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The English Kuyper and the Dutch Maurice

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Abstract. This paper seeks to recast the English Christian socialist F. D. Maurice as a sort of “English Kuyper,” arguing that his sometimes-puzzling relationship to the first wave of English Christian socialism can be clarified by understanding all of his thought and action to be animated by his own “architectonic critique” of society. Conversely, this reading of Maurice helps us understand his influence on the Dutch Neo-Calvinist theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper, who cited and recommended Maurice’s *Social Morality*. In particular, this paper explores common ground between the two figures in (1) their respective architectonic critiques of society, (2) their support for organized labor, and (3) their understanding of the social role of Christian education. In this light, the paper concludes with a consideration of private property and stewardship in both Maurice and Kuyper.

Keywords: F. D. Maurice, Abraham Kuyper, Christian socialism, Neo-Calvinism

[M]y business ... is not to build, but to dig, to show that economy and politics ... must have a ground beneath themselves, that society is not to be made anew by arrangements of ours, but is to be regenerated by finding the law and ground of its order and harmony the only secret of its existence in God.

F. D. Maurice (1884, 2:137)

For all our condemnation of the rotting structure of our society, we are never to help erect any structure other than one that rests on the foundation laid by God.

Abraham Kuyper (2021d, 215)

1. Introduction¹

In the midst of the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century and in the face of sweeping cultural upheaval sprung from the French Revolution, one theologian and pastor offered an alternative to liberalism and radical socialism in the pages of academic tomes and newspapers,

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2023 Kuyper Conference at Redeemer University in Hamilton, ON. My thanks to those present for their helpful feedback. I’m also grateful for the suggestions of two anonymous reviewers.

in social activism and organization, in the founding of a new institution of higher education, and through preaching and Bible studies. He grounded all of these activities in his own architectonic critique of society, tracing the foundations laid and the boundaries drawn by God himself, upon which basis—and no other—the struggles of the working classes, the “social question,” as it came to be called, could peacefully be resolved. Not only individual Christians, but also the institutional Church and its ministers could neither be neutral, nor could they simply tolerate, much less baptize, the status quo. “Our Church,” he wrote, “must apply herself to the task of raising the poor into men; she cannot go on ... treating them merely as poor” (Maurice 1996a, 10). The man I am describing is, of course, the Anglican theologian and minister, and founder of Christian socialism in England, F. D. Maurice (1805–72). However, one could certainly be forgiven for thinking I meant the Dutch Neo-Calvinist theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). The parallel, admittedly at the risk of equivocation, is intentional.

The place of Maurice in the first wave of Christian socialism in Britain, from 1848–1854, has perplexed many scholars. John C. Cort (1988, 139–52) acknowledges Maurice’s importance in founding the movement along with fellow Church of England minister Charles Kingsley (1819–75) and the young barrister J. M. Ludlow (1821–1911). Yet one gets the sense that Cort would rather not call Maurice a socialist at all, due to Maurice’s conservative opposition to so many of his younger colleagues’ proposals for organization, activism, and reform (see also Morris 2005, 133–4). Edward Norman (1987, 14–33), furthermore, accuses Maurice of having a divided mind on liberal political economy, leading him too often seemingly to defend the status quo that other Christian socialists sought to dismantle.² And many rightly note that Maurice deserves as much credit for ending, as he does for founding, the first wave of British Christian socialism (see Morris 2005, 144; Cort 1988, 151; Christensen 1962, 364–6; Reckitt 1947, 91–2). Yet these accounts often claim or at least imply a disjunction in Maurice’s thought and action that, while possible, seems unlikely for such a nuanced and subtle thinker.³ This paper therefore proposes that casting Maurice as an English Kuyper—in the sense that his social activism grew from his own architectonic critique of society—could

² Maurice’s relationship to classical political economy is complicated. He admired, though not uncritically, Adam Smith, and he was a friendly acquaintance of John Stuart Mill. But he rejected Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism and viewed competition as inherently selfish and, thus, sinful. To what extent his complaints about competition are directed at economic theory or rather harmful business practices in his own day is not clear. For a discussion of Maurice’s relation to Smith in particular, see Pahman (2023b).

³ Niebuhr (1951, 220) stands out for making an effort to treat Maurice with greater coherence, noting that his “work is so variously assessed that judgments about its profundity and comprehensiveness are always balanced by references to its mistiness, confusion, and fragmentariness. Yet Maurice’s influence is pervasive and permeative. He is above all a Johannine thinker, who begins with the fact that the Christ who comes into the world comes into his own, and that it is Christ himself who exercises his kingship over men, not a viceregent—whether pope, Scriptures, Christian religion, church, or inner light—separate from the incarnate Word.” He later refers to Maurice as “the most consistent of [cultural] conversionists” (Niebuhr 1951, 224).

enliven Maurice scholarship and help to resolve these perplexities, better tying together his Christian socialism to his broader theological project across his entire career.

Building upon this Kuyperian reading of Maurice, this paper will use it conversely to augment our understanding of Kuyper's own explicit appreciation for Maurice in particular, as well as other Christian socialists. Joost Hengstmengel (2021) convincingly argued that Kuyper's views on political economy fall more in line with the German Historical school of economics than liberal political economy or socialism, the latter of which Kuyper had greater familiarity with the primary sources than of the former.⁴ In 1958, Abraham Zeegers (2021) even argued that Kuyper's economic vision better fit with the German social market economy engineered by West German chancellor Ludwig Wilhelm Erhard and the ordoliberal economists Walter Eucken and Wilhelm Röpke, rather than the Keynesian interventionism ascendent at the time. But there is still a greater story to be told in terms of Kuyper's relation to Christian socialism in particular. As Peter Heslam (2022, 77) noted, Kuyper's

interest in Maurice was long-standing. In a letter to ... Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876) in 1873, Kuyper wrote, "Do you know *Social Morality*, by F. D. Maurice? In my opinion, it is a lovely and excellent book that we ought to have translated." The following year he published an article and a feuilleton to Maurice in *De Standaard*.

