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Reformed Theology as Worldview Theology: The Public Nature of the Gospel and Spirituality



by Jay Shim

Introduction

In *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, Abraham Kuyper states,

God's glory in creation appears in various degrees and ways. An insect and a star, the mildew on the wall and the cedar on Lebanon, a common laborer and a man like Augustine, are all the creatures of God; yet how dissimilar they are, and how varied their ways and degrees of glorifying God.¹

What do you feel when you hear such a jubilant confession—that each part of the creation, big or small, high or low, is praising the great God in

its own position and function? Does it not mean that your position and your work is the place where you worship the great God? This confession captures the essence of the Reformed worldview and spirituality that inspired thousands of Calvinists to bravely serve God and people in the world. Now, listen again to the same author:

Why did we, Christians, stand so weak, in the face of this Modernism? Why did we constantly lose ground? Simply because we were devoid of an equal unity of life-conception, such as alone could enable us with irresistible energy to repel the enemy at the frontier.²

While these two statements by Abraham Kuyper are related in various ways, Kuyper is struggling with a particular problem, even with his confession that all creation reflects the glory of God. Kuyper laments that Christians are losing the battle with the enemy—modernism—even when they are confessing the great God. For Kuyper, as the quotation above indicates, the reason for such failure is the absence of a coherent Christian life system in the church. As secularism assails the church in a systemic way, Christians, armed intellectually and emotionally with long-standing humanism, are not equipped with a coherent and comprehensive Christian life system. They are not ready to live out the power of faith in actual life situations.³

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It is my humble judgment that we can extract a shining gemstone from the treasure box of Kuyper to shine on our Christian life in its battle with secularism today, even though his gemstone is more than a hundred years old. The power of the church does not lie in confession itself but in confession that works in action. I think Kuyper's words on the power of the true church make a relevant point to conservative churches today:

A Calvinist worldview and life system shapes and determines actual Christian thinking and living from a particular vantage point, for it determines the way one interprets the world, as opposed to other ways of interpretation.

True conservatism exerts itself not for the shell but for the pearl within the shell. It loves not the appearance of things but the hidden germ of life with which Christ has impregnated it. . . . Therefore all its love is focused on that Word of God, the Word not only as it is spoken in sound but also as it became flesh in Christ, and from Him entered the joints of this world as the unique life-force in which all things rest.⁴

The essence of the true church lies in the power of the new life extended to the sanctified life in the world, not in any external form of the church, whatever that may be or whatever form the church may be self-righteously proud of. With the ministry of the spoken Word, the church becomes the flesh of the Word. And the "flesh" is to live according to the new life-system in the world. Thus, the power of the church lies not in the *form* of the flesh but in the *mode of new living* of the flesh.

On that basis, I will attempt to (1) describe the Reformed theology as a worldview theology based on a broad perspective of God's redemptive history from creation to re-creation, (2) describe the Reformed spirituality as a world-affirming and

world-reforming spirituality for the goal of living the comprehensive Christian life, and (3) suggest that recognizing the public nature of the gospel and spirituality serves to motivate and guide the inner power of the new life toward a comprehensive Christian life. I will try to present these ideas broadly, from the Calvinist tradition, particularly on the basis of Abraham Kuyper and the neo-Calvinist development after him. Though the subjects of this presentation—gospel, theology, worldview, and spirituality—may sound heavily theological, I will try to present this paper with a conviction that they are not simply objects of study but also words of wisdom; for these subjects guide our thinking and living.

Kuyper found the basis of the then-needed true Christian life in historic Calvinism. Let me begin with Kuyper's broad definition of Calvinism: a "form of religion" or a religious "life-system" rather than, understood in a narrower sense, a form of theology or confession; in other words, Calvinism is a mode of Christian thinking and living, not simply a set of confessional statements. In a technical way, Kuyper defined Calvinism as a Christian "world-and-life-view"; he preferred the longer term "world-and-life-view" to the shortened form "worldview" to prevent the otherwise misunderstood connotation of the shortened term as one's view of the physical world.⁵ Thus understood, Calvinism means a comprehensive framework of Christian thinking and judging with which Christian humans experience, think, and live. It is an all-embracing mindset founded on and shaped by a trinitarian reading of the redemptive history of God as revealed in the Scriptures. As such, it is the vantage point from which we locate the meaning of salvation and the proper mode of Christian life in the world. From this religious framework, Kuyper developed a particular theology, the Calvinist theology, and its life view.

