabethan Poor Law in England at the end of the eighteenth century, for "by the time of its repeal huge masses of the laboring population resembled more the specters that might haunt a nightmare than human beings."[7] Polanyi notices that legislation fostered a change when "the traditional unity of a Christian society was giving place to a denial of responsibility on the part of the well-to-do for the condition of their fellows."[8] When the poor workers became "physically dehumanized," as Polanyi observes, the rich class had regrettably become "morally degraded."[9]

The structural changes that Weber and Polanyi theorized posed challenges for nineteenth-century thinkers, including Christians who were concerned with modernity and a changed social order. In this article, we compare the views of two nineteenth-century Christian thinkers, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) and Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), based on the following considerations. First, although Tocqueville lived earlier in the nineteenth century than Kuyper did, they both theorized about structural changes when giving public speeches about poverty. Tocqueville's views also exerted some influence on Kuyper regarding the French Revolution and American democracy.[10] Second, as thinkers and politicians with Christian backgrounds, both shared insights regarding the crisis of modernity and were also engaged in how to resolve social problems. However, their views of poverty differ, partly due to their theological differences and political ideals. Holding a classic political liberal stance, Tocqueville prefers nongovernmental and individual aid and proposes that state assistance be abolished. In contrast, Kuyper endorses the church, the state, and individuals as spheres that should play a role in helping the poor. Compared to Tocqueville, Kuyper stresses the spiritual function of the church, particularly touching on the way the Lord's Supper could bridge the gap.

Tocqueville and the *Memoir on Pauperism*

In 1835, Tocqueville gave a speech at the Royal Academic Society of Cherbourg, later published as *Memoir on Pauperism*.[11] Based on his prior study of British legislation to alleviate poverty,[12] Tocqueville gives a historical overview of the problem. In the primitive society of hunting and gathering, he claims, people lived in a state of equality by self-subsistence, for "inequality was unable to insinuate among them in any permanent manner."[13] No external signs served to establish a class superiority that could be transmitted to the next generation. As human beings formed settlements and their desires expanded beyond mere survival, they also developed the taste for pleasure.[14] Meanwhile, as private property emerged and wealth and power gradually concentrated in the hands of a few, an aristocracy came into being. By then, human beings had lost their primitive virtues, and society had become "a place between a savage independence that they no longer desire, and a political and civil liberty that they do not yet understand," making individuals "defenseless against violence and deceit" and "tyranny."[15] Inequality among individuals continued to increase.

After society made its transition from agrarian society into feudalism, people fell into two classes—landlords and tenants.[16] Although this further enlarged inequality, Tocqueville considered it less deplorable than his contemporary industrial society. Tenants or peasants in feudalism enjoyed a certain degree of pleasure, freedom, dignity, and morality because they shared the same communal form and common interests with their landlords.[17] Although people in general were poor, their basic needs were met and dignity preserved.[18] Since the land did not provide extra comfort, even "the proudest medieval baron" enjoyed less pleasure than inhabitants of a modern township where a "thousand needs created by civilization" were satisfied.[19]

Industrialization expanded people's desires beyond mere survival. Goods that were earlier considered luxuries gradually became daily necessities. Due to the increase in productivity, more people either entered the industrial sector or engaged in commerce. The emerging leisure class and capitalist class took the place of the landlord class.[20] Even before Weber's theories, Tocqueville foresaw the demoralizing effect of modern capitalism after this drastic structural change. As Tocqueville said, "they were obeying the immutable laws which govern the growth of organized societies. One can no more assign an end to this movement than impose limits on human perfectibility. The limits of both are known only by God."[21]

In an industrial society, Tocqueville noticed the "dual movements": On the one hand, the concentration of industrial activities and land, especially the movements of enclosures, led to workers losing public land as the guarantee of survival. To survive, they sacrificed their freedom, time, and dignity by selling their labor. Otherwise, they would face a higher risk of starvation than in an agrarian society.[22] As Tocqueville pointed out, "the industrial class, which provides for the pleasures of the greatest number, is itself exposed to miseries that would be almost unknown if this class did not exist."[23] On the other hand, many formerly luxurious commodities gradually became daily necessities. Humans desired greater comforts. Social prosperity also created new professional ladders for industrial workers. Although societies appeared to have become more civilized, Tocqueville noted that "the progress of civilization" only "exposes men to many new misfortunes."[24] Workers are more susceptible to poverty than any time before, because "the lack of a multitude of things causes poverty; in the savage state, poverty consists only in not finding something to eat."[25] Such is the altered context of poverty in industrial society.

