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A Century of Christian Social Teaching: The Legacy of Leo XIII and Abraham Kuyper

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Looking back as we can now, at the end of the twentieth century, to the end of the nineteenth century, we are able to see much more clearly why the Christian social teachings of Abraham Kuyper and Leo XIII were themselves so insightful.[1] It is not just that the pope's *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 and the many other social encyclicals of his long and distinguished pontificate were words in season from and for a Catholic Church wracked by more than thirty-five years of revolution, strife over dogma, *Kulturkampf*, and local Italian crises. Nor was it only that Abraham Kuyper's great lecture in November 1891 on "The Social Problem and the Christian Religion" or his consideration of "Calvinism and Politics" in his 1898 Stone Lectures at Princeton offered what was, for Protestants in the 1890s, that rarest combination of sensitivity to the dispossessed with fidelity to a confession. It was not only, to repeat, that these were timely interventions. They were also prescient pronouncements. Their address to current events contained foundational reasoning that has been profitably extrapolated during the century that followed and in conditions and circumstances that no one in the 1890s could have foreseen. Of course, what Kuyper and the pope said was not flawless; each had his blindspots and his weaknesses. Nor was what they said complete; altered circumstances have created the need to say more than either could offer to their contemporaries. The main thing was that these two products of relatively insular personal experience nonetheless produced social thinking with nearly universal applicability that Christians in the twentieth century have neglected at their peril. Regrettably, Christian believers in our century have all too often neglected the insights that

these two, with the assistance of their colleagues, proclaimed a century ago. Yet, I think it is possible to specify some reasons that, instead of seeing further from the shoulders of these giants, we in the twentieth century have so often tumbled down from their heights. As a historian's way of interpreting their legacy, I am drawn to the actual contexts in which the pope and Kuyper spoke in the 1890s, and so these contexts provide the structure for this paper: Words in Season; Anchors for a Tumultuous Twentieth Century; Altered Christian Circumstances; Weaknesses; Characteristics of Faithful Christian Social Thought.

Words in Season

As learned academics who had mastered the rhetoric of formal discourse, Abraham Kuyper and Leo XIII produced stately prose. No one, reading *Rerum Novarum* or the Stone Lectures, would think that he had stumbled into *USA Today*. Yet, with hindsight, it is now clear that these documents were, in fact, as timely as a daily newspaper. The very week, for example, that *Rerum Novarum* was promulgated in May 1891, disgruntled American farmers gathered in Cincinnati for a meeting that led the following year to the establishment of the People's, or Populist Party. Their grievances were against the oligarchs of finance and railroading that had made the farming life all but unendurable; their platform exploited the apocalypticism of Protestant pietism to express their disillusionment with the myth of a better life on the western American frontier. Between 1881 and 1894 corn dropped from sixty-three cents a bushel to eighteen cents; wheat plummeted from a dollar nineteen to forty-nine cents. Over the same period, the number of people in the rural Midwest all the way from the Canadian border to the Rio Grande declined precipitously. In 1892, the Populist Party's candidate for President, James Weaver of Iowa, took over a million popular votes and won electoral votes from six Midwestern and Western states. Four years later, the Boy Orator of the Platte, William Jennings Bryan, galvanized the Democratic National Convention in Chicago with a populist appeal that Garry Wills has called "the greatest speech at any political convention"—

> If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of the nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not press

> down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.[2]

Everywhere crowding in upon the occasions when Kuyper and Leo spoke, were further signs of intense social unrest. On May 16, 1891, coverage of the promulgation of *Rerum Novarum* on the front page of the *New York Times* shared space with news of a strike and boycott by the Brewers and Malsters Union against Anheuser-Busch and of a strike by coal miners in Connelsville, Pennsylvania.[3] Later that same year in November, on the very day that Kuyper presented what was, in effect, a response to *Rerum Novarum* in his address to the first Christian Social Congress of the Netherlands, eight miners were killed in an explosion at the Susquehanna Coal Company mine in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania.[4]

The same pressure of events attended Kuyper's lectures at Princeton in 1898. Kuyper spoke six times between October 10 and October 22. On October 12, thirteen United Mine Workers on strike at Virden, Illinois, were killed when they rioted in protest against the owners' effort to replace them with African-American strikebreakers. Before Kuyper left the country in December, major strikes were begun by cotton workers in the South and shoemakers in New England.