He proposed this view, the Calvinist life-system in his *Lectures on Calvinism*, as a Christian alternative to the modernist life-system of his day and applied it to the whole of human life. In doing so, he attempted to prove that the Calvinist life-view is a coherent system, based on the sovereignty of God, which encompasses the whole of human life. With this purpose in mind, Kuyper described and

defended the Calvinist framework of life, through which Calvinist Christians believe, think, and live.

1. Worldview comes with a power of interpretation

Before we move on to Kuyper's worldview, let me highlight the point that any view of the world powerfully shapes and determines our actual thinking and living. A Calvinist worldview and life-system shapes and determines actual Christian thinking and living from a particular vantage point, for it determines the way one interprets the world, as opposed to other ways of interpretation. In the post-modern culture, we are surrounded by a plethora of challenging world-and-life views, each of which demands that we see the world from a particular perspective and make decisions accordingly. Temptation comes armed with reasonable ideas to convince us. Temptations do not tempt us for the sake of temptation, devoid of reason. Temptations are often well-prepared intellectually and emotionally to persuade us. Every believer is tempted to serve two lords: the Christian God of salvation and the secular gods of success, happiness, or wealth. We are not usually tempted to deny our God as a whole but tempted to add another god. Temptation's power is its distortion of the Christian view and its promise to satisfy us with a certain meaning of life and a joy of life. Choosing a particular view of life, a vantage point from which we interpret the world, is a matter of choosing between two competing views of life.

Choosing a Calvinist worldview and life-system, a Christian deliberately decides to think and live with the belief that the entire world and our whole life belong to God. From such a vantage point, Calvinist Christians make all decisions of thinking and living. From that vantage point, Christians must discern the true view of life from the untrue ones. Kuyper argued more than a hundred years ago that "two life systems are wrestling with one another, in mortal combat."⁶ I believe this analogy of combat between a Christian life-system and a secular life-system explains quite acutely the present Korean Christian situation. As it was during the days of Kuyper, so it is even more today: the battle is desperately fought not only between competing life-systems but also between compet-

ing confessions. Understood this way, a Calvinist life-system is an essential framework for living a Christian life.

The power of the Calvinist life-system comes from God's own acts in the world. We come to know the true view of life and the world from understanding God's acts of creation and redemption of the world. The power of the Calvinist life-system is based not on any idea or promise but on God's own acts! God, as the Creator and Law-giver, the Lord in action, is thus the true Interpreter of the world. We come to know the true meaning and direction of human life in the world from his redemptive history: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. The divine drama of salvation is well summarized in Col. 1:15-20. There Paul summarizes the crucial Christian truth: salvation is intrinsically related to creation. He makes two points regarding the salvation of the creation. The first is that Christ the Creator is Christ the Redeemer: the One who created the world came to save it. The second point is that Christ reconciles all things, the created world, to himself by his crucifixion. Salvation, then, means a restoration of the created world. The God who is accomplishing the ministry of reconciliation of the world calls the reconciled to participate in his ministry. To the reconciled Christians, God gives the "ministry of reconciliation," equipping them with the "message of reconciliation" so that they may live in the world as "Christ's ambassadors" (II Cor. 5:17-21).

Thus, God's view of the world and human life becomes the foundation of our interpretation, which judges and directs human thinking and living. The divine act of salvation embraces the whole created world, and that view of salvation should shape our view of the redeemed life. Kuyper summarizes the Calvinist view in cosmological terms: "the Sovereignty of the triune God [is] over the whole Cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible."⁷ That comprehensive view of God's creation and re-creation has moved thousands of Calvinists to serve the Lord even in a tyrannizing context, for it gives a power to think and live for the glory of God.

