

POLITICAL & ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

We must always seek to avoid the twin evils of a faith divorced from politics, or a politics divorced from faith. Only a life in which the two of them are constantly interacting with each other is a faith which takes God's love for the world seriously.

Bill Blaikie,¹
Minister of the Gospel
Member of Parliament of Canada

My intention for this chapter is to present some brief pointers to Kuyperian political and economic principles. These derive from its world view and the resulting perspectives as described in the previous chapters.

A disclaimer is in place here. I am a theologian, a missiologist and missionary, neither a political scientist nor even a politician. Nor am I an economist, even though I have published two books

on subjects of economic interest. It is not my aim to present materials secular political scientists, politicians or economists normally discuss. However, Christians among them who have rejected secular dualism *do* discuss these issues, as do Muslims. And so, without further ado...

▲ COLLECTIVISM VS INDIVIDUALISM

A dominant theme in the Kuyperian tradition is the rejection of both collectivism and individualism, the two poles that represent a false dualism around which secular political scientists and economists usually rotate. Kuyper inherited a situation dominated by the results of the French Revolution, which ended up with “the absolutisation of the state” that “lead to a rejection of the authority of God, since the state posits no limits for itself...The state therefore encroaches on all other social activity, so that all other interests suffer under the domination of the state.”² That state pressed the people of Kuyper’s day with a heavy hand that reached into every segment of society and ended up distorting and oppressing every sphere, including that of the Church. To counter that kind of situation, Kuyper and his successors creatively developed a unique principal perspective on both state and Church that Nigerian Christians and Muslims would do well to become familiar with. Gousmett describes the concept of a state that is neither individualistic nor communalistic. The state is

made up of individuals in organic relationship with others in various societal structures. Individuals in isolation do not exist: they have their being only in and through the spheres of society. “No man is an island...” Kuyper held that the individual person can only find true freedom in ties with the institutions of society. Therefore Kuyper rejected individualism, the idea that the individual is the basic unit of human society,

since the individual is unthinkable outside of his or her family. He also rejected collectivism, since this violates the rights of persons to free development and responsibility. Society is correctly understood as individuals in relationship, relationships that are not externally imposed...but within which we stand as created beings formed by God in the community of humankind.

All human beings are placed in a number of communities. We are born into a web of relationships, which constitute our societal existence. There is therefore no such thing as the autonomous and isolated individual, and so individualistic views of society are excluded. Similarly, collectivist views are excluded, since human beings do exist as individuals and not simply as members of society...We are individuals in relationship, an unavoidable state of affairs, the way in which God has established the creation.³

Individualistic societies, such as Canada, where human relationships are often minimal or even absent, are marked by loneliness, meaninglessness, dysfunctional families, psychological disturbances and the blossoming of counselling institutions. Addictions, crime and rootlessness are on the rise, leading to many homeless living on the street. In Vancouver's West End, I live in the very centre of such a culture. It is a society without an adequate safety net, for government subsidies cannot undo the root cause. The safety net they are trying to construct mostly misses the boat and in the long run is no more than a band-aid, even though important for the economic lives of its "beneficiaries."

Bennie van der Walt discusses this subject at length. "Individualism is the dominant Western viewpoint. It identifies the human person with the individual. To be an individual is to be human. And to be human means to be an individual." Who am I? The answer is "very simple: 'I am a unique individual.'" Van der

Walt traces the origin and history of this view from the 16th-century Renaissance through the Enlightenment and on into the 20th century. It is an emphasis on the individual versus a “repressive social order.” “A person has to distinguish herself from her community to be human.” It is a matter of “first the individual and then the community.” This popular opinion encouraged a move away from religion into the direction of secularism. Individualism has taken such a hold on Western Christians that many think of it as “the authentic Christian position supported by Scripture.”⁴ Especially via the avenue of U.S. superpower politics, this is a very dominant political emphasis throughout the world.

The opposite pole, communalism, “stands in sharp contrast” to individualism. When adherents think of human identity,

they immediately have in mind the human being within the group of which he is part. Because of his involvement in the community, he is the human person. The individual who does not function as a full member of the community is less than a full person. Through total involvement in the community, the individual establishes his personal identity and thus becomes a complete human being.

This is the dominant view in Africa.

Van der Walt is critical of this pole as well. “It offers no real alternative to Western individualism,” he argues, “but just another kind of impoverishment. Comunalism has its own dehumanising effects in its denial of human individuality and the subordination of all human experience to a single all-embracing community.”⁵

True to type, the Kuyperian in van der Walt rejects both approaches. Neither defines a person, for both of these poles are “only dimensions of the fullness of human being.” We have dimensions of individuality and community but are not defined by them. Both are wrong because they ask “what is *within* the person that gives identity...They each look for something *within* the human

world” for meaning. “They only differ in what they identify as the source of this meaning...”

According to Christian precepts,

it is God...who establishes human identity and gives meaning to human life. The correct answer...is that I am created in the image of God and that (after the fall) this image can be recreated in Christ. The meaning of humanness lies beyond the human being in God. It is in an obedient relation to Him and His law that we find our true identity.

That being the case, all efforts at community development must aim at enhancing both dimensions, not just one. “These two qualities complement each other. Neither can develop normally without the other.” The consequence of both “is a mutilated view of the human being.” Neither “recognises the integral, full human being created and redeemed by God.”⁶

Secularism always tries to force a choice between these two—and that’s exactly where most Nigerians now find themselves. Traditional society emphasizes the communal aspect that often deteriorates into communalism, also known as “tribalism.” The secular-colonial heritage pushes them more into the camp of individualism. I believe the Kuyperian perspective can help us cut through this dilemma by its more supernatural point of reference. I believe Muslims will also feel more comfortable with such a perspective.

▲ PLURALISM

One of the contemporary catchwords today is “pluralism.” We overheard Muslims promoting it in Monograph 4. Secularists fly its banner, especially in Canada. It has been a major cornerstone in the Kuyperian tradition ever since the beginning and has made such an imprint on its home base, The Netherlands, that foreigners who

know nothing about the Kuyperian tradition admire the pluralistic and tolerant stamp it has laid on the country even today.

Before we move to the Kuyperian view of the concept, I want to open your eyes to its secular, liberal version in Canada. I have earlier on reported Paul Marshall's view that secularism suppresses religion in Canada. The secular approach to religion has also given a particular colouration to its concept of pluralism that he considers basically an emptied meaningless shell. He quotes from Rabbi Dennis Prager:

Liberals (whom we have called secularists) are always talking about pluralism, but that is not what they mean. They mean "melting-pot." Pluralism (properly) means that Catholics are Catholics, Jews are Jews, Baptists are Baptists, etc. That's what pluralism means—everyone affirms his values and we all live with civic equality and tolerance. That's my dream. (But) in public school, Jews don't meet Christians. Christians don't meet Hindus. Everybody meets nothing. That is...why their children so easily inter-marry. Jews don't marry Christians. Non-Jewish Jews marry non-Christian Christians. Jews for nothing marry Christians for nothing. They get along great because they both affirm nothing. They have everything in common—nothing. That's not pluralism. But that's exactly what the liberal world wants. They want a bunch of secular universalists with ethnic surnames.

