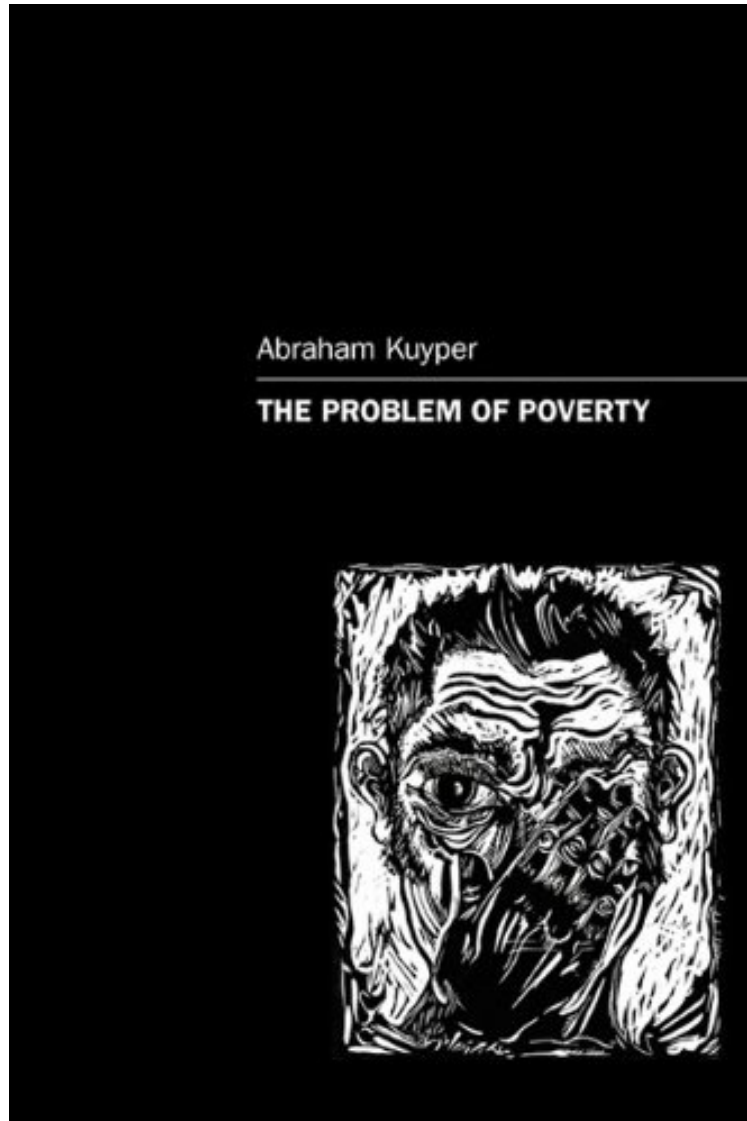


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The Problem of Poverty

Abraham Jr. Kuyper

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Abraham Jr. Kuyper : The Problem of Poverty before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Problem of Poverty:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Crystal Mason A TRUE soldier that fought for the poor! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Kuyper is always challenging. By PBS Kuyper is always a good

read. This is an issue that the 21st century church needs to rethink. Kuyper lays down the groundwork for being involved in social justice without slipping into the social gospel. I rated it a little lower because some of the material is dated and situation specific and might need a little background study to understand all that is being discussed. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The problem with Christian Democracy

By Ashtar Command

The Problem of Poverty is an annotated version of a famous speech given by the Dutch churchman and politician Abraham Kuyper in 1891. The first English translation wasn't published until 1950 under the slightly menacing title Christianity and the Class Struggle. This is a new translation published in 1991 - exactly a century after the speech was originally given. In the United States, Kuyper is mostly known for the Lectures on Calvinism, and he has been turned into an icon of sorts by some Christian fundamentalists. In reality, Kuyper was a moderate, his theologically orthodox and politically anti-revolutionary rhetoric being a cover for a conservative Christian accommodation to modernity. Historians consider his movement an early form of Christian Democracy. Thus, Kuyper was probably closer in spirit to Edmund Burke than to Rousas Rushdoony! Personally, I still find the man too conservative, so I would have voted for the other guy, but that's me

The speech entitled The Problem of Poverty was given by Kuyper at the Christian Social Congress in 1891. Although Kuyper was a Calvinist, he explicitly acknowledges Pope Leo XIII's famous social encyclical Rerum Novarum, also issued in 1891. He even states that Catholics have made more in the social field than Calvinists. The speech is also surprisingly non-confrontational towards Social Democracy, with Kuyper making a distinction between Social Democrats and anarchists (but also between Social Democrats and state socialists). By contrast, Leo XIII condemns all forms of socialism and probably wouldn't make irenic nods to Protestants. Kuyper's moderation reflects the political realities of the Netherlands, a stable parliamentary democracy in which Calvinists, Catholics, Liberals and Social Democrats attempted to co-exist with each other. Naturally, the speech does contain Kuyper's distinct ideas on a number of issues. The French revolution is the root of all evil in the modern world by its godlessness, materialism and disrespect of traditional authority. Kuyper spins his anti-revolutionary philosophy in a socialistic direction, stating that the French revolution also represents the rule of Mammon and the untrammelled free market, which hurts the workers and the poor. To Kuyper, socialism (he actually uses that term) means an organic society based on the patriarchal family and Christian values. Kuyper also expresses his support for sphere sovereignty, in effect a form of decentralization. Kuyperian organic society hence looks different than the Bourbon version overthrown by the French revolutionaries. Surprisingly for a speech on the problem of poverty given by a politician (or not so surprisingly, if you're cynical), Kuyper makes very few concrete policy proposals. He does mention the need to balance capital and labor through a Labor Code, opposes state hand-outs to the poor above an absolute minimum, and calls for more Christian charity. Often, he sounds like the hypocritical pie in the sky friar we all love to hate, saying that there's nothing undignified about being poor, exhorting the rich to cut back on their conspicuous consumption, etc. All good and well until you start wondering what the preacher intends to actually *do* about it all. (As prime minister, Kuyper became notorious for breaking a railway strike!) At one point, Kuyper calls for colonization, something the editor interprets as support for the Dutch colonial empire, while I take it to mean that the unemployed city dwellers should reclaim idle land for agriculture. Maybe it means both? Kuyper and G K Chesterton might have been an interesting pair of brothers. I don't think The Problem of Poverty is particularly interesting, in and of itself. It's important as an example of how some Christian and conservative leaders responded to the social dislocation caused by the industrial revolution and free trade policies. As already mentioned, it's probably a historically significant text for Christian Democracy. The European workers, however, weren't convinced and usually gave their support to the Social Democrats Kuyper wanted to outflank

The text, translated and introduced by James Skillen, was originally a speech by Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) that opened the first Christian Social Congress in The Netherlands on 9 November 1891. His words not only illuminate with stark simplicity many of the enduring problems of poverty, they also bring a strong and pointed biblical message that has outlived Kuyper's time and place. Roger Henderson's essay "How Abraham Kuyper Became a Kuyperian" is included in the appendix.

Language Notes
Text: English (translation) Original Language: Dutch