As a French aristocrat, Tocqueville certainly appreciated the emergence of a new social order since 1800 where new forms of liberty gave rise to a more peaceful social order and the flourishing of ideas.[26] He praised a democratic and capitalist society where "every man works to earn a living" and where "labor is held in honor; the prejudice is not against it but in its favor."[27] As economic historian Deirdre McCloskey argues, the Great Enrichment since 1800 was a necessary outcome after the success of ideas that fueled "trade-tested betterment."[28] These ideas not only included inventions but also ideas about equal liberty and dignity for commoners. However, Tocqueville also insightfully pointed to the new forms of inequality, such as the employment of the working class. As Tocqueville said, "I consider the industrial class as having received from God the special and dangerous mission of securing the material well-being of all others by its risks and dangers."[29] Although the Christian tradition saw work as a God-given calling, in modern capitalism, work held an inherent risk of poverty.

Such a crisis of modernity is also observed by historian E. P. Thompson. In England, workers still considered divine calling a source of their occupational ethics while struggling to gain comfort from utopian ideals and millennialism. Meanwhile, due to increasing inequality and exploitation, a coalition of interests was formed. After 1830, many workers' strikes broke out in England, giving birth to the working class.[30] It was during this time that Tocqueville visited England to study its legislation regarding poverty.

Problems Brought by Legal Charity

According to Tocqueville, industrialization, though an inevitable development, led to the risk of structural poverty. He foresaw this as a persistent problem for modern nations. Reckoning that there must be "means of attenuating those inevitable evils,"[31] there have been two approaches: private assistance and public or legal assistance. Tocqueville reckoned that legal charity was established in modern states under the influence of Protestantism.[32] By providing assistance to the poor through public means, the modern state seems to both ensure the proper use of wealth by the rich as well as the survival of the poor. However, Tocqueville claims that legal charity is fundamentally flawed. He notes that England is "the only country in Europe which has systematized and applied the theories of public charity on a grand scale."[33] In 1833, when England exhibited great economic prosperity before the world, Tocqueville observed its hidden dangers:

> I myself pondered the secret unrest which was visibly at work among all its inhabitants. I thought that great misery must be hidden beneath that brilliant mask of prosperity which Europe admires. This idea led me to pay particular attention to pauperism, that hideous and enormous sore which is attached to a healthy and vigorous body.[34]

Tocqueville analyzed two damaging impacts of pauperism in England. First, there was much abuse of public assistance. It nurtured sloth and irresponsibility while depriving people of human dignity.[35] While the Catholic tradition has often equated human dignity with having a decent standard of living without needing to beg,[36] Tocqueville stressed lack of initiative and dependence as loss of dignity. Due to sinful human nature, people are naturally prone to laziness. Pauperism made the poor more prone to rely on public assistance, and they lost the incentive to work. Tocqueville further analyzed that, because these public charity institutions do not distinguish the real causes behind one's poverty, be it personal habits or true misfortune, they could not effectively help those who are truly in need. Tocqueville documented that some people who lived a lazy lifestyle or indulged in drunkenness still received public assistance.[37] He concluded that "the inevitable result of public charity was to perpetuate idleness among the majority of the poor and to provide for their leisure at the expense of those who work."[38]

Furthermore, Tocqueville thought that pauperism caused public charity to inherit all the evils of medieval monasteries, but at the same time, lacking the latter's morality. Many people would tell lies or have more illegitimate children to get assistance. As Tocqueville commented, "the right of the poor to obtain society's

help is unique in that instead of elevating the heart of the man who exercises it, it lowers him."[39] The poorest were deemed most qualified to receive assistance, so these people were reluctant to improve their circumstances. They even bragged about poverty and used their disadvantage to secure charity. This is undoubtedly an insult to their own human dignity and conscience, as Tocqueville maintained:

> The poor man who demands alms in the name of the law is, therefore, in a still more humiliating position than the indigent who asks pity of his fellow men in the name of He who regards all men from the same point of view and who subjects rich and poor to equal laws.[40]