In these articles, Kuyper (1874a-e; 1875a-d) comments on the second edition of Maurice's *Social Morality*, published in 1872, claiming that while socialists have rejected him, Dutch Christians would welcome Maurice and the anti-revolutionaries would see him as one of their own. Kuyper summarizes and praises what I herein call Maurice's architectonic critique of society centering on the family, then the nation, then humanity.⁵ In a series of 1880 articles on "The Family, Society, and the State," Kuyper (2022c) even claimed that the idea of the family household as the root of society originated not with Maurice but with his own Anti-Revolutionary movement, writing, "The only thing that Frederick Maurice in particular did was to present with intellectual rigor and powerful prose what had already been surmised in our broad circle of kindred spirits before he ever sat down and composed his lectures on *Social Morality*." The articles cited by Heslam do contain some biographical details of Maurice, but it does not appear that Kuyper interacted with any other of his works than *Social Morality*. While Kuyper's own engagement with the social question in the Netherlands importantly differed from Maurice by being more democratic and more open to political action and organization, clear common ground can be found in (1) their respective architectonic critiques of society, (2) their common support for organized labor, and (3) the important role of Christian higher education in their understanding of social reform.

⁴ I have furthermore argued that Kuyper, as was still common in the nineteenth century, did not conceive of a clear distinction between economics and ethics, though his understanding of sphere sovereignty might constructively be appropriated to negotiate their relation today (Pahman 2016). For a brief overview of the social-ethical principles underlying Kuyper's economic views, see Bratt (2013, 225-8).

⁵ My thanks to Michael Douma with his help with Kuyper's Dutch in these articles.

In this light, we can see why the Dutch Christian socialist Syb Talma, upon hearing Kuyper's 1891 speech on "The Social Question and the Christian Religion" at the First Christian Social Congress in the Netherlands, believed, according to Gerard van Krieken (2011, 399), that "Kuyper was walking in the footsteps of Maurice" and that "[i]n Kuyper, he had found the Dutch translation of Maurice's ideas!" Yet *contra* Heslam (2022), who has argued that Kuyper's interest in both Maurice and the Church Fathers may have led him to affirm the French anarchist and socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's 1840 proclamation, "*La propriété, c'est le vol!*" (1849, 2) ("Property is robbery!" [1966, 12]), this paper will conclude by arguing otherwise. Kuyper's interest in Maurice should, if anything, lead us to the opposite conclusion, albeit importantly conditioned, as Heslam (2022) does acknowledge, by the theological principle of stewardship (see also Pahman 2023b).

2. Architectonic critique of society

Any scholar of Maurice's life and works must immediately be struck by how incidental his involvement with the Christian Socialists appears in the context of his corpus as a whole, not to mention his life in general (see Pahman 2023b; Higham 1947). His involvement with the small group of activists and the ultimately unsuccessful worker cooperatives they supported spanned only six years, from 1848 to 1854, and it was only from 1850 onward that the group, at Maurice's suggestion, took on the label of Christian socialism to identify their work, adopting it in the title of a short-lived publication: "'Tracts on Christian Socialism' is, it seems to me," he wrote to Ludlow in 1850, "the only title which will define our object, and will commit us at once to the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial Christians and the unchristian Socialists" (Maurice 1884, 2:35). This quote immediately suggests a less-radical (we might even say "anti-revolutionary") posturing by Maurice compared to other "unchristian Socialists" in his day, while also distinguishing his position from those more conservative "unsocial Christians" who would simply baptize the economic status quo and selfish competition as willed by God. Maurice's willingness to adopt the label "socialist," and his implication that any who endorsed market competition defended selfishness and "the economic status quo," likely alienated him from potential allies among Evangelicals at the time (see Turnbull 2023, 61-63), who otherwise shared many of the Christian socialists' concerns for the marginalized, though some did join him in promoting the Mechanics' Institutes Movement (see Lewis 1986, 229).

Maurice identified his vocation as serving the outcasts of his day as early as a November 1843 letter to Archbishop Hare, writing, "I think that some time or other my vocation will be ... generally among all that are in distress and are in debt and are discontented—Quakers, Unitarians, Rationalists, Socialists, and whatever else a Churchman repudiates, and whatever repudiates him [I]t is a dream which is worth something to me, and out of which, at any rate, I cannot wake myself" (Maurice 1884, 1:358). His 1838 work, *The Kingdom of Christ*, was alternatively titled *Hints to a Quaker* (Maurice 1883); one could

view his *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, originally published in 1847, as directed toward “Rationalists” (Maurice 1882); and his 1854 *Theological Essays* focused explicitly—and perhaps too charitably⁶—on answering Unitarian objections to Anglican orthodoxy (Maurice 1854b). In the case of the last of these, we see that Maurice’s outreach to socialists through Christian socialism did not distract him from still reaching out to others whom “a Churchman repudiates” at the very same time. In none of these works will one find much if any mention of the condition of the working classes he served in the Christian socialist movement. He also published his *Lectures on the Ecclesiastical History of the First and Second Centuries* in 1854(a). Thus, by comparison to his other works published at the time, his writing on the topic of Christian socialism was marginal—a few tracts and articles and several private letters. Yet Maurice’s work has an underlying foundation that made it coherent from his point of view. It all, as noted, served that dream he had divulged to Archbishop Hare, and moreover, all of Maurice’s works, whether directed toward the outcast groups he mentioned or to others, share the same architectonic critique of society, to borrow Kuyper’s term, grounded in Maurice’s understanding of God’s role as Father to all people and as Creator of all the world, sovereign even over the course of history.

