

DUALISM & SECULARISM VERSUS WHOLISM

▲ PREFACE: A PRAYER

A prayer of confession by Minister Joe Wright at the opening session of the State Senate of Kansas, U.S.A.:

Heavenly Father, we come before You today to ask for forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, "Woe on those who call evil good," but that's exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We confess that we have:

Ridiculed the absolute Truth of Your Word and called it pluralism.

Worshipped other gods and called it materialism.

Endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle.

Exploited the poor and called it lottery.

Neglected the needy and called it self-preservation.

Rewarded laziness and called it welfare.

*Killed our unborn children and called it a choice.
 Shot abortionists and called it justifiable.
 Neglected to discipline our children and called it self-esteem.
 Abused power and called it political savvy.
 Coveted our neighbour's possessions and called it ambition.
 Polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it
 freedom of expression.
 Ridiculed the time-honoured values of our forefathers and
 called it enlightenment.*

*Search us, O God, and know our hearts today.
 Cleanse us from every sin and set us free.
 Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent to
 direct us to the centre of Your will.*

▲ INTRODUCTION

Readers of Monographs 2 and 4 will remember a constant theme in the Muslim literature examined there, namely the insistence that Islam is not simply a religion but a complete way of life. By “not simply a religion” they mean that Islam cannot be confined to a religious institution like a mosque, for it covers all of life. Islam has its own unique approach to the various sectors of life that differs markedly from the prevailing secular approach. It talks of Muslim economics,¹ Muslim politics—in short, Muslim everything. The spokesmen for this wholistic emphasis advocate this Muslim approach with great passion in both learned books and in the popular press. The twin papers from which I have quoted so frequently in Monographs 2 and 4, *The Pen* and *Alkalami*, contain numerous such articles, as does the government-owned *New Nigerian*.

These articles are often written to emphasize, not to say celebrate, a sharp contrast to what Muslims consider Nigerian Christo-secularism. Christianity and secularism are basically

identified with each other, as you may remember from those earlier monographs. However, Muslims are keenly aware that essentially Biblical Christianity is opposed to secularism, but in the course of modern history, Christians have betrayed their own Scripture and tradition by adopting secularism. They have allowed a Trojan horse into their camp that has seriously weakened their religion and reduced its scope. As a result, Western Christianity lost all resistance to capitalistic imperialism and, in time, became one of its agents. Thus Muslims in Nigeria find themselves confronted by an indigenous Christian community that has inherited a secular, capitalistic outlook from Western missions and that supports the current dominance of secular globalism. In fact, according to Muslims, the leaders of that community are little more than Nigeria's gatemen for Western interest in Nigeria. Those interests include an alleged sinister plot to destroy Islam in Nigeria and, in fact, throughout the world.

In the context of our discussion, the central difference between the two religions, according to these Muslim writers, is precisely the difference between a wholistic religion that covers all of life and a dualistic religion that largely confines itself to ecclesiastical institutions like the Church and to private life. The latter type of religion spends all its energies and resources on building churches and other religious institutions, but it has little in particular to offer for the building up of the nation. At this latter front, secular categories of thought dominate. There, the Christian Bible is considered irrelevant. There, Christians have adopted the secular stance of autonomous human reason that does not require the light of divine revelation. In that context, Christianity sees itself as a personal, private affair that should not be allowed to intrude into the affairs of politics and nationhood. In other words, Christianity has no place in the public square by its own exclusion. That is the caricature Muslims have of Christianity—but remember: a caricature often has a core of truth that is then distorted.

The “core truth” in the above paragraph is not the core of the Gospel or of orthodox Christianity. Muslims have recognised that more than have many Christians! The core truth they have recognised is that Christianity all over the world, including Nigeria, has been distorted by secularism. In all of their discussions on the subject, Muslims deal with that distorted version, not with the real thing. They are offended by a false or pseudo offence, by a straw man. The Christianity they despise is a weakened version. They have yet to meet and address full-orbed world-affirming social Christianity. Part 2 is meant to take some of the straw out of that situation and to present them with components needed to develop a more wholistic version of Christianity. Once the straw is out of the way, Muslims, if they are honest with themselves and with Christians, have to respond to the more Biblical face of Christianity. Christians and Muslims will have reason to take a new look at each other on basis of the perspectives I offer and give nation building a new chance.

The type of Christianity that Muslims have observed in Nigeria is not confined to Nigeria but is found across Africa. Neither do only Muslims notice it. African Christians are asking questions. Bennie van der Walt, a retired South African professor of philosophy, begins his 1994 publication with “Voices Calling from Africa.” We read of Africans asking, “How can the Christian life be meaningful within my particular context?”

A young South African minister sensed that the Gospel has something to say about economics, labour and politics. “We need not say goodbye to the world if we wish to serve Him. I would like to serve the Lord *in* the world and...offer guidance to my congregation in...politics.” However, he complained, if he talks about political calling, he will be accused of preaching politics. He entreats, “Do help me not to fall into the trap of spiritualist pietism, so that I only preach to my congregation about their eternal salvation, while my people are hating one another

for political reasons, assaulting and killing one another. What should I do?"

A female journalist from Malawi asked, "Is the Kingdom of the Lord limited to the Church? Do we have to enclose ourselves within the walls of the church? Do we as Christians have nothing to say about urbanisation, corruption, one-party rule, social injustice, unemployment, art, education and many other problems?"

A Zaire high school student wondered why, in his biology textbook, "I read nothing about the Lord. Is He then not also the Creator and the Upholder of life? Will I be able to serve Him as a biologist one day, or would it be better for me to become a minister?"

A Christian official in the Namibian government asked the same question I was asked by Nigerian government officials some years ago: "I do not really have enough insight into my work. For example: What are the duties and the responsibilities of subjects? What exactly are the calling, rights and limits of government? I have enquired all over to obtain a Christian book [on this subject], but I was not able to find [even] *one*." These examples suffice to give you the picture. There is a hunger out there for something more comprehensive. People sense an aching void.

Neither is the type of Christianity that Muslims experience in Nigeria confined to Africa. It is to some degree an extension of the Western religion that has spawned the missionaries that flooded Africa and planted it there. There, in the West, these missionaries were brought up in a predominantly secular environment, where religion was/is marginalized and considered personal and private. Christians, especially the evangelical brand, had largely succumbed to the dualist reductions that Muslims have noted. They spend their Christian energies on churches and other narrowly religious concerns, while they have absorbed the secular perspective for the rest of life. Hence, mission energies and resources in Nigeria also went largely into evangelism and church growth. For most missionaries, hospitals, schools and

other institutions and programmes were mere handmaidens to the former. Muslims have long wondered about this kind of religion and shake their heads in contempt.

Muslims are not the only or even the first ones to have recognised this distorted version of Christianity. There is a long tradition of Christian critique that extends deep into the 19th century. I have documented that tradition as well as the critique offered by West African nationalists and of Western Ecumenicals in my doctoral dissertation.² The literature was there for all to read, but it was ignored by Evangelicals and their missionaries. It does not need to be repeated. There also has been a consistent critique of the secular perspective by the Kuyperian school of thought I have referred to occasionally, especially in the introduction to Monograph 1. Eventually, the insights of the latter tradition, being more amenable to Evangelicals than were those of Ecumenicals, spilled over into the Evangelical camp, so that over the past few decades, Evangelicals themselves have come to acknowledge this dualistic version of the faith as seriously wrong. Evangelicals have finally joined the critical voices of other Christians by rejecting the dualistic perspective in general. Unfortunately, its effects and residue need more time before they are completely erased. I welcome them aboard. The problem is that the damage of dualism cannot be undone that easily. Nigerian Christians are struggling with it. While they have come to recognise it and want to overcome it, this perspective can be detected throughout their writings. It definitely has saddled them with a disadvantage in their relationship with Muslims.

The plan for Part 2 of this volume is to present an alternative Christian wholistic perspective for the benefit of both Christians and Muslims. *This perspective is offered not in criticism of Nigerian Christians, but is intended to support them in their struggle to overcome their inherited handicap as well as better equip them in their relationship with a wholistic Islam.* It should also help Muslims gain a more adequate perception about Christianity. The type here

offered is more in line with what they see reflected in the Bible. It is my prayer that it will aid both by providing a platform for dialogue that is swept clean of the false Christian dualism that has been such a bone of contention between them.

Since so much has been written along these lines, I do not intend to reinvent the wheel. As in previous volumes, the material ahead will contain lengthy quotations or summaries from both my earlier writings and from writers who have said it better than I might. *The Kuyperian position is not argued so much as simply stated.* To do more than that would require more space than this project allows. Readers interested in pursuing these issues further are encouraged to go to the sources. They may also contact me through my Web site or email.

The Kuyperian tradition is unique. Many of its individual ideas are not unique, for they can be found in different quarters. What is unique is the particular constellation of these ideas and the relative emphasis each receives within the system. Though it is becoming increasingly popular internationally and is waging an influence out of proportion to its number of adherents, still its influence on the general population of most countries is miniscule. Hence, Harry Blamires, a British Anglican, can legitimately begin his book with the statement, "There is no longer a Christian mind." He explains,

It is a commonplace that the mind of modern man has been secularized. It has been deprived of any orientation towards the supernatural. It would not be so desperately tragic had the Christian mind held out against the secular drift. But unfortunately, the Christian mind has succumbed to the secular drift with a degree of weakness and nervelessness unmatched in Christian history. It is difficult to do justice in words to the complete loss of intellectual morals in the 20th-century Church. One cannot characterize it without

having recourse to language which will sound hysterical and melodramatic.