Second, Tocqueville pointed out that legal charity severs the emotional ties between people, for donors no longer act out of compassion but rather are coerced by law. Here Tocqueville offered a social-psychological analysis. Private donations not only help the poor in need, but they also allow the rich to practice loving care for others. The poor person needs to ask for others' assistance in person; and when receiving that assistance, he feels gratitude toward others. It involves personal interactions. Such an emotional exchange is beneficial, for it not only softens the conflicts between these two classes, but also connects the emotions and interests of particular individuals from these two classes. In contrast, legal charity actually widens the emotional gap between rich and poor. Here Tocqueville gives an example: A poor and helpless woman could not get assistance from her rich relatives on her husband's side, because her relative (father-in-law) thought that such aid should be provided by the state and society.[41]

Moreover, the law forcefully takes part of the wealth from the rich. Because they do not personally meet those who are assisted by these funds, the rich do not feel compassionate toward the poor. On the contrary, it may result in resentment and contempt on the part of the rich against "a greedy stranger."[42] Thus, by making charity impersonal, the law severs interpersonal ties that nurture good will among people. The poor person may also harbor discontent when such aid does not satisfy people. Therefore, Tocqueville evaluates its outcome in this way:

> One class still views the world with fear and loathing while the other regards its misfortune with despair and envy. Far from uniting these two rival nations, who have existed since the beginning of the world and who are called the rich and the poor, into a single people, it breaks the only link which could be established between them. It ranges each one under a banner, tallies them, and, bringing them face to face, prepares them for combat.[43]

Furthermore, when the poor increase in number and the rich are unable to help them out of poverty, the result, according to Tocqueville, will be a time when

the poor "will find it easier to plunder them of all their property at one stroke than to ask for their help."[44] He believes that this outcome would be produced by the wealthy and emerging bourgeois class, because they had turned the past feudalist coexistent social relationships into employer-employee relationships. Aristocratic dignity amounted only to money, so it lacked true authority.[45]

Third, Tocqueville also pointed out another unintended consequence of legal charity—the loss of freedom for the poor. In England, each city or town could assist only its own inhabitants because of the requirements of local financial structure. Consequently, local inhabitants sacrificed their freedom of migration to obtain public assistance. They became more dependent on local charity and thus less willing to venture out and explore economic opportunities in other places. Residential immobility almost formed a neo-feudalist barrier deterring potential entrepreneurial activities across geographical regions. Another repercussion was that local governments may have an incentive to expel people from other regions in order to keep local finances healthy. Consequently, as Tocqueville points out, "legal charity keeps the poor from even wishing to move."[46]

In sum, Tocqueville considered exclusive public charity risky in a modern industrial society. He acknowledged that some public charity is necessary, such as provision of free education programs for children from poor families, programs that aim at eradicating social ills such as abandoning infants, and programs helping those who have special needs and are thus unable to work. But making legal charity normative is flawed.[47] He thought that legislators should consider the psychological processes involving human dignity and emotional reciprocity. Most importantly, charity should enhance human virtue rather than aggrandize human sinfulness.

Kuyper on the True Social Problem

In 1891, Kuyper gave a speech entitled "The Social Question and the Christian Religion" at the first Christian Social Congress in the Netherlands, which was convened to discuss poverty in European society.[48] With the development of capitalism, Kuyper challenged people to rethink the relationship between human life and the changing material world.[49] He also pointed out the root of modern poverty as human sinfulness: "that men regarded humanity as cut off from its eternal destiny, did not honor it as created in the image of God, and did not reckon with the majesty of the Lord, who alone by his grace is able to hold in check a human race mired in sin."[50] People failed to understand "the laws that govern human association and the production, distribution, and use of material goods"[51] because of how they viewed the essence of human beings and their

social attributes. Their cognitive failure and lust for power also led to systemic social injustice.[52] Gradually, human society degenerates into something like an animal society. This requires the magistrate and governments to protect the weak. Unlike Tocqueville, Kuyper deemed public assistance to the disadvantaged groups a necessity given the human condition after the Fall, rather than a contemporary invention.