Kuyper, for his part, credits the socialists of his day with the call for an architectonic critique. “We must courageously and openly acknowledge,” he wrote in a series of articles on

⁶ I say “too charitably” with regards to his *Theological Essays* because though he defends the doctrine of the Trinity against Unitarian objections, he ultimately argues that the Athanasian Creed could support a view of hell that others perceived to be universalist. This led King’s College to sack Maurice, after which the workers and activists of his community asked him to become founding president of The Working Men’s College, which he accepted and in the process diverted all the energy of the Christian Socialist movement into it, thus ending it, in the eyes of others at least. See Morris (2005, 161); Cort (1988, 151); Christensen (1962, 341); Ramsey (1951, 43). Maurice’s perceived universalism also accounts for why his *Theological Essays* were placed on the Vatican Index Librorum Prohibitorum and likely further alienated him from the Evangelicals (see Turnbull 2023, 63). See also Maurice (1854c) for his unsuccessful defense of his position. It is unclear what, if any, implications this had for his social theology, however, other than the biographical significance noted above (that said, see Niebuhr 1951, 226, who connects it to Maurice’s broader vision of the kingdom of Christ). Maurice still believed in sin, which he identified with selfishness, ultimately seeing rivalry and competition as expressions of it. And he even believed in hell; he just denied that the word “eternal” necessarily amounts to “everlasting.” Nevertheless, he held to his view throughout his life, so its significance for his broader thought in general and his social thought in particular remains an open question, though unfortunately outside the scope of this paper, given his lack of explicit connection between them. In fact, it seems worth noting that while we might call his view a sort of “soft universalism” today, Maurice (1854c, 14-5) explicitly rejected the term “universalist.” Rather, his primary objection was against the idea “that God inflicted certain external punishments on ‘wicked, impenitent, unbelieving sinners,’ for the sake of gratifying his vengeance.” Rather, appealing to several Church Fathers, his position on hell had an internal, anthropological (we might even say “natural law”) foundation, that “wickedness, impenitence, and unbelief, [are] the worst tortures to which men can be subjected.” That is, since wickedness and ignorance of God are the source of the worst misery a person can experience, they are therefore in themselves the substance of hell. Thus, the extent to which his view would be universalist seems to be that he was unwilling to rule out the possibility—he does not claim certainty—of post-mortem repentance: a “soft universalism,” indeed. He ultimately claims ignorance, insisting that the freedom of the human will prevents anyone from declaring with certainty what the final outcome will be: “Dare you make it a positive article of faith that God’s will, being what the Scripture says it is, shall *not* finally triumph? Nevertheless there is such a darkness over the whole question of the possible resistance of the human will, that I must be silent, and tremble and adore” (Maurice 1854c, 16).

“Manual Labor” from February 8-22, 1889, “that the social democrats are right when they maintain that the situation calls not only for the *physician* but most certainly for the *architect* as well” (Kuyper 2021b, 147). He further elaborates, claiming, “The liberals are looking only for a medical solution, whereas the social democrats want to tackle the social problem from an architectural angle. They argue that society cannot be salvaged by eliminating a few abuses, since the evil does not reside in these but in the *entire structure* of our social system.” Yet, Kuyper distanced his anti-revolutionary view from the social democrats, writing,

one must distinguish. The design of the house we now inhabit shows a part that has been ordained by God and must be preserved in any reconstruction. But, to be frank, the same design has not a little that we do not find particularly attractive since it is a product of the liberals, and this part can be reconstructed in a different way without *contravening* divine ordinances (Kuyper 2021b, 148).

The struggles of the working classes required not just supplemental medicine but building anew to Kuyper. However, only that building erected upon God’s divine ordinances for creation and human society could be worthy of a truly Christian social policy.

Similarly, while Maurice (1996a, 1) wanted to do away with the principle of competition as the rule of labor relations in England,⁷ which seems to have had more to do with selfish rivalry than with self-interest as understood by the new science of political economy to him (see Maurice 1996b, 21-3; Pahman 2023b, 33-34), he insisted that his proposed alternative of cooperation had a deeper foundation than revolutionary socialism. As he put it in the first of the *Tracts on Christian Socialism* (Maurice 1996a, 6-7),

You are little mistaken ... when you supposed that I had a Socialism of my own which was unlike that of all other persons. I hold that there has been a sound Christianity in the world, and that it has been the power which has kept society from the dissolution with which the competitive principle has been perpetually threatening it. I hold that this Christianity has been sound, because it has not been mine or yours, but has been a Gospel from Heaven concerning the relation in which God stands to His creatures, concerning the true law under which He has constituted them, and concerning the false, selfish tendency in you and me, which is ever rebelling against that law. I hold that that Christianity has become unsound just in proportion as it has become mine or yours, as men have ceased to connect it with the whole order of the world and of human life, and have made it a scheme or method for obtaining selfish prizes which men are to compete for, just as they do for the things of earth.

⁷ For a broader overview of the political economy of Christian socialism at this time, see Emmett (2023).

This equation of socialism with Christianity “connect[ed] ... with the whole order of the world and of human life” and the spread of “a Gospel from Heaven concerning the relation in which God stands to His creatures” encapsulates the ultimate theological grounding of, and his own personal vocation in, Christian socialism to Maurice. As he claims in a particularly important September 8, 1852 letter to Ludlow,

I do hope that I may be of some little use, not in my own person but in giving a foundation to the minds of some who have materials for building, and a knowledge of order which I am utterly wanting in. *That* is my vocation... I fear I shall always seem to you only an obstructive, though in my heart and conscience I do not believe that I am one. I would not willingly burn up any of your wood, hay or stubble; but for my task neither that nor your gold and precious stones are of much avail. I am only a digger (Maurice 1884, 2:131-2).

Maurice thus embraced a sort of division of labor within the Christian socialist movement: He would dig down to the theological foundations of social reform, but others, like Ludlow, would build. This led to many instances where Maurice, whom the younger Christian socialists admired to the point of calling him “the Master” and “the Prophet” (see Christensen 1962, 93; Cort 1988, 142), ended up truly being “an obstructive,” vetoing or otherwise redirecting their proposals for social action and organization because he feared they did not rest on the solid foundation of God’s divine order.

