

Theological Research Essay

**Christ, Kuyper, and Cone: A Comparative Analysis of Dutch Reformed and Black
Liberationist Political Theologies for the Empowerment of the Poor**

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INTRODUCTION

There is significant political tension in the Body of Christ today. Though it is never wise to generalize phenomena, it can be safely said that Christian engagement within the political and governmental sphere is of particular concern in not a few nations across the globe. In the United States, Christians are deeply divided over matters of race, electoral process, and the role of government in social welfare. To illustrate the point, consider the widening chasm between the sociopolitical perspectives of Black Christians and their white counterparts. In 2019, 75% of Black Christians felt that race was definitely a problem in America, while only 40% of White Christians said the same. But in 2020, after the police killing of George Floyd and the social unrest that followed, 81% of Black Christians determined America to have a race problem, a greater proportion than that of the general Black population, while 33% of White Christians felt the same, a lesser proportion than that of the general White population.¹ In Ethiopia, the P'ent'ay (that is, Protestant/Pentecostal) Prime Minister is waging civil war against the overwhelmingly Orthodox Tewahedo Tigrayan People's Liberation Front. This Christian war has created significant upheaval in the Horn of Africa, exacerbating issues of drought and food insecurity.²

These are but two examples, but they illustrate a widespread need for theologizing in the area of politics and government. Furthermore, the political tensions between Christians in the United States, Ethiopia, and elsewhere in the world invite deep reflection upon the specific causes and manifestations of such tensions and the offering of contextualized solutions that are

¹ Barna Group, "White Christians Have Become Even Less Motivated to Address Racial Injustice," Accessed August 28, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/american-christians-race-problem/>.

² Alex de Waal, "'Peace Process' Is Dead, as Is Fragile Ceasefire in Ethiopia," *Responsible Statecraft* (blog), August 25, 2022, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/08/25/peace-process-is-dead-as-is-fragile-ceasefire-in-ethiopia/>.

consistent with the character of Jesus Christ, the teachings of Scripture, and the best traditions of the global Church.

Toward the project of reconciliatory political theologizing today, there could likely be no better conversation partners than Abraham Kuyper, a towering figure in Dutch Reformed Public Theology, and James Cone, the “father” of Black Liberation Theology. While both Kuyper and Cone are prolific writers on matters of public faith and political witness, their views are perhaps best fit for dialogue on the issue of structural poverty. We focus on poverty because economic instability tends to undergird other forms of sociopolitical concern. Further, even though their vastly different social locations led them to emphasize very different issues in political theology, the issue of poverty is a common denominator between them. The goal of our inquiry, then, is to discover the political theologies of Abraham Kuyper and James Cone, to determine the level of compatibility between their theologies, and to discern the helpfulness of these theologies for the present-day struggle against structural poverty.

In this paper I will argue that, despite their differences, both Cone’s Black Liberation Theology and Kuyper’s Dutch Reformed Public Theology can significantly inform, clarify, and unite the political-theological vision of Christians in their fight against structural poverty today, particularly as these streams reflect upon the position of Christ, the problem of caste, and the pace and process of change in the political sphere. The argument will progress from providing a broad definition of political theology and a brief biblical exploration and contemporary illustration of structural poverty to an explication of the political theologies of Cone and Kuyper related to poverty, then on to a short consideration of Allan Boesak’s Reformed Black Theology as a mediating perspective, and finally to a concluding section that will propose a unitive political theology for the empowerment of the poor.

DEFINING POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Political Theology proper is a relatively new field of scholarly inquiry. Though German legal philosopher Carl Schmitt gets credit for coining the term in the early 20th century, his conception of political theology is much different than how many Christian thinkers would define it and how we will define it for the purposes of this inquiry. For Schmitt, political theology was the appropriation of theological concepts in statecraft, or said differently, how the State uses religious ideas and terms to reinforce its own power. Political theology, in Schmitt's thinking, is the way in which the State becomes savior (or at the very least, the primary instrument of salvation).³