2. The Holy Spirit's work from creation to re-creation

The determining and guiding power of the Calvinist life-system is given by the Holy Spirit, according to Kuyper. He offered his view of the Holy Spirit's work as follows:

First, the work of the Holy Spirit is not confined to the elect, and does not begin with their regeneration; but it touches every creature, animate and inanimate, and begins its operations in the elect at the very moment of their origin.

Second, the proper work of the Holy Spirit in every creature consists in the quickening and sustaining of life with reference to his being and talents, and, in its highest sense, with reference to eternal life, which is his salvation.⁸

Indeed, this view of the Holy Spirit's work is based on a trinitarian reading of Scripture as God's redemptive history. Kuyper's summary of the Holy Spirit's work is that the Holy Spirit works from the creation to the re-creation. In creation, the Holy Spirit quickens the living beings that are created by the Father and the Son, and in re-creation, he re-quickens the living beings that are called by the Father and redeemed by the Son, consummating the goal of creation. In this way, Kuyper provides a macroscopic and microscopic understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. In a microscopic way, the Spirit inspired and stimulated each life-system and moved each at creation and then applies the work of Christ to individual members of the elect at re-creation. In the macroscopic way, he maintains the system of life and brings the whole creation to its highest culminating potential, given at the original creation. Both the microscopic and macroscopic works of the Spirit in the created world hinge on his quickening and re-quickening of humans. Since the whole world turned to corruption and was cursed because of the human fall, God in the Spirit re-creates the whole world by restoring humans to the true image of God. The principal work of the Holy Spirit's re-creation is not, then, simply to re-quicken the life (regeneration) but also to re-quicken the originally given ability of knowing and interpreting the world correctly, in order to choose the divine goal of life (discernment).⁹

It is noteworthy to see that Kuyper joined the Spirit's quickening life with spiritual regeneration and with intellectual and moral sanctification. Indeed for Kuyper, inner conversion, or regeneration of the heart/soul, is the foundation and starting point of the Christian life. From regeneration, the Christian is led by the Spirit to live a sanctified life. Kuyper does not sever the regeneration of the soul from the sanctified life. The power of the Holy Spirit that transforms the inner soul also transforms the actual life.

Sanctification then is to be achieved in an actual life situation. Kuyper defines sanctification as "a duty imposed, and not a gift imparted."¹⁰ The sanctified life is a Christian duty! It means theologically that good works do not achieve merit for salvation but instead are a consequence of salvation. It means practically that sanctification is our work to do. While the theological meaning suggests a negative connotation of work (Not by works!), the practical meaning demands a positive connotation of work (Now live and work!). Calvinists view sanctification and the fruits of the Spirit as evidence of salvation and as a means of serving others for the common good.

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This quickening work of the Holy Spirit, who calls the redeemed to serve, governs every aspect of redeemed life. Kuyper pointed out some of the more significant aspects of the redeemed life that have an impact on the Christian life. These are consciousness, reason, will, and passions. Con-

sconsciousness is humanity's thinking faculty that governs "cognition, contemplation, reflection, and judgment" of all human experiences in the world: with the faculty of thinking we acquire a new set of knowledge from a new perspective, "having reason qualified for the exercise of entirely different functions."¹¹ The function of human thinking is analogous to the role of a quarterback in a football game. As the quarterback is to plan the strategy of winning the game, based on his overview of the game as a whole, so sanctified thinking provides the direction of the godly life, based on a Christian interpretation of the world. The faculty of human thinking is an integral aspect of the Holy Spirit's work for Christian living.

The guiding function of thinking for the Christian life is clearly illustrated in the New Testament. Rom. 1:21-32 describes in detail how unregenerate humans live with the effects of depraved thinking. Rom. 12:2 indicates the guiding function of Christian thinking for the redeemed life: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."¹² Renewing the mind is an integral aspect of the Spirit's re-quickening life.