Oh, yes, the Christian still maintains certain practices, “but as a *thinking* being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization.” “He rejects the religious view of life, the view which sets all earthly issues within the context of the eternal, the view which relates all human problems...to the doctrinal foundations of the Christian faith, the view which sees all things...in terms of God’s supremacy and earth’s transitoriness...” Christians have simply adopted the secular framework.³ The reader of Monograph 4 has learnt that Muslims have observed the same in Christians and, to some degree, in themselves. The Kuyperian tradition presents a rare exception among Christians in that it consciously not only rejects secularism, but also has deeply analyzed its foundations and seeks to replace it with a communal Christian mind.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, now a retired Yale professor and a leading philosopher in the contemporary Kuyper movement, wrote the foreword to *The Transforming Vision*, a book authored by Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton and about which you will hear more in these chapters. That foreword states the concern of Part 2 very succinctly as follows:

A deep disappointment and profound longing motivate this book. The authors, themselves Christians, observe that vast numbers of their fellow North Americans count themselves as Christians. Yet Christianity is ineffective in shaping our public life. What effectively shapes our public life and our society generally is our adulation of science and technology and economic growth. Christianity for the most part stands in the wings and watches. That is their disappointment. Their longing is that things may be changed—that Christianity may receive social and cultural embodiment. For in this they see the life and guidance and hope that our society so badly needs.

Walsh and Middleton ask why the Christianity of North America remains so disembodied. Their answer goes something like this: If we probe any society for what it is that primarily forms that society, we discover it is the world view of those who compose that society. This shapes their existence. A people's world view is their way of thinking about life and the world, coupled with the values they set for themselves in the context of that way of thinking...

There is...a Christian world view, not indeed embodied clearly in any extant society but expressed in the Scriptures. To adopt Christianity with authenticity is to be a person of faith who embraces that biblical world view. Walsh and Middleton give a fresh statement of what that biblical world view is. They wish especially to emphasize that an accurate scrutiny of this world view makes clear its comprehensiveness. This is a world view for shaping all of life and not just for shaping some "religious" or "spiritual" or "sacred" corner of life.

So why doesn't it actually work this way? Why does the Christian world view remain so disembodied in spite of the fact that so many in our society count themselves as Christians? The answer that Walsh and Middleton develop is that Christians in general fail to perceive the radical comprehensiveness of the biblical world view. They assume that its formative impact does not reach beyond some "religious" corner of life. "Lo, here not there" is how they think. They fail to perceive the longing of God for the expression of faith in the polis [city, community]. Accordingly some other, competing, world view and some other, competing, faith shape their public lives. Christians, in short, are dualists.

This book, then, is a passionate call to Christians to be of one heart and mind and to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord in all of life. Read it as a provocative analysis of what hinders such singleness of heart and mind. Read it also as a

provocative prescription for overcoming the hindrance and recovering the service of just one Master.

Part 2 of this monograph is a summary introduction to that same “passionate call” and to that same “provocative analysis...[and] prescription.” It is my recommended prescription to Christians for a new way to tackle Nigeria’s religious problem. It is a *doctor’s* prescription jointly recommended by Walsh, Middleton, Wolterstorff and myself—all doctors in the various disciplines appropriate to this discussion. And, if you have read Monograph 4, you will also recognise the close parallel to the Muslim “provocative analysis” of secularism and Nigerian society. So, something for everyone to chew on.

Two final parameters. First, in addition to considerations of space, *the choice of materials is determined by the Nigerian situation.* It is that context I am primarily addressing, not some other part of the world. That consideration will naturally colour the selection. *Do not expect a full coverage of the entire Kuyperian waterfront; you will only receive a few hints.* Of course, the wider implications are there for all to read. Sometimes they are even referred to explicitly. Secondly, the materials following contain some, but not many, overt comparisons between Kuyperian and Muslim wholism. It offers the Kuyperian perspective with the expectation that many Nigerian readers, especially Muslims, will recognise the parallels with Islam. For some, this discussion will be too heavy. No matter. Just pass it by and move on to the next volume.

▲ KUYPERIAN PERSPECTIVES

I have initially introduced aspects of the Kuyperian perspective in the introduction to Monograph 1.⁴ I introduced Kuyper himself elsewhere roughly as follows:

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1921) was a pastor and theologian in the Reformed or Calvinist tradition, a Christian philosopher, politician and educator in The Netherlands. He served a number of years as Prime Minister of his country, due to his leadership of a Christian political party that he established. Not only did he establish that party, but also a complete Christian educational system, a full-fledged Christian university, and a Christian press. A major achievement of his was the establishment of a thoroughgoing political and cultural pluralism that even today evokes the admiration of foreigners who know nothing about the history of its development, let alone Kuyper himself.⁵ He was a prolific writer with an endless list of books and even longer number of newspaper articles to his name. His general aim was to free the common people from oppression and intolerance by government, state church and other forces who were guided by an intolerant secular liberalism. In some ways it can be said that he won that battle: His supporters voted his party into power several times throughout the 20th century. He placed such an imprint on his country that eighty years after his death, one cannot understand his country without reference to Kuyper.⁶

Kuyper became the leader of a movement that received its immediate original impetus from the Dutch statesman Groen Van Prinsterer, though various other philosophers also had significant input in the shape of his thought, not all of them Christian.⁷ These two developed a community with a perspective in the context of a liberation struggle that was both spiritual and political. That community and its perspective developed into what is now a viable Christian tradition characterized by a thoroughgoing political and social pluralism and wholism, accompanied by a strong rejection of the dualism I refer to repeatedly. It is a tradition that is known for its aggressive approach to culture and national life, admittedly

sometimes in a spirit of triumphalism. Its unusual combination of Evangelical orthodoxy and social activism has come to the attention of Evangelicals as a possible model with which to overcome their anemic dualism.

The tradition goes by various names, especially “Neo-Calvinism” and “Kuyperianism.” The term “Neo-Kuyperian” is sometimes used for post-Kuyper developments. With a play on “Reformed,” another term for the more generic Calvinian tradition, sometimes one hears the word “Reformational.” And then there is the term “Dooyeweerdianism,” a take-off from Herman Dooyeweerd, the most prominent philosopher in the tradition. He has been dubbed the greatest of all Dutch philosophers, including Spinoza, and the creator of “the most extensive Christian philosophy ever developed.”⁸ But there are many Kuyperians who do not identify with Dooyeweerd or even with the “Neo-...” terms above. So, I will restrict myself to the broader term Kuyperian (-ism). If reading this book leads you into reading similar materials, you will come across all these terms along the way.⁹

A viable tradition is never static. That of Kuyper includes academics, social activists and authors, many of whom are all three, including this author. Such people tend to be creative and are not usually content merely to re-chew established tenets; they will introduce new shades of meaning and opinion, so that over the years, some of the ideas of the founder have been replaced, even though the basic spirit continues to guide. Kuyper might not recognise some notions currently in vogue, but he himself insisted that his system was open-ended.¹⁰

The movement continues to be dynamic and has given birth to a considerable number of universities and colleges in various countries as well as numerous organizations that are active in almost every sphere of culture. Often they work without flying any flag. Few residents of British Columbia, the Canadian province in which I live, for example, have ever heard of Kuyper

or the tradition spawned by him. Over the years, however, they have been challenged by it at various cultural fronts in ways that have sometimes caused considerable political waves and involved much public participation. Several times these adherents have scored significant victories and won their causes, because its categories of thought are difficult to counter by any fair-minded and reasonable person. Douglas Todd of the *Vancouver Sun* stumbled upon its consequences in The Netherlands, its birthplace, and suggested that Canada should consider adopting its brand of pluralism and toleration¹¹—but I suspect he never heard of Kuyper or this entire tradition.

One Canadian church that has been deeply influenced by this tradition and that is getting ready to celebrate its centennial in Canada is the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) along with the cluster of educational and social organizations its constituency has spawned in the country. Similar things could be said about the tradition's input in the U.S.A., South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, Latin America and, yes, even in South Africa, where a degenerate form of Kuyperianism contributed to apartheid¹² but a chastened version contributed to its demise. *It is now the turn of Nigeria to be blessed by the input of this tradition of wholistic religion with its strong dose of pluralism and toleration but that resists religious relativism.*

This is the tradition that repudiates “other-worldly or world-flight Christianity,” the type that Muslims so contemptuously berate and that Nigerian Christians are trying to overcome, while it affirms “world-formative Christianity.” The former “turns away from this world”; the latter “seeks to transform society to better it.” “The most distinctive aspect of that approach is the idea that Christianity is world-transformative,” explains Chris Gousmett of New Zealand. This struggle for social reformation is “not in addition to piety, but it is an essential part of piety, without which Christianity is a truncated and falsified version.”¹³

Another dominant feature of Kuyperean social thought is that it insists that Christianity does not only provide the *motivation* for social action but also shapes the *content* that is hammered out in an interplay with the specific situation and combines features of both faith and history within the local context. That combination prevents the tradition from attempts at prescriptions of universal validity that ignore local conditions and traditions, something of which the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have been accused in their prescriptions for non-Western nations. Kuypereanism seeks to build on local tradition and history; it is not a ruthless revolutionary force that sweeps everything out of the way.