Marshall then gives a brief summary of a Kuyperian view of pluralism that contrasts sharply with the secular version: "Pluralism means that different people with different beliefs and different ways of life are living together in the same society. A good form of pluralism is one in which we live together in peace and mutual respect, while acknowledging that our differences are very real and important." Unfortunately, that is not what obtains in Canada. He continues,

The problem with much current stress on individualism and secularism is that it tries to achieve a kind of peace by denying that the differences exist or that they are important. The result is that committed believers of many religions are told that they must leave their beliefs at the door, confined to private life, if they want to enter public debate. The result is an exclusion of religion masquerading as openness to all. Secularism, in this sense, is a false form of pluralism. By trying to exclude religious considerations from public influence, it destroys the very differences it claims to want to protect. It claims not to discriminate but ends up discriminating against any religion that shapes the public life of its members. Where it dominates, it negates the life of our religions and our religious traditions.⁷

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is officially Evangelical in orientation, but has over time been deeply influenced by the Kuypers among them. Its 1992 publication, edited by Aileen Van Ginkel, clearly betrays such influence. In a submission to the Federal Government it concluded a discussion on the secular situation in Canada with the words: "This secularism then becomes a false form of pluralism. By trying to exclude religious considerations from public influence, it destroys the very diversity it claims to want to protect. It claims not to discriminate but ends up discriminating against any religion that shapes the public life of its members."⁸

In multicultural societies such as Canada and the U.S.A., the struggle has not been between religions like Christianity and Islam, but between Christianity and secularism. Secularism crept in and spread its tentacles while most Christians were sleeping. Once its implications began to be turned into realities, Christians slowly woke up from their slumber, prodded especially by Kuypers that began to make their influence felt at various fronts.⁹ In those contexts strict

separation of state and religion causes problems, for it often ends up favouring secular organizations and, in fact, leads to the establishment of the secular faith or world view at the expense of all others. You end up with the establishment of one single world view or belief system. Writing about current debate in Canada on health care, Paul Schratz writes, “The people who denounce religious believers for their supposed rigidity often fail to recognise that when it comes to inflexibility, few are more zealous than devotees of secular viewpoints.” With the help of Iain Benson, Schratz charges that there is a double standard of values. While

people of faith...are criticized for trying to impose their value on others, non-religious values that are preached with equal or great fervour somehow escape notice. Religious believers aren't the only ones with values, as Benson points out, and we're not the only ones trying to bring our values into the public square. Everyone has personal beliefs, and everyone should be trying to bring those beliefs into engagement with modern society. If I believe that the most serious challenge facing society is pollution, I'd be remiss if I weren't working to bring about tougher environmental legislation. Shouldn't the same apply to Catholics who have views on health care, child care, and yes, issues such as abortion, euthanasia and "homosexual marriage"? For some reason, it doesn't, as Calgary Bishop Fred Henry discovered recently when federal tax officials called him on the carpet.

We are constantly advised not to "force our values down other people's throats." Debate, however, cannot be restricted to those without religious affiliation. To permit politicians, activists, or the media to make the secular case for assisted suicide or national child care, while warning the Catholic Church or the faithful to keep their religious arguments to themselves, would discriminate against religious believers and hand society over to the atheists and agnostics.

*Catholics are entitled to bring their religious beliefs to any debate on any issue. In fact, some Catholic thought would be a helpful corrective to the blinkeredness that often surrounds these debates...*¹⁰

The Kuyperian perspective is not only about the right of “people of faith” to equal participation in public debates, but also about equal access to public resources. That is a major point of American Christian scholars Stephen Monsma and Christopher Soper, editors of the book *Equal Treatment*. In their introduction they write,

*The basic concept of equal treatment says that the establishment clause of the First Amendment (Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion) is not violated, even if government grants aid, recognition, or support to religion or religious groups, as long as government gives equal aid, recognition, or support to all religions and parallel or similar secularly based systems of belief and their organized groups. Equal treatment... does not mandate an artificial, perhaps impossible-to-attain strict separation between government and all of religion in its various manifestations. Instead, it argues that the establishment clause mandates governmental neutrality on matters of religion, a neutrality that is more fully attained by the equal treatment of persons and groups of all faiths—religious and secular—than by an attempt strictly to separate religion and government, which leads to a rejection of all governmental support and recognition for religious groups.*¹¹

Carl Esbeck quotes one American Justice Kennedy:

A significant factor in upholding governmental programs... is their neutrality towards religion... In enforcing the prohibition against laws respecting establishment of religion, we must be sure that we do not inadvertently prohibit the government

*from extending its general state law benefits to all its citizens without regard to their religious belief... We have held that the guarantee of neutrality is respected, not offended, when the government, following neutral criteria and evenhanded policies, extends benefits to recipients whose ideologies and viewpoints, including religious ones, are broad and diverse.*¹²

Under the heading “In Defence of True Pluralism,” Antonides writes:

The order of creation is God’s design for everything that exists. All human and non-human creation is subject to His law order. This order displays great variety and diversity both in nature and in human culture. The phrase “according to their kind” is used no fewer than nine times in the creation story. God has made everything after its own kind and He created a vast multitude of things, plants, animals, people and societal structures. Each is subject to its own law sphere. Thus, for example, mathematics is subject to a different order than is a flower or an animal.

Each individual person is different from all others... Similarly, society does not consist of a collection of individuals, but is constituted of a host of different structures, institutions and... associations. This great variety... is made possible because it is built into the order of creation. Societal variety and differentiation is a sign of true historical progress, because it is precisely in the free development of a variety of structures that human responsibility and freedom can flourish.

To be sure he is understood, Antonides quotes from Richard John Neuhaus, who explained the concept of freedom succinctly: “Freedom is found in obedience to the normative; all other liberations are just different ways of being lost.”¹³

In distinction from secularists who seek to impose their stamp on society by forcing religion out of the public square, Antonides does

*not advocate the establishment of a Christian society. That is beyond our ability in any case, and it would fail to reckon with the reality that many people have used their freedom to choose for a faith other than Christianity. Nevertheless, we must object to the argument that the Christian faith is a private matter and therefore has no place in the public realm. In a genuinely democratic and open society, the public square should be a place for conversation and dialogue about ideas and faith commitments. No one faith may lay claim to the entire square. This will mean some compromise on the part of everyone, but compromise is a necessary ingredient in a genuine democracy. A compromise does not necessitate the surrender of principle...*¹⁴

Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, wrote a brief popular exposition of Kuyperian pluralism. Mouw is deeply aware that the world of politics is one where compromise between different visions is the order of the day. In that kind of context, suggests Mouw,

The most plausible political framework for Christians to advocate... is that of a pluralistic society. This involves a commitment by Christians to a society governed by a posture of impartiality toward persons and groups whose pursuits and life-styles reflect a diversity of fundamental commitments. Such a social and political framework is attractive from a Christian point of view for two reasons. First, the Body of Christ must advocate social and governmental structures for the larger human community in which it is possible for the Church to be itself... The people of God must seek the freedom to exercise... obedience in all dimensions of its life...

Second, a Christian will not only seek this freedom for himself. He will also want to advocate structures in which persons and groups with differing perspectives and loyalties are free to live out their commitments. Christians should not wish for the coercive imposition of Christian patterns of behavior on those who do not freely choose to serve the Lord...

Mouw recognises that there may be differences of opinion regarding freedom and justice. That can create a situation where Christians have to be satisfied with less than perfect solutions and with

fragmentary justice and peace. But such commitments are legitimate, if we view them not as the end but the beginning of our Christian witness. Once the first step of partial peace has been taken, the Christian [or the Muslim] can prepare for the second step towards fuller peace until he reaches “the peace which passes human understanding.”¹⁵

Coming back to Antonides, he recognises that the term “pluralism” is used in at least three ways. The first meaning is “relativism,” something he and all Kuyperians reject. Another meaning is the one described in the previous paragraph, where there is insistence on the freedom of all human beings and opinions to play their role in the public square and to be equally respected and treated by the government. “Each person has a spiritual freedom that must be respected by all human authority. Freedom means that life may not be regulated by command but that people must exercise their own responsibility.” Kuyperians tend to call this “confessional pluralism.” The third meaning has reference to “the existence of a variety of societal structures, each with its own specific and limited task, scope and kind of authority.” Here we are back in the territory of sphere sovereignty that he also discusses.¹⁶ The Kuyperian term for this one is “structural pluralism.” So, a double type of pluralism: “the rights and liberties of a diversity of religious

convictions” and “the right of a diversity of societal relationships.”¹⁷ This double pluralism, according to Antonides, “is the only true safeguard against arbitrary power and despotism.” That is to say, we need to protect both religious and cultural pluralism in Nigeria as well as the equality and relative autonomy of the different social spheres. Discussions about this double type of pluralism appear frequently in Kuyperian literature; it is one of their classics.

My final quote for this section is from McFetridge, introduced earlier, who promoted political Calvinism with such vigour. “What, then, do we mean by Calvinism?” he asks. Without any acquaintance with Kuyperian pluralism but very much in line with it, he replies,

*It is the right and privilege of every man and of every body of men to give a reason for the hope that is in them, and to maintain by all lawful means what they conceive to be the truth. Intolerance is no part of our creed, unless it be the intolerance of all shams and lies and hypocrisies. Of such things we all are, I trust, intolerant. But as regards the sacred rights and privileges of men, Calvinism is one of the most tolerant...of all systems of belief.*¹⁸

Tolerant even to make room for its most bitter enemies, for those who have suppressed it, as Kuyper and his successors amply demonstrated. If it has a weakness, it may be that it has no clearly defined natural limits that do not violate its logic. I judge that Kuyperians need to establish proper limits so that, when applied, this pluralism does not lead to the lawlessness and immorality we now have in both Nigeria as well as the West and that starves us of all positive moral and other standards.

