

Do Christians have a political future?

Part 2

by *Bernard Zylstra*

In the first part of this series of explorations (VANGUARD March/April) I discussed the immense scope of politics. How can Christ's disciples today become vessels of reconciliation in this vast arena? Politics has been described as the art of the possible. What is politically possible for Christians in the national, state or provincial, metropolitan, and local settings? At present, very little that is authentically Christian. By "Christian" I mean the pursuit of a biblically directed policy in the resolution of issues that require settlement by the state and its organs. Such a policy hardly exists. Today there is no significant body of citizens that would support such a policy. And the avenues of bringing such a policy effectively to bear on the actual political decision-making process are not to be found. In view of these inadequacies our problem can be more precisely formulated: How can the conditions be created to make possible a scripturally directed contribution in politics? The major avenue that I propose is the organization of a Christian political movement in both Canada and the United States. The central tasks of such a movement must be (1) the development of a Christian social and political policy; (2) the development of Christian political maturity and consciousness among citizens; and (3) the development of an action front relating Christian policy to political decisions.

Links with the Past and Present

In this essay I will focus mainly on the first of these tasks. Before doing so, however, I want to point out certain group efforts among evangelical Christians that can be meaningfully used as stepping stones to broader political witness and action.

The Christian Government Movement (CGM)

Especially during the last decade smallgroups of Christians have joined hands to form a common front for a variety of social and political purposes. Among the Covenanters, spiritual heirs of John Knox and ecclesiastically gathered together mainly in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, there is still the conviction that Christ is not only Saviour of men but also Lord of the state. The Reformed Presbyterian Church, which sponsors Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, has supported the Christian Amendment Movement for many years. The reflection behind the endeavor to obtain a recognition of Christ's Lordship in the US Constitution has deep historical roots, as Dr. Samuel E. Boyle, long-time director of the Christian Amendment Movement (CAM) and at present a missionary in Japan, has shown in *The Christian Nation*. Recently the interest in political affairs in RP circles broadened to transform the Christian Amendment Movement into the Christian Government Movement. (804 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221). The CGM, under the direction of Robert Milliken, can play an important role in reviving John Knox's convictions among the North American sons and daughters of the Scottish and British Reformation by directing these biblical convictions to the problems of the modern

state. Many Covenanters died for precisely these convictions in the seventeenth century, and they are still worth fighting for today. It should help us all in reviving the best of the Christian political tradition in the Anglo-Saxon experience. *The Christian Patriot*, CGM's monthly, is already beginning to become a voice for renewal by republishing a wide variety of articles, including the politically relevant parts of William Symington's *Messiah The Prince*. This book, first published in Glasgow in 1838, is a remarkable dogmatic-exegetical treatise on the universality of Christ's office as mediator between God and man where the individualistic evangelical understanding of salvation is radically rejected. *Messiah The Prince* deserves renewed attention by all evangelicals who want to come to grips, with the relevance of Christ's redemptive work for men and nations.

The National Association for Christian Political Action (NACPA)

Canadian Christians with a European Calvinian heritage established the Christian Action Foundation in Edmonton, Alberta, during the early sixties. Rev. Louis Tamminga was instrumental in setting up a US branch of the CAF when he became pastor of a church in Sioux Center, Iowa, the home of Dordt College. By now this former branch has become a political movement with sub-divisions in Chicago, the home of Trinity Christian College, and in Philadelphia, one of the main centers of Presbyterianism. The organization is known as the National Association for Christian Political Action (NACPA), and publishes *The NACPA Politikon* (Box 185, Sioux Center, Iowa 51250) eight times annually. Jim and Glenda Vanden Bosch, its dynamic husband-wife development team, have introduced NACPA to numerous Christians in the Midwest and lately in several southern and eastern states. In the US the NACPA programme deserves wide support. Its aims are:

1. To bring together into a national political movement all those who accept the principles of NACPA.
2. To develop a unified Christian political mind and a deepening understanding of our Christian political task.
3. To articulate through communal reflection and analysis a responsible Christian political programme.
4. To rally around certain issues and present Christian political alternatives in local, state, and national levels.
5. To develop and promote ways and means of implementing a united Christian political platform.