We just discussed the point that Kuyper placed the spiritual aspect and reasoning aspect in the whole of sanctified life, affirming their particular positions and functions in it. In the Calvinist life-view, the reasoning faculty is not relegated to the so-called "worldly" function with an anti-spiritual character, as in a dualistic view. Rather, the reasoning faculty is deemed a God-given gift that is to be sanctified and restored to serve the spiritually determined direction of life. This broad view of the work of the Holy Spirit may serve as an antidote to all kinds of anti-intellectual tendencies in the church and as a springboard to move to the holistic Christian life. It may also work as a biblical alternative to the supernaturally biased views of the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The Calvinist life-view is shaped by the biblical teaching that the Spirit sanctifies and re-appoints all the God-created aspects to their proper places and functions in the re-created world. What God the Father created good, though it became corrupted, is being redeemed by Christ and is now all being re-created by his Spirit. In the re-creation,

no one aspect dominates over other aspects; rather, all are found harmoniously in their own indigenous places and function under the lordship of God in Christ. Thus, even though the Calvinist life-view is explained more in philosophical and theological fashion, it is not to be understood as a rationally oriented system of thought. And it is not to be regarded as merely an object of academic comprehension. For it is, rather, biblical wisdom for actual Christian living. And since, being shaped by a trinitarian reading of Scripture, it provides a broader and more balanced idea of the Holy Spirit's work, it serves as an antidote to partial understandings of the Holy Spirit's work.

Thus, there is no separation of the sacred and the secular or of the domain of God and the domain of the evil in the world. The biblical teaching of creation and redemption does not allow any form of dualism. All aspects of life are reclaimed for sanctification under the lordship of Christ. As a result, cultural sanctification and communal sanctification become as significant as personal sanctification for the Christian. It is undeniable that certain Christian theologies have dealt with the doctrines of justification, sanctification, and spirituality more in terms of personal and private piety than of cultural and communal obedience. The point that I want to make along with Kuyper is that the creation, re-creation, election, and redeemed life are all described in a communal sense "in Christ" (Eph. 1-2). The cause and effect of justification and sanctification are to be found in the communal sense of "in Christ." When this salvation "in Christ" is applied individually by the Spirit, we may see the effect of salvation beginning in a person and becoming extended to the broader life.

3. Public nature of the gospel and spirituality

From this broad perspective of the Holy Spirit's work, we can draw the Calvinist world-and-life-view. And the Calvinist world-and-life-view is characterized by the public nature of the gospel and spirituality. By the public nature of the gospel, I mean that the knowledge of the gospel—knowledge about God, human beings, the world, and salvation by grace in faith—is known publicly, to the world. The knowledge of the gospel is a public knowledge because it is known to all, because it is

for public benefit, and because it is about all. The message of the gospel is the reconciliation of the created world to Jesus Christ. The spiritual aspect of the gospel, namely that salvation is made possible by God's grace through faith, is a spiritual message, and the fact that only those who are renewed by the Spirit may receive it does not prevent it from being known to the whole world. Rather, the spiritual message of the gospel came to be

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known, to be received by people, for the benefit of the world. Jesus Christ became incarnate to deliver the spiritual message to the public. Christian spirituality, then, may be incarnated by the public nature of the gospel.

At this point, some words are necessary to clarify the meaning of *Reformed spirituality*, for the term "spirituality" has been defined, or misdefined, from diverse points of view. Spirituality, in its essence, is a spiritual disposition, formed "according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5), that directs the believer to feel, interpret, think, and live in the world from a regenerated point of view. The very essence of Christian spirituality lies in the combination of the regenerated heart and mind. Spirituality is not limited to spiritual matters, for the regenerated life is to form a certain view of life, both actively and passively. The combination of heart and mind may be formed by diverse methods of Scripture reading and theology. The Reformed spirituality is characterized, as we have discussed above, by its comprehensive view of creation and redemption. I define Reformed spirituality as a co-

herent combination of a deep personal piety and a comprehensive outlook of mind, caused and shaped by the Holy Spirit for sanctified life in the world. I believe that the combination of personal piety and a comprehensive outlook may not be limited to the Reformed circle, for it is drawn from the biblical teaching.¹³