As a personal penultimate aside, sometimes I wonder whether secularism borrowed a leaf from Islam. Islamic governments have a long tradition of tolerance towards Jews, Christians and others. For many centuries they outshone Christians in this respect. However,

these other religions were tolerated only as long as they met the parameters set by Muslims. They were not free to express themselves publicly, to advertise their presence except as secondary citizens, to evangelize, etc., etc. Certainly they were not free to participate in the public square as Christians or Jews. It is quite similar to secular restrictions that are increasingly severe in Canada. Both Islam and secularism are wholistic, but both have difficulties tolerating rival *wholistic* perspectives. Restrict your religion to religious institutions and your home. As long as you agree to these restrictions, your religion will be tolerated. It is the death knell for any religion to be so restricted—and even more so for any religion to agree to such restrictions.

Much has been written about this Kuyperian pluralism. The above treatment is little more than a hint of the political practices it has engendered and of the rich theory underlying these practices. I must let it go at this and encourage you to pursue it on your own. But here you have a theory that offers a place in the sun to people of all persuasions without anyone imposing their perspective on others and without degenerating into relativism or syncretism. Here you have a social theory that has its feet solidly in both creation and religion. I believe that, with its emphasis on the creation order, it has much to commend itself to both Christians and Muslims.

▲ POLITICS AND RELIGION

The secular notion of separation of religion and politics—in distinction from Church and politics—has never sat well with Calvinists in general. McFetridge insisted on an “organic connection”; in other words, a natural one. “That religious and civil liberty have an organic connection and a natural affinity is [historically] quite obvious. They hold together as root and branch.” Quoting from De Tocqueville, he continues, “By the side of every religion is to be found a political opinion connected with it by

affinity. If the human mind be left to follow its own bent, it will regulate the temporal and spiritual institutions of society in a uniform manner, and man will endeavor, if I may so speak, to harmonize earth with heaven.” “When a man is free to follow his own inclinations, he will body forth his religion in his political beliefs.” Where this is the case, Calvinism has always championed freedom and democracy, McFetridge asserted. He supports this assertion with reference to developments in the U.K., the Netherlands, U.S.A. and other countries where Calvinism has been influential. It is only when other factors override the natural connection that this link may disappear—and that is the case with secularism that has created a huge disconnect between the *Christian* religion or belief system and politics. But it has *not* disconnected religion in general or belief systems in general from politics, for the belief system of secularism has become the de facto faith, even among many whose *official* or *declared* faith is Christianity.

Kuyperians regard political life, like the rest of culture, as arising out of the Cultural Mandate and, thus, an expression of faith, world view, religion. Basing himself on Romans 13 and other Biblical passages, Paul Marshall wrote,

Political authority is authority from God. Those who hold political office... can do so because God has authorised such an office for the governing and service of humankind. Political authority is not an area apart from the Gospel, but can be an area of ministry performed by ministers¹⁹ of God. It can be ministry just as much as any office in the church. This authority is not a thing separate from the reign of Jesus Christ but is itself a manifestation of the authority of the King of Kings... who said, “All authority in heaven and earth is given unto me” (Matthew 28:18).²⁰

Similarly, Evan Runner, under the heading “Politics, an Aspect of Our Religion,” insisted that the “*Christian political life is...an*

aspect of our single-hearted life-walk before God.” In a following section he continued, “Of course, all political action is religion,” though it can be false as well as true religion. All political activity is an expression of the faith or belief of its practitioners, though people often do not realize this and even deny it.²¹

The Christian political task is not something individual Christians can take up according to their individual insights. It is not something that we may feel for or not feel for, take or leave as we please, depending on whether we “happen” to have...some more developed political interest or ability...The Christian political task is part of the divine assignment, part of the cultural mandate...it is a task given to God’s people, the renewed humanity, to accomplish together...the Truth. It is an aspect of our building together genuine community...

Runner continued,

*The Christian political task is first of all service of God. It is...part of our whole religion. When we assume our human task, we place ourselves under the sovereignty of God and inquire as to His ordinances and commandments. We begin with the confession: the Lord reigns! Not we, not chance or necessity, not the spirit of the time or progress, but the Lord reigns. Therefore, [also in politics] we must obey Him. His glory is our first concern.*²²

Sometimes Christians ask whether Christ participated in politics. Usually the question is asked by people who are negative with regards to politics and who will tell you to follow Christ’s example. If He did not go into politics, why should we? Runner commented that we should reject this question, not answer it, for it is falsely motivated. Christ came to save the world in its fundamentals. Out of His work and that of the

Apostles, “a whole Christian life would develop.” We are to offer Him our entire lives, withholding nothing. Politics is part of that service in His world.²³

The question arises on whose behalf Christians should conduct politics. Runner’s answer is: for the entire world. Christian politics is to bring to the entire world the blessing of Christ. “It is genuinely Christian...only when it is...service to the world, to all mankind.” It may never serve only particular groups of Christians or churches. It is for the good of all people, no matter their religion. In Nigeria, that means it is meant to bless Muslims and Islam as much as Christians and Christianity.²⁴

There are those who feel that if you cannot win the election, then you are wasting your time. Runner rejected this line. Christian politics is, first of all, witness, not winning or even ruling. “Like the rest of the Christian life, political life is first of all witness. It is a witness to the direction this aspect of life must take from the Word of God.”²⁵

▲ GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

This section on “Government and Politics” comes *after* that on “Politics and Religion.” This may seem strange, since politics are so closely tied in with government that the subjects can hardly be separated, while politics and religion are supposed to be far removed from each other, at least in the cult of secularism. If you have read the previous section, you will understand the reason. As closely as government and politics are related to each other, religion is even closer to politics in that it is the prevailing religion, values, world views and beliefs of both politicians and the political system as a whole that determine the shape of the entire enterprise. This holds for both politics and government. Hence, it makes sense to begin with the subject of politics with its relationship to religion, and now we are ready for government and politics.

Kuyperians have written many articles and books about the Christian view of government and politics. It has always been a major concern for them, for the simple reason that the movement was born in resistance to intolerant, secular, “liberal” government. Basic to their approach is the theory of sovereignty of the spheres discussed earlier. In keeping with the theory just mentioned, Gousmett writes the following:

The state is only one of the spheres of society, with the task of protecting the other spheres of society. Its task is to ensure the establishment and maintenance of just relations between all spheres, including the proper sovereignty of those spheres. Those that are weak must be enabled to become strong; those that overreach their proper bounds must be drawn back. The areas of sovereignty of each sphere can be discerned from God’s revelation, both directly and as it illuminates our experience and understanding of the world He has created. The state may not interfere with the proper exercise of the authority of those sovereign spheres.

Kuyperians regard this sphere-based sociology a prerequisite for freedom. Writes Gousmett, “The idea of freedom can reach its fulfillment only with a correct view of society, that is, with the protection of the sovereignty of the various spheres, since otherwise there is no check on the power of the majority”²⁶—or, for that matter, on that of the government.

Bennie van der Walt summarizes his own lengthy discussion about the role of government as follows:

- God appoints people as office-bearers. In the case of the state, He appoints a government which has to serve the citizens according to His will and...owes Him accounting.
- The service of the government consists of its guiding the citizens in such a way that their calling as citizens

can be fulfilled, and that wrongs which obstruct such fulfillment be opposed.