In the mainstream Christian view, however, political theology, broadly construed, speaks to a reflection upon the activity of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church "in the public square, where the various dimensions of religion, culture, society, economics, and government converge and interface."⁴ Far from a deification of the State, political theology from a mainstream Christian perspective asks who God is for the political and governmental sphere, how He is moving therein, and what His purposes and plans are for cities, regions, people groups, and nation-states. Further, such political theologizing reflects upon how the Church is to bear public witness in light of the reign of God over the nations of the earth. While Schmitt has provided the terminology, the kind of political theology that Kuyper and Cone have engaged in is

³ LeQuire, Peter Brickey. "'From Political Theology to Political Christology': The Figure of Hegel in Carl Schmitt's Political Theology II," presented at the conference "Actuality and the Idea," Princeton University (Princeton, NJ, May 2012).

⁴ Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology*, The Cadbury Lectures 2009 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), page xix.

rooted in the Christian mainstream, as borne from the biblical reflections of the Israelite prophets and the New Testament apostles, as well as that of patristic voices like Augustine of Hippo.

UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURAL POVERTY

Before exploring the political theologies of Kuyper and Cone, we should first gain an understanding of what structural poverty is and why it matters for our political-theological project. Structural poverty refers to the lack of economic stability and opportunity resulting from market forces, government policies, and social environments. Very often, Christians focus on the causes of individual poverty, such as sloth, substance abuse, and financial irresponsibility. However, personal decisions are only ever one part of the story.

When YHWH established the governance of Israel at Mount Sinai, He built a safety net structure into the nation's policies: the edges of and gleanings from harvest fields were to be left for the poor and for immigrants (Leviticus 23:22), Israelite slaves were to be freed every seven years (Exodus 21:2), and land was to be restored back to its original inheritors every fifty years, preserving and propagating generational wealth (Leviticus 25:13). Each of these regulations were structural in nature, meant to provide a system wherein poverty would never be a reality passed from generation to generation.

Unfortunately, Israel did not always honor these aspects of its covenant with God. Thus, "The field of the poor may yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice," (Proverbs 13:23 NRSV). Further, as the prophet Amos testifies in a prophetic judgment against the nation, "They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed," (Amos 2:7).⁵ While the context of both the Proverbs and Amos passages may speak to individual sins, they also speak to systems of collective sin. When individual persons and

⁵ All Scripture references are from the New International Version (NIV), unless otherwise stated.

jurisdictions rob the poor of justice and when other persons and jurisdictions refuse to stand in the gap to challenge the injustice, structural poverty is born.

Such was the case with Israel, and such is the case in the United States and other countries today. We might consider the plight of African-Americans by way of illustration. In the wake of the Civil War, General William Sherman met with a group of black ministers and asked what their communities needed to thrive post-slavery. The ministers asked for land and to be left alone. General Sherman, with President Lincoln's blessing, issued Special Field Orders No. 15, famously guaranteeing former slave families "forty acres and a mule." The program had great promise and could have gone a long way in providing restitution for the institution of slavery. But after Lincoln's assassination, President Andrew Johnson rescinded the order, returning the land to its former Confederate occupiers.⁶ The United States government has to this day done nothing to right this wrong and to keep its original promise, and has added to its sins redlining, which systematically depressed property values in black neighborhoods. The brutal legacy of racial land injustice has resulted in lopsided homeownership rates. In fact, "Only 44 percent of black households own their homes compared with nearly 74 percent of whites. The black homeownership rate is little changed from the late 1960s, while whites have made steady gains over time."⁷ And while many factors can influence a family's wealth, the wide disparity in homeownership is one of the primary reasons why the wealth of the median white household is almost ten times as great as the wealth of the median black household.⁸ Truly, justice has been denied to the poor and the oppressed.

⁶ Sarah McCammon, "The Story Behind '40 Acres And A Mule,'" *NPR*, January 12, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/01/12/376781165/the-story-behind-40-acres-and-a-mule>.

⁷ Heather Long, "Analysis | The Black-White Economic Divide Is as Wide as It Was in 1968," *Washington Post*, accessed June 18, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/06/04/economic-divide-black-households/>.

⁸ Jay Shambaugh, et. al., "Examining the Black-White Wealth Gap," *Brookings* (blog), February 27, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/02/27/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap/>.