Paul Marshall critiques a variety of Christian social approaches where “the content of the Christian faith is...only a ‘commitment,’ a ‘value,’ that provides the *dynamic* but not the *content* of the process.” In such cases—and they are the majority—the major input is from social sciences, usually conducted along secular lines, while Christianity or the Bible serve as a secondary source. The goals themselves or the methods employed come from secular sources. He writes,

since the “tools of analysis” do not fall fully formed from the sky but are an expression of a whole view of the nature of humankind, of the world, of history, of justice, of wealth, of work, of destiny, of salvation, then the...[non-Christian] tail will wag the Christian dog. Christian faith does not add anything distinctive to the scheme; it only tells us to do “good,” while other forces will tell us what actually is the “good” to be sought.

He concludes, “in borrowing such forms of analysis, Christians already determine much of the content of the proposals they will offer as policies stemming from the Gospel.” “We need,” he continues, “clear grounds for adopting any particular means of inter-

preting...our world and, further, we must develop means of understanding society which themselves flow from our Christian faith.” He admits that, given the secular world view Christians have lived with for so long, the task is arduous and will undoubtedly be strewn with mistakes, but this should not keep us from the adventure towards the development of “an integrally Christian understanding of the world...”¹⁴ I present this as a challenge to Nigerian Christians and as a witness to their Muslim neighbours who rightly expect more from Christianity than they have seen so far.

One disclaimer. Kuyperian thinking has sometimes been accused of triumphalism and pride, even by its own adherents, as if it had *the* monopoly on God’s Truth.¹⁵ Having worked ecumenically for some twenty years, I am acutely aware of the truths other Christian traditions have emphasized and of the weaknesses of Kuyperian thought or of its larger progenitor, Calvinism. Kuyperians would be greatly enriched by embracing some of those treasures and shedding some of their own baggage. However, in these studies and particularly in this particular section we are dealing with issues for which the Kuyperian tradition has developed powerful tools and that are particularly relevant to a Christian-Muslim context. These I offer to you, without belittling the treasures of other traditions.

▲ SECULARISM: ORIGIN AND NATURE —————

Kuyperians recognise that secularism is largely the result of Christian failing at various fronts and that it has introduced a number of important corrections in society. Jonathan Chaplin of Toronto’s Institute for Christian Studies is generous and honest in this respect:

Let me make it clear that the anxieties shared by many secular liberals about the impact of public religion are real

ones. Some of them are mine too...And let me also record that the response of early modern liberalism to public religion was compelling and necessary. In the 17th century, religion was not only public, it was backed by force of arms. In such circumstances, we can see why moves to confine the public expression of faith seemed so necessary. In time, Christians who had stoked up religious warfare were humbled and had to allow liberalism to teach it again what its own deepest principles had always implied: that authentic faith cannot and may not be coerced. So, a religious response to contemporary liberalism must begin by appreciating liberalism's vital historical contribution to religious freedom and democracy.¹⁶

In spite of my constant anti-secular bias throughout this series, I want this contribution of secularism recognised and remembered as we go along.

At the same time, Kuyperians reject secularism in principle with all their hearts. After all, Kuyperianism owes its origin to a form of liberalism that had become illiberal and intolerant of non-secular viewpoints. Harry Antonides, for many years associated with the Christian Labour Association of Canada, insists that “Christians...must disagree with those who argue that religion is a matter of private opinion while public life is subject to rational and unbiased criteria. It is simply impossible for people to discover any criterion that is purely rational and devoid of all prejudice.”¹⁷ The Christian Reformed Church, in the preface to her Identity Statement of 2002, wrote, “The primary enemy of the North American Church is a deadly secularism that threatens all Christians and against which they should stand together in common faith and action.”¹⁸ It is important to note that this statement is post-9/11 and adopted during the period when Americans were still shell-shocked. Nevertheless, it was secularism that is identified

as the main enemy, not Islam. In a report from the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) we read that “secularism poses a great threat to the people of God.” In fact, it is seen as “one of the greatest dangers the Church...faces today.”¹⁹

Bennie van der Walt, an author of numerous books on the subject, considers secularism the “most dangerous enemy of Christianity.” He regards it much more dangerous than Islam, an opinion that goes back at least as far as the 1928 World Missionary Conference in Jerusalem. He gives three reasons for this opinion:

- Secularism is not an open enemy attacking the Christian faith with physical weaponry. No, it works practically unnoticed. In a subtle way it infiltrates and undermines faith.
- It works gradually from the outside to the inside, so that the virus ultimately paralyses one in the heart. From the outside it might thus seem as if Christian life is still in order, while living communion with God has in reality ceased to exist. The process is so gradual that mostly we do not notice it any more. And when we ultimately realize that an institution or the whole of life has been secularised, it is already too late.
- It is not a clearly discernible and definable phenomenon. It is a sort of chameleon ideology, the medium for the growth of a variety of ideologies, which in turn further promote the process of secularisation.

“Such a practically invisible, stealthy enemy, which...administers the poison in tiny doses, must be regarded as extremely dangerous!” van der Walt concludes.²⁰

Even the gentle Chaplin, who reminds us not to berate secularism unduly, comes down honestly and firmly on it. Non-secularists

may invite secular liberalism to reflect more honestly on what they [non-secularists] believe is the fragility of its own foundations. In a remarkable article in the current issue of the British magazine Prospect, Edward Skidelsky warns that liberalism severed from its historical [Christian] religious roots is losing its bearings and its appeal. Liberal freedom has become nothing more than “freedom from...” tradition, from authority, from Nazism. But in the absence of any positive ideal to support it, the liberal proclamation of individual freedom looks increasingly like a mere license to selfishness. This is often how it appears to members of other cultures. This is what they mean by the “decadence” of the West. Religious freedom, by contrast, is “positive freedom.” It denotes not only absence of constraint but a positive ideal of holiness.²¹

That of course, lies behind the Muslim fulmination against Western immorality.

Chaplin also adduces the words of one Robert Fulford, who “claimed that the dilemma of secular liberalism is that it doesn’t speak to the heart. It cannot evoke awe before the mystery of existence. It has no cure for the self-obsession that is a major infirmity of our age. It offers only reason.” Chaplin concludes that liberal democracy, “it seems, needs firmer, deeper, foundations.”²²

The writer of the back cover of Os Guinness’ *The Gravedigger File*, interpreting the book, asks “Why can contemporary Christianity be dismissed as ‘privately engaging but socially irrelevant?’” And, my own question as well, how can it be that Evangelicals have turned into “the most world-denying in theory” but “the most worldly in practice” as Guinness describes them? He answers, “When secularization and privatization have finished their task, every religion has lost its power.” “Secularization is the body blow, the relentless stamina-sapping punch that leaves the adversary on his feet but finished.” Secularization is “guaranteed to put him down.”²³

It is difficult to define secularism or secularization to everyone's satisfaction, for not only are there many perspectives leading to different definitions, but even many *types* of definitions.²⁴ Kuyperian writers have produced many definitions of secularism, but they basically are similar to each other. Harry Antonides, using "secularization" and "secularism" more or less indiscriminately, defines it as "the belief that man is autonomous, able to find his own way in the world when guided by reason and assisted by science and technology." Again, "the core meaning of secularism" includes the rejection of "belief in the transcendent God and in life beyond history, and replaces it with an exclusive focus on man and on life in this world." "The heart of secularization is the conviction that man is his own lawgiver and that his power is therefore (at least in principle) unlimited."²⁵

Paul Marshall, famous for his work on persecuted Christians, defines secularists not as "people who reject religion per se, but people who regard religion solely as a private matter." He asserts that most leaders in the American media, government, academy and the arts "are secular in outlook." They are marked by

an inability or refusal simply to take religion seriously, combined with suspicion of those that do. As Richard Land puts it, "An increasingly secularized West and its leadership elites tend to be indifferent, and often uncomprehending, of a spiritual world view that endures persecution and death for the sake of belief."

Coming into these circles...is like entering a closed and parochial world. Religion is something foreign, something distant, something strange, something almost reprobate. I was once in a group of thirty political theorists who...were anxious about the "religious right." I asked them how many of these highly informed, well-read, and literate people had actually read any books by people in the "religious right." None

had, except for one...[who had read one] in the early 1970s and therefore regarded himself as something of an authority.

The “religious right” and, indeed, to be more accurate, theologically conservative Christians were simply a foreign world, despite the fact that these theorists were now worried that the denizens of this netherworld might take over the country. It was as if a strange horde from afar had appeared over the mountain and, altogether inscrutable, had surrounded the city. [Boer: doesn’t that sound like a plague of locusts?] Professors with a commitment to human rights, who could do factor analysis on the results of nationwide survey data, who could discourse on Hegel and Heidegger, and who knew the intricacies of American constitutional law, didn’t know a thing about the people who lived on their street, let alone across the world.