To be fair, this has not been lost on scholars of Maurice, who commonly note his insistence on a Coleridge-inspired “divine order” to creation and a Unitarian-inspired “brotherhood of man” (see Christensen 1964; Morris 2005; Ramsey 1951; Cort 1988; Allen 1968; Jones 2003; Ranson 1961; Norman 1987).⁸ In Maurice’s (1872, 372) own words, “a Fatherly Will is at the root of Humanity and upholds the Universe.” This clashes with the struggles of our world fallen into sin, while also serving as the ground of our redemption from those struggles, as Christ submitted himself to the Father’s will through the cross and taught his disciples to “be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48; see Maurice 1872, 378-96). Where some of the secondary sources fall short is that in noting the differences between Maurice and other Christian socialists, especially the more radical Ludlow, they take the others to represent the “real” Christian socialism and set Maurice’s worldview in opposition to it. Yet according to Torben Christensen, Ludlow at least shared some of the same convictions: “Socialism,” to Ludlow, “had set forth the principles of reorganization of society in full accordance with Christ’s teachings about a universal brotherhood, characterized by fellowship and mutual service, in which God was the Father of every man”

⁸ Coleridge and Unitarianism are not the only sources of these ideas, which can also be traced to Maurice’s interest in Church history and the Church Fathers. See Morris (2000, 89; 2005, 176-7); Ramsey (1951); Allchin (1988); Vidler (1948, 46); Young (1992, 15, 127-129); Masterman (1907, 118); Pahman (2023b).

(Christensen 1962, 154). More nuance is needed, and reading Maurice through a Kuyperian lens can provide it. It is not just that Maurice believed in a divine order or family; it is precisely what he believed that divine order to entail that explains his involvement with, and differences from, other Christian socialists.

Like Kuyper, history mattered to Maurice. As mentioned, Maurice also wrote a history of the early Church, and his *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy* is actually a history of philosophy as well, from ancient Athens to his present day. In line with his appreciation for history, Maurice's divine order is not simply static. Rather, it is founded on the biblical story of salvation. Maurice outlines a progressive development of society and God's work of redemption through it, beginning with a family in the calling of Abram, to a nation in the people of Israel, to all humanity in the Church of Jesus Christ and down through Church history, full of imperfect instantiations of these presently realized societal tiers, as early as his *Kingdom of Christ* and as late as his *Social Morality* (also a historically-informed work). Kuyper (2021d, 202n58) even cites the latter in his speech on "The Social Question and the Christian Religion," when he claims in a footnote, "The beautiful word 'social' should not be left to the private preserve of social democrats. Christianity is preeminently social. ... In fact, we believe that, rightly viewed, the original organism of humanity, now purified, has been resurrected in the church of Christ."⁹ *Social Morality*, moreover, is structured around the historical emergence of the societal tiers of family, state, and Church, roughly the first third of the book being on "Domestic"—i.e., family—"Morality"; the second "National Morality"; and the third "Human"—i.e., universal—"Morality." These three additionally resonate with the traditional Lutheran "estates" or "mandates" of the family, state, and church (see Hemmingsen 2018; von Harless 1868; Bonhoeffer 1955), though unlike Kuyper (see Pahman 2023a), the degree to which Maurice may have been influenced by Lutheranism has not been explored in the literature.¹⁰ Nevertheless, we can at least note in this similarity the possibility of a common Reformational grounding to Maurice's view, in addition to Coleridge's idealism and Maurice's Unitarian upbringing.

This factors into Maurice's conception of Christian socialism inasmuch as any appeal to universal brotherhood he made must necessarily have also been an appeal to the Church, for it is God's divine and universal family (see Maurice 1872, 227-50). Thus, in addition to his general opposition to party-spirit (see Morris 2005, 132-3, 145), Maurice largely opposed Chartist or other political action as well as national organization on behalf of the workers on the basis of his coherent theological worldview. As Jeremy Morris (2005, 145) admits, "There is a case for seeing [Maurice's] involvement [in Christian socialism] as a logical extension of

⁹ On the idea of the Church as resurrected humanity in Neo-Calvinist theology, see Brock and Sutanto (2022, 162-3).

¹⁰ Maurice does comment on Lutheranism in general and Martin Luther in particular, in Maurice (1882, 2:110-25), noting, for example, that Philip Melanchthon and later Lutherans were far more favorable to Aristotle than was Luther. On Lutheran influence on Kuyper, I (Pahman 2023a) have specifically highlighted the influence of Gottlieb Christoph Adolf von Harless (1806-79) and Hans Lassen Martensen (1808-84).

his theological commitments ... and one that inevitably led him to a degree of suspicion about practical schemes that might imply the creation of distinct ‘party’ spirit.” On the one hand, Maurice understood the importance of local knowledge and diversity. According to Morris (2005, 142), “Maurice provided a theological rational[e]” for the “piecemeal” practical efforts of the Christian socialists, “but,” on the other hand,

even then not all shared his particular commitments. ... Moreover, this effort was paternalist. It was provision *for* the working class, and persuasion *of* them by educated social superiors. There was little to separate the group from any other group of middle-class do-gooders. Their specific local projects looked like the philanthropic pursuits of churches up and down the poorer parts of Britain.

Yet Morris, no doubt, equivocates here by claiming that “little” about the Christian socialists separated them from other philanthropic efforts. Others did not support worker cooperatives, nor did they inspire national criticism or imperil their careers through their philanthropy. One may be disappointed with the limited, local efforts of the Christian socialists, but the unique character of those efforts ought not to be minimized.