If sanctification is a Christian duty, as we discussed above, then spirituality is a calling for discernment (stressing the responsibility of the human agent) and at the same time an invitation to humble obedience (stressing the source of the sanctified life). The Christian is *the spiritual man/woman*. The Christian is the one who is born again by the Holy Spirit and thus now lives as the temple of the Spirit. Paul points to a particular way of life for the spiritual person—discernment: "The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment" (I Cor. 2:15). In this passage the apostle teaches that when "we are enlightened by the Spirit," we become equipped with "a spirit of discernment." So, does this passage teach an errorless Christian life? Far from it, says Calvin. It is only the power of the Holy Spirit that enlightens our mind. The ability of Christian discernment is based solely on "whether he is born again, and according to the measure of grace bestowed on him."¹⁴ Thus, though this verse seems to exalt the human capacity of discernment, it actually teaches our total dependence on the Holy Spirit's guidance.

The public nature of the gospel and spirituality is a logical consequence of God's acts of creation and redemption. At the very beginning of Scripture, God reveals himself as the King addressing his people; God is known to the public! In God's first act of salvation, God's covenant connects the creation to the post-flood re-creation (Gen. 1, 6-9). The correlation between the creation account and the post-flood covenant account anticipates the restoration of the created world. In shaping his people, the God of the Hebrews is not a tribal god but is proved to be the true God and Lord of all nations (Ex. 6:6-8; 7:3-5; 12:12; 14:4, 18). The Jews were supposed to be the "light for the Gentiles" with a purpose to preach the gospel "to the end of the earth" (Isa. 49:6). Jesus came as the King-Messiah over the whole world and is

reconciling “all things” to God (Col. 1:15-20). The Holy Spirit is shaping reconciled humans to be the salt of the earth and light of the cosmos (Matt. 5:13-16). Christians are identified, in their relationship to the world, as humans originally were, in the creation account. And God is proclaiming at the end of the Bible, “I am making everything new” (Rev. 21:5). A brief outline of redemptive history shows that the God of the Bible is known as the public God in his creation, in the way of salvation, in the extent of salvation, and in the way of the redeemed life.

As God is known publically in the world, so humans are known publically. God created human beings in his own image; God did not create only religious humans in his image. And God did not create humans in his image only in their religious aspect. Rather, God created the human being as *nepes*, the whole human person, out of dust of the ground, with God’s own breath. Thus, the human being, though created, became a “person,” who is endowed with the gifts of a consciousness and free will. The whole human person was supposed to act and live in total dependence on the Creator. God is restoring the whole human person, not just the religious part of the person, to the true image of God in Christ. The regenerated Christians, to whom the “new life” (Rom. 6:4) and the “new self” (Col. 3:10) are given, are Christian humans, not simply religious humans. As a result, Christian spirituality should shape the whole human person and all human faculties. Richard Mouw captures this biblical idea of spirituality in terms of the whole human person: “First and foremost, I am a human being. But I find being a Christian to be the best way for me to be a human being.”¹⁵

Explaining that gift, Kuyper summarized the public nature of the gospel as religion’s “universal character, and its complete universal application”: The whole created world must run according to the law of God since “God has fully ordained such laws and ordinances for all life”; the whole of the human being, as God’s image, “must be pervaded by the *sensus divinitatis*”; and all human activities must be done for the service of God. In other words, as Mouw explains, “Religion concerns the whole of our human race. This race is the product of God’s creation.”¹⁶ The Christian life, then, must

be understood as a holistic “life-system,” which is described by Kuyper’s famous words, “there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, “Mine!”¹⁷

The public knowledge of God and Christians is well captured in Christ’s identifying the Christian community as “the light of the world,” “a city on a hill,” and “a lamp” (Matt. 5:14-15). Indeed, this view of the Christian community as a public reflection of God’s glory is recognized only from the Christian point of view. This very spiritual perspective of the Christian community demands that Christians move into the world with a recognition of the public nature of the gospel. The gospel is given for the *homo peccator*, human sinners. God’s glory is to be reflected in all human culture. It is to be reflected in the lives of individual Christians (as the organic church in their living in the world) as well as in the ministry and life of the church (as the institutional church). This public reflection of God’s glory in the Christian community is more its own identity than a tool for mission and evangelism. When the Christian community reflects the true human life, its preaching of the gospel may bear beneficial fruits to the world.