HOW WE SEE JESUS

Having a basic understanding of what political theology is and how structural poverty operates, we now turn to an exploration of the theologies of Kuyper and Cone. Importantly, both perspectives are grounded in the revelation of Jesus Christ, but they differ in their Christological emphases. For Kuyper, the political-theological project must begin with the cosmic kingship of Jesus Christ. Though Jesus is also our Redeemer and Savior, His foundational role is King, such that “his royal honor and dignity are not added to his work as Savior but constitute the final goal to which everything is being steered, directed, and driven.”⁹ Christ reigns as the Son of Man and the Son of God over all of history and human life. As such, though His rule is only intimately manifested in the Church, governments are also subject to His influence, such that “Christ exercises his kingship not only by being the Head of his church, but also in that he intervenes directly in the development of political life.”¹⁰ Still, for Kuyper, an evaluation of Christ’s kingship is not complete if one only considers His current post-Resurrection position. One must also consider “the hallmark of the Messiah,” the fact that “as the One sent by the Father ... [Jesus] had taken the gospel not to the upper classes but in the first place to the lower classes of society.”¹¹ In this way, Jesus is the cosmic King whose heart is and has always been with the poor and oppressed.

⁹ Abraham Kuyper, *Pro Rege (Volume 1): Living Under Christ the King*, edited by John H. Kok, Collected Works in Public Theology (Ashland: Lexham Press, 2016), section III.4.

¹⁰ Abraham Kuyper, *Pro Rege (Volume 3): Living Under Christ's Kingship*, edited by Jordon J. Ballor and Melvin Flikkema, Collected Works in Public Theology (Ashland: Lexham Press, 2019), section V.4.

¹¹ Abraham Kuyper, “Christ and the Needy,” in *On Charity and Justice*, edited by Matthew J Tuininga, Collected Works in Public Theology (Belingham: Lexham Press, 2022), section 5.

For Cone's Christological foundation, it is not just Jesus's heart that is with the poor, but His hands are with them as well. Cone argues, "If the gospel is a gospel of liberation for the oppressed, then Jesus is where the oppressed are and continues his work of liberation there."¹² Cone agrees with Kuyper that Jesus sided with the oppressed in His earthly ministry, but he goes further to emphasize the *present* messianic ministry of Jesus among the disadvantaged.¹³ Christ is just as much involved in contemporary ghettos as He was involved in the towns of ancient Galilee. Indeed, "Jesus is not safely confined in the first century. He is our contemporary."¹⁴ While Kuyper emphasizes Jesus' role as cosmic King, Cone emphasizes His role as earthly Messiah, and the "Black Messiah" at that. For Cone, Jesus' blackness is not a matter of ontological reality but is rather a meaningful symbol that illustrates the depth of His present solidarity with the poor and oppressed. His incarnation continues to this day; He has made Himself one of us. It is precisely because of Jesus's solidarity with the disadvantaged during His earthly ministry that we can be assured that He practices the same solidarity today: "While the *wasness* of Jesus is Christology's point of departure ... the *isness* of Jesus relates his past history to his present involvement in our struggle."¹⁵

It is likely that Kuyper would dispute Cone's characterization of Christ as Black. Indeed, Kuyper seems to challenge even the *Jewishness* of Jesus, claiming "Jesus to be not the King of the Jews but the King of a people drawn from all the nations."¹⁶ It is interesting, however, that Kuyper emphasizes Jesus's titles "Son of God" (Matthew 16:16) and "Son of Man" (Matthew 24:30), even taking the latter term to ascribe a cosmopolitan identity to Jesus, while giving less

¹² James H Cone, "The Gospel of Jesus, Black People, and Black Power," in *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969).

¹³ James H. Cone, "The Content of Theology," in *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 50th anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ James H. Cone, "Who Is Jesus Christ for Us Today?" in *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 134.

¹⁶ Kuyper, *Pro Rege* (Vol. 1), section III.4.

attention to another of His titles – “Son of David” (Matthew 1:1). It would seem that a bridge between Kuyper’s “colorblind” King and Cone’s Black Christ is an understanding of a Jewish Messiah, who remains such after His Resurrection and Ascension. “All authority in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18) belongs to the same Jesus who for our sake became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus reigns from above, but He also works from below. Together, Kuyper’s and Cone’s Christological perspectives powerfully express a foundational truth for Christian political witness: Jesus is King of and for the poor.