Marshall continues his discussion with stories about “outright bigotry” on the part of distinguished professors at prestigious universities. When a respected political scientist, Charles Taylor, indicated that his theorizing was influenced by his Catholic beliefs, in a review, one “Quentin Skinner of Cambridge...widely regarded as one of the leading historians of political thought...basically regarded Taylor as insane.” Skinner asserted that belief in God is “grossly irrational” and those who hold such belief “must be suffering from some serious form of psychological blockage or self-deceit”—and that about a book published by Harvard. This was not private conversation; it was accepted as responsible scholarship and published in a respectable academic journal!²⁶ Marshall also reproduced part of Taylor’s reply:

I think that it probably shows up a striking blind spot of the contemporary academy, that unbelievers can propound such crudities about the sources of belief, of a level which any educated believer would be excoriated for applying, say, to members

*of another confession. The paradox is that...members of the educated community in the West who have to learn some lesson of ecumenical humility are (some) unbelievers. When these come to talk about religion, they have all the breadth of comprehension and sympathy of a...The really astonishing thing is that they even seem proud of it.*²⁷

Marshall calls all this simply “prejudice,” the very thing from which secularism is supposed to free us! He calls it “a disdain for those for whom faith is the central fact of human existence.” I would rather put it this way: disdain from those who, because of secular dogmatic blinders, are totally unconscious of their own faith, for those who are conscious of their faith. Quoting James Finn, Marshall warns that when it comes to religion, especially “religious human rights,” one must expect to meet “less outright hostility or opposition than blank incomprehension” from the secular media.²⁸

Turning his attention to Canada, where he once lived, Marshall declares that Canada’s secularism is responsible for the general malaise from which the country suffers. Its secularism has suppressed the religion that has historically undergirded the nation and has emptied religion of its content. The current Canadian belief is “that differences between people, such as in religion, are irrelevant and therefore must be ignored in social life. (This is perversely called ‘respect for religion.’)”²⁹ Under the section on pluralism in Chapter 7, we will see how Marshall works this out further.

Of course, you don’t have to be a Christian or Kuyperian or Muslim to recognise this secular negative attitude towards religion. In a recent essay in *New York Times*, Ian Buruma, a self-described “agnostic in religious affairs,” wrote:

The idea that modern democracy has to be secular in its ethos is, of course, rooted in European history. The Enlightenment was partly an assault on the authority of the

Church, especially in France. Political arrangements were to be subject to reason, not to theology. To be modern was to reject religion, or “superstition,” and to believe in science. It was not enough, in the view of Voltaire, among others, to put organized religion in its place; it was necessary to “wipe out that rubbish.” The belief in science as a solution for all human problems became a kind of superstition itself.³⁰

In a very different camp, Lamin Sanneh from Yale, born a Gambian Muslim and now an American Catholic, expressed himself similarly. Many secular people, he writes, resist “any hard and serious thinking about...rival claims to the truth” and “encourage complacency among reasonable people.” In fact, they tend to feel that religion really does not matter. The secular attitude towards religion as “a private individual matter has blunted our grasp of genuine religious pluralism” that led to the marginalization of religion and caused surprise “that Muslims show such little inclination to follow the secular path that it (the West) has confidently laid out.”³¹

We have seen in Part 1 that some Christians seek to legitimize secularism via the distinction between “secularism,” a notion supporters of the distinction reject strongly, and “secularization,” a term and process of which they approve.³² Kuyperians tend to be somewhat open-ended about the distinction and often feel it has both a positive and negative meaning. Klaas Popma, a third generation Dutch Kuyperian, thinks secularization refers to two contradictory directions: “emancipation from unjust ecclesiastical and theological bondage” on the one hand and “the de-christianizing of life” on the other. The first he judges positively; the latter, negatively. Father Kuyper himself thought it has a favourable connotation when it refers to “de-ecclesiasticizing of life”; that is, freeing both state and society from the domination of the Church—which, as we will see later, is not the same as freeing them from God or separating them from religion. In fact, he thought of this

process as “one of the most basic ideas of Calvinism.” While he favoured a strong Church, he opposed any Church attempt to control state and society. Hendrik van Riessen, a recently retired teacher of philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam, which was established by Kuyper himself, to the contrary regards secularization as “the apostate emancipation of man from God,” an opinion shared by various Reformed authorities. While the REC recognises both its positive and negative connotations and lists both of them, at the end of the day it must be admitted that secularization “has its historical roots in the dualist world view” of the sacred versus secular scheme. The term “would most likely never have come into use” were it not for the prevalence of western dualism. Thus it is difficult to use the term favourably without spreading confusion.³³ That is exactly what the Church in Nigeria is doing by the use of this terminology.

Van der Walt finds the distinction “not satisfactory.” Secularisation “indicates a *process* of which the *result* is secularism.” Sometimes, he judges, it can be positive, but that depends on the motives that play a role in a specific secularisation process. If it refers to “liberation from primitive superstition and idolatry,” we can welcome it. Same for the process of emancipation of “various social structures” from the Church to “become sovereign in their own spheres,” provided this independence from Church does not lead to autonomy from the law of God as well.³⁴ In this last sense, Kuyperians fully favour it, but then usually reserve other terms for it to avoid confusion.

Eugene Rubingh writes with unusual sensitivity about the impact of the Gospel among the Tiv of Nigeria. He wrote: “Desacralization of the Tiv world view is but one side of the coin, for a secularization that results in a closed secularism is no emancipation but rather a sophisticated re-enslavement.” He then adduces a firm warning from his—and my—professor, Johannes Verkuyl, a Dutch Kuyperian missiologist: “It appears to me mortally danger-

ous for us to say Yes to secularization without at the same time to speak of the enthroning of the living God and to arouse men to kneel before the Lord.”³⁵ Lamin Sanneh is not enthusiastic about the distinction either. He thinks that “it does not change very much to tinker with the notion and break it up into, say ‘secularity,’ ‘secularism,’ and ‘the secular.’”³⁶

As to the Kuyperian definition of secularism, van der Walt suggests its “real meaning” is that it is an “-ism,” an exaggeration, an “absolutisation of the secular or the worldly.” Absolutisation in these discussions means to exaggerate the role or expand the importance of the item absolutised. Van der Walt thinks of it as “an opened-up atheism, projected into things. It is, as it were, the climate of our new era. The whole human situation has become secularised.” “To live as if God does not exist is, of course, self-deception, illusion... But in our day this illusion has become so strong that it controls life, and people do not recognise it as an illusion any more.” However, secularism is also a “deeply-rooted faith. The faith has established the condition and the condition supports and promotes the faith.” When he puts it all together, van der Walt ends up with the following more complete definition or description:

*Secularism, born of the atheistic ideas of three centuries, is a subjectivist, relativist and utilitarian ideology, as well as the condition resulting from it, according to which the so-called free, independent, autonomous man... has assumed the place of God, who, to his mind, has become redundant, to enable him to live only out of, through and for this closed world.*³⁷

Some years ago, I wrote about Christian sharia opponents in Nigeria of the 1970s. Their approach was classically secular—and classically off the mark! “The humanistic pseudo-solution was to restrict religion to private categories, while secular concepts were to form the basis of public life. However, in reality it was not a matter of subjective religion versus secular common sense of an objective

and neutral reason.” It was a matter of two religions or two belief systems—Christianity and Islam—versus a third set of beliefs or values called secularism. Secularism is based on *belief* in the ability of autonomous man to find his own solutions, and rejects the need for divine revelation as well as the notion that human reason is radically handicapped by the fall into sin. *All the issues in the last sentence are assumptions held by one or the other faith systems that cannot be proven, only believed. Secularism believes in human autonomy and the human ability to solve its problems on its own. Secularism is not reason over against faith or belief. It is just another belief system that, because of its subtlety and lack of liturgy, is a far greater threat to both Christians and Muslims than they are to each other. Christians who have adopted secularism are really using the beliefs of a rival faith system or world view—secularism—in order to undercut a third faith system or world view, namely Islam.*³⁸

The REC report asks and answers:

What now is secularism seen from a religio-sociological viewpoint? The answer is that secularism has many characteristics of a religion. It reveals where people place their ultimate trust, namely in man. It has its priestly elites: the supposedly neutral scientists. It has its myth, namely that the secular society is a neutral, unbiased society, the source of the greatest good. It has its means of evangelism: the public school system. It occupies the public square, now bereft of the symbols of traditional religion, with its own icons. It has its own eschatology, the here and now.

If religion is defined in terms of institutions and of activities usually associated with churches and denominations, then religious life is still vigorous. However, if these same institutions are viewed in the light of their influence upon society, then it must be said that their impact is much less than before.

If religion is understood in its fundamental sense, namely as our being bound to God as bearers of His image,

as surrounded with His revelation, as upheld by His law and kept in being by His Word, then it must be said that modern societies are no less religious than they ever were. Religion is inescapable.