A further dimension of "the social problem" was also pressing in upon the United States during Kuyper's visit in the last months of 1898. This dimension was the addition of race to class. While Kuyper was in Princeton, the United States took over Puerto Rico from Spain. In early November, Kuyper was between engagements in Chicago when eight African-Americans were killed during a race riot in Wilmington, North Carolina. In early December he had just brought an address at the Hartford Seminary Foundation when terms of the peace treaty to end the Spanish-American War were released. For a paltry recompense of twenty million dollars, the United States absorbed the Philippines. The great Spanish Empire, which had endured for more than four hundred years, was no more. In its place, with a new set of responsibilities as a world power, all of a sudden appeared the United States of America. The challenge, as President McKinley defined it, was daunting: "Spain has shown herself unfit to rule her colonies, and those [that] have come into our possession as a result of war, must be held, if we are to fulfill our destiny as a nation … giving them the benefits of a Christian civilization that has reached its highest development under our republican institutions."[5]

Leaders in such times were not laboring under imaginary pressure. The pope, in 1891, referred to "the conflict now raging" (n. 1); later that year,

Kuyper spoke of the shame that Calvinists of the Netherlands should feel at remaining silent for so long "in the face of so crying a need" (28). They were referring directly to European class struggles, but they could just as well have been speaking of conditions in North America as well as of expanding dilemmas throughout the developing world. They were not making things up. Their words arrived in the nick of time.

Anchors for a Tumultuous Twentieth Century

The greatness of Kuyper and Leo XIII, however, was not just their ability to read the signs of the times. Both also grounded their timely discourses on solid foundations that could stand the test of time. For later Protestants and Catholics, it was a very good thing that they did so. Much more than either could have foreseen, an epoch was opening that required the stability of enduring truth even more urgently than it required solutions to immediate problems. Their writings in the 1890s had to address contemporary concerns if they were to be heard then. But that these writings have continued to be read, even when considering the momentous political, religious, intellectual, and cultural trajectories that we now know were also in motion during the 1890s, is stunning testimony to their perspicacity. What, in fact, we can see now in retrospect is how publications, events, and personages from the 1890s were anticipating so many of the twentieth-century's signal crises.

To begin with, apparently trivial matters that nonetheless speak to modern revolutions in popular culture, in 1891, the same year that Leo and Kuyper addressed "the social problem," the zipper was invented, the Canadian James Naismith gave basketball to the world, and Thomas Edison applied for patents on devices related to what would later be known as radio and the movies. The founding, also in 1891, of the University of Chicago, the California Institute of Technology, and Rice University, anticipated a transformation of intellectual culture that in the twentieth century would have consequences nearly as momentous as the transformation of popular culture. In events anticipating developments of a more obviously lethal sort, while Kuyper was in the United States during the fall of 1898, Marie and Pierre Curie in Paris isolated radium. Earlier in the decade, with greater self-consciousness about the bellicose consequences of his research than the Curies could possibly have entertained, Alfred Thayer Mahan published *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (1890).

The 1890s witnessed as well a whole series of events or developments that created at most a ripple of interest at the time, but that we now can see were dark clouds, the size of a man's hand, looming on the horizon. On the very day in 1891 that Kuyper addressed the Dutch Social Congress, Russia stepped up legal harassment of the Jews.[6] That same month, Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov passed his law exam and continued to grieve for a beloved brother who had been executed shortly before for conspiring against Czar Alexander III. During 1898, while Kuyper was in the United States, peasants rioted in several places throughout Russia, and the All-Russian Social Democratic Labor Party held its first congress in Minsk; five years later at its second meeting in London it divided into two camps, the Menscheviks and the Bolsheviks. In 1898, Ulyanov (soon to be known as Lenin) was languishing in Siberian exile, while at the Russian Orthodox Seminary in Tiflis, authorities were berating Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili for spending more time reading Karl Marx than his lessons in theology. The next year they expelled him. Soon he took the name "Stalin." Throughout 1898, in the grade school of Linz, Upper Austria, the nine-year-old Adolf Hitler continued his nondescript academic career.

In the decade of the 1890s, a remarkable number of writings also appeared that in the twentieth century would function as weighty alternatives to the Christian reasoning proposed by Leo XIII and Abraham Kuyper. In only a partial list, tumbling after each other appeared Sigmund Freud's *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899); Friedrich Nietzsche's *Der Antichrist* (1895); Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Women and Economics* (1898) advocating financial independence for women; and Emile Durkheim's *Suicide* (1897) and *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895). Durkheim was, in part, responding to works from the new German school of sociology, which had already seen major publications by Ferdinand Tönnies and Georg Simmel and which would very soon be joined by the seminal essays of Max Weber. In Vienna, an entire intellectual culture was taking shape that in its rejection of both the Christian tradition and the newer certainties of the Enlightenment—in its definition of mankind as "condemned to recreate his own universe"—would anticipate the never-ending series of "modern" and "postmodern" constructions of the twentieth century. Joining Freud in that effort were the writers Arthur Schnitzler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the painters Gustav Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka, and the composer Arnold Schoenberg.[7] All of these important intellectual developments bore in some way upon "the social question"; all of them did so in self-conscious rejection of the Christian framework to which Kuyper and the pope applied.

During the 1890s, yet another raft of publications came from within church circles to challenge those like the pope and Kuyper who felt that the only true and truly useful Christianity is historic Christianity. These challenges were primarily varieties of modernism: George Tyrrell and Alfred Loisy among the Catholics; Washington Gladden's *Who Wrote the Bible?* (1891) for Americans; and Adolf von Harnack's *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1900), which rapidly became a best-seller in Europe and overseas. From the other end of the theological spectrum, works like R. A. Torrey's *What the Bible Teaches* (1898) and John Mason's *Why We Expect Jesus Now* (1893) were getting ever deeper into the Scriptures as a puzzle to be solved and so losing the ability to apply biblical reasoning to the lived problems of the era.