The promotion and realization of these aims require, I think, the relocation of NACPA headquarters in a national cultural centre, such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, or Philadelphia. Moreover, the informal links with the Christian Government Movement should be intensified, not on the basis of a common denominator of present positions, but on the foundation of a growing awareness on both sides of the meaning of biblically directed social and political action.

New US Evangelical Developments

A number of additional phenomena on the US evangelical scene which indicate a growing social consciousness. A few of these should be mentioned here. The

Evangelical Committee for Urban Ministries in Boston (ECUMB, 387 Shawmut Avenue, Boston, Mass. 02118) is "an association of evangelicals concerned about the oppressed people in (Jur cities, the forces maintaining the conditions in which they live and the general lack of positive and effective Christian response." It supports black Christian schools and assists students from oppressed minority groups at Christian colleges like Gordon. It has moved into other urban centres where its name undergoes a slight change; for instance, ECUMP operates in Paterson, New Jersey. In this way local initiatives dovetail into a common concern sharing mutual insight. The entire project is stimulated by the bimonthly publication of *Inside: a Forum for Progressive Evangelical Thought*, edited by Roger Dewey, which publishes some excellent theme issues, notably the proceedings of the Conference on Race Relations held in Chicago in 1971 under sponsorship of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and just recently an in-depth analysis of race relations in South Africa. The announcement of future issues indicates the ECUMB is moving from an orientation on race to the entire problematics of Christian social and political concern.

The work of ECUMB in New England is linked to the work of evangelicals around Wheaton College (and in the Midwest) who issue *The Other Side* magazine. Fred Alexander, a philosophy teacher at Wheaton, has fought racism and bigotry in conservative evangelical circles, and today *The Other Side* is an effective new white evangelical voice for social justice linked to the prophetic and redemptive themes of liberation found in the biblical record. *The Other Side* has allied itself closely with *The Inside*, forming a major part of the alternative evangelical press that focuses a growing evangelical movement for social justice.

The greater Chicago area is also the home base for the quickly spreading People's Christian Coalition, first initiated by students and staff at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in suburban Bannockburn. It has published *The Post-American* (Box 132, Deerfield, Illinois 60015) since 1971 on a quarterly basis and fills it with incisive analysis of certain facets of the American way of life. Led by former New Leftist Jim Wallis, this emerging coalition describes itself in these words: "The People's Christian Coalition is a non-membership alliance of people and communities working together to build radical Christian consciousness, commitment, and action in our time. We wish to serve the people by proclaiming the gospel of liberation in Christ, by articulating the ethical implications of that gospel, by working for peace, justice and freedom and by serving you — you who are interested in organizing others in your universities, seminaries, churches and communities to work for these objectives. We are convinced that strength will never lie in bureaucratic structures but in the dedication of people willing to organize locally We are a grassroots coalition calling for people committed to the Christian message that is distinctively Post-American, that changes men's lives and generates an active commitment to social justice which serves as the basis for social liberation."

It is interesting to note that each of these organizations or alliances is engaged in journalistic activity. As a matter of fact, new journalism efforts that support Christian social reflection and action without themselves being involved in action programmes have been initiated in various areas of the US. Two examples of this trend are *New Reformation: The Magazine of Campus Missions* (Box 13850, University of California, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93107). It is edited by journalist-campus missionary Jon Reid Kennedy at the Institute for Christian Communication in Isla Vista, and is

made available free in bulk to students on campuses throughout the nation. Its purpose is evident from its statement of policy: "As the publication of a Christian community dedicated to the reformation of mass communication, New Reformation will seek to demonstrate in every article in each issue the journalistic practice necessary to a reformational, reformed journalism. A major effort to this end will be the treatment in each issue of a major development, event, or trend in current events having implications for all people and life in general in the era we live in. Such articles may be a new Christian critique of news events based on reports appearing in other major media, or original Christian research into current historical phenomena."