If secularism is seen to be the opposite of religious institutions and ecclesiastical influence, then we are sliding towards irreligion at an alarming pace. But if secularism is seen to bear the traits of an alternative religion...modern society is increasingly displaying the characteristics of one of the oldest religions...namely paganism.³⁹

Richard Russell from Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A., is a self-proclaimed atheist who strongly disagrees with the above paragraphs. In his letter to *Church & State*, a magazine published by Americans United for Separation of Church and State, he writes, “Atheism is not a religious belief; it is the *absence* of a religious belief. It is no more a religion than bald is a hair color or health is a disease.” This is an important distinction, he asserts, “because if atheism is seen as just another kind of religion, then there’s a glimmer of truth to...[the] contention that ‘removing all references to God in government can be reasonably viewed as establishing atheistic philosophy.’ Of course, since...[the] premise is utterly without foundation...[the] conclusion is utterly without merit.” Russell ends his letter with the question, “Why...is it so difficult for them (religious people) to see the problems that we atheists have when they try to use...coercive governmental mechanisms to foist their beliefs on us?”⁴⁰ While strongly rejecting anyone’s right to foist any world view on anyone, I want you to notice his complete disregard for or lack of consciousness of the belief factor underlying his belief called atheism, which really is just a “denomination” within the broader belief tradition of secularism. Even if the term “religion” is not acceptable, how can Russell deny the belief or faith factor in his value system?

▲ ORIGIN, HISTORY AND NATURE OF DUALISM —

Much has been written within the Kuyperian camp about dualism—tomes and tomes of it. I myself have contributed to it in my 1979 and 1984 publications. The German-American Gordon Spykman (1926-1993) of Calvin College just before his death published his *Reformational Theology*, an attempt to create a new approach to theology shorn of dualistic influences. Let me briefly trace Spykman's story of their development.

During the second century A.D., Christian thinkers began to adopt Pagan Greek categories, including the Greek tendency towards dualism. The framework they created became the basic point of reference in Christian thinking that Kuyperians often describe as a synthesis between Pagan Greek and Christian thought. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the great genius of Western medieval theology, brought this synthesis to a higher level known as Scholasticism, the school of thought that was eventually adopted as the official Roman Catholic perspective and served them for many centuries. It was reaffirmed by Vatican I in 1869-1870. "There," writes Spykman, "in unambiguous terms, the basic structure of... Thomist dualism... was promulgated, backed by the full weight of papal authority." "Note," he continues, "the following declaration."

The Twofold Order of Religious Knowledge:

The Catholic Church with one consent has also ever held and holds that there is a twofold order of knowledge, distinct both in principle and also in object; in principle, because our knowledge in the one is by natural reason, and in the other by divine faith; in object, because, besides those things which natural reason can attain, there are proposed to our belief mysteries hidden in God, which unless divinely revealed, cannot be known.⁴¹

Spykman has critiqued this dualistic order in classic Kuypertian style. I reproduce one more statement of his on this subject:

At bottom...this Thomist view of society is a dualism...It presupposes a basic dichotomy between nature and grace [for our purposes: the world and religion]. In this view, the Church belongs to the supernatural realm of grace [religion], while the state and other so-called secular institutions in society operate in the lower order of nature. There natural, not supernatural, law is the norm. Upon it the public sector of life is based. While the Church directs eternal, spiritual matters, the state is in charge of the temporal affairs of life. Natural law functions there as a relatively independent, autonomous governing principle. Its demands are held to be accessible to and realizable by all reasonable men of good will, apart from divine revelation. This view, when implemented consistently, tends to turn Christianity into "churchianity." That is, the Church is considered the primary or even the sole source of Christian concern and influence in the world.⁴²

The next two pages are from earlier writings of mine where I describe the resulting dualism that emerged from Scholasticism and that has become the indigenous "natural" world view of the Western world, the West's "common sense." Until recently, few Christians, apart from Kuypertians and Liberation theologians, have seriously questioned this scheme. I begin with the words of the art historian Simon Rookmaker of Amsterdam. According to him, basic to this dualism is the view that

this world is good, but yet has autonomy of its own. The world of faith, of grace, of religion is the higher one, a world for which we have need of God's revelation. This is where our aims and affections should be set. But the lower world, the world of men, the world of "nature," can be understood by

reason, and here in fact reason reigns. It is as such non-religious, secular. Here there is no difference between the Christian and the non-Christian, as both act according to the natural laws of thought and action.

The Latin American Reuben Alves put it this way:

Traditional ecclesiastical languages have their ultimate concern in eternity, God, and salvation of the soul. Their relation to the world, to life, to history, when it is not negative, is purely tangential. Or it puts the world and life in an inferior hierarchical rank: super/natural; the secular world/the religious world; the material/the spiritual; the temporal/the eternal.

The economist R. H. Tawney explains that in dualism the religious and secular relate to each other as “parallel and independent provinces, governed by different laws, judged by different standards, and amenable to different authorities.” It is based on “an attitude that forms so fundamental a part of modern thought, that...its precarious philosophical basis...[is] commonly forgotten.”

This perspective looks like this diagramme:

sacred	higher	grace	divine revelation	spiritual	soul	theology	church	clergy
secular	lower	nature	autonomous reason	material	body	philosophy	world	laity

In this perspective, God is more interested in the spiritual things above the line than those below. Those below are only the natural things; God prefers the spiritual. The natural below the line has little to do with the Bible. It is understood only by means of human reason independent from the Bible. If you really wish to serve God, you work in the things above the line. That is spiritual or religious

work. Those below are merely worldly or so-called secular; they are the so-called “laity.”⁴³

While Scholasticism seeks to synthesize the two “parts” of reality and even attributes priority and dominance to the “sacred,” eventually the “secular” took priority, with the former slowly receding from view as humanism, rationalism and secularism took over the Western mind. Copleston, a prominent Catholic historian of philosophy, feels that the synthesis was too precarious to hold and was bound to lead from an autonomous secular realm to an opposing one that would swallow up much of the “sacred.” A system that separates truth known only by faith in revelation so far from truth known only via faith in natural philosophy or science simply *had* to fall apart. *The system makes it “impossible for there to be faith and knowledge concerning the same object, that the same truths should be both known scientifically (philosophically) and at the same time believed (by faith) by the same man.”*⁴⁴ Now, to my mind, we come close to a situation legitimately to be regarded as bizarre. As we know, eventually the sacred was reduced to a minimal as science expanded the secular. That is what Muslims observe in Nigeria—and that is what both they and Kuyperians battle against.

It is this dualism that has led to a popular mentality among Christians that tends to divorce religious input from artistic, scientific, political and economic activities. According to this scheme, while these enjoy prominence in the “secular” sector, in the “sacred” area these are affairs of secondary importance. Rookmaker has warned that when Christians separate these concerns from their religious life, they are unwittingly giving in to this long Western secular tradition.

The Reformation introduced many profound changes in the West. Men like John Calvin rejected Scholastic dualism in principle but, according to scholars, did not always consistently carry through with this rejection. Ingrained habits of thought take a long time to change; residues tend to linger long. Martin Luther

espoused a two-kingdom theory definitely influenced by that tradition. Subsequent generations of Protestants resorted to revised versions of the scheme. The perspective suffered a demotion, I understand, at Vatican II, but that was only a few years ago. Its residue continues to influence much Christian thinking and practice even today. It is the Kuyperians, probably more than any other Christians, who have consistently sought to undermine this major Western world view. They are doing so not primarily to castigate their fellow Christians, but because this scheme has so seriously undermined and weakened all Christians who have imbibed it—including Nigerian Christians.

Albert Wolters, a Canadian scholar, also explains the “very great error” implied by this dualism of sacred vs secular. In this scheme, the sacred is considered the favourite by God, while He at best tolerates the secular. The former is associated with positive good; the latter is depreciated as largely negative—if not evil, at least kind of indifferent as far as God is concerned. “This approach has led many Christians to abandon the ‘secular’ realm to the trends and forces of secularism. Indeed, because of their two-realm theory, to a large degree, Christians have themselves to blame for the rapid secularization of the West”⁴⁵—as well as, I wish to add, for the same process in Nigeria.

Jan Herman Bavinck, the renowned Kuyperian missiologist, left little doubt about the dangers of this Christian dualism imported by missionaries. The dualistic mentality rendered missionaries easy prey to the premises of secularism. The missionary movement “has not been sufficiently aware of these things. It has not been critical enough of the basic ideas and motives of Western culture. It has been too naïve in its acceptance of Western science and the Western capacity to enrich human life...and it has not sufficiently understood that such blessings can also contain a hidden curse.” “Unwittingly and unknowingly missions have...become a contributing cause to the inner dislocation and disturbance of the

life and thought of the people...” “The deepest cause of the powerlessness [of missions]...is that we have been too little aware of the thoroughly dangerous character of...[Western] one-sided technical culture...There is...an irreconcilable dichotomy between our faith...and modern life and thought.” “Those whom we have reached often have sensed this poverty and deficiency in our lives more clearly than we ourselves. From the very beginning they have felt the cleft in our lives between what...we believe and what we repeatedly do in practice. Such poverty has rendered us powerless or at least weak in our struggle against...secularization...”⁴⁶

The tragic result of this dualism is felt throughout the Christian world. Blamire concludes with respect to the British scene,

Christianity is emasculated of its intellectual relevance. It remains a vehicle of spirituality and moral guidance at the individual level perhaps; at the communal level it is little more than an expression of sentimentalized togetherness.