The idea of antithesis does not prevent Christians from engaging the world with the public nature of Christianity. Antithesis implies the conflicting principles of the regenerated life and the natural sinful life. Antithesis does not mean a separation of the world into two different dominions but a separation of the different worldviews and lifestyles in the undivided world. The idea of antithesis thus may emphasize the radically different principle of spirit-quickened regenerated life in the context of the sinful world. When the antithesis is emphasized by Christ’s regenerating power, it demands active engagement of Christians in the world. Such engaging the world is made possible only when the regenerated person is convinced by and equipped with the public nature of the Christian worldview.

The public nature of the gospel calls Christians to work for the benefit of the world in all cultural activities. With the confession that Christ is reconciling all things to himself and the recognition of the gospel’s public nature, Christians are called

to work in the world. This belief is the basis for Christian scholarship, Christian education, and a Christian understanding of work as vocation. Living the gospel in the public, ordinary, and natural realm of the world is as serious and important to God as living the gospel in the spiritual realm. Christian living in the natural realm glorifies God as much as service in the supernatural realm. For God's salvation restores nature.

Truth and justice may be singled out as significant aspects of reflecting God's glory in the public arena as well. God by nature is true and just. The whole Scripture testifies God's demand for his people to live out truth and justice in the public life. Amos the prophet, for example, teaches that true worship must be materially reflected in actual life by living out truth and justice (Amos 5:24). The sin of Israel was the combined transgression of formalistic worship and immoral life. When one is broken, the other must be corrupt also. In the New Testament, the episode of Zacchaeus dramatically illustrates the public nature of salvation's effect. Interestingly, Luke records Jesus' announcement of salvation to the sinful tax-collector without any mentioning of repentance and spiritual regeneration. I assume that Zacchaeus repented of his sin and accepted Jesus as his savior, but the main point of the episode lies in the fact that Zacchaeus lived Jesus' offer of salvation in his economic life by making compensation to the people from whom he had extorted (Luke 19:1-10).

Combining the messages of Amos and Zacchaeus, we can conclude that we are to reflect our worship of God materialistically in the very aspects of our life that we deem the most essential and the most important for living. For Zacchaeus, that aspect is money and power. It was also money and power in the case of the Israelites in the prophecy of Amos. I assume that humans and their lives have changed much and the challenge remains the same: living the gospel by acting out truth and justice in the world.

Based on the discussions above, we may characterize Reformed theology as a worldview, in that the Christian confession is rooted in the trinitarian understanding of creation and redemption and its call to believers to live out their faith in the restored world. Reformed theology invites believers

to live within a grand structure of the world and life for the glory of our great God, for it is "trinitarian in theology and catholic in vision."¹⁸ The public nature of the gospel guides believers to live the redeemed life with a world-affirming and, at the same time, world-reforming spirituality. The world is God's House and our Home within God's redemptive history: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16), and "the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world" (I John 4:14). The Kingdom of God's creation, the object of God's love and care, must be distinguished from the world as life corrupted by a sinful nature (I John 2:15-17). The Reformed theology, with its public nature of the gospel and its world-affirming spirituality, leads toward a public theology.¹⁹

Conclusion

The Scripture reveals God creating and restoring humans in the world. God redeems sinners to become Christians, with an ultimate purpose of shaping them into true humans. And the Kingdom that God is re-building embraces the whole domain of the created world. The whole and every part of the world (the physical realm) and the whole of human life (the cultural realm) must reflect the creation principles that are restored in Christ's redemption. This comprehensive view of God's redemptive history shapes the all-embracing Calvinist worldview and life-system. The width and depth of God's salvation shapes the public with God's world-embracing, and, at the same time, world-reforming spirituality.