While *New Reformation* is written for Christians, and aims to develop an integral Christian cultural conscious, Kennedy also publishes *Renaissance Review*, an attempt to reach modern pagan students on their own cultural turf with the life-transforming Good News of Jesus. *Renaissance Review* features film, record and book reviews, as well as cultural analyses. Because of his sensitivity to the non-Christian public of *Renaissance Review*, and because of his keen gifts as a reviewer and stylist, Kennedy is a leader in a core group of radical Christian journalists.

Canada: The Committee for Justice and Liberty (CJL)

In Canada, unlike the United States, one cannot find nearly as much evidence of an incipient Christian social conscience among younger evangelicals. Is this perhaps a result of the fact that traditional evangelical leadership in Canada looks for direction from mainline evangelicalism in the US? Is it because there are few outstanding Christian liberal arts colleges and evangelical theological schools in this nation? Is it because English-speaking Canada has so long depended first upon Great Britain and now upon its southern neighbour for cultural direction that it lacks the vigour to come to grips with its problems on its own account?

In this rather bleak setting the Committee for Justice and Liberty (CJL) (Box 151, Rexdale, Ontario) is now struggling to mold itself into a national political movement. The CJL has two main roots. It was incorporated ten years ago as an organization to defend the rights of workers to join a union of their choice before the courts and administrative tribunals of the province of Ontario. In cooperation with its spiritual ally, the Christian Labour Association of Canada, it fought and won several legal battles dealing with the pluralism of religio-economic conviction and the monolithic adversary structure of the collective bargaining process. Thus through action in labour relations the CJL called attention to one of the key legal problems of a religiously divided citizenry.

The second root of the CJL lies in the Christian Action Foundation (CAF), which originated in Alberta. The CAF acted on a number of fronts, notably in the area of equal treatment of children in the educational system. After several years of struggle in the 60's, it won a limited but significant victory: children educated in Albertan so-called "non-public" schools receive \$150 per year as the province's contribution to their educational civil rights. So far the efforts of the CAF on the educational front in Ontario, supported by the Ontario Alliance for Christian Schools (OACS) and coordinated by John Olthuis, its legal counsel, have not met with success. Plans are now afoot to launch a lawsuit against the Government of Ontario on the grounds that the working constitution of the Dominion of Canada, the British North America

(BNA) Act of 1867, does not forbid support for an alternative system of public education.

For several years the CAF published The Christian Vanguard in Edmonton. It dealt with a broad variety of social issues. Edited until 1970 by James Visser of Edmonton, this periodical was the pioneering forerunner of VANGUARD, which today is not linked with any organization but is responsible for its own editorial direction. The occasion for making VANGUARD independent was the union between the CAF and the CJL. Since 1971 the leadership of the new organization has been studying steps to broaden its purpose and its constituency so that it can begin to act as an articulate Christian political movement in Canadian national and provincial politics.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY

All the groups just mentioned assert that the Gospel is integrally related to politics. No doubt by now most of them have also discovered that it is quite another thing to show explicitly what that integral relation is to the concrete issues that must be debated in the actual political process. This is not an easy matter, as was evident in the analysis of the scope of politics in the first article of this series. What is needed is a Christian political policy which translates the heart of the Gospel into a conception of justice that, in turn, is related to the solution of problems in a specific time and place. What I mean by a political policy will be explained as we go along. But first I want to direct myself to the question of who is responsible for the development of a Christian political policy.

Who is Responsible for Policy?

One might argue that a practical political action movement ought to limit itself to matters of organization, propaganda, and concrete efforts to influence political decision-makers, somewhat like a lobby or a pressure group. The articulation of an overall frame of reference and the exploration of detailed principles relevant to specific issues — this is what policy is all about — could then be left to other bodies, such as the institutional church (with its assemblies, synods, councils, etc.) or the Christian academic community. How should we understand both the distinction and the connection between the tasks of activation and articulation?