*The mental secularization of Christians means that nowadays we meet only as worshipping beings and as moral beings, not as thinking beings. We cannot meet, as thinking Christians, over the controversial political, social, and cultural issues... This is not because there are no propositions on which we can agree with fellow Christians, but because there is no common field of discourse...*⁴⁷

It has come to the stage where Blamire agrees with those Christians in Nigeria who have concluded that it is no longer possible to be Christian in the public sphere. Anyone entering with the intention to “enter trailing clouds of spirituality which will magically transform the atmosphere around him” or to “enter without accepting the pragmatic mode of discourse dominating thought and decision in these fields” will find himself bitterly disappointed.

It cannot be done. As a Christian you may enter these spheres determined to be the leaven, but your leavening influence is

*restricted to the narrow field of personal relations and moral attitudes. You cannot enter these spheres as a thinking Christian, for there is no one to communicate with christianly. There is no field of discourse in which your presuppositions can be understood, let alone accepted or discussed. Within these fields you will find yourself inevitably, by acquiescence, subscribing to the furtherance of aims of which you deeply and christianly disapprove.*⁴⁸

I share Blamires' sentiments with you because they are very insightful. However, his conclusions are definitely not universally valid. I believe there is more space for Christian input. Kuyperian thought is not that fatalistic. However, the direction things have taken could logically end up in this kind of situation. Wolters warns, "A certain cultural phenomenon may be so terribly and thoroughly distorted in a given historical setting that it is a matter of Christian wisdom to avoid it altogether."⁴⁹ Blamires' sentiments should serve as a warning against the flirtation with secularism so rampant in Nigeria. That's not where Nigerian Christians want to go.

▲ EVANGELICAL CONFESSIONS

The discussion in this Part 2 features mainly Kuyperian ideas, but, before I go on, let us listen to Evangelicals confess that they have indeed bought into this dualism and thus shortchanged the peoples that have hosted their missionaries. This is important, for the Christianity that has been brought to Nigeria is mostly Evangelical in orientation. Of course the Catholic Church has a large presence as well, but its heritage is similarly tainted. In fact, they are the mother of all this. It is important also because some Evangelicals have reacted strongly to earlier discussions of mine on this subject, accusing me of judging the past by present standards. The next few pages will show that this is hardly the case.

1. “CONCERNED EVANGELICALS”

A South African group that calls itself “Concerned Evangelicals” wrote the following under the title “Dualism”:

The concept of dualism is more of a Greek philosophical concept than a biblical concept. The Greek philosophers believed in a clear demarcation between the spiritual and material. They believed that all material things were evil, whilst God was a Spirit somehow committed to save the spirit in the bodies of human beings. On the basis of this Greek philosophical concept of dualism, Western theologians saw the Gospel as concerned only with the spiritual rather than the social. They dichotomized between the physical and the spiritual and between the sacred and secular. Evangelical theologians have bought wholesale into this model of dualism.

The consequences of this dualistic form of life have been disastrous for evangelical faith. What this dualism has done is that one can live a pietistic “spiritual” life and still continue to oppress, exploit, and dehumanize people. And those who are victims of this oppression...are prohibited from complaining or resisting it, because this would amount to worrying about material things that have nothing to do with one’s spirituality. Actually, trying to engage in a struggle to get rid of this oppression is seen as having “fallen” from grace. In this way, the oppressors of this world are able to maintain their system by conveniently confining the Gospel to the spiritual realm alone. It is just like keeping the Gospel in captivity to be able to continue in sin without any disturbance to their consciences. Like the Sadducees and Pharisees, we are claiming the authority of the written law, but we refuse to let it address the real issues of our day.

The Judeo-Christian faith as found in the Bible is different from Greek dualism. It does not differentiate between the spiri-

tual and the social, because Jews live their spiritual in their social life. For the Israelites being oppressed was a concern of their God. When they went to war, their God was to be involved or they would be doomed. Their cultural life was a spiritual life. Their economic life was a spiritual life (the Jubilee, the question of loans, etc.). Their political life was a spiritual life (appointment of kings and deposing of kings, how they ruled, etc.). There was nothing for the Jews that was not spiritual in their whole lives. It was all spiritual.

The concept of dualism is therefore a foreign concept to...the Judeo-Christian tradition. This is not a Biblical concept. It is but a Greek and Western concept.⁵⁰

2. RALPH WINTER

Ralph Winter is editor of *Mission Frontiers*, a magazine published by the U.S. Center for World Mission. His articles often strongly promote a wholistic approach far beyond the traditional Evangelical. Recently he wrote,

In much of Evangelicalism "the Christian calling" really only affects our lives "after hours." That "new life" has to do with meeting in small groups for Bible studies, in work groups to paint dilapidated school buildings, in helping ghetto kids after-hours. Everything is after-hours and as such is often in the category of "band-aid," cosmetics, token assistance. It's all to the good, but, meanwhile, Biblical integrity is not being stressed for believers in their eight-hour day.

A couple of paragraphs later Winter continues:

After-hours band-aid is not enough. It does not address the fact that the Los Angeles Times has run an article of four pages...about the incredible wealth, the lavish spending and the alcohol-drenched executive meetings of the Trinity

Broadcasting Network—the most extensive Christian network—while the legal corporation behind all this is essentially a mom-and-pop outfit.

We must go further than part-time Christianity if the essentially unregulated pharmaceutical industry is going to go on paralyzing our Congress, the National Institutes of Health, and even the American Federal Food and Drug Administration with its enormous financial power and extensive deceptions. This is now well established by a recent flurry of serious books and articles. We read all the time about believers all around the world losing their lives for holding to their faith. Yet we don't hear very often of U.S. churchgoers losing their jobs for sticking up for the truth.

Glorifying God is not just singing, “Glory, glory, glory”; it is demonstrating that glory, making our work our ministry and our ministry our work. If we do that, we will run into opposition, accusations and trouble—a war!⁵¹

This is more than just confession; this is a declaration for wholism from a pioneering leader of the evangelical movement that I gratefully recognise and support.

3. WORLD EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP (WEF)

Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden edited a collection of documents that traces the development and meaning of the concept of mission as transformation within the constituency of WEF. On the back cover, Peter Kuzmic of Croatia, Chairman of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians, writes: This compilation “documents an evangelical journey from unbiblical dichotomies, cultural and ecclesiastical provincialism and fragmented understandings of God’s purposes for His Church and its mission in the world towards a more balanced globally sensitive and biblically fully fledged wholistic ministry.”

On the same back cover, Bryant Myers, at the time Vice-President of World Vision International, confesses,

Mission as transformation has been a struggle for evangelicals. Our Two-Thirds World colleagues have patiently assisted many of us to the table. This book provides a gathering place for the seminal papers and discussions that are part of this 25-year journey. This volume helps anyone understand how evangelicals, struggling to unite evangelism and social action, found their way to the biblical view of mission in which God calls all human beings to love God and their neighbour, never creating a separation between the two.

The book's pages are replete with confessions that echo the sentiments on the back cover. The unidentified author of the introduction writes, "Twenty years ago the divide between Evangelicals and liberals over mission was still between proclamation and social action. The missiology of transformation has contributed to Evangelicals combining proclamation with social action as part of mission."

In March 1995, an international group of eighty-five Christian leaders held a conference to discuss the issues at hand. Among other things, they composed a confession that included the following statements:

We confess that all too often—

We have obscured our witness to the Kingdom by tearing apart the interrelated tasks of proclamation of the Word and social transformation...

We have ignored the centrality of the Good News of the Kingdom of God...

We have distorted...failed to recognise...

We have diluted Jesus' gospel, by neglecting to proclaim and live its radical challenge to the evil in every culture, society and socio-economic system.

We have disgraced the Gospel...mocked...Jesus' prayer... Some have one-sidedly emphasised the individual and personal aspects of the Kingdom of God to the neglect of the corporate and communal...

We have failed to serve our neighbours and witness to the Kingdom in the affairs of government, education, business, economics, trade unions, science, welfare, medicine, the media and the arts.

We have prayed Your Kingdom come and ignored the command to seek it first in our personal and societal lifestyles. Therefore we repent of our failure to let Christ be King in these areas. We will redress these failures with biblical teaching...robust theological debate and wholistic congregations and ministries that integrate proclamation, social transformation and renewal in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In its “Final Summation,” the group affirmed:

that Jesus' Good News of the Kingdom requires that we observe his Kingly rule:

In all things. Therefore there is no human activity, no region of human endeavour which is beyond God's reign—*[or, I wish to add, interest].*

At all times. Therefore we repudiate any distinction between the sacred and the secular which obscures that biblical truth that God is King of all times and places.