On this religious front, though, of course, Leo and Kuyper could not have known it, the 1890s were also doing something about reinforcements. On November 30, 1898, Kuyper paid a visit to President McKinley in the White House, whom he was troubled to find strangely indifferent to the lot of the Boers in South Africa. Had Kuyper been as omniscient as some of his followers thought he was, however, his disappointment with the president would have been tempered by his delight at the birth one day before, in St. Mark's parish, Dundellan, Belfast, of Clive Staples Lewis. For his part, Leo XIII would not have been surprised to learn that a generation coming of age in the 1890s would include some support for the kind of Christian reasoning he was developing in encyclicals on society, on the Sacred Heart, on the rosary, and on the condition of Catholic churches in many places around the world. He might, however, have started in surprise if he had realized that such reasoning would one day find its most impressive modern champion as at least a partial result of the maturing devotional lives of two ordinary teenagers in Poland (Poland!), Emilia Kaczorowska of Krakow and Karol Wojtyla of Wadowice, who would be married in 1904 and sixteen years later become parents to the most influential public Christian of the twentieth century.

The decade of the 1890s, in other words, was jammed with presentiments of the great world developments of our own century. Kuyper and the pope had only the foggiest notions of what we now realize was the world unfolding around them. Nonetheless, these very proceedings, Calvin College and Seminary along with their multiplied gifts to Christian thinking, a long line of profound Catholic social pronouncements, and much more are testimony to the enduring worth of what they wrote, which turned out to provide wisdom for an age as well as for a season.

Altered Christian Circumstances

Again from our perch at the end of the twentieth century, it is clear that harbingers of change that went well beyond Western society were appearing during the 1890s. That decade also revealed hints as to what would come during the twentieth century in the demography and geography of the Christian Church. To be sure, the pope and Kuyper were somewhat ahead of the times, even in their times. With his encyclicals directed to several South American countries and especially aimed at the eradication of slavery in Brazil, Leo XIII showed that he understood well the catholicity of his Roman Catholic Church. Likewise, Kuyper saw clearly, as he put it in 1891, that "the social need is a world problem. The social question has an *international* character" (79). Moreover, in his years in the Dutch parliament and as prime minister, Kuyper was at least partially successful in bringing normative Christian reasoning to bear on the management of Dutch colonies in the East Indies.[8]

More generally, Kuyper and Leo concentrated on the difficulties confronting the Church as they knew it in a primarily European setting, yet even as they did so, tremors beneath the surface in the structure of world Christianity during the 1890s, which they probably barely noticed, presaged the very different Christian world that has come into existence at the end of the twentieth century.

Not long before the pope and the future prime minister spoke out on "the social question" in 1891, a band of upstart Anglican missionaries stripped Samuel Ajayi Crowther of his episcopal duties in the Niger River region of West Africa. Crowther, the first African to become an Anglican bishop, seemed to the young recruits from Britain, a failure. The upstarts thought they could do better. Those who knew of this incident at the time probably saw it as further testimony to the parlous state of non-Western Christianity in the face of Western hegemony. They could not have been more wrong. Even as this dispute took place with Crowther, the tide had begun to surge the other way.[9] The first ordination of Kenyans to the Anglican ministry was taking place in East Africa (1885); in the Philippines the Gospel of Luke was being translated into Pangasinan (1887); the martyrs' blood of thousands of Catholics in Indonesia (1885) and of Protestants and Catholics in Uganda (1885) was sinking as seed into freshly plowed soil; the Nevius method of Bible training for the laity was being introduced into Korea (1890); and a Catholic hierarchy was being established in Japan (1891).

Between the promulgation of *Rerum Novarum* and the Stone Lectures, the Malagasy Protestant Church was founded as the first indigenous church in

Madagascar (1894), and a Christian revival began among Western and indigenous Madagascar churches that lasted for eighty years; the first Catholic missionaries entered the Central African Republic (1894) and Mali (1895); and African-Americans established the Lott Casey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention (1897).