- The norm for the fulfillment of the calling...of the state is public justice towards all citizens.
- The government may not unnecessarily intrude in the spheres of other societal relations and assume for itself totalitarian authority.
- The government may not suppress basic rights of citizens such as public expression of opinion. It can be to the advantage of the government itself if ways are left open for citizens to express their dissatisfaction with government in a peaceful way.
- The government has received a special power from God: the power of the sword. If forced to exercise this power in a violent manner, it should always be a matter of constructive or positive and not destructive or negative power. It should promote, not destroy public justice.
- Should a government neglect its calling, it should be reminded by other societal relationships (such as, for example, the Church) or by its subjects. This protest or even rebellion against the abuse of the office of government is to be carried out in a peaceful way. All legal ways of protest should be tried first. Should this not succeed, nothing will remain but non-violent civil disobedience.
- What if the government remains blind and deaf to entreaties, if it keeps making empty promises which repeatedly culminate in nothing, if it is paralysed by a cowardly fear of restrictive influences in its own ranks, if it keeps ascribing the cause of the unrest to “agitators,” even “foreigners,” and if civil disobedience is suppressed because it endangers “law and order?” Such

government should not be surprised if law and order finally evade it altogether, because it has been deaf to pleas and entreaties for justice.²⁷

Antonides writes:

There is a long history of Christian thought (within both Catholicism and Protestantism) that consider the state's core responsibility to be the preservation of a political-legal framework within which the rights and freedoms of all citizens are protected. Fundamental to the just state is the maintenance and protection of the rule of law, of public order, of national borders, of the currency, of the infrastructure necessary for a modern society, and of a social safety net. Despite this rather extensive list of duties, there has been in Christian thought a strong emphasis on the limits of the state and the need for the state to respect those limits. Christianity is, in principle, anti-totalitarian. Basically, the task of the state can be described as the administration of public justice. The emphasis on public means that all members of the public (citizens) are equally entitled to the protection of the state and the safeguarding of their constitutional freedoms.²⁸

As to the role of citizens with respect to government, van der Walt suggests the following guidelines:

- Citizens are to respect the government, even when it is unjust, and, in direct obedience to God's command, pay taxes to the government.
- The Christian may never be involved with violence. He should be involved with peace. God is God of peace (2 Corinthians 13:11). Christ is Lord of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). The Gospel is a gospel of peace (Ephesians 2:17). This peace is not simply a matter of maintaining the status quo, but the upholding of God's peace.

- The Christian is to serve as an example of love and reconciliation. “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” (Romans 12:14). Even though it may be very difficult, we may never tire of doing good (2 Thessalonians 3:13).
- The Christian has to help all people, but especially the weak, such as the poor, the dispossessed and the suffering. And structures, which often are the cause of suffering and poverty, should be examined critically. This is the Christian citizen’s first responsibility.
- The Christian may never stop praying (I Timothy 2:1-2). Have you ever tried to imagine how difficult it is to hold high office? Do we still realize the strength of prayer to effect change (James 5:16)?
- The Christian may not neglect his prophetic calling as a citizen, whether with regard to government or to the weak, whatever religion they belong to. The Old Testament (OT) Prophets are our examples here. They loudly criticized their own as well as foreign rulers and nations. They were neither tribalistic nor nationalistic.
- There is need to gain clarity about the relationship between the Church and the state. (Unfortunately van der Walt does not express himself clearly here.)
- The Christian should use all permissible means to change an unjust situation to a just and peaceful society. Both oppressors and privileged should be addressed. An oppressor actively uses existing structures to commit injustice to his own advantage or that of his group at the expense of others. A privileged person may not have had a hand in creating the unjust structure, and he does not consciously use the structure to the detriment of others. Still it is the duty of both exploiter

and privileged to end the injustice. They should not wait to correct the situation till the victims turn to violence as a last resort.

- It is the duty of the Christian to keep trying to convince the government of change in situations of injustice.²⁹

▲ CHURCH–STATE RELATIONS

The relationship between Church and state has been a troublesome one in Western history. Who was to have the upper hand? It's been a seesaw. Kuyperians insist that

*the doctrine of sphere sovereignty provides the only way in which the impasse can be resolved. This [doctrine] does not subordinate the state to the Church, nor subordinate the Church to the state, nor artificially draw a boundary between them...The doctrine of sphere sovereignty rejects both nature/grace dualism and the basis on which the conflict between Church and state is based, namely, the contention for supreme control in society. This conflict arises from a false conception of the nature of the Church and its role in society.*³⁰

Kuyperians hold that “Christ...is supreme over one world, one society, one humankind. Human beings are responsible to Christ...not only in their membership of the Church, but in every sphere of society.”

The task of the church is not to act as the realm of Christ's rule, from which divine grace “trickles down” to others...Rather, the role of the church is to proclaim the rule of Christ and to make known the availability of divine grace directly to all human society through Christ. But, instead, the church has often acted as if it were Christ's regent, with its officials ruling in His stead and seeking to see all human

society come under their sway. Through this means, grace has been locked up within the church, and deprived from the rest of society, resulting in the secularisation of both church and society as a whole. Society is secularised, that is, cut off from God and considered to have independence and autonomy, while the church is secularised by seeking to remain relevant to his secularised society through adopting its agendas and programmes.

The officials of the state, as much as the officials of the church, are alike and equally the ministers of God. They are not different in dignity or importance, but only in function. The officials of the church are charged with the proclamation of the Scriptures, making known and making clear to believers and unbelievers alike what God requires of us in every area of life. The officials of the state are charged with carrying out their task in ways which are consonant with the revelation of Scripture...

So, according to Kuyperian theory, the official institutional church “must restrict itself to proclaiming the message of the covenant.” But the Body of Christ, i.e., the people of Christ, “can and must engage in any and every area of life as ambassadors of Christ, bringing the light of God’s word into their work and leisure.”

“To refuse to bring the Word of God to bear on political life through the preaching, teaching and liturgy of the Church is to...muzzle [the Word of God],” according to Gousmett. The reason some people refuse

is not because the church is apolitical, but because it is politicised by its members who will not allow their own political opinions, practice and ideals to be scrutinized in the light of the Word...It is a result of church members taking a profane political stance who do not want to be exposed to the Truth concerning politics in the liturgy and teaching of the church.

Any acquiescence to demands from such members to cease confronting their political convictions with the Word of God...has as a result [that] politics enters the church and controls the [preached] Word of God...

Some additional comments by Gousmett: “The political task of the church institution is the proclamation of the Scriptures as Word of God to human life...that encompasses all that we do, and therefore directly addresses political life...” The “supreme task of the state” is the administration of justice, “and to this task the Church must address its political message.” By doing so, “the Church fulfills its task with relation to the state. More than this it is not permitted to do.”³¹

Pieter Coertzen of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, interprets the position on Church and state relations of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), a council comprising a wide range of Reformed Churches, as follows:

This entails a separation of church and state not in a total manner but in a manner where the state, within the boundaries of its power, guarantees freedom of religion for the church. However, the task of the state to guarantee this freedom of religion cannot pertain only to one church alone. It must also pertain to the plurality of...religions within the boundaries of the state. This in no way diminishes the responsibility of...a Reformed church to state its conviction that the whole of life—also political life—should be conducted in accordance with the Word of God; to confess that the authorities are instituted by God to curb and punish all evil; to confess that it expects the state to provide protection for the church [and other religions] and to serve the...kingdom of God in the manner appropriate to the state; and to confess that it as church expects this of all authorities, irrespective of whether they are Christian or not. For the church this is the principle of freedom of religion. On

*the other hand, while the church expects this from the state, it cannot expect it for itself alone. A Reformed church must realise that the state must grant the same freedom to all other...religions within the limits of its authority.*³²

Coertzen warns that a simple constitutional guarantee does not cover the situation adequately; more is needed. This “more” has to come from the legislature, but also from the religious groupings themselves. They “will have to co-operate with each other...on issues that concern them all.” Together they will have to work with the Legislature to ensure that newly developed legislation does not undermine the constitutional guarantees for freedom.³³ So, the protection of religious freedom requires inter-religious co-operation. The failure of such co-operation is likely to lead to undermining religious freedom in the long run. Christians and Muslims, are you listening?

Occasionally in these studies I have complained that many people mix up the issue of Church and state with that of religion and state. Kuyperians are in tune with most other Christians and even secularists on the issue of separation of Church and state. They do not wish the state to have a special relationship with any single denomination or religion at the expense of others. The state must treat all religions equally.

However, that does not mean that religious social organizations, whether belonging to a church or mosque or organized on their own, should be denied government aid or that such aid should only be given to so-called secular organizations. Where the latter happens, we have in effect the establishment if not of a religion, certainly of a certain world view or belief at the exclusion of others. That is what is happening in some secular countries, especially in education. I have argued that point already earlier under the heading “pluralism.” If the government wishes to support a certain kind of activity or development, she should do so regardless of who spon-

sors it. If the government is involved in education, it should get involved in the education of every religion or philosophy, not merely that of secularists. In other words, this separation does not mean exclusion from sharing government grants. The principle is not meant to suppress religion but to protect it from unhealthy relationships with the government and with other religions.