In all situations. Therefore we urge all Christians to seek first the Kingdom of God in the home, in the Church, at work, in study, in their local community, during recreation and in all other activities of their lives as our highest priority in our lives.⁵²

In the same book, Graham Cray admitted, “Our vision of the Kingdom has been impaired by our tendency to compartmentalize

and argue about the priority of evangelism, signs and wonders, social action and spiritual warfare.”⁵³

The same kind of confessions are heard time and again during the past couple of decades. Brian Stiller, a recognised Evangelical leader in Canada, had as a major goal of his “to help Evangelicals understand the role they could have in engaging the public and government. ‘We had so long vacated that role,’ he says.”⁵⁴

It was heartening to read that, according to the unidentified writer on the back cover of Samuel and Sugden, this more wholistic approach “has been adopted since 1983 by most evangelical agencies,” including even the Pentecostal churches. I rejoice at this development but cannot forget that Nigerian Christians have in the meantime been cheated significantly from a more healthy approach to their nation and to their neighbours, the Muslims. Muslims have similarly been cheated and been saddled with a seriously distorted impression of the Christian religion. *I am still waiting for an apology to all Nigerians from the missions operating in the country, especially the Reformed missions who should have known better.* My own central focus during my thirty-year ministry in the country was precisely to help the Church overcome this handicap. The interest of my sponsoring mission was at best ambiguous. There always were some individual missionaries who had similar concerns, but they did not usually have the time or elbow room to “practice” a more wholistic approach. It was clearly a matter of priorities.

The point of this present discussion is that I am not accusing Evangelicals on my own steam. They themselves have confessed their shortcoming in this regard. They have done so, I believe, because they came to recognise the seriousness of their failure. *To bring a reduced Gospel to a people is a serious failure indeed; it comes close to betrayal of both Gospel and people. Both Muslims and Christians have been stuck with that during these decades of crises.*

Tokunboh Adeyemo, General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, sees it differently. “Deriving from our tradi-

tional world view, where reality of life does not divide between sacred and secular, and in keeping with the practice of the founding missions, who did not only preach the Gospel but also established hospitals, schools and so on, the Church in Africa does not dichotomise between evangelism and social concern.” “The holistic model of ministry as practiced by our churches has given credibility to the message and acceptance to the Church in society.”⁵⁵ His opinion flies in the face of most schools of thought, many of whom bemoan the lack of wholism in the Nigerian Church. His own friend Bennie van der Walt, who wrote the preface to Adeyemo’s publication, has written a whole series of books to counter the very dualism Adeyemo denies.⁵⁶ Muslims, as we have seen in Monographs 2 and 4, fault the Church precisely for that reason. As to my own stand on this issue and its explanation, I refer you to my writings as referred to in the endnotes throughout this series. With all the respect I have for Adeyemo, I fear his failure to recognise the problem is an indication that he may not be free from it himself.⁵⁷

▲ WHOLISM VS DUALISM

A strong feature of Nigerian Islam is its rejection of this dualism. Monographs 2 and 4 have addressed this Muslim issue; Monograph 6 will also deal with it. The Kuyperian tradition has long fought this dualism so prevalent in the West. It has recognised how dualism undermines healthy Christian communities, and it has exposed the deep philosophical roots of dualism in Pagan Greek philosophies in publication after publication. Below follow a number of Kuyperian statements rejecting that dualism.

1. CHRISTIAN REFORMED DENOMINATIONAL PLAN

Jesus is Lord. This affirmation...takes on a particular significance in the modern world where we are plagued by dualism, the devastating split between the sacred and the secular. The

secular world view, which is the air one breathes today in North America, would have Christians believe that the world is really split... between the sacred and the secular. It's fine for Christians to have their little Jesus in their little sacred world. But whatever claims Christians make about Jesus apply only to that little world called "the sacred."

Under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper, Reformed Christians strongly reject this... dualism and declare that Jesus is Lord of all things... The most well-known quotation of Abraham Kuyper is, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ... does not cry 'Mine!'"⁵⁸

2. JAN H. BOER, THE AUTHOR

The dualism of which I write includes a kind of hierarchy between the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the physical or worldly. One is considered more important or valuable in God's sight than the other. It is part of the Greek and Scholastic heritage, but definitely not of the Bible. The very first chapter in the Bible is a ringing testimony to the great joy God derived from His material creation. There is the sevenfold praise for the material: "And God saw that it was good," with the seventh expanded to "And God saw *every thing* that he had made, and, behold, it was *very good*" (KJV). And that in a chapter almost exclusively devoted to the physical creation! A view that relegates the physical to a secondary place in God's scheme invariably ends up belittling working in His world and emphasizing man's spiritual duties as the only ones of value.

The Reformed uphold this high regard for the physical in spite of a number of Bible passages that at first glance appear to downgrade the world. These include Matthew 18:7, Mark 4:19, John 12:31 and 18:36, I Corinthians 3:19, James 1:27 and, especially James 4:4 and I John 2:15. However, a careful study soon

reveals that the term “world” has more than one meaning in the Bible. Sometimes it refers to the world created by God, over which He rules and that He loves. At other times it refers to the spirit of godlessness where men no longer obey their Creator. That is the realm where men worship the creature, an aspect of creation that has then in their imagination become autonomous. It is the pseudo-world that competes with God for human loyalty. It is the world men love more than its Creator. When that world is thus cut off in men’s minds from God Himself, it becomes an object of God’s displeasure. However prevalent this situation may be, this does not undermine the high honour of the material world in God’s scheme of things.⁵⁹

▲ WORLD VIEWS ---

The concept of world view has been a central one in the Kuyperian tradition from its beginning. The subject of world views is about deep-seated beliefs that people hold and on basis of which they conduct their lives and create their structures or organizations. Our lives, cultures and structures are based on unproven beliefs or assumptions. This is true for all, whether secularist, atheist, rationalist, despite their objections to this observation, or Christian and Muslim.

World views were a major concern of Kuyper himself and continue to be so with Kuyperians till this day. Albert Wolters wrote a book on the subject that quickly was recognised as a classic. We have already read how he defines world view as “the comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things.” “Things,” in turn, “is a deliberative vague term that refers to anything about which it is possible to have a belief.” World views “have to do with *basic* beliefs about things,” “with the ultimate questions.” “They involve matters of general principles.” And, yes, “everyone has a world view, however inarticulate he may be in expressing it. Having a

world view is simply part of being an adult human being.”

As to its function, Wolters asserts that it serves

as a guide to our life. Even when it is half unconscious and unarticulated, it functions like a compass or a road map. It orients us in the world at large, gives us a sense of what is up and what is down, what is right and what is wrong... Our world view shapes, to a significant degree, the way we assess the events, issues, and structures of our civilization and our times. It allows us to “place” or “situate” the various phenomena that come into our purview. Of course, other factors play a role in this orientation process (psychological or economic self-interest, for example), but these other factors do not eliminate the guiding role of one’s world view; they often exert their influence precisely via our life-perspective.

Wolters declares that “one of the unique characteristics of human beings is that we cannot do without the kind of orientation and guidance that world view gives.” We all are in need of its guidance. “We need some creed to live by, some map by which to chart our course. The need for a guiding perspective is basic to human life, perhaps more basic than food or sex.”⁶⁰

Wolters goes on to discuss the influence of world view on our action. He acknowledges the input from various disciplines and philosophies that must be taken into consideration in this question, for human behaviour is very complex, involving all kinds of factors. But the question is not merely what factors influence us so much as “what constitutes the *overriding* and *decisive* factor.” The way we answer this is not primarily the conclusion to our scientific research. The answer “depends on our view of the essential nature of humankind: it is itself a matter of our world view.” “Our belief is a decisive factor in our lives, even though our *professed* beliefs may be at variance with the beliefs that are actually *operative* in our lives.” We must always be watchful that our official beliefs and our

operative beliefs are in agreement both with each other and with the Bible. Our belief(s) must constantly be tested by the Scriptures.⁶¹

I have already referred to Walsh and Middleton's contribution on the subject. They write:

*World views are best understood as we see them incarnated, fleshed out in actual ways of life. They are not systems of thought, like theologies or philosophies. Rather, world views are perceptual frameworks. They are ways of seeing. If we want to understand what people see...we need to watch how they walk. If they bump into certain objects or stumble over them, then we can assume that they are blind to them. Conversely, their eyes may not only see but dwell on certain other objects.*⁶²

While Walsh and Middleton do not indicate familiarity with the Nigerian situation, they do touch upon Nigeria's problem:

*When society manifests a plurality of world views, problems arise. If no one vision is dominant, that society becomes a house divided against itself, and inevitably it will experience cultural disintegration. But when there is a majority position, when one world view dominates the others, the culture must somehow deal with the minorities. The issue is significant ethically and politically. How does the mainline society, with its allegiance to the culturally dominant vision of life, relate to the minority groups within it?*⁶³

Below, I reproduce a number of statements Walsh and Middleton make to further describe world views (but without including their supporting discussion):

Humans are creatures of vision. It means that we are creatures who live our lives in terms of our perspective, our vision of life.

Humans make life choices, and they make them in terms of their way of looking at things.

A world view provides a model of the world which guides its adherents in the world. It stipulates how the world ought to be, and it thus advises how its adherents ought to conduct themselves in the world... Each world view comes equipped with...a vision of the future, which guides and directs life.

...world views never belong to just one individual. World views are always shared; they are communal. Indeed, true community is possible only when people are bound together by a common way of life rooted in a shared vision of life... When a whole society is dominated by a particular world view, a cultural pattern emerges...all political activities, legal, economic activities, marriage, family and child rearing practices are all expressions of a confessionally led [that is, led by a common set of beliefs or faith] way of life. Thus, each culture presents a coherent, meaningful pattern that finds its unity in the dominant vision of life.