Unlike Tocqueville's perspective, which was somewhat influenced by Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau, Kuyper takes a more conservative stance influenced by principles from the Reformation.[53] He first points out that the gospel preached by Jesus connects with eternal joy and glory, transcending temporal existence. The "Social Question" reflects people's serious doubt about the soundness of social structures.[54] But the reason that human beings are classified into the rich and the poor is only due to sin.[55]

Furthermore, Kuyper highlights the role of the church when referring to the two levels of Jesus' teachings. The church has a threefold role, that is, the ministry of the Word, the ministry of charity, and "instituting the equality of brotherhood."[56] During the latter part of the Roman Empire, it was the church that reversed the decadent morals of society, as Kuyper comments,

> The contrast of abundance and scarcity was not erased, but extreme luxury no longer clashed so sharply with dire poverty. Man had not yet arrived at the point where he should be, but at least he was started along a better path; and had the church not gone astray from her simplicity and her heavenly ideal, the influence of the Christian religion on political life and social relationships would eventually have become dominant.[57]

In Kuyper's public theology, the church shapes social morale and institutions.[58] The survival and flourishing of a civilization depends on whether the church can fulfill its divine calling and mission.[59] Kuyper views the progress of European civilization as the Christianization of the continent.[60] However, as Christianity strayed from its identity and mission, Europe fell into a chaotic disintegration, which then led to its most severe outcome, the French Revolution. Kuyper thus concludes,

> The salt lost its savor, and social corruption regained its ancient strength—a corruption checked but not brought under control in the lands of the Reformation. And in those parts of Europe that remained Catholic, royal absolutism and aristocratic pride created conditions for the ripening of an unbearable social tension that eventually brought forth the French Revolution.[61]

Biographer James Bratt claims that Kuyper had a passionate concern for the poor partly out of fear that poverty and oppression might lead to violent turmoil like the French Revolution.[62] A self-identified "counter-revolutionary,"[63] Kuyper believed that this revolution brought forth a new worldview and value system that worsened social problems. According to the ideals of the French Revolution, all rights originated with the individual. The authority and rights of communities such as schools, churches, and other institutions were simultaneously weakened. Moreover, as the nature of this revolution was antireligious, it led to the separation of human beings from their eternal existence. The social question also arose from the huge gap between how Christianity and the French Revolution viewed social problems. As Kuyper points out, "[Christianity] … seeks personal human dignity in the social relationships of an organically integrated society. The French Revolution disturbed that organic tissue, broke those social bonds, and left nothing but the monotonous, self-seeking individual asserting his own self-sufficiency."[64] Kuyper sees the roles of intermediate organizations and the state as important in upholding order and morality.

The French Revolution forced the church to rethink its place in society.[65] By severing human beings from their eternal worth, Kuyper asserts, the Revolution proposed different theories and systems, which eventually and inevitably all led to the rule of currency. The Revolution produced "a deep-seated social need."[66] Human beings are forced to seek value in this earthly life, and social relationships also degenerate into the state of animal society, that is "dog eats dog."[67] Wealth and capital determine the status and relationships of human beings to society. Here Kuyper shares views similar to Tocqueville's:

> On the side of the bourgeoisie there was experience and insight, ability and association, available money and available influence. On the side of the rural population and the working class, which were destitute of knowledge and deprived of all resources, the daily need for food forced men to accept any condition, no matter how unjust.[68]

Kuyper then stresses the problem of "alienation." The lower class, especially workers, were treated like tools in such a social system.[69] Meanwhile, there was the bourgeoisie living in luxury and boasting about its lifestyle. The "false desire" for luxury goods trickled down to the lower class, undermining their "contentment."[70] Consequently, the relative standard of living was raised and even the poor display a "feverish passion for pleasure."[71]

Second, Kuyper posits that the Revolution actually created new forms of inequality despite trumpeting freedom and equality. It created a new category

of modern social problems characterized by unstable social structures that produced inequality and poverty worse than before. The Revolution also initiated humanistic and mechanistic social engineering to fulfill the needs of human beings. It undermined the nature of true humanity, that is, human beings living as interdependent and organic organisms.