Neither does the principle of separation of Church and state mean that individual Christians should not bring their faith to bear on political issues. In some secular countries like Canada there is an extreme phobia about inserting overtly religious concerns into politics. Of course, those so afflicted fail to recognise that they themselves bring them together all the time. All the major tenets of secularism are beliefs, unproven assumptions, that they merely believe to be universal and natural. It is just another faith alongside the others. So, as secularists bring their faith to bear on politics, so can Christians, Muslims and all others. Again, not as Church but as believers, either as individuals or as groups organized for that purpose.

Believers are part of the Body of Christ that flourishes most when members think and act together. Hence, in some countries Kuypereans have created political parties. In other countries, Christians organize coalitions, associations, action groups, all with a political focus, without actually becoming parties. These will monitor political developments and challenge undesirable ones by any legitimate means available to them. They will confer, publish, broadcast, consult, meet with officials in government or in political parties, lobby, boycott—any legitimate means at all.

In Nigeria this happens mostly by the Church itself in the form of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) or as Catholic bishops. The reasons the Church in Nigeria is involved in politics are several. One is the undifferentiated state of traditional society, though that is rapidly changing now. A second is the natural tendency towards social hierarchy in Nigerian culture. The church leadership

is thought to sit on the top of the religious establishment and should therefore represent and speak for not only the Church but also for all Christians. Probably the strongest force preserving this situation is the dualistic framework in the Christian community that equates religion and Church, that thinks of the Church and its hierarchy as the proprietor of the Christian religion and dispenser of its blessings. The Church “owns” the religion; it “owns” Christ. “Lay” people must toe the line of the religious hierarchy.

The Kuyperian tradition insists on the maturity of the so-called “laity.” The Reformation coined the term “the priesthood of all believers.” Unfortunately, due to their inherited dualism, even in churches that have accepted that principle, Christians restrict that priesthood to the Church and do not take it into the marketplace, whether business or politics. Kuyperians challenge Christians to be priests and prophets in the marketplace, independent from any church hierarchy, but very closely dependent on the Word of God for direction. Not by themselves, but together with others to become expressions of the Body of Christ in the various marketplace sectors. When the church institute gets involved in that front, it will destroy the Church, for it will take sides and thus estrange those members who happen to favour another side. It can no longer serve as pastor to all members, regardless of political persuasion. Worst of all, it then violates the sovereignty of other spheres and thus is no longer in a position to resist other spheres that may be similarly tempted, like the government.

The question thus becomes whether the Church has any political function at all. Indeed it has. A very important one at that. Its function is to proclaim the relevant teachings of Scripture without building political theories on that basis or without proclaiming how a specific political problem is to be settled concretely. It must continue to insist on justice, on God’s concern for the poor and weak, on love, on honesty and discipline. All of them need to be applied in politics, but their application is not the Church’s role;

that is for the political Body of Christ, for the Christians in politics to figure out, preferably in concert with one another.

▲ THE GREAT MYTH IN POLITICS³⁴ _____

I am going to copy most of a lecture given by E. L. Hebden Taylor at the Institute of Christian Studies Center in Memphis, U.S.A. Taylor was an Anglican Kuyparian. The lecture is put in the stark kind of language that most Nigerians, both Christians and Muslims, are accustomed to in their writings and that expresses disagreements with vigour, not to say with hostility. There it is, right in your face. It was written to address the American situation of a few decades ago, but it expresses the Kuyparian point of view in a spirit that should seem familiar to Muslims. Nigerian Christian readers should remember that the enemy in this document is secularism, not Islam. Reading this lecture is in effect a repeat of most of the concepts met so far in this Part 2 and will thus reinforce the main ideas I have introduced. Read it prayerfully and thoughtfully. It is lengthy, but it says it all in plain language.

*Before Christians can hope to make any contribution to the solution of the social and political ills afflicting our nation, it is imperative that they first dispose of the secular humanist myth of the neutrality of politics so far as religion is concerned. According to this neutrality principle, Christians may participate in the political process only as citizens but never as believers. Thus in his book *The Christian in Politics*, Walter James argues:*

“The Christian is called upon to act beside other men and no assurance is given him that he will sense God’s purpose better than they. He can no more aim to be a Christian statesman than a Christian engineer. Politics has its own techniques, aims and standards, vary though they may, and in the

light of them...the Christian's effort must be to make a good politician and no more. He stands on a par with the non-Christian, just as there are no denominations in the science of physics.³⁵ His religion will give him no special guidance in his public task, as it will do within his personal relationships with close neighbors."

In thus advocating that Christians should restrict their religion to the field of personal relationships, James has neatly fallen into the secular humanist trap that tries to place religion alongside man's other activities and interests...This modern idea of religion is one that the secular world around us today loves to have Christians accept.

Secular humanists have no objection to our Christian faith, provided we reserve it strictly for ourselves in the privacy of our homes and churches, and just as long as we do not try to live up to our Christian principles in our business and public life. On no account must the Spirit and Word of the Lord be allowed to enter the ballot booth or the market place where the real decisions of modern life are made, nor must religion interfere with such vital matters as education, politics, labour relations...These activities are all supposed to be "neutral" and they can therefore be withdrawn from religious influences so that the secular spirit of the community may prevail.

A Neutrality Concept

According to the secular humanists, people may hold different views and religious beliefs with respect to their personal lives, but in politics, education and...such basic religious convictions need play no part. In all these areas of modern life it is supposed that men and women, races and classes and nations and peoples can be united by an appeal to common utility, expediency and "technical" reason rather than by the appeal to a religious criterion...

Speaking of this neutrality concept... Bernard Zylstra well said: "Neutralism is the view that man can live wholly or partly without taking God's Word into account. Those who pay homage to the fiction of neutrality maintain that many segments of modern culture are merely technical. It is then thought that a corporation, a union, a school, a government can be run by making exclusively factual...decisions which have no relation to one's ultimate perspective... The defenders of...[this approach] are among the most dangerous guides to a wholly secular world."

From whence did such an idea ever arise that men and nations could conduct their affairs without any reference to fundamental religious and moral principles?³⁶ The answer in brief is that it arose from the secularization of the medieval...dualism of Thomas Aquinas which divided up human life into two spheres—the supernatural, revealed to man by God's Word...and the natural which is known to man by his own reason. For our purposes here, the significance of this cutting of reality in two is that Aquinas located the state in the...natural sphere, arguing that its structure, nature and function could be explained in purely natural or human terms. The state was in fact the product of man's reason rather than an institution ordained by God on account of man's fall into sin, since Aquinas claimed that the fall had not ruined man's reason but only his will.

Refusing to be directed in his thinking about government and politics by the Word of God, Aquinas instead turned to Aristotle for his political and legal doctrine. Accordingly, Aquinas taught that political institutions are an aspect of "natural" morality, that is they can be justified on a purely human plane, independently of religious values.

For generations both Roman Catholics and Protestants have denied any Christian character to the state as such by

supposing that the state is something strictly “natural” and “neutral.” Knowledge of the natural sphere, for Aquinas, could be obtained by man’s reason alone, which had remained uncorrupted by the fall of man into radical sin. Only man’s will had fallen, not his reason. From this incomplete view of the Biblical fall have flowed the most serious consequences. Man’s intellect and science became autonomous or independent of God’s holy Word. This autonomy, in the course of the centuries...was to provide the basis for the secularization and “neutralization” of Western...[culture], and above all Western economics and government.

The Great Turnaround in Thinking

Upon basis of this autonomy first provided by Aquinas, European life...and culture became free of God’s law...and separated from His revelation...As a result, there soon came to be felt no need for a distinctive Christian philosophy of society and the state....The tendency toward a complete secularization of politics and statecraft increased until it reached its apostate climax in the French Revolution³⁷ in 1789 and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917.

At this point, Taylor goes into a harangue about the struggles in the U.S.A. between Calvinists and Evangelicals. The upshot was that “Evangelicals came to accept the division of life into sacred and secular and the compartmentalization of religion from economics, politics and science. In these areas of life many of the leading figures were rationalists rather than Christian.³⁸ Religiously, Evangelicals became pietistic and “tended to concentrate on the soul rather than on the structures of society...”

Continuing the long Taylor quote:

It is not surprising that such pietists have tended, with some notable exceptions, to think of their religion as being mainly

concerned with the salvation of the individual's soul. As a consequence, pietism has greatly assisted in the secularization of... culture and society, since its religious individualism takes for granted or ignores the structures of society outside the institutional church and seeks rather to build up significant religious cells of the "saved" within society.