To begin with the institutional church cannot and should not be isolated from politics. For its task lies in the proclamation of the Word of Life, Christ crucified and risen. With divine authority, and thus great courage, it must dare proclaim that politics can heal if it is subject to the great Healer, the Savior, and conversely that politics is on the way to death if it does not share in the Life which the Healer brings to mankind. The church brings the Good News to politics that the Lamb of God is King of kings, that justice issues from His throne, that men can be authentic citizens of their nation in the final analysis only when their citizenship, their ultimate loyalty, is in heaven, where their Master rules. That kind of proclamation will bring life to the land, vigour to present bureaucracies, and light in the labyrinth. For through such proclamation the institutional church calls men to political repentance, political salvation, and political discipleship. Through such proclamation the citizen is beckoned to "Follow Me" in the exercise of his civil responsibilities.

S.U. Zuidema summed up the matter in the last paragraph of his essay "Church and Politics" in *Communication and Confrontation*: "The church is here in order that political life may be religion," that is, service to God. If the institutional churches in the US and Canada do not accept this as part of their task in preaching, missions, and pastoral care, citizens will not hear the Word of the Lord for this facet of their actual life, they will stumble along in darkness without Light, subject to all the propaganda and lies of the Prince of Darkness and his co-belligerents. If the institutional churches, with their prophets and preachers, do not understand that political life is religion, service to God or to idols, these churches are serving themselves and not their Master, the Head.

But when the institutional churches in the US and Canada again assume their all-important office of ministering to the Word of Life, then God's People will be challenged and revived to assume their office of serving the Master in their daily actions, their schooling, their citizenship, their economies. Grasped by the sovereign and healing Word brought by their minister and missionary, pleading forgiveness for their self-seeking sins at the foot of the Cross, they will become seekers of the Kingdom, salt of the earth, light upon a hilltop, leaven in society. In the maturity of faith the office of all believers can come to fruition. In the unity and fullness of faith, growing up in every way into Him Who is the Head, each part of the Body will begin to work properly (Eph. 4). That work includes subjecting our politics to the Word, to Christ.

In this light we can say that our task as citizens is not to be executed within the institutional church, but within the state. As mature members of the Kingdom of God we must become responsible citizens of the state. There we must learn to lead lives of sanctification, that is, lives of dedicated and humble service to Christ and, through Him, service to our fellow citizens. Our civil responsibility includes competence to judge legal and political matters and to act upon them. That competence and that activity require a Christian political vision, policy, and programme that express throughout the Gospel's concern for justice. The first task of a Christian political organization whose members have been gripped by the vision of the Lordship of Christ lies in the formulation of a political policy. In policy formulation the growing maturity of our faith can begin to express itself in political competence.

Towards Non-Pragmatic Politics

There is another consideration that ought to be kept in mind here. Most political parties and organizations in the US and Canada are "pragmatic." This is generally looked upon as a virtue, not a vice. They are largely oriented to the immediate application of political power to the realization of concrete aims and objectives. They are hardly interested in relating goals to principles, to basic and underlying starting points of reflection and action. Reflection, indeed, is often divorced from action. The former may deal with principles (or with "theories" as they are wrongly called); the latter deals with goals. No wonder that often one can not distinguish between political parties and pressure groups. Our parties, it is said with pride, are and should remain non-ideological.

Many Christians who are active in the political arena look upon this pragmatism with great enthusiasm, for it supposedly creates the possibility of making a concrete

contribution without engaging in ideological hassles, without debate on principles which might lead to conflict. Principles, it is asserted, divide; goals unite.

In response to this it must be said that pragmatic politics is by no means non-ideological. Its ideology is one of non-ideology; its principle is one of non-principle. It proceeds from a distinct view of man and his social environment. Man in pragmatism is not a responder to the Word of the Creator-Redeemer who in that response shapes creation into culture. No, man is viewed as a responder to (the stimuli received from) his physical and social environment. This environment offers certain potentials-for man's existence; it also puts obstacles on man's path that threaten his life. Thus for his own well-being man must learn to cope with both potentials and obstacles. This "learning to cope" is man's progress in the process of evolution. This "learning to cope" sets the goals that must be achieved in his pragmatic existence. Tools, science, technique, organization, industry, and politics are the avenues by means of which man can learn to cope with his physical and social environment.