Kuyper proposes that the humanism produced by the French Revolution that later birthed socialist movements sought to resolve social problems, especially poverty and inequality. Tocqueville's predictions in the 1830s became reality in Kuyper's time. By the end of the nineteenth century, socialist movements did become the dominant ideology. Kuyper also discusses five different ideological camps that emerged out of socialism, including nihilism, anarchism, social democracy, state socialism, and cynical pessimism.[72] Each of these at its core arose out of a concern for the social problems created by the French Revolution. Thus, they are all characterized by an antireligious attitude, for the root principle of the Revolution was not humanism, but rather a rebellion against God's rule and a will to establish human rule—"neither God, nor master."[73]

Kuyper's Solution

Kuyper believed that the goal of socialist movements was to establish the sovereignty of the people to solve social problems and specifically poverty. Socialism aims at reconstructing social structure via human means.[74] Therefore, Christianity and socialism are in principle polarized, although the Christian church serves as a "God-willed community, a living, human organism" which also plays an important role in shaping social structures.[75]

Like Tocqueville, Kuyper observes the moral dilemma of relying on public charity. On the one hand, social needs call out to people, and conditions of misery arouse people's compassion. On the other hand, the poor might misuse such assistance, corrupting their own character.[76] To resolve these problems, Kuyper proposes his well-known principle of "sphere sovereignty." God-ordained order should guide the working of social relationships in different spheres. Kuyper suggests that Christians who live in between the spheres of state and society should not make either of them an absolute sovereign entity. On the contrary, both realms are under the sovereignty of God.[77]

As Kuyper emphasizes in *Our Program*, "sovereignty in an absolute sense occurs only when there is an authority that has no other authority over it, that always commands and never obeys, that does not admit of restrictions or allow competition, and that is single and undivided for all that has breath."[78] Based on this understanding, Kuyper claims that socialist movements or other ideologies

can never solve social problems, for "the social question cannot be resolved rightly unless we respect this duality and thus honor state authority as clearing the way for a free society."[79] Human society is neither a mechanistic gathering of human beings nor atomized fragments. Rather, it is an organism with both individual freedom and interpersonal ties.

Kuyper believes that absolute ownership belongs only to God, and human beings are responsible to serve as faithful stewards. Since the French Revolution, people either defined property rights as private economic freedom or as belonging to the state in socialism. Both make the mistake of making property rights an absolute right in itself. Only when people acknowledge God's absolute ownership can they come to the realization that wealth is needed not just for self-fulfillment but also for the common good through service to others. This foundational principle also prevents the state from illegally abusing individual property. The state must also obey God's sovereignty and order, because "God's Word gives us firm ordinances-even for our national existence and our common social life.[80]

Kuyper further lays out how the family, the church, and the state should serve different roles in their different spheres. First, the family plays an important role in resolving poverty. Kuyper emphasizes that "the family is portrayed as the wonderful creation through which the rich fabric of our organic human life must live itself out.… We do not have to organize society; we have only to develop the germ of organization that God himself has created in our human nature."[81] Kuyper opposed the French Revolution and the socialist movements for their misplaced emphasis on individualism and its destructive influence on solidarity within the family.[82]

Family is important also because it is a resting place. As an individual worker is God's image-bearer, "he must be able to fulfill his calling as man and father,"[83] so he should be granted the right to work and the right to rest. Kuyper sees the right to rest as important because it is "a right especially important for the one whose work tends to pull him down to a material level."[84] Family life helps save workers from alienation. Kuyper further stresses that society should also realize that human beings are not machines. People will encounter days of sickness and aging when they would not be able to work. Families and society should provide for those daily needs, something that cannot be offered by extreme humanism.

Regarding the role of the state, Kuyper disagreed with many anarchists by affirming that the state exists outside of the family and society as a divinely ordained structure to preserve justice. There is no contradiction between the role of the state and that of society, because to the workers, "labor must also be allowed to organize itself independently in order to defend its rights."[85] Kuyper did not completely oppose redistribution by the state as Tocqueville did. Nevertheless,

Kuyper stressed that material assistance "should be confined to an absolute minimum," or else it would harm the dignity and natural resilience of workers.[86]

Finally, Kuyper highlights the role of the church in engaging social problems. Although both Tocqueville and Kuyper consider religion important for society, Tocqueville does not dwell on the role of the church in his writings on pauperism. It is only in his *Democracy in America* that Tocqueville mentions how the church could provide assistance as a nongovernment organization. In comparison, Kuyper thinks that spiritual values endow the poor with more dignity and joy in life. He also discusses the spiritual needs of the rich. Kuyper feels that it is God's calling for Christians "to place life eternal in the foreground for both rich and poor, and to do so with a gripping and soul-piercing earnestness."[87] Only when human beings realize the reality of eternal life can they appreciate the value of earthly living. Therefore, Kuyper posits that an important calling of the church is to make both rich and poor realize that there is such a thing as transcendental value, and that spiritual benefit is worth more than earthly welfare.

