

**WINNING**  
**THE BATTLE**  
*for the*  
**MINDS OF MEN**

**DENNIS PEACOCKE**



Santa Rosa, California  
[www.gostrategic.org](http://www.gostrategic.org)

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[www.gostrategic.org](http://www.gostrategic.org) | [info@gostrategic.org](mailto:info@gostrategic.org)

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*“Do you love me?” . . . “Tend my sheep.”*

—John 21:17



## CHAPTER 2

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# The Care and Discipling of God's Nations

**S**O, THE CHURCH IS SUPPOSED TO “OCCUPY TILL HE COMES.” What does that mean? It’s certainly more than just holding bigger and bigger meetings until the Second Coming. The occupying that the Bible talks about is active, not passive. The Church is the strongman God has left as His steward on the earth until the return of His Son. As stewards, we have commitments and responsibilities which God expects us to fulfill as His agents. Our faithfulness in carrying out these responsibilities reflects our understanding of God’s love for the nations.

### God’s Love for the Nations

God’s love for the nations is stated and implied throughout the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. His love is expressed through His authority and righteous judgment over the nations.<sup>1</sup> In Genesis, we see Abraham, our “father of the faith” (Romans 4:16), declared the father of many nations, as well as many believers:

*Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.*

—Genesis 18:18

In the book of Revelation, God’s unending commitment to the welfare of the nations continues into eternity with these tender words:

*And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the*

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 82:8.

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*tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. —Revelation 22:1-2*

“The nations” does not mean “a big collection of people.” God cares about individuals; in fact, He “purchased” them with the blood of His Son,<sup>2</sup> but He also cares about social units (families, communities, governments, nations). God loves the nations, and the closer we Christians come to His heart, the more we feel His anguish over them, and the more we can open our hearts to His commission of working on behalf of their liberation.

### **The Nations as Christ’s Inheritance**

The destiny of the nations is at the heart of Christ’s future plans. His post-resurrection commission to His disciples was to wait in Jerusalem until they had received power from the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Why were they to receive God’s power? Was it to be spent on themselves in their own private church meetings? Was it simply to speak in tongues or enjoy church meetings? No! They received God’s power for the same reason you and I receive it—to bring salvation to the lost and healing and liberation to the nations.<sup>4</sup>

In Psalms 2:8, we are told that the nations of the earth have been given by the Father to our Lord as His possession: “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.”

As Christ’s joint heirs,<sup>5</sup> the nations, therefore, have become the stewardship of His bride, the Church. They are ours because they are His. If we love Jesus, we will honor His commitment to His Father to care for the Father’s gift to Jesus.

The nations really do belong to God, and He wants them back from the satanic system that has enslaved them. Christian involvement in the political issues of the nations becomes the shepherd’s rod by which Christians guide the wayward nations home to their Creator and Shepherd. As we stand for God’s Word and press for the application of His principles in all areas of society, we prod the nations along. God is reluctant to use tribulation, poverty, and

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 20:28.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 1:4-5.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 1:8.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:17.

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anguish to get them to turn their hearts toward home, but use them He does when the church's pastoral care for the nations proves ineffective. Our neglect helps bring down God's judgment on them. Christ-centered involvement in the affairs of the nations is the most powerful way to call an *entire population* to Christ. It puts the issues of the gospel in the newspaper, in the voting booths, on television, and in the daily conversations of even unbelievers. Citizens of the Kingdom are commanded to press all men for social, economic, and political obedience to biblical principles. When we do, then all people, wherever they are in society, must to deal with the claims of Jesus Christ—not because they go to church, but because they cannot escape His Word as the pervasive conversation topic of a new way to structure their nation. We are taking God's Word to them instead of asking them to come to our meeting!

### Finding the Nations' Destiny

*All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord. —Psalm 86:9*

Nations, like people, have purposes and destinies for which God has created them. The Church's job as the Father's earthly steward and discipler for His nations not only is to lead individuals to their personal destiny (salvation) but also to lead whole nations to their destiny (national redemption). The nations are vehicles of God's cosmic plan:

*He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. —Acts 17:26-27*

### God's Design for the Nations

God wants both individuals and nations to obey Him so that they will prosper in every way and fulfill their unique purposes in God's overall plans. Sin is not simply "doing the wrong thing." It actually creates a barrier between people and God's blessing for them. It keeps them separated from their destiny. Through repentance and discipling, nations, as well as individuals, are led

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into spiritual and earthly clarity as to why they are created. In this sense, a true patriot is one who loves his nation and hungers to see it fulfill God's purposes for it. This pattern of Godly admonition and instruction to equip men and nations in fulfilling their destiny is found throughout the scriptures in the following pattern:

1. The standard of conduct God requires from us.
2. The blessing and creative life we will experience if we obey His standard (our destiny).
3. The poverty and death we will experience if we disobey God and walk in our own self-determined law.