In any case, the point stands that for Maurice the ecclesial universal brotherhood did not abolish, but instantiated itself within, the national state. As Morris (2005, 85) notes, “Maurice claimed that the Catholicity of the Church was served, not by absolute uniformity, but by local diversity. Locality and persistence in time were complementary elements of the function of liturgy as a ‘sign’ of Catholicity.” The universality of the Church does not do away with more local tiers of society. Thus, in contrast to Kuyper and as a good Anglican, Maurice supported a national Church, whereas Kuyper, seeing Christian unity and catholicity in more purely spiritual terms, was more comfortable with factions to the point of leading his own national political party and founding a breakaway denomination from the state Church in the Netherlands. For Maurice, however, the only proper national Christian organization was the national Church. “The Family is not lost in the Nation, nor the Nation in Human Society,” Maurice (1872, 17) wrote. This is what justified national churches and made local ministers and parishes the proper loci of true cooperation, as Morris (2005, 150-1) further details,

Maurice was not seeking the construction of something like a permanent *national* organization or sphere of influence. Rather, in the immediate context in which he found himself he was attempting to explore the implications of Christian faith for society as a whole. To put it more sharply, the *local* dimension of the movement is vital to understanding its nature, and in particular its subsistence within the traditional parochial structures of the Church of England.

Thus, while Maurice did support worker cooperatives, he could only see these as a form of *Christian* socialism if they arose organically with the guidance of the local and national structures of the universal Church. This localism, says Morris (2005, 152),

was a natural outgrowth of the comprehensive, national vision of the Church that lay at the heart of Maurice's ecclesiology. Care of the particular communities in which the Church of England was situated, under the influence of the argument for comprehensiveness as well as the contemporary language of Socialism, thus turned conventional views of local pastoral care into a conception of the Church serving the renewal and harmonization of the local community. This was served by personal encounter, by listening, by joint study, and by prayer and preaching.

Indeed, Maurice led a weekly Bible study with other Christian socialist leaders as well as biweekly conferences with local labor leaders, providing spiritual guidance—and authority—to both (see Christensen 1962, 93; Cort 1988, 142).

Edward Norman (1987, 25) reflects the frustration many since Maurice's time and up to the present have expressed with him: "Opposition to democracy, extreme distrust of collective action for any social purpose apart from local co-operative enterprise, and antipathy to enemies of the established governing classes: these were not the sort of attitudes which easily combined with Socialism, 'Christian' or otherwise." Yet all of these elements fit coherently into Maurice's architectonic critique of society, where God has ordained families (including aristocratic ones), nations, and the Church to embody the love of the family of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, education in which constituted the essence of Christian socialism to Maurice, its eldest founder. As he put it in the same September 8, 1852 letter to Ludlow cited above (Maurice 1884, 2:131),

I don't want a Blackstonian balance of powers, a negation of results, any absurd via media in State or Church. But I must have Monarchy, Aristocracy and Socialism, or rather Humanity, recognised as necessary elements and conditions of an organic Christian society. If you keep any one out it will avenge itself fearfully, as Aristotle says the women did in Sparta for the neglect of them by Lycurgus.

Thus, Maurice was no class warrior or anarchist. Indeed, the group's first publication in 1848, *Politics for the People*,¹¹ was an attempt to forestall the revolutionary tide that swept across Europe from Paris and reinvigorated the principles of the French Revolution. Maurice sought social, as distinct from political, integration of the working classes into society through cooperation with each other and under the spiritual guidance of the Church.

¹¹ On Maurice's contributions, see Christensen (1962, 75-90).

We may conclude this section by noting that in summarizing Maurice, Niebuhr (1951, 227, emphasis added), who read much wider than Maurice's Christian socialist works, unintentionally echoed Kuyper's most famous quote from his "Sphere Sovereignty" speech: "Maurice dealt with all phases of culture; with social customs, political systems, languages, economic organizations.... [T]here is no phase of human culture over which Christ does not rule, and no human work which is not subject to his transforming power over self-will—as there is none, however holy, which is not subject to deformation." Or, as Kuyper (2022b, 141) put it, "there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" Those "phases of culture," those "square inches" of social spheres, included the domain of organized labor, to which I now turn.

3. Organized labor

Like Maurice, Kuyper supported organized labor on the basis of his own architectonic critique of society, and he addressed the social question as early as 1871—eight years before the founding of the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP). He criticized even then those who would offer merely supplemental care to the working classes (Kuyper 2021e, 128-129). Also like Maurice, Kuyper believed the Church corporately, and not just individual Christians, had an essential role to play. "[A]llow me to ask ..." he wrote, "whether those who work with their hands will not with their whole soul turn their backs on the church of Jesus when warm interest in the conditions of their daily life is always absent in that church" (Kuyper 2021e, 129). So, too, Maurice's outreach to the working classes served an evangelistic purpose (Pahman 2023b). Industrialization came later to the Netherlands than to Britain, where the Industrial Revolution began, but by 1871 Kuyper identified in Holland many of the same social problems the Christian socialists had two decades previous in England. Two years later, as noted by Heslam, Kuyper would recommend Maurice's *Social Morality* to Groen van Prinsterer and the next year to readers of *De Standaard* (Heslam 2022, 77).

1876 would see the founding of the Dutch Workers Association Patrimonium, an orthodox Protestant association for the support of the working classes by Klaas Kater and others, including Willem Hovy, Kuyper's "most faithful financier," according to James Bratt (2013, 128). Yet according to Peter van Dam (2011, 376), Kater and other founders and organizers "did not regard the improvement of concrete working conditions to be a task for Patrimonium, choosing as their activities among other things lecturing, founding reading rooms, and supporting indisposed colleagues and widows." To be clear, they did not *oppose* the improvement of concrete working conditions either, but they saw their specific vocation to educate and support workers, both materially and spiritually. To that end, Patrimonium's membership included employers as well as employees.

While Maurice may have opposed Patrimonium's national scope, its educative and cooperative focus, which sought to dispel rather than exacerbate the antagonism between

capital and labor, otherwise fits his unique brand of Christian socialism. Furthermore, despite Maurice's opposition to national organization of labor, the other Christian socialists did prevail upon him to join the Society for the Promotion of Working Men's Associations—so the nature of an organization also seems to have conditioned at what tier of society—family, nation, or Church—it was best positioned to him.