Within eighteen months of Kuyper's departure from the United States, a wide array of events with world-historical significance took place. The Boxer revolt in China led to the death of two hundred missionaries and nearly fifty thousand Chinese Christians (the vast majority of them, Roman Catholic) and in so doing contributed to the divine alchemy that by the end of this century produced a situation where, on any given Sunday, there are more Christian believers worshiping in the People's Republic of China than in all of Western Europe. The first Roman Catholic missionaries entered Upper Volta. William Wade Harris was receiving instruction from Methodists and Episcopalians that would later shape his remarkable leadership of a quasi-indigenous Christian movement in Liberia, the Ivory Coast, and elsewhere in West Africa. Students at the Topeka Bible College in Kansas spoke in tongues. William Seymour was "sanctified" at a meeting of the International Apostolic Holiness Union and yet continued his restless quest for the full manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that would bring him to leadership at the Azusa Street Pentecostal revival in Los Angeles in 1906. Solomon Plaatje (1876–1932), after training in a Lutheran Missionary School, discovered his talents as a writer while recording the resistance of the South African Boers to the British; this was a talent he later put to use in helping to found the African National Congress and in writing an important book, *Native Life in South Africa Before and Since the European War* (1916), that used Christian principles to protest the South African Native Land Act of 1913. In India, by the end of the 1890s, Vedanayakam Samuel Azariah (1874–1945) had embarked on missionary work in Tinnevelly that would lead eventually to his appointment as the first Indian Bishop of the Anglican Church.

The Christian world, in other words, was deep into the kind of renovating structural change it had experienced only three or four times before, when the faith as shaped by one set of cultural experiences was being reshaped by its transit into a different set of cultural circumstances. As a result of trends already at work in the 1890s, world Christianity would soon mean not so much Western Christians evangelizing the non-West but non-Western Christians evangelizing the West.

The movement was underway that saw the number of Christians quadruple over the course of the twentieth century (which means, among other things,

that there have lived more people affiliated with Christian churches since 1950 than in all times before 1950). That movement also witnessed a dramatic rise in the proportion of affiliated Christians living outside the West: in Asia from four percent to seventeen percent; in Africa from two percent to seventeen percent; and in Latin America from thirteen percent to twenty-five percent.[10]

The reality of the world Christianity that was coming into existence even as the pope and Kuyper addressed Europe's "social question" posed two major difficulties for the Christian thinking that they promoted. The first was that the practices of the Church would be transformed by the globalization of Christianity. To a certain extent, the very nature of the Church would change over the course of the twentieth century as the dynamics of the Southern hemisphere overtook the traditions of Europe. Both Kuyper and Leo were still Constantinians of a sort, but Constantinianism was not an option for the burgeoning churches of twentieth-century Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The situation of the newer churches and the realities that these newer churches bring to world Christianity, have been well-summarized by Lamin Sanneh in a recent essay on Africa when he speaks of, "the transition from a territorial, scholastic Church of the medieval period to evangelical, voluntarist forms of the religion, from the concordat approach to mission to Independency and personal lay agency, and from metropolitan *assimilados* to vernacular translation and rural empowerment."[11] For nineteenth-century social teaching to work in this new Christian world, it would be necessary to find equivalent terms for the traditional understanding of the Church that Kuyper and the pope brought to their analyses of society.

The second problem concerns the settings within which the Church functions in society. Kuyper and the pope depicted a threefold contest for the minds and hearts of public actors: full-orbed Christianity versus socialism versus liberalism. Much of the power of their work derives from their attractive picture of the ways that a Church-anchored social policy preserved the dignity of God and the well-being of humans in ways that neither the varieties of socialism nor the plans of individualistic liberalism could. At the end of the twentieth century, with our eyes drawn out to the global reaches of Christianity, it is obvious that we need careful understanding of more than socialism and liberalism. Probably a majority of the Christians in the world today live in situations where, beside being affected by socialistic and liberal aspirations, they are also affected by two circumstances that Kuyper and Leo did not stress. These circumstances are ethnic tribalism and the global financial economy. Kuyper and Leo focused on politics as a function of nations. A majority of the world Christians today are as much affected by tribal ethnic conditions and by

the IMF as they are by nations as such. One could suggest that tribalism is a special brand of all-encompassing State socialism, and the modern economy a global extension of individualistic liberalism. But to do so, stretches the categories that Kuyper and Leo used beyond recognition. To be relevant in the twenty-first century, their Christian social teaching would have to provide answers for, not only new ways of experiencing the Church but also for crises defined by ethnic cleansing, dependency theory, and international debt.

The remarkable, nearly staggering, reality is that, although Kuyper and Leo could not have foreseen the way the twentieth century developed for either the Church or world politics, what they said in the 1890s still offers solid foundations for dealing with the twentieth-century's new ecclesiastical and global circumstances. I think it is possible to specify why their teaching still continues to work despite altered circumstances, but before trying to do so, it is pertinent to record weaknesses in their thought. Compared to strengths, these weaknesses are nugatory, but where, except at a conference on Kuyper and Leo, could one expect to start a discussion on such matters?

Weaknesses

From my vantage point, Kuyper and Leo both suffered the vices of their virtues. Kuyper's great strength was to reason on the basis of principles. Leo's great strength was to bring Catholic tradition into active dialogue with modern problems. At least, for some matters, however, Kuyperian principialism and Roman traditionalism could be too much of a good thing.