Obedience to God's laws leads men and nations to their destinies and ultimate place of service. When they disobey, they are derailed. When they are obedient, the evidence of blessing clearly reinforces their chosen compliance with God's Word. In other words, the Bible is designed by God to be a self-evident thermometer that registers health or danger in *this world* as men measure their lives against what God promises them as rewards or penalties for obeying His laws. You really can "keep score," to some degree, before you die.

For example, Israel was promised, among other things, that a nation obeying God's moral laws could expect a positive balance of payments and world leadership position in international trade and finance markets.<sup>6</sup> It was also promised that disobedience to God's law would produce a nation of debt, dependency, and slavery to foreign nations.<sup>7</sup> God's Word is filled with this form of encouragement and admonition for individuals, families, churches, businesses, and even whole nations.

The Church's job is to serve as a doctor to the nations, diagnosing their health needs as we read their vital signs against the chart of health or disease God lays out in His Word. If they are sick, we should know why and what to do about it.

### God's Care for His Created World

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life. —John 3:16*

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<sup>6</sup>Deuteronomy 15:6; 28:12-13.

<sup>7</sup>Deuteronomy 28:25, 29, 43-44.

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The world order that God has created for man to tend and steward, and for which Jesus died, is called the *kosmos*, in the original Greek of the New Testament. *Kosmos* has interesting origins which reflect God's benevolent care for the inhabited world. The word comes from *komeo* which means, "to tend for, care for, and bring order to." This meaning is consistent with God's original "dominion mandate" for man outlined in Genesis 1:26-28. Man is told there that he is to hold the earth in covenant with God, applying God's laws to it, so that it will fulfill his purposes and flourish. The world has been marred by thousands and thousands of years of sin and death, but God has given Christians the tools—the Word of God and the personal gift of the Holy Spirit—to take dominion.<sup>8</sup>

Obedience to God's laws unlocks more than individual blessings for those who have been saved by grace. Obedience also unlocks God's blessings for the *kosmos*.<sup>9</sup> Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalties of disobedience, and the blessings promised to both individuals and nations from God's Word are available through the power and administration of the Holy Spirit.

The "good news" that Christians bring to the nations is liberation, not bondage to religious tyranny. Think of the wider implications of the Church's favorite verse, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Of course, God's love encompasses the "whoever," the individual. But this verse states clearly that God loves the created world (*kosmos*)! Christ's sacrifice also procured the liberation of the nations so that His treasures are now theirs! This is incredibly good news! God's love for His creation goes beyond simply loving man and Christ's resurrection releases that love to the entire created order. He really does love the created world enough to give Jesus to release it!

### How Do We Disciple a Nation?

*There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace on the throne of David and over his kingdom. To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will accomplish this. —Isaiah 9:7*

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<sup>8</sup>John 14:16.

<sup>9</sup>Romans 8:21-23.

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As we now know, Christians are commissioned to care for and disciple the nations. Caring for them means to bring them God's peace, and God's peace comes from *His government*. As Isaiah tells us, there can be no peace without godly government. Government *precedes* peace. When Christ came to earth, the process of extending His peace to His world began. The Scripture says that God's government is ceaseless and all-persuasive. The Church's job is to let God establish Christ's government to the nations through it. So, discipling nations intimately involves the process of discovering how the *government of God functions through men*.

How can the Church even begin to tackle the worldwide task of caring for the nations? Where do we start?

God doesn't ask us to tackle everything at once. God doesn't ask us to produce a completed canvas without first teaching us and then enabling us to paint it section by section.

God has broken down man's *kosmos* order into more manageable units for *governing*. There are five natural *governing units*, or spheres, to the *kosmos* that compromise the Kingdom of God's government. All government falls into one or more of these five categories:

1. The Individual (Self-Government)<sup>10</sup>
2. The Family (Family Government)<sup>11</sup>
3. The Local Church (Church Government)<sup>12</sup>
4. The Commercial (Economic Government)<sup>13</sup>
5. The Civil Government (Civil Government)<sup>14</sup>

God's Word has set standards for governing each one of these units or spheres, and each one is blessed through obedience to those standards or suffers through disobedience. God holds man responsible to govern each of these five spheres of human activity according to God's directions for it and expects the harmonious result to give God a good return on His investment.<sup>15</sup> In other words, God doesn't simply want order on the earth; He wants increasing blessing.