These features of political pragmatism help explain why so many are so highly interested in the "mere" manipulation of political power for the achievement of aims and objectives. The widespread commitment to pragmatism also explains the degree of confusion and aimlessness in the direction of the affairs of state. It gives at least some hints about the self-seeking character of the political system where public power, under the mask of public purpose, can so easily be used for the realization of private ends. Because there are so many private ends, pragmatic politics has failed to achieve political unity and cooperation.

From the very outset a Christian political movement will want to break radically with this conception of a supposedly non-ideological pragmatic politics. It must not leave the formation of principled policy to other bodies, but make it part of its own organization. This means that from the start and for the duration of their existence associations like NACPA and the CJL should assume responsibility for the acquisition of principled political ideas, and the translation of these ideas into policy and action programmes directed to immediate and concrete goals which they desire to realize. These and similar bodies should now establish a division or a centre where competent persons — we have too abominably little talent right now! — can systematically cement together the building blocks for an all-round Christian political option related to the most urgent questions of practical politics. The viable fusion of Christian principle and its realization in action must become a vital concern for a Christian political movement so that it can avoid the pitfalls of pragmatic activism unequally yoked to principial sloganeering.

The Search for Building Blocks

Where should a Christian political movement start in the formulation of policy? Must it start from scratch? Not really! As there are some skeletal organizations that provide links with the past, so there are also meaningful elements in the history of Christian social reflection that can and must be used as stepping stones in the formation of policy. From the times of the early Church Fathers there has been a long tradition of social thought that anchors us in the biblical teachings on justice and stewardship. That tradition is partially revived for our generation in Roman Catholic and neo-

orthodox Protestant circles. Witness the Second Vatican Council and the proceedings of the various social conferences of the World Council of Churches. Within the evangelical wing of the Anglo-Saxon countries there is also a growing awareness of the "social relevance" of the Gospel. Of the many publications that give evidence of this, I will mention just a few: C.F.H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (1964); R.G. Clouse, R.D. Linder, and R.V. Pierard, eds., *Protest and Politics: Christianity and Contemporary Affairs* (1968); Edward Coleson, *God, Government and the Good Life* (1970); Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man* (1970); Vernon C. Grounds, *Revolution and the Christian Faith* (1971); John H. Redekop, ed., *Labor Problems in Christian Perspective* (1972); and Brian Griffiths, ed., *Is Revolution Change?* (1972).

Despite these and many other explorations in the field, if we limit ourselves to evangelical thought we must in all honesty admit that our tradition does not provide a Christian theory of law and the state providing the building blocks of a policy for political action. Why is this so? Why is the main focus of evangelicalism, even after it transcended the narrow confines of fundamentalism, largely limited to "the salvation of individual souls" and "the defense of the faith?" There is a strange and certainly un-biblical confusion of issues that keeps evangelicals from developing a Christian notion of the state and a policy for political witness and action. In discussing the need for such witness and action in the areas of industry, education, and politics, the traditional evangelical will often answer: "Our method of social action is personal evangelism." This seems to be the conclusion, for instance, of Brian Griffiths, the editor of the recently published *Is Revolution Change?* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1972). After arguing that revolution is not the answer to social injustice, he asks, "What then is the Christian way?" His reply is that "the Christian starts not with society and its problems but with the individual. It is he himself who first needs to be changed." (p. 108). But in my opinion this answer simply misses the point. No disciple of Christ will deny the necessity of conversion, of a radical change of heart commitment. But a strategy of personal evangelism and missions — today as imperative as ever! — is not a Christian *political* strategy, nor a policy of *industrial* reform, nor an *educational* philosophy. The latter indeed presuppose the former. But how do we move from *conversion* by the Holy Spirit to a *life* where Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father? Or, how do we move from conversion to politics — a vital part of the life which the Man of Nazareth claims as His own?