The day that Kuyper spoke on the social question in November 1891, the Italian premier, the Marquis di Ridini, also made a speech in which he reaffirmed the policy by which Italy had appropriated the papal estates and underscored his judgment that the papacy should forget about its lost property and stick to spiritual affairs. In response, Leo prepared what news reports called "a sharp note in reply."[12] For whatever it is worth, my own judgment is that Leo rescued the papacy from the parlous condition into which it had been brought by his predecessor, Pius IX. There is conservatism, and then there is conservatism. As a Protestant, but also simply as a Christian, one can argue that Pius IX's 1854 personal definition of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, his promulgation of the Syllabus of Errors from 1864, and his thrusting of papal infallibility onto the Church in 1870 were all mistakes. Leo, without, of course, repudiating these actions, largely abandoned Pius's embattled spirit. His efforts at reaching out to the scientific community, at opening the Vatican archives to historians, at promoting fuller study of the Scriptures, and at regu-

larizing relations between the Vatican and the French republic, all represented actions that balanced conservative tradition with savvy understanding of the world in which he lived. On a few matters, however, Leo retained something of his predecessor's susceptibility for overkill: For example, in the tone of his 1896 repudiation of the possibility of Anglican orders, in certain implications concerning religious liberty in his 1899 encyclical against "Americanism," and above all, in his decision to live as a prisoner in the Vatican while working to recover the papal estates. These actions represented, in Jaroslav Pelikan's phrase, traditionalism as the dead faith of the living, rather than tradition as the living faith of the dead.[13]

For Kuyperians, principialism became dangerous when it was exported to Africa and entangled with race. During his Stone Lectures, Kuyper himself spoke about the desirability, as he put it, "of the mingling of blood,"[14] but also during his American trip, as Peter Heslam has shown, Kuyper spoke a great deal about essential affinities between Calvinism and Dutch national character, about how in 1898 the United States was joining a long, Dutch tradition of battling the Spanish, about his pride that "two men of Dutch blood" were contending for governorship of New York in that fall's election, and about the essential Calvinist leaven that had made both Holland and the United States singularly blessed.[15] Such archly romantic organicism was relatively harmless in Kuyper's Dutch context, but I follow the writings of Irving Hexham and Andrè du Toit in concluding that it became malignant when transported to South Africa.[16] According to these scholars, there was no Calvinist ideology of Afrikaner nationalism before the Dopper minister (Reformed Church or *Gereformeerde Kerk*) S. J. du Toit imported Kuyper's principal reasoning and his notions of sphere sovereignty in the 1870s and 1880s. Kuyper should not be blamed for applications of his thought for which he did not approve. But his great stress on principle—his ferocious determination always to reason, as he put it in 1891, by first taking up "the general ideas that give shape and color to our entire conception of life" (64)—bore evil fruit when certain Kuyperians concluded that a *verzuiling* (or pillarization) of race could be built upon Kuyper's principial reasoning about the sovereignty of spheres. The point that Kuyper, as a believer in the Incarnation, unduly neglected was that context sometimes should be allowed to sway principle.

For Leo and Kuyper together, one further weakness must be mentioned. That weakness was to stop analysis and simply react when confronted with the word *socialism*. It was not a mistake to defend Christian alternatives against political theories that gave States or governments the kind of sovereignty that God alone deserved. It was a mistake to assume that everything

labeled "socialistic," "radical," or even "social democratic" postulated such a sovereign view of the State. Kuyper's principialism, which caused him to link all forms of socialism to the atheism of the French Revolution, as well as to Leo's traditionalism, which caused him to define socialism as organized anti-clericalism, blinded them to what in the 1890s they should have seen.

What they should have realized was that a very impressive but also very diverse, array of Christian thinkers were, in the 1890s, attempting to reason about the social question in ways that provided a significant role for the State. Imagine, if you can, the sort of Leftist or at least radically tinged colloquium that could have been assembled from within the bosom of the Church during the 1890s to discuss *Rerum Novarum* or the Stone Lectures.

Let us start with two Roman Catholic Cardinals: Patrick Moran who in the mid-1890s supported the formation of the Australian Labor Party;[17] and, even more important, Henry Edward Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, who successfully mediated the great London Dock Strike of 1889 and who, a few years earlier, had intervened with the Vatican on behalf of Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore to prevent Leo XIII from condemning the Knights of Labor.[18] Then add the Anglican Bishop and distinguished Bible scholar, Brooke Foss Westcott, a mediator of the Durham Coal Strike of June 1892 that put nearly one hundred thousand people out of work and also a founder of the Christian Social Union that carried on some of the Christian socialism of F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley.[19] The British delegation to our imaginary meeting should also include Keir Hardy, the leading spirit behind Britain's Independent Labor Party, who was converted in 1878 (probably at a Moody-Sankey meeting) and who claimed that he took his socialism from the Sermon on the Mount.[20] It should also include William Booth, who in 1890 had published his landmark tract, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*. Booth was no socialist but as the leader of the Salvation Army he headed the most radically self-giving Christian social movement of his day. It would be well also to include the young G. K. Chesterton, whose deep suspicion of socialism and liberal paternalism rivaled that of Leo and Kuyper, but whose quixotic promotion of distributism showed a prescient fear of the costs to common people of giant capitalism.[21]