Kuyper maintained a positive relationship with Patrimonium throughout his career, though not without some conflict. According to van Dam (2011, 376-7), for Kuyper

a nonsectarian organization was better suited [than Patrimonium] ... [to] represent more people and thus wage more influence. Patrimonium, on the other hand, could serve Protestant workers in strengthening their faith. Kater and some of his companions thought differently. They meant Patrimonium to have more political influence and therefore urged for the development of a political and societal agenda.

Yet unlike Maurice, Kuyper was not opposed to political action or parties; he was a politician, after all, and rather, "he considered his political party, the Antirevolutionaire Partij, the appropriate vehicle for" advancing the "structural societal reforms" needed "to improve the position of the underprivileged" (van Dam 2011, 377).

Article 39 of the ARP platform (Kuyper 2015, 331) stipulated "the necessity to contribute better than at present, also by means of legislation, toward making relations between the various social classes answer as much as possible to the demands of God's Word." For Kuyper (2015, 336), this entailed a threefold proposition: "We must turn back to the Word of God, correct the political imbalance, and codify the rights and customs under which wage labor is carried out." Only on the basis of the higher standard of God's Word, says Kuyper, can rich and poor transcend their conflicting interests. With regard to the role of the state to correct "political imbalance," Kuyper (2015, 339) argued for the state as only an arbiter of conflicts: "protection, not regulation." He opposed universal suffrage as a solution, rejecting "the destructive delusion of popular sovereignty" (Kuyper 2015, 344), wary that universal suffrage would lead to mob rule, and instead advocated for "*corporative* states, and ... head-of-household suffrage, with weighted voting." Moreover, appealing to British labor laws, Kuyper advocated the development of a labor code in the Netherlands, including a list of thirty possible headings.

Kuyper would take up the theme of a labor code again in his series of articles on manual labor in 1889, explicitly grounding the idea in his architectonic critique (Kuyper 2021b, 148). While he grants that the socialists have the right idea in calling for systemic reform, he differentiates his anti-revolutionary position, saying, "Neither the liberals nor the social democrats in their politics know anything of a God who built everything." Despite his aversion to political action, one could not charge Maurice with the same accusation—as already noted, his architectonic critique rested on a biblical foundation, too. Likewise, Kuyper's architectonic critique rests upon the Reformed doctrines of divine decree and common grace. God has

ordained a progressive, historical development of the spheres of social life; God, by his common grace, has protected this development from complete corruption due to the Fall; and this development entails sphere sovereignty, i.e., that each progressively emerging sphere of social life has a principle and boundaries of its own for the authority bestowed upon it by God to accomplish his purposes. God alone bears absolute sovereignty; social spheres, including the state, must be subordinate to the kingship of Christ and respect the sovereignty of other spheres. Thus, Kuyper (2021b, 154) reiterates his claim that the state's role is primarily to be an arbiter of disputes. Kuyper then offers a relevant example: "the point of contact between the sphere of capital and the sphere of manual labor *formally* is always a contract—either explicitly entered into or tacitly assumed. Because the authorities are involved in court cases about contracts, this is the formal point that lies within the reach of the government." The state should not adjudicate the details of contracts, such as the rate of wages, but should set the rules of civil negotiation and protect the just execution of freely entered contracts under those conditions.

On the same foundation, Kuyper (2021b, 158) supported organized labor because labor, as an organic sphere of society, has the right to organization as much as capital. While he does not want a return to the medieval guild system, he faults the liberals for abolishing one form of organized labor while offering no substitute. The state, thus, should protect and promote freedom of association: "The government has the duty to ensure that organization take the place of disorganization and that both parties have the opportunity to furnish the building blocks for this organization freely and independently," he writes. Notably, in this, Kuyper echoes the Danish Lutheran Christian socialist Hans Lassen Martensen, whose work he cites as an influence, and which also anticipates aspects of Kuyper's sphere sovereignty.¹² This point leads Kuyper (2021b, 159) to a further elaboration on his corporative scheme for the representation of labor: "We do not oppose the idea of a chamber of labor but, on the contrary, will support any initiative to have them established." This would function similarly to a chamber of commerce, an independent representative body for the purpose of advising government policy in the creation of a code of labor. As Kuyper (2021b, 166; see also van Dam 2011, 379) put it, "the realm of labor is a world of its own and best suited to be the judge of its own interests."

In addition to his proposal for a chamber of labor, Kuyper continued to support Patrimonium, even commending its explicitly Christian character as compared to social democratic groups in a footnote (Kuyper 2021d, 196n43) to his 1891 speech at the First Christian Social Congress, itself co-organized by Patrimonium and the ARP, writing, "the lower

¹² For Martensen on a labor code freely being drafted by workers rather than the state, see Martensen (1899, 165). For some of Kuyper's references to Martensen, see Kuyper (2021c, 216n89; 2008, viii). On Martensen's influence on Kuyper's concept of sphere sovereignty, see Pahman (2023a, 24-27). Kuyper certainly has differences with Martensen—he is more democratic than the Dane and opposed state regulation of wages, but still the commonalities with Kuyper on this point at least warrant a consideration of Kuyper's relationship to Christian socialism more broadly. Kuyper specifically refers to Martensen's *Socialismus und Christentum*, which can be found in Martensen (1899, 126-171).