<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 16:32; 25:28; Luke 9:23; Acts 24:25; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Galatians 5:22-24; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 12:11; 2 Peter 2:9-19.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 2:18; 3:16; Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Ephesians 5:21-31; Colossians 3:18.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 18:18-20; 22:21; 1 Timothy 3:1-15; 5:17-22; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 20:15-17; Numbers 27:1-9; Deuteronomy 8:17-18; 28:1-18; Proverbs 6:1-5; 10:2; 11:4; 13:22; 15:16; 23:4-5; Philippians 4:19; Hebrews 7:4-10; 1 Corinthians 9:6.

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 18:19-23; Deuteronomy 1:13-17; 1 Samuel 23:3-4; Psalm 2:10-12; 33:12; Proverbs 8:12-16; 11:11; 14:34; 29:12; Isaiah 10:1; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 1:8-10.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 19:21-23.

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God is organized and orderly, governing through these systems. We must teach people and nations what God requires from them personally, in their families, in the churches, in their economic stewardship, and finally in their civil institutions. The instruction of the *whole man* becomes the totality of the commission Jesus gave His Church.<sup>16</sup> We cannot neglect any one of the five governing spheres without disobeying the Lord's Great Commission. To disciple a nation is to teach its citizens to fully obey and reach their potential in each one of the five spheres. A nation of such people is a nation under God's government and will experience His peace.

The Kingdom or government of God is not simply goosebumps or angels' wings or exciting experiences. It is God's ordained *order* functioning harmoniously *between* the five spheres as the Holy Spirit maintains the ecological balance of power with the attendant blessings of wholeness and peace.<sup>17</sup>

## Tyranny and Balance

The Word of God provides the only hope for the proper management of power among these five governing spheres. The world system is not only in rebellion against God, but also in rebellion against the balanced operation of these five units of government designed by God to bring order to His *kosmos*. The Church is supposed to teach the nations how to find the proper use of power and government. This is *how* the Church should bring correction to injustice within a nation and lead it into God's desired order.

Let's look at a diagram that helps explain this truth:

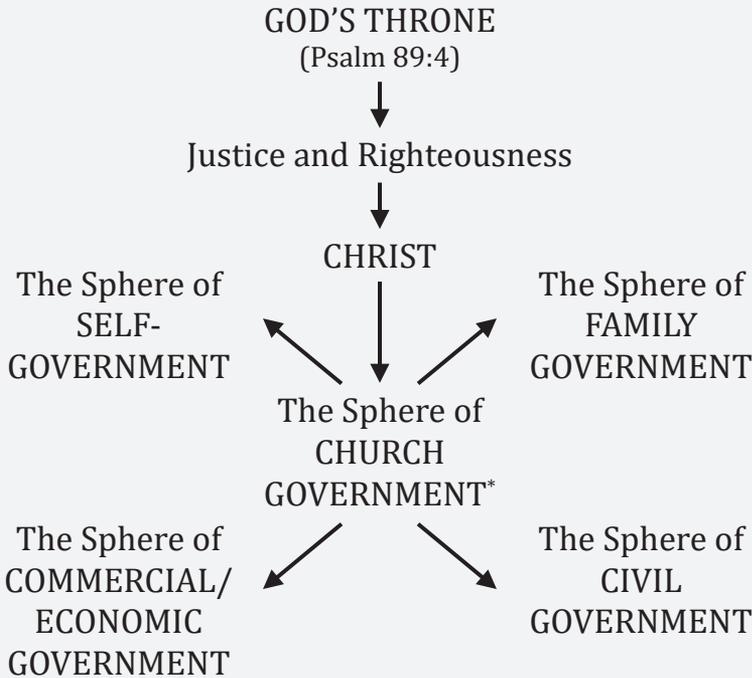
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<sup>16</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

<sup>17</sup> Romans 14:17.

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### The Five Spheres of Human Government



\*PRIEST (teacher-healer; on God's behalf) and PROPHET (guardian of God's vision and investment)

Notice that the Church is at the center of this diagram, Christ is over the Church, and God's throne of justice and righteousness presides.<sup>18</sup> The Church is to be the priestly, teaching, and prophetic voice to the world. Its responsibility is to correctly interpret the Word of God to all the forms of government. Its job is to hold that Word up to all other institutions, including itself, as a plumbline for human conduct.

The New Testament teaches us:

*All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. —2 Timothy 3:16-17*

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 89:14.

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“All Scripture” means just that—*all Scripture*. Not just personal salvation passages. Not just rapture passages. Not just the New Testament. This “all Scripture” means the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments, and passages for the structuring of the social order, as well as for the healing of individuals. Please remember, the New Testament was not even fully written when Paul referred to the power of God’s Word. The believers of Paul’s day thought the “Scriptures” simply meant the Old Testament!