WE HAVE A PROBLEM

Having established the identification of King Jesus with the poor and oppressed, we should explore why socioeconomic class is such an important issue in the political theologies of Kuyper and Cone. For Kuyper, the fundamental problem is that some have an abundance of riches, while others lack basic provisions. He explores John the Baptist’s instructions related to true repentance: “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same,” (John 3:11). Continuing on, Kuyper claims, “The situation in the world is always such that two people stand side by side, one of whom has two beds to sleep on, two garments to wear, and two portions of food for his hunger, while the other has no bed to lie on, no raiment to cover his nakedness, and no food to ease his hunger. This cries out to heaven.”¹⁷ Kuyper concludes that the will of Christ is for a “para-equality of possessions,” but only concerning the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter.¹⁸ And ideally, such para-equality should flow from the charitable action of those who live in abundance, not through the coercion of government.

¹⁷ Kuyper, *On Charity and Justice*, section VII.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Flowing from the notion of para-equality, two other issues arise for Kuyper in his consideration of poverty and class. One such issue is that, despite the ideal of ecclesial and private sector support for the poor, extreme inequality persists. In these cases, Kuyper grants that the government should get involved: “Care for the poor does not belong to the task of government, but when pauperism spreads and philanthropy falls short and starvation is imminent, government inaction would be criminal.”¹⁹ Kuyper’s other issue speaks to the danger of inequality for the health of society as a whole. When economic instability persists for a large portion of the population, argues Kuyper, political instability is inevitable.²⁰ What is needed, then, is a governmental and societal commitment to endorse para-equality, while the greed of the rich and the covetousness of poor must be guarded against. In Kuyper’s view, the idol of Mammon is a real threat for all classes of society.

For Cone, the problem of class or more accurately *caste* (that is, structural oppression that keeps certain people groups confined to socioeconomic instability) strikes more deeply than a lack of basic provisions for those at the lower rungs of society. The fundamental problem is a lack of human dignity. In Cone’s context of 20th century Black America, he sees caste as primarily defined along racial lines, in which blackness and economic oppression are often interrelated and interconnected realities. From this context, Cone sees racism and structural poverty as fundamentally dehumanizing. The solution, then, is “Black Power [which] means black freedom, black self-determination, wherein black people no longer view themselves as without human dignity but as men, human beings with the ability to carve out their own destiny.”²¹ Such dignity means that there can be no economic or societal slave masters. While

¹⁹ Abraham Kuyper, *Business & Economics*, edited by Jordon J Ballor and Melvin Flikkema, *Collected Works in Public Theology* (Ashland: Lexham Press, 2021), 180.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 187.

²¹ Cone, “Toward a Constructive Definition of Black Power,” in *Black Theology and Black Power*.

Kuyper's para-equality is for basic necessities, Cone's is an equality of respect and opportunity that allows each person and people group to determine their own futures.

In this light, another problem that emerges for Cone is the Church's complicity in oppression. Both the White Church and the Black Church "have marked out their places as havens of retreat, the one to cover the guilt of the oppressors, the other to daub the wounds of the oppressed. Neither is notably identified with the tearing-healing power of Christ. Neither is a fit instrument of revolution."²² While Kuyper wants the Church to step up in its charitable works, Cone wants the Church to step up in its prophetic witness and political identification with the poor. The effect of the Church's inaction is that Christ is a lonely champion of the cause of the oppressed, fighting for them without the participation of those who name His name. "The kingdom of God is for the helpless, because they have no security in this world," lamentably not even among the so-called church.²³

Cone's perspective on the problem of class inequality is somewhat more thoughtful than Kuyper's, though both perspectives offer clarity for our understandings of class inequality and caste today. At issue is not just that the poor lack adequate housing, food, and clothing, but that in being denied these things the full humanity of the poor is also denied. The work of empowering the oppressed, then, is the work of loving our neighbors as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31). Further, if "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8), and the heart of that work was to "preach good news to the poor" and "to set the oppressed free" (Luke 4:18), then it stands to reason that demonic powers are at play in perpetuating the dehumanization of poverty and oppression. This is evident in the economic exploitation of an enslaved girl's demonization in Acts 16, as well as in the apocalyptic visions

²² Cone, "The Black Church and Black Power," in *Black Theology and Black Power*.