rural classes, even though their condition is often more wretched than that of the lower urban classes, actually live happier lives and complain far less than their counterparts in the city. One can also discern this in *Patrimonium*. ... How vastly different its tone from that heard in socialistic groups!" By this time, according to Bratt (2013, 222), *Patrimonium* "had grown to be the largest union in the country." Given this context of *Patrimonium* as co-organizers, one should keep in mind that many in Kuyper's audience were Christian labor organizers and even Christian socialists inspired by Maurice, like Syb Talma. As van Krieken (2011, 404) put it, "The ARP did not want to lose the support of the Protestant workers, and [Klaas] Kater sensed that without Kuyper's support, *Patrimonium* was powerless." Kuyper and others across party lines advocated against conservatives within and without their parties for the expansion of the franchise.¹³ Expanding the franchise to heads of many working class families would significantly contribute to Kuyper eventually rising to the office of prime minister under a coalition government including members of the Roman Catholic General League in addition to Kuyper's ARP.¹⁴ Yet as prime minister, despite his longtime advocacy for organized labor, Kuyper would become the common proxy for capitalism and colonialism in the comics of the socialist political cartoonist Albert Hahn, no doubt exacerbated by Kuyper's actions to end the railroad strikes of 1903.¹⁵

Even so, Kuyper was far more ready to give credit to social democrats than to liberals. In another footnote, Kuyper (2021d, 197n45) begrudgingly acknowledges that the liberals have made "sincere efforts ... to advance the lower class." But he complains that the liberals gave them "[r]eading, writing, and arithmetic" only in exchange for their faith and "moral energy," while withholding "[t]rade schools and a share in capital." We see again here a parallel to Maurice's concerns: The failed Christian socialist worker cooperatives had attempted to give workers "a share in capital," and the Working Men's College, though far more than a trade school, sought to develop workers' human capital, to borrow a term from modern economics, and moreover to strengthen their faith and "moral energy." In fact, humane Christian education played an important role in both Maurice's and Kuyper's understanding of how best to advance their architectonic critiques and alleviate the hardships of the working classes. To this, I now turn.

4. Christian education

As already noted, Maurice did not share Kuyper's advocacy for expanding suffrage. Nevertheless, it is not entirely accurate to simply cast Maurice as a generic anti-democratic

¹³ On this, see his impassioned series of articles from 1895, "Christ and the Needy" (Kuyper 2022a, 115-49). See also Van Dyke (2013); Bratt (2013, 232-3).

¹⁴ Notably, despite polemical rhetoric between Protestants and Roman Catholics at the time, Kuyper voiced (2021d, 175-176n4) his appreciation for a long list of Roman Catholic social theorists, even explicitly citing (2021d, 204) Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), commonly held to be the inaugural document of the modern papal social encyclical tradition.

¹⁵ Some of Hahn's comics can be seen in Bratt (2013, 214-5, specifically the unnumbered pages between 214 and 215).

conservative of the time, though his methods certainly were paternalistic, for better or worse, and he did oppose democracy, at least as he understood it. Yet, as quoted previously, Maurice (1996a, 10) claimed, “Our Church must apply herself to the task of raising the poor into men; she cannot go on ... treating them merely as poor.” As Norman (1987, 23) put it, for Maurice, “The working classes should certainly be admitted to the Constitution, but only when they had been educated into the means of making proper choice.” As Maurice explained in the fourth of his six-lecture series *Learning and Working*, given “to announce” (Maurice 1855, xv)¹⁶ the founding of the Working Men’s College, “we must aim in all our teaching of the working classes, at making them free.” He goes on to say (Maurice 1855, 113),

If the distinction between a freeman and a slave ... is identical with the distinction between a Person and a Thing, you will seek above all things to make our working people understand that they are Persons, and not Things. Whatever teaching contributes to that end must be good for them, and, as they have shown in the instance of Music, they will by degrees *feel* that it is good for them.

Thus, the express purpose of the humane and Christian education of the Working Men’s College was spiritually to emancipate the working classes. Evincing a less-Victorian view of women than Kuyper, Maurice also cofounded Queen’s College, London, in 1848.

However, perhaps as more of a semantic matter, Maurice did oppose democracy because he saw it as presuming popular sovereignty. As he put it to Ludlow, again in the same September 8, 1852 letter (Maurice 1884, 2:128-9),

I cannot get rid of the feeling that whenever you use the word democracy you fall into an equivocal. Those to whom you speak believe that you wish the people to govern themselves. “Yes,” you say, “we do. That is, we wish them to restrain themselves; that is, we wish them to submit to Christ and have Him for their king.” Well, but what I wish to know is, *do they make* Christ their king? Might they choose another if they liked? If not, your democracy is not what other people intend by it, and what they have a right to intend by it. Twist the word as you will, it must imply a right on the part of the people to choose, cashier and depose their rulers. It must imply that power proceeds from them, that it does not find them.

Thus, like Kuyper, we can see that for Maurice the only locus of absolute power and authority could be the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, to which all human sovereignty must be subordinate and of which all must be derivative. The role of education for Maurice, then, would be to inculcate such a worldview into the working classes, particularly regarding the presently

¹⁶ Maurice helpfully inserts a schedule of courses taught at the college into this preface. Courses ranged from biblical studies to mathematics, political theory, philosophy, English, French, Latin, astronomy, law, linguistics, history, and literature. See Maurice (1855, xxi-ii).

realized brotherhood of all in the Church of Jesus Christ under the Fatherhood of God, which stands against the selfishness of sin. As Maurice (1855, 114) put it, “I do not suppose, however, that the *only* end of Education is to make us free. It would not accomplish that object if it did not lead us to perceive an *order* in all that we do, and in all we think.” And though he does not state it as his goal, we can at least speculate that should the Church fulfill its vocation of “raising the poor into men,” the question of political representation might arise again. To the extent that Maurice dedicated his life from 1848 onward to educating the working classes, we might instead, less cynically than Norman, say that Maurice at least worked to further what he considered the preconditions necessary for their greater political participation.