Kuyper further proposes measures within the church to bridge the gap between the rich and poor. First, love should lead to action, and by providing the poor with assistance, Christians are practicing Christlike love. Second, the sacrament of communion can serve as a way to grant the poor equal dignity with the rich. As Kuyper explains, "Just as rich and poor sit down with each other at the communion table, so also you feel for the poor man as for a member of the body, which is all that you are as well."[88] The symbolism of church communion serves real life functions that Tocqueville overlooked in only emphasizing the ideal that aristocrats and commoners enjoy equal dignity as members of the same social commonwealth. In comparison, Kuyper views the Lord's Supper in a tangibly unifying way. As James Bratt says, "class-conscious as [Kuyper] was, he took an integral view of human society as one body."[89]

Conclusion

We compare Tocqueville and Kuyper in how they treated poverty as a social problem in their contemporary societies. As social thinkers, they both observed poverty as a phenomenon embedded in unprecedented and inevitable structural changes in Europe following the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. As statesmen, they both spoke publicly about legal and private charity. As Christian thinkers, they discussed human dignity, morality, and social solidarity. Coming from different theological and political traditions, however, Tocqueville and Kuyper offered distinctive insights and proposed different solutions. Tocqueville warned that state legislation had worsened the situation, locking the poor into

perpetual poverty and causing them to lose freedom and dignity. Tocqueville pessimistically foresaw that the wealth gap would further radicalize mass movements for redistribution of property.

Kuyper stressed the causes and impact of the French Revolution. Even before the Revolution, human beings had been pulled into a ruthless process: With the strengthening of individual awareness of inequality, social structures were undergoing drastic changes. So, the Revolution was an outcome of such opposing forces. Not disapproving legal charity completely, Kuyper placed the role of the state into a God-ordained sphere of sovereignty. By framing human value and dignity according to an eternal perspective, Kuyper also proposed means within the church to foster solidarity between the rich and the poor.

In his attempt to resolve the problem of poverty, Tocqueville seemed to be more confined by his experience of French and British politics. He was pessimistic because he saw the expansion of state power in Europe as individual and nongovernment forces were receding. A sophisticated moralist, Tocqueville dialogued with legislators and policymakers,[90] and thus he was not theologically inclined to exclusively associating charity with Christianity. As Kahan claims, "Tocqueville was quite willing to forgo divine grace if he could get a Republic of Saints without it."[91] Religion is the admirable path to "human greatness."[92] In contrast, Kuyper grounded all things in God's absolute sovereignty and the transcendent value of spiritual benefits. He discussed extensively a topic that Tocqueville only slightly touched on—the Christian sacrament of communion. Serving as a powerful counterbalancing mechanism against inequality, this ritual makes poverty recede in the realm of eternal welfare. Kuyper's discussions center "the whole social question" on "the relationship between our human life and the material world."[93] As money has become the highest good, in struggling for it every man is set against every other, and the whole economic system eventually became "a kneeling before Mammon" while cutting off "the horizon of an eternal life."[94]

Nevertheless, Kuyper's proposals such as using communion as an equalizer or preaching eternal perspectives may still face realistic challenges in a pluralistic society where not everybody is a member of the Christian church. Even within the church, communion may take on different forms and interpretations that have frequently invited debates among Christians. Modern society in Kuyper's era had already evolved regions with differing degrees of secularism or pluralism. It thus remains a question of how practical Kuyper's solutions may be. Before Christians are able to present themselves as a unified body with regard to equality before God, is there a role for the state or other forms of authority? It might be helpful to consider Tocqueville's and Kuyper's prescriptions as mutually beneficial.

