

“Lordship Of Jesus Christ Over All” “Every Square Inch Is Mine”

Abraham Kuyper was a teacher, theologian, journalist, and also a politician in the 19th-20th c. Netherlands. From 1901-1905 he was the prime minister. This gifted and careful thinker helped clarify two very important truths that arise from a biblical worldview.

Sphere Sovereignty

First Kuyper taught in his Stone Lecture series delivered at Princeton University in 1898 that there are three spheres or domains God has set forth in which men operate. Though God is in charge over all three (He is sovereign), yet He has entrusted primary leadership or authority (we might say derived sovereignty) to different institutions for each sphere.

To begin with, there is the sphere of the state. Here, God has given to mankind the commission to bring order to the world and to create culture (Gen. 1:26-28), as well as to preserve justice in and protect society—and these are primarily carried out through government (Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

Though we can say that every Christian would have a responsibility, to some degree, to be involved in this process (which could include anything from voting to the actual holding of office), it is not the God-given calling of the Church to run the government. Also, though we can say that family members will be involved in this process, nevertheless, it is not to be families, per se, who are running the government.

The second sphere is that of society (we can also call it the family). God established family from the very beginning of time as a primary institution in society. He brought man and woman together (Gen. 2:18-25) and gave children to them (Gen. 4:1; cf. Ps. 127:3). The primary responsibility of raising these children is given to parents (cf. Dt. 6:6-9; Prov. 1:8; 13:1; 22:6; Eph. 6:4).

Even though it is true that the government passes laws and enforces laws which can benefit and help families in the child raising process and can also provide protection, it is not the responsibility of the government to raise children. Likewise, though the Church can come alongside the family and certainly aid them in the processes of marriage and child rearing (e.g.

Romans 13:1-4: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. [3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, [4] for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.”

Psalms 127:3: “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.”

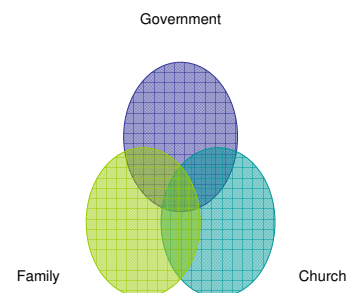
Rom. 12:7; Gal. 6:2), nevertheless, it is not the God-given responsibility of the Church to raise those children.

The third sphere this Dutch teacher and writer aided us in recognizing is that of the Church. Like with the first two, there is God-ordained leadership given to the Church (Eph. 4:7-11; Heb. 13:17). It is the responsibility of pastors to serve as the undershepherds (under Christ) of the body of Christ (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Families are part of the Church and Christian leaders are often husbands and fathers (1 Tim. 3:2, 4), but it is not the institution of the family which has the chief oversight of the Church. Likewise, the government can help protect the Church (Rom. 13:1-4), yet the state does not possess the God-given authority to run the Church.

So, what we see in this first area of teaching from Abraham Kuyper is that God has given order to the world He created and has graciously given these three institutions for the benefit of mankind and His own glory. To understand the division of responsibility and who has ultimate authority in each, as well as not to confuse the three, helps us to function in accordance with how God has created us.

But we must understand that the three spheres, though distinguished, also overlap because people who are part of the Church are also part of families and also exercise responsibility in the state. This leads to his second area of truth within the biblical worldview which the Dutch statesman clarified for us.



The Lordship Of Christ Over All Of Life

In his delineation of sphere sovereignty, Kuyper did not mean, for example, that those who are part of the Church must stay within the confines of the Church, totally separated from the state, not having any influence upon or responsibility in the government. His focus was merely upon the ultimate authority or responsibility in each.

He understood the Bible taught that God created all things (Gen. 1:1) and that all things ultimately belong to God (Psalm 24:1). They not only belong to God, but they were created for Him and His glory (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 2:10). As such, we conclude that it is not just spiritual things or religious things that have to do with God. He has made the entire world and it all has

Col. 1:16: "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."

to do with Him (1 Cor. 10:26; 1 Tim. 4:4-5) and we are bound to obey and follow Him in all areas of life (Ps. 119:73).

So, when we put this all together, we understand that our God is Lord over all of life and we must submit to Him regarding every area and must be faithful to what He has to say about every area. As Kuyper himself so eloquently affirmed: "In the total expanse of human life there is not a single square inch of which the Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare, 'That is mine!'"

The implication of this for the Christian is simply this: We must seek to serve Christ and honor Him in every area of existence. Though serving as a pastor or missionary is very important, it is no more spiritual or godly, per se, than a lawyer, physician, mechanic, teacher, restaurant server, artist, farmer, soldier, or truck driver. There are different vocations of God and different responsibilities that God gives to each Christian, including the shaping of the public square (i.e. how things function in society, what we often call the political process, media, educational institutions, etc.). We mention this entire area simply because so many Christians separate it off from the Church and suggest that the Church has no business having an impact in it. Even though it is not the calling of the Church to run the public square or the state, nevertheless, individual Christians are called to love their neighbor and not ignore their needs (cf. Luke 10:25-37). What is more, God holds all people responsible for neglecting or abusing the kinds of issues so often addressed in this sphere (cf. Amos 1-2; Isaiah 58; James 1:27).

When we understand that Christ is Lord over all of life and that life is not divided out into the sacred and the secular (i.e. the Church or religious and everything else), we then begin to see that the entire world is the arena of Christian life and faithfulness.

Though Abraham Kuyper was not the first one to teach us this principle, he did help clarify it for us and to remind us of it. Like with the Dutch statesman, may our vision for how we can impact society for God's glory be enlarged to encompass all of life!

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you state, in your own words, the two key biblical teachings which we discussed?
2. In what way(s) do we need to change how we view Christian

Psalm 119:73: "Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments."

"If we look externally there is difference betwixt washing of dishes and preaching the word of God; but as touching to please God, none at all."
-William Tyndale

"The action of a shepherd in keeping sheep...is as good a work before God as is the action of a judge in giving sentence, or a magistrate in ruling, or a minister in preaching."
-Puritan pastor, William Perkins

life and service as a result of this teaching?

3. What do you believe God has gifted you to do in life? How can you glorify Him through this?
4. What area(s), as a family, must we begin to see as coming under the Lordship of Christ that we have not previously realized?