From the continent should come Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt, who, at Bad Boll promoted a welter of pietistic and social-welfare projects, who honored his father Johann Christoph's Kuyperian motto "Jesus Ist Sieger," and who, in 1900, entered the Württemberg Diet as a Social Democrat. Karl Barth was only a teenager in the 1890s, but perhaps he could have provided reasons for later joining the German Social Democratic Party.[22] It would be nice to

think that such a gathering could also include the ghost of Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, Catholic Bishop of Mainz from 1850, member of the Reichstag in 1871–1872, a vigorous opponent of Bismark, but also a vigorous proponent of governmental action for social welfare.[23]

From America it would have been good for Europeans to hear from Walter Rauschenbusch, most prominent spokesperson for the American Social Gospel, who spent most of the decade of the 1890s pastoring a German Baptist Church near "Hell's Kitchen" in New York City; from Frances Willard, who, as leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, was the most effective American social reformer of her era and who was leaning toward Christian socialism at the end of her life; and from George Monro Grant (1835–1905), Principal of Queen's College, Ontario, who, even as a distinguished Presbyterian, promoted a distinctly Canadian version of the Social Gospel.

A colloquium made up of such guests would have been chaotic, but the chaos would not have entirely obscured the fact that the people I have mentioned shared three things: First, all of them could be found in the moderate middle or even at the conservative end of the era's theological spectrum. Second, all of them had lived in close contact, some for many years, with human beings whose daily existence was imperiled by the social Darwinistic effects of the Industrial Revolution. Third, none of them were afraid to explore Socialist or social democratic solutions with deliberately Christian reasoning.

It is entirely justified to conclude that, when Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* spoke of "the cruelty of men of greed, who use human beings as mere instruments for money-making" (n. 42), he was not condemning capitalism per se. It is likewise justified to conclude that the failure of Stalinism and other atheistic State-socialisms in the twentieth century should not be taken as a complete falsification of the points that Christian social democrats in the 1890s could have made to Leo and to Kuyper. If a person claims that capitalism can coexist with the deepest Christian values (as, in fact, I do), then a person should be willing to listen as such social democrats explain how a larger role for the State can coexist with the deepest Christian values.

It is clearer now in 1998 than it was in 1989 at the point of collapse of State-Communist regimes that mere markets and freedom by itself cannot revive economic life and restore societies. A wide range of commentators seem now to agree that for these goals to be reached it will take markets *with morality*, enterprise *with ethics*, opportunity *with responsibility* to nurture an improved economic and social life.

Those points of agreement on the general shape of an appropriately healthy society bring us back to Abraham Kuyper and Leo XIII. Even if they blinked

when confronted by the Christian claims of Social Democrats, their steady gaze on almost everything else meant that the legacy of their social teaching is as vital and fresh today as it was a century ago.

Characteristics of Faithful Christian Social Thought

The characteristics that Leo and Kuyper shared as Christian social thinkers single them out as especially wise teachers. Very good reasons exist, in other words, why, by at least one count, there were more centennial celebrations around the world in 1991 for *Rerum Novarum* than there were bicentennial celebrations in 1989 for the French Revolution.[24] There also very good reasons to explain why, if at the end of the twentieth century there exists an intellectual revival among evangelical Protestants, it is substantially because of Kuyper's inspiration as mediated through several generations of faithful American Kuyperians. It would be possible to quote at length from their social teachings in the 1890s to support each of the following assertions, but even a brief summary will be enough to show why the social teaching of Abraham Kuyper and Leo XIII still recommends itself, both to the West in which they lived as well as to the farthest reach of the globe where the Church now reaches.

Kuyper and Leo shared an eagerness to treat subjects such as labor, class, poverty, wealth, and the nature of the State as first-order theological issues. Too often in the twentieth century, Christian believers have failed to live up to that standard. In our self-congratulatory piety we become docetists, unable to see that following the Incarnate Christ *ipso facto* entails the necessity of thinking deeply about the God-ordained character of social life. Unlike many who followed them, Leo and Kuyper did not drop Christ out of Christian politics, and the difference it made in what they wrote was, in every sense of the word, profound.

Leo and Kuyper shared an eagerness not only for theologizing about "the social question" but also for bringing the weight of sturdy theological traditions into that study. For Leo, it was the vigorous Thomism he had done so much to promote earlier in his pontificate. For Kuyper, it was the great themes of Calvinism as he understood them at the end of the Dutch nineteenth century. The Thomistic and the Calvinistic inheritances did not yield identical, or even compatible, social-political conclusions, but they yielded sturdy positions with *gravitas* that could be acted upon, debated, and strengthened. By

contrast, a lack of historical sense has come close to crippling the social witness of many twentieth-century Protestants, and, I suspect, the same could be said about some post-Conciliar Catholics as well.