Instead of thinking that Christians should be concerned with the reformation of the whole of life, pietism demands the segregation of certain spheres of life as being peculiarly "religious" and teaches that Christians should concentrate their religious activities upon personal and devotional disciplines. In short, they concern themselves entirely with the sphere of the supernatural and ignore the sphere of the natural. The larger questions of politics and business tend to become discounted and played down because they are considered to be religiously "neutral."³⁹

As Christianity has become merely another department of life existing alongside the other independent spheres such as business and politics, it is not surprising that it has come to exercise less and less influence upon the cultural and political formation of American society. In this way, the gates have been opened for the triumph of secular humanism in America. Instead of being the salt of society... most [Christians] have become fit only to be trodden down under the feet of unbelievers.

The secular humanist and Evangelical pietist arguments for keeping religion out of politics and economics are exposed as being only specious propaganda on behalf of the god of modern secular humanism. It is not a question of whether we should or should not bring religion into our economic and public life, but the crucial question is this: By which religious motivation and by which religious criterion of value will we be governed in our social life? As William Penn warned us in his famous words: "Men must choose to be governed by God or they condemn themselves to be ruled by tyrants."

All Aspects of Life!

A true Christian will surely want to be guided in all aspects of his life by a Biblical motivation rather than by a neutralist humanist one. If Christians really acknowledge that God rather than man or the state is sovereign in this universe, how can they avoid the conclusion that God's dominion and supremacy must extend over every aspect of life, including the political and economic, and that the living God cannot be shut up in the walls of a church building or a limited circle of Christian believers. Do the Christian "neutralists"...think that God has abandoned the world outside the Church to Satan and the powers of darkness?

Because God is supreme and sovereign, His divine norms and standards of justice, truth, goodness, beauty, mercy and love must have the final control and motivation in everything the Christian thinks, wills and does. These norms rather than those of a...[disobedient] political, legal and economic science must become the directives by which the Christian is guided as a citizen, as a worker, as a teacher, as a businessman and as a parent. And they alone must constantly enlighten us in solving the problems with which we are faced in all areas of life.

God's beautiful world has become corrupted by man's sin and the power of darkness. Evidence of this in America [and indeed most countries] is surely overwhelming. Last year millions of babies were killed by abortion, more than one out of three marriages ended in divorce, over a million people were put into mental hospitals, corruption abounds, crimes of violence reached an all time high. It will only be through the Lord Jesus Christ that America can now hope to avoid revolutionary chaos and be made whole again.

...It is up to us to do everything in our power to prevent our beloved land from being undermined and destroyed by the powers of darkness which have largely taken over the political

and economic direction of our nation's life. For Christians to withdraw from politics, industry, education and communications is exactly what Satan most wants, for no battle was yet won in history where the soldiers refused to fight.

Traitors to God's Kingdom

If Christians accept the neutralist principles, not only will Christ's cause go by default but also Christians themselves will inevitably become traitors to God's Kingdom. In fact, all that is now necessary for the complete triumph of apostate secular humanism and its attendant consequences is for Christians to sit back in their church pews, sing hymns and do absolutely nothing outside in the workaday world...⁴⁰

We must seek to show the tremendous relevance of the Biblical view of man-in-society for political and economic life. Our Lord is giving us an opportunity to study through the economic and political implications of our discipleship. Let us then pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us into a further and deeper understanding of the unsearchable riches that are in Christ Jesus our Saviour and let us pray that we may be determined to make Christ's Kingdom real in every aspect of our lives. As the Lord of history, space and time, Jesus Christ can be satisfied with nothing less than the Christian reformation of society as a whole, and it therefore becomes our bounden duty and glorious privilege as His disciples to struggle for a condition of modern society which will give the maximum opportunity for all to live a full, free and more abundant life. We are to make sure that we are never controlled by an apostate and rebellious world...

▲ ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS LIFE⁴¹ _____

One day I stopped along the highway south of Jos, Nigeria, to buy potatoes from women selling vegetables. I knew that this par-

ticular community was largely Christian. I picked out a certain basket with potatoes and settled on a price fair to both. As the potatoes were poured out of the basket into a sack, it became clear that the lower half of the basket was full of cardboard instead of potatoes. I semi-jokingly asked the women in the Hausa language, “*Ku ba Kirista ba? Haka Yesu ya koya maku kuwa?*” One of the women promptly retorted, “*Ina ruwan Yesu da dankali?*”⁴² It is a humorous story, but also tragically representative of the separation of economics and business from religious standards that is common almost everywhere among Christians at every level. It is a separation based on the dualism we have discussed and that obviously has made deep inroads into the thinking of these village Christians, the beneficiaries of an Evangelical mission.

Like other sections of this chapter, this section does little more than give some examples of Kuyperian views on the subject. For an example in the economic sphere I turn from the village level depicted above to the global matter of corporations, since this is a frequently-expressed concern of Nigerian Muslims. In the book from which this material is taken, I write of recognizing the world of commerce as a potential *area* for Christian mission or as a *vehicle* for mission. Muslims and Kuyperians see it as both; many other Christians, Evangelicals prominent among them, see it only as an *area* for mission.

The distinction between the two italicized terms is crucial. In so far as they have had any vision for the economic sphere at all, Evangelicals, in their pre-wholistic era at any rate, have tended to regard this basically as an area in which the participants need to be evangelized. The standard styles of operation within the world of economics and its structures are hardly ever questioned. By and large, the capitalist style and structures are accepted as they are, except when blatant immoralities occur such as the accounting scandals or the slave trade in which both Christians and Muslims excelled at one time.

Kuyperians regard economic activity also as a vehicle for mission. That is, as a vehicle to carry out our basic task in this world as prescribed in Scripture, a task much broader than evangelism. I refer you again to the section on the Cultural Mandate, where I describe post-fall cultural developments. Almost all corporations have followed the pattern there described. They are twisted by their own internal logic, by the very reason for which people organize them, namely profit as the overriding purpose. They are examples of the way fallen people carry out the Cultural Mandate in the economic sphere, twisted expressions that tend towards oppression and distortions instead of enhancing positive developments in human culture. If the fallout of these distortions were restricted to the community of corporations that would be one thing. It becomes a serious matter when, as Douglas Roche, a prominent Canadian senator, parliamentarian and U.N. diplomat, put it, “the political process is dominated by the powerful elements...who want...to retain their power” and that “business interests dominate the formulation of public policy,” a situation of which “there is no doubt.” Roche added, “The constant aggressiveness of business and political interests has been the driving force of progress” to such an extent that “there is scant room for social justice in this agenda.”⁴³ Thus these distortions spill over into all of life and twist the entire human enterprise.

The mandate for Christians, in fact for all humans, is not to withdraw from the economic sphere but to redirect it in a positive way. Sometimes this can be done by reformation; at other times more radical change is needed, revolution even. The major change needed is to demote the profit motive from its bottom line perch. When that is attempted, you are not merely making a minor adjustment; you are changing the very soul of the system. That is revolution, though not, I pray, a bloody one.

Kuyperians do not opt for Marxism or any other milder form of socialism. I make a point of this because in Nigeria a large number of Christian and Muslim academics dislike capitalism and opt

for Marxism, regarding it as a more compassionate way. However, Marxist theories of anthropology, of a closed universe and materialism, are so hopelessly unrealistic and unscientific that they have no credibility, without even mentioning their oppressive style. When property and enterprise are all usurped by the state and the latter disregards the sovereignty of the spheres, it becomes all pervasive and no opportunity is left for people to freely develop their potentials. Talent is stunted; enterprise, dulled. I have a few times personally seen the startling difference within the length of one city block upon crossing the former Iron Curtain.

On the capitalist side, there are many admirable aspects, some of which have long roots in history and that have either developed out of or been supported by a Christianized, not to say “Christian,” consciousness. Private property and private enterprise are presupposed and supported in the Bible. However, the private aspect is never absolutized. It is always placed in the context of social responsibility and stewardship.

The differences in production between West and the former Eastern block are no accident. Freedom may allow for terrible distortions that can become offensive even, but it also constitutes the condition for creativity and ingenuity not found in Marxist societies. You can try to legally restrain these distortions, but you will also hinder the creativity and the incentive, two necessary ingredients for a viable economic system. No other type of organization has improved on corporate creativity and inventiveness—and, as Muslims might add, no other type has led to the level of immorality currently undermining the West.