²³ Cone, "Jesus Christ in Black Theology," in *A Black Theology of Liberation*.

of John concerning beastly empire made in the image of the draconic Satan in Revelation 12-13. If the devil is involved in keeping people poor, oppressed by caste, and denied human dignity, then the Church should recognize that Christ is already at work pushing back against oppression and empowering the poor. Further, the Church should join Him in that work, both through ecclesial charity and political advocacy.

A PATIENT REVOLUTION?

Perhaps the sharpest contrast between the political theologies of Kuyper and Cone is found in their drastically different perspectives on the pace and process of political change. Cone's view is decidedly revolutionary, while Kuyper's is professedly antirevolutionary. For Cone, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Oppressed One, affirms the human dignity of the oppressed and thereby demands that they fight for their liberation. Indeed, "Through Christ the poor man is offered freedom now to rebel against that which makes him other than human."²⁴ Such rebellion may include violence, but not necessarily so. The issue of violence is peripheral, while the issue of human dignity is fundamental. At the heart of the empowerment project is refusing to accept society's limitations and "demanding that justice become a reality now, not tomorrow."²⁵

Such demand might reasonably lead someone to conclude that Cone is concerned only with present conditions without regard to future progress. This conclusion would be misguided, however, as Cone explains that it is the future of God's liberation that should animate the present struggle against oppression. In fact, "Those who see God's coming liberation breaking into the present must live as if the future is already present in their midst. They must bear witness to

²⁴ Cone, "The Gospel of Jesus, Black People, and Black Power" in *Black Theology and Black Power*.

²⁵ Cone, "Church, World, and Eschatology in Black Theology," in *A Black Theology of Liberation*.

humanity's liberation by freeing the present from the past and for the future.”²⁶ In this way, Cone’s message to the poor is not that their revolt against oppression will result in full liberation now. Rather, they are to rebel for the sake of human dignity. They are to refuse to quietly bow to the oppression of a system that denies their humanity, and they are allowed to employ any means necessary to assert their dignity, even in the face of continued mistreatment. In this way, the first fruit of political change and liberation is not an immediate change in the socioeconomic conditions of the oppressed, but a transformation in their sense of identity and collective agency.

Kuyper’s theological perspective of political change is much less disruptive. While Cone sees Christ as a revolutionary figure for the oppressed, Kuyper’s own exploration of Scripture leads him to conclude that

Jesus and his apostles allowed the existing order to continue unimpaired and undisturbed. They lived and acted within that existing order. They made no attempt to introduce another state of affairs in its place; and concerning the powers that be, the apostle says that they are from God. That was how things were, and that is how things still are at the present time.²⁷

Kuyper views government as an entity both established and sanctioned by God. Thus, revolution against government is a form of rebellion against God. Even Jesus as King of kings “does not overturn human society as such” nor “the existing order of things;” instead, through Christianity’s “spiritual power [He] elevates and ennobles that order to a much higher level.”²⁸

In this way, Kuyper sees Christ influencing political change “at a slow but steady pace” through His direct influence on the minds of political leaders both Christian and Non-Christian as well as through the progression of His Church’s influence in public discourse and political

²⁶ Cone, “The Meaning of Liberation,” in *God of the Oppressed*, 162.

²⁷ Kuyper, *Pro Rege (Vol 1)*, section III.17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, section III.19.

organization.²⁹ Unlike Cone, Kuyper says little if anything about the role of the oppressed in the process of political change. It would seem that Kuyper suggests that the poor are to set their minds on heavenly things and to trust that Jesus is guiding history toward a reality of justice and equity even if they cannot see or participate in this process.