Kuyper and Leo shared an ability to promote piety along with social understanding. The fact that Leo published *Octobri Mense*, an encyclical on the Rosary, only four months after *Rerum Novarum*, and that Kuyper regularly wrote devotional columns for his newspapers throughout his long, political career suggests that neither teacher separated life into artificially closed compartments. There have been a few such ones in the twentieth century who have combined such winsome piety and such rigorous social commitment—in that number, I include Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, and Ronald Sider, the Anabaptist conscience of American evangelicals. But there have not been many. Those who look for a revival of Christian social thinking would do well to pray as well for a revival of Christian devotion, for the two—or so we are taught by the subjects of this conference—may be more intimately linked than most of us realize.[25]

Leo and Kuyper shared a belief that, to promote a healthy society, it was necessary for the Church to play a large role. Of course, their ecclesiologies were not the same, and so they differed on the exact tasks that the Church should perform, but they were united in believing that the Church as a visible manifestation of Christ on earth had a social business to take care of. Protestant churches in the United States, whether evangelical or mainline, specialize in the grand denominational pronouncement, but this is not the kind of ecclesiastical involvement that Kuyper and Leo had in mind. They were concerned, rather, that the Church exert a Christian *presence* in its corporate and distributed activities. Kuyper put the matter bluntly in his 1891 address: "All State relief for the poor is a blot on the honor of your Savior" (78). Kuyper's statement concerned much more the actions of those who claim to honor Christ than it did the actions of the State. He was saying that if, as a Christian you complain about Big Government but are not deeply involved in your church's effort to meet the social needs of the poor, you should shut up.

Kuyper and Leo shared a concern for the range of human institutions between the level of the State and the level of the individual, and also a belief that these institutions were ordained by God and could be exploited for both the glory of God and the good of humanity. Leo's defense of workingmen's associations sparked a flurry of such institutions around the world. Throughout the twentieth century, doughty bands of Kuyperians have persisted in the quixotic-looking effort to form Christian labor unions. Such efforts, and other attempts at strengthening mediating structures in education, health care,

business, recreation, and other spheres of life, may seem risible when ranged against the juggernaut of government and the cornucopia of opportunities for personal fulfillment in our world. The Italian pope and the Dutch prime minister might agree with that assessment but also remind us of the story of the five small, smooth stones.

Leo and Kuyper shared a rejection of the notion of an omnicompetent State, but they also recognized a positive place for State action under certain conditions. Their wisdom in such matters is the subject for many of the papers presented at this conference. Suffice it to say here that neither of them promoted extremism of the Right or the Left, which meant that neither held the Christian faith hostage in the way that so many "culture Christians" have so often done over the course of the twentieth century and, by no means, only in Germany's Third Reich.

Kuyper and Leo shared a genuine concern for the working poor. This is where their responses to "the social question" began, and this is where their legacy to future generations continues. The ironies in Christian attention to the poor have been noted many times, especially the irony that sees the Christian faith act successfully to boost its adherents out of poverty only to have these same ones, or their middle- and upper-class descendents, forget the poor. Leo and Kuyper offered a better way—as their own eminence grew, so did their identification with the poor. They have had many imitators in the twentieth century, but not enough.

As a last commonality, Leo and Kuyper shared a commitment to the Christian observance of Sunday as a source of social well-being as well as of Christian devotion. Many twentieth-century Christians, even those with strong sabbatarian traditions, have forgotten this reality. One who did not is Leo's successor in the papal chair. Only this May in his apostolic letter, *Dies Domini*, John Paul II reiterated one of the reasons that his predecessor and Abraham Kuyper had been champions of a Christian Sunday:

> It should not be forgotten that even in our own day work is very oppressive for many people, either because of miserable working conditions and long hours, especially in the poorer regions of the world, or because of the persistence in economically more developed societies of too many cases of injustice and exploitation of man by man. When, through the centuries, she has made laws concerning Sunday rest, the Church has had in mind above all the work of servants and workers, certainly not because this work was nay less worthy when compared to the spiritual requirements of Sunday observance, but rather because it needed greater regulation to lighten its

> burden and thus enable everyone to keep the Lord's Day holy. In this matter, my predecessor Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* spoke of Sunday rest as a worker's right which the State must guarantee.[26]

Many pressures work against the Sunday ideal upheld by the popes and Kuyper. The cause of Christ in the world demands that they be resisted.

Cardinal Manning, whose engagement with the London poor contributed materially to the writing of *Rerum Novarum*, once sent a fellow Catholic bishop to tour the work of the Salvation Army because Manning wanted his colleague to catch a sense of the great work the Army was accomplishing among those whom everyone else despised. The bishop returned to tell Manning that he thought the Army was using its philanthropic efforts only as a front for proselytizing. When Manning disagreed, his colleague responded that he was not interested in philanthropy per se, that he was interested in souls rather than bodies, that he did not love the world for its own sake. Manning's reply not only silenced his colleague but showed why the Army's work had to be commended and why the social theory of Kuyper and the pope were such excellent theology. To his colleague, Manning replied with sardonic simplicity: "God so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son—but that is a detail."[27] With Manning, Abraham Kuyper and Leo XIII knew that the Incarnation of the divine Son and all the saving work of God flowing from that Incarnation established *prima facie* reasons for treating the social question as a first-order theological concern, for looking upon society as an arena in which to promote the kingdom of God, and for believing that the Church had an important message *beyond* its doors as well as *within* its doors. So, too, should we.