## Separation of Power

A Christian philosophy of government in each of these five spheres consists of the ability to make sure that power is properly held and balanced proportionately for each governing institution. The Bible provides us with these guidelines.

*Tyranny* is not some black figure out of the night, leaping into the midst of society. Tyranny is abuse of power. Tyranny results from the improper accumulation of power in one institution or sphere. The whole of modern culture is moving deeper and deeper into tyranny under the misguided principle of centralization. The anti-God forces are continually transferring more and more power to civil government, in effect castrating our individual freedom, our families, our churches, and our economy. The centralization of power into the state is the most dangerous trend in the world today.

The first sentence of Rousseau’s *Social Contract* is a living reality today, over two hundred years after it was first written (1762): “Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains.” Although man may be born without a consciousness of slavery, the Bible tells us that man is born a slave to sin. Nevertheless, Rousseau is right that men everywhere are in chains. If man is ever to be free, he must exchange sin’s chains for Christ’s freedom—freedom in all spheres of life. Freedom can only reign when Christ reigns in all things.<sup>19</sup> Each of the five governing units God has ordained (the individual, the family, the Church, the economic/commercial realm, and the civil government) must subordinate itself to the purposes of Christ, finding their perimeters of authority and responsibility in His government alone.

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<sup>19</sup> Colossians 1:15-18.

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## The War with Tyranny

If Christ is not reigning, then either the individual, the family, the Church, the commercial realm, or the state will rise up as a false point of human focus. Men will always deify one or another aspect of the creation. Carnal man cannot avoid worshipping the created rather than the Creator.<sup>20</sup> Even the Church, strange as it seems, can be exalted to tyrannical power in a Christian's life, becoming out of balance with both the Lord and the other institutions of human society.

## The State as God

In our contemporary world, it is civil government, the state, that has reared its head in an ungodly attempt to replace Christ as the *centering agent* of all human life. The state, in modern political theory, increasingly demands that the individual, the family, the commercial realm, and the Church bow down before it and give it first place as a "god." The opponents of Christianity claim that the state is "the will of the people." Instead, the state subverts individual will to collective tyranny.

The state demanded first allegiance in Christ's day too. The war then was between Christ and Caesar. It has all come full circle. However, to the early Church's credit, it took barely 300 years for Christ to triumph over Caesar through His Church. Our legacy from our Christian brethren is a legacy of victory over tyranny, not defeat by tyrants. But victory requires Christian *faith* and *involvement*, and this is what must be restored in the Church today.

When the state starts talking about being "the voice of the people," watch out! Some bureaucrat or politician is about to pass a law or administrative order that will fleece your pockets, restrict your personal property, or take your life. The state is not God, try as it will to hold all authority, because it calls itself "the voice of the people."

The state as tyrant sublimates all rival spheres by regulating individual belief and thought, family size, structure, and authority, crushing free religious assembly and expression, controlling all aspects of the economy, and assuming all ultimate power for itself.

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<sup>20</sup> Romans 1:18-23.

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## The Individual as God

*A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind. —Proverbs 18:2*

When our lives center on personal pleasure and convenience, and when our life goal is to discover every nook and cranny of our own wonderful little selves, tyranny emerges. Preoccupation with "self" will turn everybody and everything else into *objects* whose only worth is in their ability to satisfy our selfish urges. People are dehumanized when they become objects, becoming victims of exploitation and expendable refuse. Whatever is not valued because of its unique creation by God is dismissed through an act of evolutionary arrogance. The Marxists and decadent West are equally able to turn humans into "things."

Unborn babies are called "tissue"; women are called sex objects; sex is self-gratifying and divorced from love; children are exploited emotionally and physically for their use as personal stimulants; minorities become second-class citizens and "the enemy." In the world of self-actualization and self-centered universes, self is god, and the law of this god is exploitation, personal "rights," and exploitation of others.

## The Family as God

When the family usurps Christ as the center, it produces a tribalism or clannishness that prevents man from cooperating in larger units. The possibility of unity beyond the family is impaired. If the family is not balanced, no other social institution can survive. The Kingdom of God is weakened and distorted when the family becomes tyrannical. Individual family members look to their own natural families as the circumference of their involvement in life, abandoning the divine plan for the natural family to *fit harmoniously with the other institutions of the Kingdom*. The classic teaching of Jesus on this point is:

*Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside to speak to You." But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold, My mother*

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*and My brothers! For whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”*  
—Matthew 12:47-50

The family is our home base, but important as it is, it is not the ultimate unit. Christ alone is.