As a result, Calvinist spirituality leads Christians to participate in the reforming work of Christ in all aspects of human life, with a confession that this work, no matter how sincere and faithful that work may be, is not of humans but of God, in Christ, who actually reforms the world. In every moment of our participating in the work of Christ, through success and failure, we should maintain deep personal piety.

Illustrating several warnings on the Calvinist tradition, Bratt mentions its potential tendency of beginning the Christian life with the "inscrutable sovereignty of God" and ending it with "magnifying human agency."²⁰ The replacement

of God's sovereignty with human autonomy was, in fact, the cause of the atheistic French Revolution, which Kuyper so vehemently opposed. Another possible flaw of Calvinism may be its heavy emphasis on principles for the Christian life and its arduous intellectual orientation, at the expense of dynamic personal piety. Though principles provide formative direction for the Christian life, it is persons, Christian humans, who actually obey and live. The fundamental impetus for the Christian life is not principle but power of the Holy Spirit in the redeemed person. I have already pointed out that Christian discernment depends on the power of the Holy Spirit. I want to make a concluding comment on the need of the right combination—a sound, formal Christian worldview and personal and communal pious spirituality.

The Calvinist life-system works best for the Christian life when it is truly motivated by Calvinist spirituality. When Calvin identifies theology as the study of knowledge of God and humanity, he defines that knowledge as faith-knowledge based on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. The faith-knowledge we come to have of God and of humanity presents us with an even higher conviction than the best reasoning can do in natural knowledge. The starting point of faith-knowledge, for Calvin, is personal piety: "that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces."²¹ Such piety is created when an individual is convinced of the countless benefits of God's salvation in his/her personal relationship to God. That personal piety is the spiritual cradle, a prerequisite and an essential condition for the growth of a sanctified mind.

When the right combination is broken between the motivating personal piety and the formative Christian mind, two opposite dangers may emerge as a consequence. The first is caused by an absence of the power of the personal piety or by an imbalanced emphasis on the intellectual side of Christian principles. Without the proper inner spiritual piety, the formal principle of living every square inch of human life under Christ's rule sounds like only an empty slogan. The opposite danger may be caused by a blind emphasis on private spirituality at the sacrifice of the intellectual and social aspect of the Christian life. In this case,

the regenerated life becomes focused on a narrow understanding of church mission and is directionless. The former danger appears in the form of a Christian cultural program, while the latter danger appears as an other-worldly spirituality. While not wanting to over-generalize, I tend to find the former problem more among the transformationist circle and the latter problem more among the fundamentalist and piety-oriented churches.

The inquiry looming here is not which one of the two is more essential or significant for Christian thinking and living but how we find a working combination of the two. My answer to the question and the thesis of this paper is that the public nature of the gospel and spirituality can join in an effective way. Recognition of the gospel's public nature motivates and directs inner personal piety, the power of the new life, towards engaging the world.

Endnotes

1. Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, tr. Henri De Vries (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1900), 22
2. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 19.
3. Kuyper pointed out modernism in his European context as a false promise in the name of the modern human-centered uniformity, devoid of truth, in "Uniformity: The Curse of Modern Life (1869)," *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 19-44. Kuyper preached on the radical newness of the Christian life system, in its difference from the modernist culture, as evidence of the true conservative church, in "Conservatism and Orthodoxy (1870)," *Abraham Kuyper* 65-86. In the American context there are ample references from the Evangelical circle that point out the problems of an anti-intellectual tendency and the church's unwillingness to engage society. Carl F. H. Henry, already in 1947, lamented the failure of Evangelicals and Fundamentalists to apply "the fundamentals of the faith" in actual life, in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), xviii. George Marsden identified American Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism of the mid-1900s with the effort of maintaining orthodox faith and other-worldly, individualistic, and anti-intellectual spirituality, in *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 98-121. And Mark Noll pointed out