Considering Cone's urgency for social change, Kuyper might count him among those who "want to lower the Christ of God to the status of a social reformer."³⁰ Conversely, considering Kuyper's evolutionary tendencies, Cone might count him among those who make the justice of Jesus a philosophical abstraction. But holding both perspectives in charitable tension, we might discern an integrated political theology of "patient revolution." Cone would be wrong to dismiss the work of Christ behind the political-historical scenes, while Kuyper would be wrong to suggest that the political work of Christ can never advance in urgent, even revolutionary ways. One would be hard pressed to explore Daniel 7:9-14 and leave with an impression other than the divine dismantling of unjust political systems. Still, how those systems are dismantled and the associated paces of change may not be constant across nations and generations. As "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5), Jesus has the authority to oversee the direction of political systems in ways particular to and appropriate for those various systems. Just as God relates to people in different ways, so He can relate to people groups in different ways: "To the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd," (Psalm 18:26).

What, then, can we say definitively about the pace and process of political change? "The Lord knows." Jesus may be at work through incremental reforms, and He may also be at work in the midst of violent upheaval. While nonviolence must characterize the witness and political

²⁹ Kuyper, *Pro Rege* (Vol 3), section V.6

³⁰ Kuyper, *Business and Economics*, 164.

activity of the Church proper, consistent with the example of Jesus during His earthly ministry, nonviolence does not necessarily encompass the full instrumentation of Christ's kingly interaction with the destinies of political systems and nation-states. What we can say with certainty is that significant political change *does* happen at the direction and intervention of Christ, and in the eschaton, all things will be ultimately made new by the One who sits on the eternal throne (Revelation 21:5).

A MEDIATING PERSPECTIVE

Before concluding our analysis of and reflection upon Kuyper's and Cone's political theologies, we should briefly consider the perspective of Allan Boesak, a South African Reformed Black Liberation theologian who wrote extensively during the era of Apartheid as the Dutch Reformed Afrikaners perpetuated racial, social, and economic oppression against Black people groups. Boesak laments, "Being Reformed is equated with total, uncritical acceptance of the status quo, sinful silence in the face of human suffering, and manipulation of the word of God in order to justify oppression. Being Reformed is to support the intransigence of our present rulers and to expect the unconditional submission of the oppressed."³¹ Boesak's theological solution is found in placing the authority of government in cosmic context. Political powers are to be submitted to, but only to the extent that they are in alignment with their mandate from God: "We obey government insofar as its laws and instructions are not in conflict with the word of God."³² In this sense, Boesak sides with Kuyper in giving deference to government as divinely instituted, but sides with Cone in speaking against governments that perpetuate poverty and oppression as divinely condemned.

³¹ Allan A. Boesak, *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation, and the Calvinist Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 86.

³² *Ibid.*, 92.

PROCLAIMING GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR: A CHRISTIAN POLITICAL WITNESS THAT EXALTS CHRIST AND EMPOWERS PEOPLE IN POVERTY

Any reconciliatory political theology for Christians today must take as its starting point the supremacy of Christ as King and the activity of Christ on behalf of the oppressed. Because Jesus reigns and because He is actively advancing His kingdom, we should accept that He is ever-present in the fight for human dignity. We should agree with Kuyper that Christ's dominion over all of life means that the realm of government falls under His jurisdiction. Further, we should agree with Cone that poverty and oppression are pressing realities that God demands we address. Christ is at work in the political sphere, calling governments, policies, and policymakers into agreement with what constitutes justice and equity for their unique contexts. Thus, the Christian should view government and the political process through a lens that is *optimistically realist*, recognizing that Christ may use political systems to advance His just purposes, but no government will submit itself perfectly to the lordship of Christ until His return and the subsequent renewal of heaven and earth. Our relationship to governments, then, should be a combination of submission and protest, and our protest should be chiefly concerned with the governmental motivations and implications of structural oppression.

Our political perspective and project must be constantly formed and reformed at the theological nexus between Christ's authority over the cosmos and His identification with the poor. Further, the Christian must never doubt if Christ is at work in political structures but should ask *how* He is at work. The presence of political peril in no way prevents the operation of Christ's authority over the governmental sphere nor His activity in delivering the oppressed. Whether in times of peace or in times of upheaval, we can be assured that Christ's liberating and

life-giving kingship is a present, active reality. Indeed, our political theology should declare triumphantly with the Negro spiritual, “Ride on, King Jesus! No man can hinder Thee!”

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