Furthermore, the corporate type of organization with its device of investment is an expression of community. People from all over the world, who do not know each other, co-operate by pooling their resources to accomplish their desired aims. Churches and corporations both work that way. It is nonsense to describe corporations as purely individualistic; they are commu-

nal efforts. That kind of structure is not to be rejected per se.

Unfortunately, in most cases these positive aspects are distorted, because they are placed in the service of the primary motive of profit.⁴⁴ With profit as the primary guiding motive, so much of corporate life has degenerated into or tends towards oppression or distortions in society in their homelands as well as host countries, as my book from which this material is taken amply demonstrates. The current Western concern with the unhealthy foods that corporations are foisting on their customers is merely one of many examples. The profit motive needs to be demoted from its pedestal. Not profit itself—that is necessary to grease the machinery and without which the system will shrivel up—but the *priority of profits*. That motive needs to be replaced by a renewed consciousness of the Cultural Mandate, by a sense of service and co-operation, by a sense of responsibility for one's neighbour, development of the community and the ecological system, by a sense of stewardship with respect to resources.

The replacement of the priority of profit with service and responsibility cannot but lead to profound changes throughout the corporate system. It would change advertising techniques beyond recognition from sophisticated manipulation of the public psyche to a truthful offering of positive services and products. It would spell an end to the shark mentality where the strong wipes out the weaker competitor and leaves consumers and workers with less and less choices. It would eliminate ecological irresponsibility and the marketing of harmful products. Banks would not ally themselves with oppressive and corrupt elite so as to throw poor countries into the spiral of external debt for the sake of quick profits. Ah, it is almost impossible to picture the changes this basic transformation would bring or what shape corporate culture would take over time. We would enter a new economic era.

It is unrealistic to expect many investors to support such changes, but it would be quite conceivable that people of various

faiths, including Islam as well as the secular faith, would join in attempting such an economic revolution. I could see especially Kuyperians and Muslims give it a try together. Even certain secular organizations, such as the Vancouver-based VanCity Credit Union, are into socially responsible investment. The experience of the social investment movement described in my 1992 publication indicates that most investors, of whatever faith, secular or otherwise, will not tolerate such a revolution. It would interfere too radically with their basic aim.

Defenders of capitalism never tire of insisting that, as defective as it may be, capitalism is still the most effective economic order ever devised. I am not sure whether I have ever heard a poor man affirm this! It *is*, of course, undeniable that capitalist societies tend to spread the wealth around more than any other. So, the claim may well be true, at least for a certain stage of its development. However, the complaints coming in about globalism are increasing. Even the workers of the rich countries are finding themselves squeezed more and more. Whereas North American labour unions in the past could afford to run missions abroad, today, under the pressure of globalism, they are closing in on themselves to protect their jobs from being exported. The income gap between rich and workers is increasing. The crisis in the health-care systems of Canada and the U.S.A. can be traced to capitalist-created problems. The obscene salaries of executives and professionals are crying to high heavens. The globalist promise that the vulnerable ones will profit from current corporate expansion—"A rising tide lifts all boats."—is demonstrably not coming true.⁴⁵ There is every indication that the system is running into a crisis, the end of which cannot be foreseen.

Whatever the system's virtues may be, *it is not good enough for Christians*. It rides too roughshod over the weak and is too much guided by self-interest under pressure of the priority of profits. Regardless of the individual orientation of executives, directors or investors, there is a basic logic at work that militates against the

Christian Spirit. It suppresses the Spirit of God in even the most pious participant in the system.

I am not calling for Christians to withdraw from the investment world. The Cultural Mandate dictates that Christians make positive contributions to the direction of all sectors of life, including the corporate sector. However, that must be in the spirit of Christian stewardship and concerns as hinted at above. It must fit into the formula developed by the World Council of Churches for a “just, participatory, sustainable society.”⁴⁶

The issue here is the role of the Bible in the life and work of a Christian entrepreneur and investor. *The question is whether the Bible is to serve as brake or engine.* Most corporations in which Christians participate are motivated by the priority of profit. This motivation means that Christians are often involved in dubious ethical practices to which they may protest and call for correction. In such situations, the Gospel serves as a brake: it slows down, it reduces, it may even lead to the elimination of a specific problem. That is the situation in which Christians active in the ethical investment movement find themselves—forever running after de facto situations that arise from wrong motivations. The basic motivation remains in place, and thus they are forced to run after one unethical fire after another, forever tinkering with symptoms and never eliminating the basic problem. The Christian ethic is not given free creative scope but is forced into a box that does not fit.

When Christians, possibly in partnership with others who share similar motivations, create their own corporations, they will be much more at liberty to give free creative reign to the Cultural Mandate and to the prodding of the Holy Spirit. They will not need to struggle as small minorities against overwhelming majorities who do not share their concerns. They will thus free themselves from implication in and responsibility for the style of the happy family of incestuous corporations I have described in my 1992 publication.

More positively, the Spirit of God with His love for the wretched of the earth can then serve as the engine that pulls the enterprise along in directions in consonance with Him. In such a situation, Christians have the opportunity to discover what it means to be led into the truth as per John 16:13—“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.” This work of the Spirit is not restricted to “religious” affairs. He also offers the insights, motivation and power to break the shackles of negative economic motivations that lead towards inevitable distortions. It would definitely withdraw the stamp of approval capitalism has imprinted on egoistic motivations that are supposed to cancel each other out through an alleged invisible hand as the mechanism of the “neutral” marketplace.

This discussion is meant to indicate that many economic activities by Christians, whether by individuals or corporations, militate against their Christian mission in this world. What the Church and its members are supposed to do, namely to represent the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, to serve as God’s image in this world, is often undermined by the economic activities of Christians.⁴⁷ This is a terrible contradiction that must be corrected by rejecting the dualism underlying it. *Our economic mission and our evangelistic mission are expressions of the same mandate. The Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission must be brought in line with each other as I have argued elsewhere.*⁴⁸ Our economic activities must not only be supportive of Christian missions in terms of donating from the profits, but they themselves must be an expression of that mission. *Business equals mission*—that is the Kuyperian thrust as well as that of the Bible—and of Islam. Away with all dualism!

Another way of putting it is in terms of wholistic economics that takes all aspects of life into consideration. North American politics is ridden with divisions between those who emphasize either “economic policy” or “social policy.” Marshall points out that neither one should be emphasized

at the expense of the other; for they are both essential parts of stewardship. We cannot select either “realist” economics or “compassionate” economics, for, if realism is to be true to the real human world, then it must be compassionate and, if compassion is to be more than pious exhortation, then it must be realistic. Instead, we must avoid the “two track” framework altogether and try to make our corporate, family, individual and government decisions ones which are stewardly from the word go. We must make decisions about starting factories, developing new technologies, moving families, buying food, and adjusting taxes on the basis of their effects on unemployment, family life, production of genuinely needed things and gentleness to the environment as well as on their effects on incomes, profits and inflation. Right from the beginning we must be stewards and weigh [all] the options before us.⁴⁹

▲ FINAL COMMENT AND A CAUTION: NO GUARANTEE

I have offered aspects of the Kuyperian tradition for consideration as my contribution to the search for religious toleration and stability in Nigeria. In case you have not noticed, I want to draw your attention to a pattern that has emerged. Have you noticed how secularism always tries to force false choices or dilemmas on you? Individualism *or* communalism. Market economics *or* compassion. Faith *or* reason. Physical *or* spiritual. And have you noticed the tendency of Kuyperian thought to cut through these false dilemmas in favour of wholistic alternatives? Kuyperians reject the either-or approach of secularism and almost always find that the issues are wrongly defined or the wrong questions asked. That’s the Kuyperian style—in some ways, similar to that of Islam.

That was the comment. And now the caution. It should be understood that even if the Kuyperian tradition were understood by Muslims and adopted by Christians, this would not constitute an automatic guarantee that the aims of this series would be achieved and its results be permanent. I am offering this perspective at a time after it has been chastened, honed and matured for over a century.

An earlier, less mature version of the tradition was offered by Kuyperian missionaries in colonial Indonesia, but it could not prevent that country's current turbulence. There are reasons for that sad development that are beyond the reach of this series, but it certainly has to do with at least two factors: (1) Kuyperian missionaries arrived long after mission patterns had already jelled. They were too late to determine the direction. (2) Kuyperian thought itself began to fossilize between the world wars, something that happens to every tradition that fails to revitalize itself every generation.