- that the “failure to exercise the mind for Christ in these areas [areas of life in the world] has become acute in the twentieth century,” a failure he termed *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 7. Noll also presents an example of the Christian mind in scholarship and work from a rigid Christological perspective, in his work *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).
4. Kuyper, “Conservatism and Orthodoxy (1870),” in *Abraham Kuyper*, 80.
 5. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 11. For a summary of the recent development of Kuyper’s ideas in North America, see Albert Wolters, “Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Worldview, Philosophy and Rationality,” *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, eds. Hendrik Hart, Johan Vander Hoeven, and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 113-131.
 6. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 11.
 7. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 79; Recently Wolters summarizes the Calvinist view of redeemed life: “Distinctive about the Calvinist understanding of the Christian worldview... is that it takes all the operative words of this basic formulation in a universal, all embracing sense... So the Kingdom of God is truly a re-creation, a restoration of the entire range of earthly reality to its original goal.” Albert Wolters, “Dutch Neo-Calvinism,” 116.
 8. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 46.
 9. Vincent E. Bacote reads the re-quickening work of the Holy Spirit as the agent that provides the context of the common grace, *The Spirit in Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 112-116.
 10. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 487.
 11. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 491-95.
 12. See also Rom. 8:5-8.
 13. Reformed spirituality is characterized by the fact “that the personal experience of grace and salvation is inseparable from the corporate relationships of church, community, and world,” according to Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, “Piety,” *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1992), 279. Howard G. Hageman summarizes John Calvin’s spirituality: “Calvin believed nothing so much as that ‘our religion... must enter our heart and pass into our daily living and so transform us into itself that it may not be unfruitful for us... [but] a religion of the tongue and mind, a piety of faith alone,” in “Reformed Spirituality,” *Exploring Christian spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*, ed. Kenneth J. Collins (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 138-157. See, for a modern development of the Reformed spirituality, James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009) and Howard L. Rice, *Reformed Spirituality* (Louisville: Westminster, 1991), ch. 2, 6. Francis A. Schaeffer, a popular Evangelical thinker, summarizes the spirituality also broadly, based on his dialectical understanding of the “inward” piety and the “external” life: Salvation is not just for going to heaven. He reaches the conclusion of “positive inward reality, and then positive outward results.... And we are to love men, to be alive to men as men, and to be in communication on a true personal level with men, in this present moment of history” in *True Spirituality* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1972), 17. Donald Dorr, a Catholic missionary priest, suggests also a comprehensive view of Christian spirituality by linking spirituality and justice. He points to Micah 6:8 as the foundation of his “balanced spirituality”: “This is what Yahweh asks of you, only this: That you act justly, that you love tenderly, that you walk humbly with your God,” in *Spirituality and Justice* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1990), 8. See also pp. 195, 200-203.
 14. John Calvin, *Commentary on Corinthians*, tr. John W. Fraser, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 2:15-16.
 15. Richard Mouw, *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 20. Otto Gründler summarizes Calvin’s spirituality in the same way: “*Homo Christianus* is he who, being conformed to the image and exemplar of Christ, lives not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” in “John Calvin: Ingrafting in Christ,” in *The Spirituality of Western Christendom*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 187.
 16. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 52-53.
 17. Abraham Kuyper, “Sphere Sovereignty,” *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 488.
 18. John Bolt, *Christian and Reformed Today* (Jordan Station: Paideia Press, 1984), 20.
 19. For a general review of the kinds of public theology, see Bacote, *The Spirit in Public Theology*, 40-53; John Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper’s American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), xvii-xviii, 193, 187-225.
 20. James D. Bratt, “Raging Tumult of Soul: The Private Life of Abraham Kuyper,” *On Kuyper: A Collection of Readings on the Life, Work and Legacy of Abraham Kuyper*, eds. Steve Bishop and John H. Kok (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2013), 38.
 21. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, tr. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I. i-ii., III.ii.14-15.