The move from conversion to politics can only be made when there is no dualism in our conception of the relation between redemption and creation. Conversion is a phenomenon of redemption; and politics is a matter of creation (and its history). How are they related? I have dealt with this question extensively in, "Thy Word Our Life," an essay published in the 1972 summer issue of the *International Reformed Bulletin* (1677 Gentian Dr. S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49508). Briefly put, redemption (conversion) makes it possible for the new Christian to understand the creation where his life is lived. Redemption makes it possible for the convert to walk in the Lord's ways of creation, and one way of creation is political. For redemption makes it possible for the convert to see that all creatures, including the state, are *structured* to be servants of the Creator. Thus the convert knows that God's Order or Plan or Word for conversion is the same as God's Order or Plan or Word for creation. This Word simply is, "Be My servant, and you will have life." This Word is addressed to man as a person, calling for repentance and service. This Word is also addressed to all other

creatures, made after their kind, each with their peculiar structure, demanding obedience to the sovereign Master. When Christians, often with the best of intentions, drive a wedge into this single Order or Word of God for creation and redemption, they introduce a dualism between conversion and the life inescapably lived in creation. This dualism accounts for the absence of a Christian conception of law and the state among evangelicals today.

Structural Analysis of the State

We have spoken of the need for a policy that directs the activities of a Christian political movement. At this point we can describe more precisely what that means. The state displays a structure that makes it suitable as one of the Creator's servants for the good of men (cf. Rom. 13). The state structure is an avenue of blessing.

What do we mean by "structure"? "Structure" derives from a Latin verb meaning "to pile up, put together, put in order, and thus to build or arrange." Two uses of the term "structure" are relevant here: (1) the arrangement of particles or parts in a substance or body, and (2) the interrelation of parts dominated by the general character of the whole.

When, in harmony with biblical revelation, we say that reality is creation, we confess that material things, plants, animals, human -beings, and social institutions (all things "visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities," Col. 1:16) are so built, arranged, and structured after their kind by the Creator as to make their unique and distinctive blessing possible to the glory of God. In this sense the state, for example, is not a human invention instituted by a dictatorial fiat or in a democratic social contract. It is a creature, a divine institution with a unique structure making possible its obedience to the order of the Creator-Redeemer, and thus becoming a blessing to mankind. In the light of the written Word enlightening their hearts, Christian citizens have the task of discovering that peculiar arrangement of parts in the body politic and the unique interrelationship of structured elements dominated by the general character of the whole that can make the state a minister of good for the entire citizenry.

This path of discovery on the part of Christians we have come to call *structural analysis* of the state, of its internal coherence and its external relationships. This type of structural analysis was already involved in the first installment of this series dealing with the scope of politics. Structural political analysis attempts to find coherent answers to questions such as these: (1) Should there be states at all in human society? If so, why? What are they supposed to accomplish? (2) How can a state achieve its purpose? What kind of power does it need? Who may wield this power? How does a person assume a position of power in the state? Are there limits to state power? (3) Who are the members of the state? Who are entitled to benefit from the state? What are rights? Do rights derive from the state itself or can the state only recognize rights inherent in human beings simply because they are persons? (4) What are the duties of citizens toward the state? Who determines these? What happens if there is a conflict in loyalties? Should a Christian obey God rather than the government? Or should he give Caesar what belongs to Caesar anyway? (5) How should a state be divided into parts? Are there a variety of ways of doing this? How should the powers of the whole and its parts be distinguished and still coordinated?

(6) How should states get along together? Should there be a super-state? Can Christians support war between states? (7) What should a state not try to accomplish? Should it educate children? Should it support the poor? Should it determine when a person can get a divorce or use drugs? How should the state relate itself to all those areas of society which are not primarily political but moral, economic, environmental, social, medical, educational and ecclesiastical? How can we make distinctions here? Where is the overlap? How can we find avenues of cooperation rather than opposition?