Notes

1. For texts, I have used *Rerum Novarum*, in *The Papal Encyclicals, 1878–1903*, ed. Claudia Carlen (New York: Consortium, 1981), 241–61; Abraham Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty* (originally, "The Social Problem and the Christian Religion," 1891), ed. James W. Skillen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); and Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, the 1898 Stone Lectures (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931). For assistance in studying Kuyper, I am pleased to acknowledge a long-standing debt to Richard Mouw, a more recent debt to John Bolt, and a literary debt to James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); and Peter S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). For awareness of Leo

and his work, I am indebted to a Richard John Neuhaus and George Weigel, eds., *Being Christian Today: An American Conversation* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1992); and also to the writings of John Molony, *The Worker Question: A New Historical Perspective on Rerum Novarum* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1991); and "The Making of *Rerum Novarum*, April 1890–May 1891," in *The Church Faces the Modern World: Rerum Novarum and Its Impact*, eds. Paul Furlong and David Curtis (Hull, England: Earlsgate Press, 1994), 27–40.

2. William Jennings Bryan, "Speech Concluding Debate on the Chicago Platform," in *The First Battle: The Story of the Campaign of 1896* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey, 1896), 206; Garry Wills, *Under God: Religion and American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 67.
3. *New York Times*, 16 May 1891.
4. Ibid., 9 November 1891.
5. Bernard Bailyn, et al., *The Great Republic: A History of the American People* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1977), 992.
6. *New York Times*, 1 November 1891.
7. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980), xxix.
8. That Kuyper operated above the moral norm for European imperialism of his period seems to be the conclusion of Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands and the Rise of Modern Imperialism: Colonies and Foreign Policy, 1870–1902* (New York: Berg, 1985), 159–64, 317–20.
9. Chronological help is mostly from David Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 29–30.
10. David Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1997," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21 (January 1997): 25.
11. Lamin Sanneh, "Christianity: Missionary Enterprise," *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*, ed. John Middleton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997), 288–97, quotation 297.
12. *New York Times*, 10 November 1891, 1.
13. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 65.
14. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 37.
15. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 156, 70, 74–78.

16. Irving Hexham, "Dutch Calvinism and the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism," *African Affairs* 79 (April 1980): 195–208, esp. 201–4; *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism Against British Imperialism* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1981), 186–87; Andrè du Toit, "No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology," *American Historical Review* 88 (1983): 20–52; "Puritans in Africa? Afrikaner 'Calvinism' and Kuyperian Neo-Calvinism in Late Nineteenth-Century South Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27 (1985): 209–40, especially 228–34; and "South Africa: The Construction of Afrikaner Chosenness," in *Many Are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism*, eds. William R. Hutchison and Hartmut Lehmann (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 115–40, especially 126–29.

17. Roger C. Thompson, *Religion in Australia: A History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 37–38.

18. Vincent Alan McClelland, *Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence, 1865–1892* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 140–60. See also Molony, *The Worker Question*, 22: "Manning's fundamental argument was that, when the rights of the workers were not respected by the employers, and when the workers were unable to defend themselves, the State was bound to intervene."

19. Arthur Westcott, *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, abridged ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1905), 331–42.

20. Ian McLean, *Keir Hardie* (New York: St. Martin's, 1975), 11, 164–65.

21. A good discussion of the slippery subject of Chesterton's distributism is found in Margaret Canovan, *G. K. Chesterton: Radical Populist* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 81–96.

22. *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914–1925*, trans. James D. Smart (Richmond: John Knox, 1964), 28: 5 February 1915: "I have now become a member of the Social Democratic Party. Just because I set such emphasis, Sunday by Sunday, upon the last things, it was no longer possible for me personally to remain suspended in the clouds above the present evil world but rather it had to be demonstrated here and now that faith in the Greatest does not exclude but rather includes within it work and suffering in the realm of the imperfect."

23. Erwin Iserloh, "Die soziale Frage," in *Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler—sein Kampf, Freiheit und soziale Gerechtigkeit* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1987), 8–11, a reference I owe to Mary Noll.

24. Emile Poulat, "Rèflexions sur un Centenaire," in *The Church Faces the Modern World*, 21. Poulat's own judgment is noteworthy: "*Rerum Novarum* est, en 1891,

le premier document de grande ampleur et d'indiscutable autoritè consecrè ‡ la 'question sociale,' trës prècisèment 'la condition ouvriëre,' par une … glise chrètienne."

25. For a modern example of a Kuyperian who combines great skill in social analysis with forthright piety, note the authorship by Richard J. Mouw of both "Some Reflections on [Kuyper's] Sphere Sovereignty," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 19 (1998): 160–82.

26. *Dies Domini*, n. 66.

27. McClelland, *Cardinal Manning*, 19.