As for the importance and nature of education in Maurice’s understanding of Christian socialism, many have noted its centrality to his understanding of his own work (see Christensen 1962, 86, 344-5; Davies 1964, 22, 141-2; Cort 1988, 154; Morris 2005, 141, 146; Pahman 2023b, 31-6). I have already noted his Bible studies with other Christian socialists and conferences with local labor leaders, as well as his remarks at the founding of the Working Men’s College. I furthermore contend that Maurice considered his younger contemporaries as much his mission field as his coworkers in this cause (see Pahman 2023b, 37-41). To the extent they identified as socialists and some like Ludlow harbored radical tendencies, they, too, belonged to those “a Churchman repudiates, and whatever repudiates him” (Maurice 1884, 1:358). From Maurice’s point of view, Christian socialism was an educational project all along, and thus when the movement came to an end with the founding of the Working Men’s College in 1854, Maurice believed the movement not really to have ended but rather to have finally found its truest expression. By contrast, Ludlow (Christensen 1962, 365) lamented that “the comparatively broad stream of Christian Socialism was turned into the narrow channel of a Working Men’s College.” But for Maurice (F. Maurice 1884, 2:549) it had been good to stop “meddl[ing] with the commercial part of the business,” i.e., the worker cooperatives. Moreover, he writes, “A college”—in particular, the Working Men’s College—“expressed to my mind ... precisely the work that we could undertake, and ought to undertake, as professional men; we might bungle in this also; but there seemed to me a manifestly Divine direction towards it in all our previous studies and pursuits” (F. Maurice 1884, 2:550). Indeed, according to Peter R. Allen (1968, 474), Maurice’s former “change of mind” about joining the Society for the Promotion of Working Men’s Associations “was an admission that an apparently social scheme of reform was in fact educational or moral.” And perhaps, we might say, vice versa, i.e., a moral and educational project could itself be social reform.

Kuyper certainly shared this conviction, and his readers have, intentionally or otherwise, shown a spotlight on the inability to disentangle education from Kuyper’s social thought by commonly drawing upon his famous “Sphere Sovereignty” speech (Kuyper 2022b), the focus of which is education and the occasion of which was the founding of the Free

University on October 20, 1880.¹⁷ This use of the speech is warranted by the text itself, of course, in which Kuyper (2022b, 127) claims that “from an inner vital force, the day had to arrive, as it now has, that we would launch this vessel”—i.e., the Free University—“small and unseaworthy, but chartered under the sovereignty of King Jesus and with a mission to fly at every port of knowledge the flag of sphere sovereignty!” That is, his social and political activism necessarily led to the founding of the Free University, albeit aimed at the education of an elite few rather than the working classes.¹⁸ Yet Kuyper still believed, according to Craig Bartholomew (2017, 301; see also Pahman 2020), that “Christian scholarship not only serves the church but the entire country.” Who would lead his denomination? Who would run for office in the ARP? Who would write for his newspapers? The answer is educated men. Indeed, according to James Bratt (2013, 83), education was a driving force behind Kuyper’s journalism as well: “For many it provided a post-elementary school education, a sustained induction into politics, culture, and social affairs.” Thus, while not all would attend the Free University, they could still get a taste of higher education through Kuyper’s journalism. Even many of Kuyper’s massive tomes, such as *Common Grace*, originated as a long series of newspaper columns. So, too, as I have demonstrated, Maurice married Christian education to social reform, in both word and deed.

5. Conclusion: stewards, not thieves

Cast in a Kuyperian light, F. D. Maurice proves more coherent in his thought and action than much of the literature on Christian socialism would suggest. Moreover, understanding Maurice as a similar thinker to Kuyper—acting upon a principled, biblical architectonic critique of society, supporting organized labor, opposing popular sovereignty, and elevating the social role of Christian higher education—should lead us to less-radical conclusions than Heslam regarding Maurice’s influence on Kuyper.

Indeed, to Heslam’s claim that Maurice and the Church Fathers may have led Kuyper to agree with Proudhon that “property is theft,” we might juxtapose Maurice’s (1861, 65) declaration in his fifth sermon on the Lord’s prayer, given on March 12, 1848, just three weeks after the February Revolution in Paris in 1848, that “Property is holy.” Maurice did not believe that, therefore, property owners have unlimited sovereignty over what they own. Rather, “Beneath all distinctions of property and of rank lie the obligations of a common Creation, Redemption, Humanity.” That is, because property is holy, ownership has limits grounded in Maurice’s architectonic critique of society.

So, too, Kuyper (2021a, 17), also commenting on the Lord’s prayer—specifically the petition “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11)—writes, “Even though you sit down

¹⁷ Notice that this speech was included in the *On Charity & Justice* volume of Kuyper’s Collected Works and not the volume on education (see Kuyper 2019a). For an overview of Kuyper’s philosophy of education, see Pahman (2020). See also Heslam (1998).

¹⁸ Kuyper (2019b) imagined one percent of the population attending university. See also Pahman (2020, 402).

to a copious meal with an abundance of bread and so much more, nevertheless that bread before you is *not yet yours*.” He grants that “you earned this bread yourself, through your work.” Elsewhere, he (2021d, 218n91) even explicitly claims, “Neither Calvin nor any Reformed exegete understood what we read in Acts 3:44-45 as describing a ‘community of goods.’” Yet, he (2021a, 17) continues, “But your work too was not yours. All the strength you applied to get that bread was strength from God at work in you.” As Kuyper (2021f, 46) put it earlier in the same commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, “God Almighty is also the owner *of all property*.” By virtue of the same theological grounding of Kuyper’s architectonic critique of society—that absolute sovereignty resides in God alone—so, too, Kuyper affirms that absolute ownership belongs to God alone.

Thus, as a corollary, we are not thieves in our limited ownership, justifying anarchy or revolution, but rather we are stewards who one day must give an account for how we’ve used our property when confronted with the needs of those Christ refers to as “the least of these my brethren” (Matthew 25:40).¹⁹ Private property makes possible the existence of other spheres of society beyond the state—including churches, businesses, worker cooperatives, trades unions, and schools—all equally subject to the kingdom of Christ. Rightly understood, with the help of Maurice and Kuyper, Christians today might find the foundation, blueprint, initiative, and knowledge required of them to reconcile rich and poor in Christian brotherhood and one day hear the words, “Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

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¹⁹ On Kuyper on stewardship, see Gootjes (2013); Bacote (2005, 139-48).

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