Structure, Principle, Theory, and Policy

To formulate and pursue a political policy, the following points should be clearly kept in mind.

First, one cannot answer these and similar political questions off the cuff. Rather, pooled answers to the questions above must form *a coherent* picture of the *foundations* of politics. In other words, they must be related to the one structure of the state, the institution responsible for the establishment of an order of public justice.

Second, the answers to these questions concern matters of *principle*. A principle is a point of departure for action. Principles are indispensable if one is not to get lost in action without direction. A principle is a human guideline, formulated in response to the unchanging divine norm of justice for concrete political action in a specific time and place. A set of political principles itself is not yet a political policy; it gives *direction* to policy.

Third, The Christian academic community can assist a Christian political movement in finding answers to political questions. Scholars thus contribute to the formation of policy. The relationship between the academy and political action is a debated one. President Eisenhower shunned the academics; Kennedy welcomed their contribution: George Wallace is suspicious of professors; George McGovern is their friend. The question is important for a Christian political movement if only for the simple reason that there are hundreds of Christians teaching in the departments of political science and economics in both public universities and private Christian colleges. I would suggest that a Christian political movement and the Christian academic community ought to cooperate with the following distinctions in mind: The (Christian) academic community is responsible for the development of *theory*. With reference to our topic, political theory is concerned with the analysis of the general structure of states, the coherent principles of political action and organization, and the variable forms of government. The Christian political theorist and the Christian politician have two vital convictions in common: both proceed from the same biblical view of life and an all-controlling commitment to Christ. And both are interested in making a contribution to a meaningful politics. But the political theorist, as a member of an academic community, is not responsible for implementing his insights in political action. That is the politician's job. Nevertheless, the theoretical insights of the political scientist are of immense value to a political action movement as well as to the government, especially in a complex society. For the theorist can often relate and identify the principles, social forces, components, consequences, and possible options for action in a complex situation more easily than a political activist.

In view of this I would suggest close cooperation between Christian political action movements, like NACPA, CGM and the CJL, and those members of the academic world who are highly concerned about a Christian reorientation in society. Teams of activists and theorists should be formed by NACPA, CGM and the CJL (and perhaps other groups — like the People's Christian Coalition) to formulate the foundations, principles, and directives for Christian political action. These teams should include political scientists, economists, theologians, ecologists, etc.

Finally, principles plus theories still do not constitute a policy. A policy is the direction given in an actual issue by a set of principles. An actual issue, for example, may be the war in Viet Nam, Canada's participation in NATO, the size of the army, the use of nuclear weapons, the sources of governmental revenues, or the use of public funds to relieve unemployment, poverty and urban decline. A policy cannot be formulated in the abstract, that is, without having all the relevant facts of an issue on the table. Research into facts will be imperative for policy formulation. A good deal of information on public issues is easily available; much is not — as Daniel Ellsberg revealed to us in the Pentagon Papers.

Conclusion

In sum, the development of policy is the first main item on the agenda for NACPA, CGM, the People's Christian Coalition, the CJL, and similar organizations. One reason why followers of Christ took the initiative to establish these bodies is the absence of a scripturally mature social policy that can direct us in the execution of our civil responsibilities. Now these Christian political agencies should take steps to fill this policy vacuum by founding and funding an inter-agency policy-research centre.

Will that then be enough? No. A policy, I said, is the direction of a set of principles for an actual issue. But that still isn't political action. The policy must be related to political decisions. That means that politicians must be influenced by the policy. At present I would suggest the following general avenues which can be pursued by a Christian political movement in order to influence actual decisions of legislative bodies, administrative organs, and the courts. (1) The building of a broad supportive constituency at the grassroots level; (2) influencing public opinion in the "hearing constituency" of the citizenry at large by means of the media, publications, conferences, demonstrations, etc.; and (3) developing an action front in those areas of political life and around those issues where a redirection is most feasible. We will have to pay attention to these aspects in the growth of a Christian political movement at a later time. Meanwhile, let us take those steps that are an indispensable prelude to Christian political action: the formation of a coherent policy.

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