That [mutual coherence] is what makes these different aspects of a culture hang together...If they are not, then we experience a kind of spiritual schizophrenia, in which one part of life is led by one spirit and another part by a different spirit. Such a condition cannot go on indefinitely without causing problems.⁶⁴

World views are intensely spiritual. They are a religious phenomenon. We speak of the "spirit of the age" when one spirit or world view has a predominant role in a culture over a significant period of time.

Some people refer to world views as different "universes" in which they live. Walsh and Middleton continue: "Indeed, we often feel that we are worlds apart from other people, or that someone seems to live in a different world from us. And often that is precisely the case. Another person's world view is like a different world or universe..."

“This is why it is often so difficult for people of different visions of life to communicate and understand each other. They really are in different worlds, and they cannot penetrate each other’s universe.” Does this not describe exactly Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria?!

Walsh and Middleton affirm that

World views are founded on ultimate faith commitments. Faith is an essential part of human life. Humans are confessing, believing and trusting creatures. And where we place our faith determines the world view which we will adopt. People who doubt their world view are restless and feel they have no ground to stand on. They are often in the throes of a psychological crisis, but that...crisis is fundamentally religious, because our world view rests on a faith commitment.

Walsh and Middleton ask, “How do we judge a world view? What criteria can we use?...what would compel us to select one over another?” We must be careful not “to discount how much we [simply] tend to be drawn to world views that coincide with our own” and judge on that basis. They then suggest a set of criteria that they feel is fairly objective and universal. I will only list the criteria, without further details, except for the last: reality, coherence, openness and Bible conforming. For Christians, the ultimate—but not the *only*—criterion is the Bible. Our world view must be “informed, corrected and shaped by the Scriptures under the guidance of the Spirit.”⁶⁵ Muslims claim the same for their world view and the Qur’an. Secularists base their belief on reason. These are different world views, different assumptions and value systems, but they are, *all of them*, belief or faith systems.

▲ CLOSING REMARKS

This chapter has provided you with elements of the underlying world view of Kuyperian thought that I consider relevant in the

current Nigerian context. I have quite on purpose repeated certain concepts, for I know how difficult it is to grasp these principles. Not because they are so difficult *per se*, but because they meet such strong resistance in the deep-seated mental-spiritual habits of Christians everywhere, including Nigerians.

However, the Kuyperian tradition is not only a matter of world view. It also includes a lot of specific content that represents social doctrines as well as the seeds for a sociology with its own approach to social structures. The Kuyperian and the Roman Catholic are the only Western Christian traditions that provide more than Christian inspiration and motivation. Chapters 6 and 7 will give flesh to some of that in so far as I judge it to be helpful to Nigeria at its present stage of differentiation. I will refrain from promoting Kuyperian concepts for which Nigeria is not ready.

Please move on with me.

▲ NOTES

¹ Religion would not be religion if someone would not disagree with major opinions. Asghar Engineer, an Indian Muslim and prolific author, rejects the notion of “Islamic economics” on basis of his definitions of science and religion (A. Engineer, 2004, p. 22).

² J. Boer, 1979, pp. 37-42, 236-261, 340-380; 1984, chps. 6 and 7.

³ H. Blamires, pp. 3-4.

⁴ J. Boer, 2003, pp. 16-24. See also the Kuyperiana page on www.SocialTheology.com. A. Wolters, 1985, p. 1.

⁵ D. Todd, the religion editor for the *VS*, is one of them. See Bibliography. Another is a self-conscious humanist in Vancouver who wishes to remain anonymous, who admires the resulting system of tolerance that Kuyperians designed specifically to overcome the intolerance of his Dutch secular co-humanists of the 19th century.

⁶ J. Boer, 1991, p. 1.

⁷ Recently, e.g., Dr. J. Glenn Vriesen is drawing attention to the influence of the German philosopher Franz von Baader on both Kuyper and Dooyeweerd. See Friesen in Bibliography.

⁸ C. Gousmett, 1999, pp. 10-11.

⁹ For a wider Web-based introduction to both Kuyper and Dooyeweerd, see the relevant pages and links on www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen as well as Kuyper and Dooyeweerd entries on the *Companion CD*.

¹⁰ W. Berghuis, 1964, p. 3.

¹¹ See bibliographical entry.

¹² J. McGoldrick, pp. 227-229. C. Gousmett, p. 12.

¹³ C. Gousmett, pp. 2, 4-5.

¹⁴ P. Marshall, 1984, pp. 75-77.

¹⁵ A recent sad instance is the “confession” of my friend Louis Tamminga in T. Hofman, pp. 180-183.

¹⁶ J. Chaplin, 2002. This recognition is not unique to Kuyperians. In vol. 4, Muslims express it a number of times. So does Mike Ikhariale, p. 40 above.

¹⁷ H. Antonides, 1987, p. 22.

- ¹⁸ Christian Reformed Church, 2002, p. 72.
- ¹⁹ REC, 1991, p. 1.
- ²⁰ B. van der Walt, 1994, pp. 374-375.
- ²¹ J. Chaplin, 2004. For Skidelski's article, see *Prospect*, Jan/2002, p. 15.
- ²² J. Chaplin, 2004. For Fulford's article, see the *Saturday Post*, 19 Jan/2002, p. 19.
- ²³ O. Guinness, 1983, pp. 178, 105.
- ²⁴ W. Kauuova, pp. 20-23.
- ²⁵ H. Antonides, 1987, pp. 2, 3, 10.
- ²⁶ *Inquiry* 34 (1991), p. 148. See also P. Marshall's further discussion of this incident in *Studies in Political Thought* 2 (1993), pp. 87-104.
- ²⁷ *Inquiry* 34 (1991), p. 242.
- ²⁸ P. Marshall, 1997, pp. 5-7.
- ²⁹ P. Marshall, 1992, pp. 19-20. See also P. Marshall, 1997, pp. xxii-xxiv.
- ³⁰ I. Buruma, "An Islamic Democracy for Iraq?" *New York Times*, 5 Dec/2004.
- ³¹ L. Sanneh, 1997, p. 205.
- ³² Part I, Ch. 2.
- ³³ REC, 1991, pp. 1-3.
- ³⁴ B. van der Walt, 1994, p. 369.
- ³⁵ E. Rubingh, 1969, p. 158.
- ³⁶ L. Sanneh, 1997, p. 222.
- ³⁷ B. van der Walt, 1994, pp. 368-374.
- ³⁸ J. Boer, 1984, p. 144; 1979, p. 482.
- ³⁹ REC, 1991, p. 63.
- ⁴⁰ R. Russell, p. 22. See R. M. Smith for an entire chapter devoted to this trend, though Smith is more reasonable. Smith's arguments leave room for dialogue.
- ⁴¹ G. Spykman, 1992, pp. 23-24.
- ⁴² G. Spykman, 1989, p. 90, footnote 2.
- ⁴³ See J. Boer, *Christians and Mobilization* for a similar discussion of

dualism. It is here reduced to a few simple propositions (p. 11). The document constitutes Appendix 8. For a similar, but more extensive, discussion, also geared towards Africa, see B. van der Walt, 1994, pp. 109-117. The Table of Contents of this book is reproduced as Appendix 9.

⁴⁴ F. Copleston, pp. 424-430, 315, 310. J. Boer, 1979, pp. 449-456; 1984, p. 132.

⁴⁵ A. Wolters, 1985, p. 54.

⁴⁶ J. Bavinck, 1960, pp. 106-107.

⁴⁷ H. Blamire, p. 15.

⁴⁸ H. Blamire, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁹ A. Wolters, p. 94.

⁵⁰ "Concerned Evangelicals," pp. 24-25.

⁵¹ R. Winter, Nov/2004, p. 5. This is also a major point in my publication of 1992.

⁵² V. Samuel, pp. xiv, 12-13, 23. Emphasis mine.

⁵³ V. Samuel, p. 40.

⁵⁴ D. Fieguth, p. 32.

⁵⁵ T. Adeyemo, 1995, p. 10.

⁵⁶ I have more than twenty-five of his titles on my shelf!

⁵⁷ For the reasons missions in Nigeria have engaged in healthcare and education, see J. Boer, 1979, Part 3; 1984, Chapters 8-9. At best it represents a truncated wholism, a contradictory term, but an approach commonly found among Evangelicals, as the next section shows.

⁵⁸ Quoted in *CC*, "How We Relate..." 12 Nov/2001, p. 10. C. S. Lewis, the famous British Christian apologist, made a strikingly similar statement: "There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God..."—(Quoted in Walsh and Middleton, p. 71).

⁵⁹ J. Boer, 1984, p. 151.

⁶⁰ A. Wolters, 1985, pp. 2-4. Gousmett offers a similar definition: A world view is "a non-theoretical, everyday account of how the world is" (pp. 15-16).

⁶¹ A. Wolters, 1985, pp. 5-6. Italics mine.

⁶² Walsh & Middleton, p. 17.

⁶³ Walsh & Middleton, pp. 22-23. In Nigeria it is not a matter of majority vs minority world views so much as two huge majorities with different world views that are regarded as incompatible. One of the goals of this series is to narrow the gap and to search for ways in which the two can accommodate each other without either one losing its authenticity.

⁶⁴ Christians who flirt with secularism suffer from such “spiritual schizophrenia.”

⁶⁵ Walsh and Middleton, pp. 31-39.