In South Africa, aspects of the tradition were distorted and harnessed to the vested interests of apartheid.⁵⁰ That can happen. Any form of religion, no different from political or economic theory, can be distorted—as we are seeing all too clearly in Nigeria. But it must also be realized that it was deeply embarrassed Kuyperians from other continents who quietly, behind the scenes, doggedly worked with the offending Kuyperians. They laid the groundwork for a revived Kuyperianism that, as a result, became open to overtures and pressures for change. I personally know some of them involved. My own denomination, the Christian Reformed Church, played an aggressive part in this process without publicizing its activities. I have since then heard South African Blacks and so-called Coloureds passionately promote Kuyperian perspectives in the service of liberation.

And then there are the sad developments in The Netherlands, Kuyper's homeland, that has almost completely turned its back on the country's most creative and unique spiritual gift to the world. Evert Overeem, a Dutch theologian, depicts the current situation

of dualistic secularism with a vengeance and concludes, “Although churches may still be located in the heart of a city or village, they are no longer its heart.” What happened? A fatally fossilized tradition could not stand up to the strong theological winds from Barthian quarters that blew up a storm after World War II. The Kuyperian church of my birth had grown indifferent to its foundations and began to drift. Worshippers grew cold and walked off with a shrug of the shoulders. Nevertheless, the social institutions the tradition created remain active and today are held up by foreigners as models of toleration worthy of emulation elsewhere, though, I am afraid, now often in secularized form.

And then comes Overeem’s real heart wrencher: “This trend cannot be reversed. History knows only of one-way traffic.” How utterly sad! I do not accept that as a final judgment. The Kuyperian tradition itself is a product of revival. That revival was more than a reversal to previous conditions; it represented continued dynamic revelation upward along the spiral of Kingdom history where the past is reappropriated with a revitalized vision and new inspiration. Who is to say this cannot happen again? When the Dutch people become weary and tired of the dryness of secularism, remnant groups of dynamic Kuyperians stand ready to once again present a tired people with a fresh vision that has its roots in their own history.

I have a vision. I see lively Nigerian Christians, enriched by the Kuyperian vision, bits and pieces of which are offered in these pages, flooding The Netherlands as the West once flooded Nigeria. We now have a chastened Kuyperianism, matured, developed, enriched by new experience and by input from its now global and multicultural community of adherents. This will be an influx by imaginative Nigerian Christians who will cut right through the bone and marrow of secularism. Nigerians will do so with their particularly vibrant witness to a Kingdom of Christ that infuses all of life with an excitement and purpose no less than that which Kuyper bequeathed his people a century ago. Nigerians and

Dutch, prepare for a wonderful challenge. Your two people, both imaginative and aggressive, will make for a most exciting Kingdom partnership. You are made for each other! *Bari Allah Madaukaki ya sa haka. Amin.*⁵¹

Muslims, are you still there? What are *you* thinking? The Christianity you complain about is not the only alternative. In these chapters I have offered you an approach more concrete, with its feet in God's good creation, and one that takes the world of commerce and politics seriously as the place to serve God. *Bari Allah Shi daidaita kasarmu ta hanyar bayinsa su yi cikakkiyar biyayya gareshi. Amin.*⁵²

▲ NOTES

¹ P. 29.

² C. Gousmett, 1999, p. 8.

³ C. Gousmett, 1999, pp. 32-33.

⁴ B. van der Walt, 1994, pp. 247-249.

⁵ B. van der Walt, 1994, pp. 249-250.

⁶ B. van der Walt, 1994, p. 250.

⁷ P. Marshall, 1992, pp. 19-21.

⁸ A. Van Ginkel, p. 87.

⁹ Victoria Cunningham's *Justice Achieved* is a vivid example on the British Columbian scene.

¹⁰ P. Schratz, 6 Dec/2004.

¹¹ Monsma and Soper, pp. 1-2.

¹² Quoted by C. Esbeck, p. 25.

¹³ H. Antonides, 1987, pp. 20-21.

¹⁴ H. Antonides, 1987, p. 24.

¹⁵ R. Mouw, 1973, pp. 94-98.

¹⁶ Antonides writes, "No authority in society is absolute, encompassing all people. Each kind of authority is limited, and the various societal structures are not subordinate to one another. For example, the state has no authority within other spheres, such as the family, the business enterprise and the school. Yet in each of these areas, authority is exercised in keeping with the specific task and responsibility of such institutions." He adds, "The Roman Catholic principle of subsidiarity...plays an important role at this point" (p. 25).

¹⁷ B. van der Walt, 1994, p. 281.

¹⁸ N. McFetridge, 1882, pp. 11-12.

¹⁹ "Ministers" here does not refer to clergy. Rather, it refers to all those who minister to or serve God in whatever capacity in society.

²⁰ P. Marshall, 1984, p. 46.

²¹ H. Runner, 1962, pp. 162-163.

²² H. Runner, 1962, pp. 168-169.

²³ H. Runner, 1962, p. 175.

²⁴ H. Runner, 1962, p. 176.

²⁵ H. Runner, 1962, p. 177.

²⁶ C. Gousmett, 1999, pp. 27, 32.

²⁷ B. van der Walt, 1994, pp. 502-503.

²⁸ H. Antonides, 1987, p. 9.

²⁹ B. van der Walt, 1994, pp. 504-505. Not exact quotations.

³⁰ C. Gousmett, 1999, p. 50.

³¹ C. Gousmett, 1999, pp. 51-53, 55, 56.

³² P. Coertzen, 2002, p. 20.

³³ P. Coertzen, 2002, pp. 22-23.

³⁴ E. Taylor, "The Great Myth in Politics," n.d. This document gives a Kuyperian interpretation of the development and meaning of secularism. It supports, augments and corrects the Muslim interpretation of these same developments as found in Monograph 4.

³⁵ They may not be called "denominations," but the scientific community is riddled with different schools of thought not much different from differences in religion. A classic illustration is the publication by G. Chase and C. Jongsma, *Bibliography of Christianity and Mathematics: 1910-1983*. See also *A Christian Perspective on the Foundations of Mathematics: Proceedings of the Conference held at Wheaton College April 28-30, 1977*.

³⁶ While Taylor finds the situation strange and in need of explanation, secularists find the situation most normal and the question strange. Of course that's the way it is! Secularism has indeed come a long way...! R. H. Tawney wrote that though many Christians dismiss "the concern of Churches with economic relations and social organization as a modern innovation," he concludes that it is the *lack* of concern among dualistic pietists that is novel. "What requires explanation is not the view that these matters are part of the province of religion, but the view that they are not." R. H. Tawney, 1962, pp. 278-280. Also quoted in J. Boer, 1979, pp. 456-457; 1984, pp. 135-136.

³⁷ For a Kuyperian interpretation of the French Revolution, see G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Unbelief and Revolution: A Series of Lectures in*

History. Amsterdam: The Groen van Prinsterer Fund, 1975. Groen van Prinsterer was Abraham Kuypers's mentor.

³⁸ In other words, they lived double lives. Their spiritual side took them one direction—towards God and His law—and their social side in the other—away from God and His law. Christian in one part and rationalist in the other; obedient in the one and disobedient in the other.

³⁹ To see how this perspective worked out in Nigeria, see J. Boer, 1979, pp. 446-458; 1984, pp. 132-135.

⁴⁰ That, rightly or wrongly, is, of course, exactly the way Muslims in Nigeria view Christians.

⁴¹ Much of this section is an adapted version of J. Boer, 1992, Chapter 15.

⁴² "Are you not Christians? Is this what Jesus taught you?" Answer: "What does Jesus care about potatoes?"

⁴³ D. Roche, 1999, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁴ See also J. Boer, 1984, pp 160-163 on priority of profits.

⁴⁵ D. Roche, 1999, p. 28.

⁴⁶ J. Boer, 1992, pp. 129-133.

⁴⁷ For a dramatic but not unusual example, see J. Boer, 1992, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸ J. Boer, 1979, pp. 491-492; 1984, pp. 155-156.

⁴⁹ P. Marshall, 1984, p. 105.

⁵⁰ See especially T. Dunbar Moodie, 1975.

⁵¹ Hausa for "May our Almighty God bring this about. Amen."

⁵² Hausa for "May God put our country back on track through the full obedience of His servants. Amen."