Notes

1. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 5.
2. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 31.
3. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 31.
4. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17.
5. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 54–55.
6. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 109–10.
7. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 106.
8. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 106.
9. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 106.
10. John Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001), 136–37.
11. Alexis De Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, trans. Seymour Drescher (London: Civitas, 1997).
12. Richard Swedberg, *Tocqueville's Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 126–27. Although Swedberg finds that Tocqueville has ignored the changes in these British laws, we do not engage with this aspect of Tocqueville's views.
13. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 19.
14. Here Tocqueville is obviously influenced by Rousseau. See Swedberg, *Tocqueville's Political Economy*, 137–38.
15. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 19–20.
16. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 21.
17. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 21.
18. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 22–23.
19. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 21.
20. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 21–22. Later, Veblen also proposes something similar to Tocqueville with a more detailed discussion. See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, ed. Martha Banta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

21. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 22.

22. See Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 95–107. For a more in-depth study, see Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 189–233.

23. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 24.

24. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 24.

25. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 24.

26. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pt. 1, chap. 3.

27. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pt. 2, chap. 18, 318.

28. Deirdre N. McCloskey, *Bourgeois Equality: How Ideas, Not Capital or Institutions, Enriched the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 507.

29. McCloskey, *Bourgeois Equality*, 23.

30. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 807–30.

31. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 25.

32. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 25.

33. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 26. Poverty in England received much attention from scholars at that time. Swedberg mentions Friedrich Engels, Seymour Drescher, and others. See Swedberg, *Tocqueville's Political Economy*, 129. See also John Barton, *Observations on the Circumstances which Influence the Condition of the Labouring Classes* (London: John & Arthur Arch, 1817).

34. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 33.

35. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 27.

36. Jennifer Dirmeyer, Paolo Revelo, and Walter E. Block, "Poverty, Dignity, Economic Development, and the Catholic Church," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 63–64.

37. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 33–34.

38. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 31.

39. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 30.

40. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 31.

41. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 34.

42. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 31.
43. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 31.
44. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 37.
45. Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: Les Sources Aristocratiques de la Liberté. Biographie Intelectuelle* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 52.
46. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 33.
47. Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, 36.
48. Abraham Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, ed. James W. Skillen (Sioux Centre, IA: Dordt College, 2011),
49. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 19–23. For a detailed discussion of the Netherlands in Kuyper's time, see John Halsey Wood, Jr., *Going Dutch in the Modern Age: Abraham Kuyper's Struggle for a Free Church in the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–35.
50. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 26.
51. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 24.
52. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 24.
53. Mark J. Larson, *Abraham Kuyper, Conservatism, and Church and State* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 4.
54. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 44.
55. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 30–31.
56. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 34.
57. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 35.
58. Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation*, 76, 89.
59. Halsey Wood, Jr., *Going Dutch in the Modern Age*, 48–55.
60. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 35–36.
61. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 36.
62. James Bratt, "Passionate about the Poor: The Social Attitudes of Abraham Kuyper," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 37
63. Abraham Kuyper, *Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto* (Bellingham, MA: Lexham Press, 2015), 1–2.
64. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 37–38.

65. Halsey Wood, Jr., *Going Dutch in the Modern Age*, 56–81.
66. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 39.
67. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 39.
68. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 39–40.
69. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 40.
70. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 41.
71. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 41.
72. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 49–50.
73. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 53.
74. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 54.
75. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 45–46.
76. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 55–56.
77. For the purposes of discussion in this article, it is not necessary to wade into the debate about just how large the role of government should be in Kuyper's approach. Some scholars, such as John Bolt, have argued that Kuyper was a strong proponent of a strictly limited state. Others, such as James W. Skillen, have argued that Kuyper's approach permits a wider latitude for state action. See Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation*; and Skillen, *In Pursuit of Justice: Christian-Democratic Explorations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).
78. Kuyper, *Our Program*, 16.
79. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 58.
80. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 61.
81. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 62.
82. Here Kuyper relates the family with immigration policies in the Netherlands. He thinks that since God calls human beings to multiply and subdue the earth, this does not mean that they all cram into a small area, but rather they should spread out. In populated areas, families and societies all face a series of problems related to human sinfulness. See Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 62.
83. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 63.
84. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 63.
85. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 64.

86. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 64–65.
87. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 66.
88. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 69.
89. James Bratt, "Passionate about the Poor," 41.
90. Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: Les Sources Aristocraticuqes de la Liberté Biographie Intellectuelle*, 165.
91. Alan S. Kahan, *Tocqueville, Democracy, and Religion*, 24.
92. Kahan, *Tocqueville*, 29.
93. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 19.
94. Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, 35.