### The Local Church as God

Can the local church become a tyrant? Yes. Any institution ordained by God can become tyrannical when it claims that it is the most powerful and deserves the obedience of all the others.

The individual must answer to God,<sup>21</sup> the family must answer to God,<sup>22</sup> the local church must answer to God,<sup>23</sup> the commercial realm must answer to God,<sup>24</sup> and the nations must answer to God.<sup>25</sup> All must bow their knees to *Him* alone.<sup>26</sup> Christ's government brings peace because it balances all claims to ultimate authority.

When the local church assumes the throne which belongs properly to Jesus Christ, members sacrifice their individual relationships with Christ to the corporate life of the church. Church families lose their unique natural unity and are splintered into fragments floating in the sea of church activities and commitments. Responsible social and economic activism is sublimated to the limited and shortsighted needs of the local church. Competing commitment to the other four spheres is seen as intrusive and disruptive, and the local church becomes “a law unto itself.” Tyranny on the local church level is a hollow mockery of the true purposes of the Church in God's order.

### The Marketplace as God

*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? —Mark 8:36*

When the commercial sphere becomes the center of life, it produces ruthless exploitation of man by man and self-indulgent materialism.

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<sup>21</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:10.

<sup>22</sup> Joshua 7:24-25.

<sup>23</sup> Revelation 2:4-5.

<sup>24</sup> Deuteronomy 14:22.

<sup>25</sup> Psalm 72:11.

<sup>26</sup> Philippians 2:10-11.

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Capitalism, in a biblical context, is the promotion of individuals using private ownership to produce increase. The Bible stands unequivocally behind the right of the individual to own private property and his attendant responsibility to be a good steward and to bring and share increase.

But what happens when commercial issues become our god? Employees are not loyal to their employers; they're only loyal to money and benefits. Employers are not loyal to their employees; they're only loyal to hefty profit margins. Unions go to any lengths to amass wealth for the workers, and corporate tyrants exploit their employees in the race for the almighty dollar. Corporations don't work for the good of society; they work for the good of their balance sheets. Personnel don't give their best; they give the minimum required by law. Tenure and unionization have often produced sloppy work, and unbridled free enterprise has cruelly exploited the workers.

Those who worship the state tell us that the solution to commercial exploitation is for the state to appropriate the means of production, extending the tyranny of the state into yet another realm. Even well-intentioned Christians are drawn into this false philosophy through the guise of "liberation theology" which replaces Christ with economic "justice" (obtained through violent revolution). It falls into the reverse trap of exploitive commercialism; instead of exploiting man for economic reasons, it cuts off man's ability to be a creator through developing his own private property.

### **False Gods of Failure**

When the individual rises up to be the center, we have anarchy. When the family rises up to be the center, we have feudalism. When the Church tries to take Christ's place, we have religious tyranny. When the marketplace attempts to supplant Christ, we have mutant, ruthless capitalism. And when the state tries to take Christ's place, we have deadly authoritarianism.

True biblical pluralism, that elusive balance between differing institutions and responsibilities, is possible only when Christ is the center of all things, and every other human institution is held in proper balance. It is this balance that the Church is to practice and multiply in the world around us.

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God's Word is the Church's most precious possession, for in it is life. It alone tells us how to view God, ourselves, the ordering of all life, and final reality. It is relative to nothing, unchanging, understandable, and accurate. It is the glasses through which the Church must view all things (a Christian worldview). Handling the Word of God properly is the Church's ultimate stewardship, from which springs the nations' only hope. If we do not give them God's *whole* Word for the nations' *whole* life, we give them only a portion of Christ—not enough to free them. All men are required to live by it (Matthew 4:4), all men will be judged by it,<sup>27</sup> and all social laws should be set by its standards.<sup>28</sup>

### Pride of Ownership

Everyone who has ever owned a business knows the difference between the attitude of an employee and the attitude of a proprietor. The proprietor cares about everything from the cleaning of the floors to the filing of the tax forms. The employee stops at quitting time and tends to view only his own job. The owner is concerned with the entire endeavor, while the employee can't see beyond his own self-interests.

Our Father is calling for a generation of believers to emerge in His Church who dare to become, in attitude, proprietors with Him.<sup>29</sup> He hungers for us to water and teach and prune and care is for His vines. Stewards, everything the nations do is our concern; they are part of our Father's business. Let's stop being employees and accept our responsibilities as heirs! Let's disciple nations by teaching them what God requires of both *individuals* and the four other spheres of God's earthly government that surround them.

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<sup>27</sup> Romans 1:20; 2:12-15.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 28:19.

<sup>29</sup> Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7.