

# The Kingdom State: An Exploration of Capitalism and Socialism for the 21st Century Christian

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**Abstract:** *The Kingdom State: An Exploration of Capitalism and Socialism for the 21st Century Christian* interrogates the enduring tension between two dominant economic paradigms—capitalism and socialism—through a theological and ethical lens grounded in biblical principles. The study critically evaluates the philosophical foundations, strengths, and limitations of both systems, highlighting how capitalism often promotes individual initiative and wealth creation but risks entrenching inequality and materialism, while socialism emphasizes equity and collective welfare yet may suppress personal agency and economic efficiency.

Against this backdrop, the concept of the “Kingdom State” is proposed as a transformative framework that transcends the binary of these ideologies by integrating spiritual values with socio-economic practice. Rooted in scriptural teachings on justice, stewardship, love, and community, the Kingdom State envisions a model of governance and economic life that prioritizes human dignity, equitable distribution of resources, moral accountability, and servant leadership. The abstract further situates the discussion within the contemporary global context, with particular sensitivity to the challenges facing developing nations and emerging generations, especially Generation Z. It argues that neither capitalism nor socialism, in their conventional forms, sufficiently addresses the holistic needs of humanity—spiritual, social, and economic. Therefore, a Kingdom-oriented paradigm is advanced as a viable alternative that calls Christians to active participation in shaping systems that reflect divine principles on earth. Ultimately, this work contributes to interdisciplinary discourse by bridging theology, economics, and public policy, offering both a critical analysis and a constructive vision for Christian engagement in the socio-economic transformation of the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Kingdom State, Capitalism, Socialism, Christian Ethics, Socio-Economic Transformation.

## Introduction

The 21st century is marked by a complex and rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape, characterized by persistent inequality, ideological polarization, and an intensified search for systems capable of addressing the holistic needs of humanity [1]. At the center of this global discourse stand two dominant economic paradigms—capitalism and socialism—each exerting profound influence and grounded in distinct philosophical and ideological foundations [2]. Capitalism, commonly associated with free markets, private ownership, and individual liberty, has undeniably driven innovation, productivity, and economic expansion across much of the world [3]. However, it has also been subject to sustained critique for exacerbating wealth disparities, promoting consumerism, and contributing to social fragmentation [4]. Conversely, socialism, rooted in principles of collective ownership and equitable distribution, aspires to reduce inequality and advance social welfare, yet often struggles with inefficiencies, diminished individual incentives, and the risks inherent in centralized control [5]. For the Christian in the contemporary era, these competing frameworks raise critical theological, ethical, and practical questions. How should believers engage with economic systems that fundamentally shape societal structures and daily human

experience? To what extent can capitalism or socialism embody the values of the Kingdom of God as revealed in Scripture? More fundamentally, do these systems suffice as frameworks for a biblically grounded vision of human flourishing, or is there a higher paradigm that transcends both? These questions are not merely abstract; they carry profound implications for governance, stewardship, justice, and communal life [6].

This work introduces the concept of the Kingdom State as a theological and socio-economic framework designed to move beyond the inherent limitations of both capitalism and socialism. Rather than aligning exclusively with either ideology, the Kingdom State is anchored in core biblical principles—righteousness, justice, love, stewardship, and servant leadership [7]. It envisions a socio-economic order in which economic activity is inseparable from moral accountability, and governance reflects divine order rather than purely human ambition [8]. Drawing on both Old and New Testament foundations, this study examines the economic ethics embedded in biblical law, the communal practices of the early Church, and the teachings of Christ, which consistently reorient human priorities from material accumulation toward eternal and Kingdom-centered values [9]. For instance, the early Christian community practiced forms of resource sharing and mutual support, ensuring that no member was in need (Acts 2:44–

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45; Acts 4:32–35) [10]. Simultaneously, this work engages contemporary socio-economic realities, particularly within developing contexts, where prevailing systems often fail to address the lived experiences and structural challenges of the majority [11]. Special consideration is given to emerging generations—especially Generation Z—who are increasingly disillusioned with traditional paradigms and are actively seeking purpose-driven, ethically coherent models of societal organization [12]. The purpose of this book is therefore twofold. First, it offers a critical evaluation of capitalism and socialism through a robust Christian worldview. Second, it constructs a coherent and practical vision of the Kingdom State as an alternative framework for socio-economic transformation. In this vision, systems of production, distribution, and governance are not merely functional mechanisms but become instruments through which the will and purposes of God are manifested in society [13]. Ultimately, this work calls upon scholars, church leaders, policymakers, and believers to reassess prevailing assumptions and to participate actively in shaping a future that reflects the values of the Kingdom of God—on earth as it is in heaven [14].

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The discourse surrounding economic systems has historically been dominated by capitalism and socialism, each presenting distinct philosophical, ethical, and operational paradigms. In recent decades, scholars, theologians, and socio-economic theorists have increasingly interrogated these systems through ethical, moral, and theological lenses, particularly within Christian thought. The concept of a “Kingdom State” emerges within this intellectual space as a normative and transformative framework that seeks to reconcile the strengths and weaknesses of capitalism and socialism under biblical principles. This literature review critically examines key scholarly contributions on capitalism, socialism, and Christian socio-economic thought, culminating in the conceptual foundation for the Kingdom State.

### **Capitalism: Foundations and Critiques**

Capitalism is grounded in the principles of private ownership, free markets, and individual liberty. Classical economists such as Adam Smith argue that the “invisible hand” of the market leads to efficient allocation of resources and economic growth [1]. Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* emphasizes self-interest as a driver of innovation and productivity, which has been widely credited with fostering industrialization and global economic expansion. However, contemporary critiques highlight inherent inequalities within capitalist systems. Scholars such as Thomas Piketty argue that capitalism tends to concentrate wealth, thereby exacerbating socio-economic disparities [2]. From a Christian perspective, this raises ethical concerns regarding stewardship, justice, and care for the poor. Biblical teachings, particularly in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, emphasize generosity, communal support, and moral responsibility—values that often conflict with unregulated market individualism. Furthermore, neoliberal capitalism has been criticized for prioritizing profit maximization over human dignity and environmental sustainability. The literature suggests that while capitalism promotes efficiency and innovation, it lacks intrinsic mechanisms for ensuring equity and social justice, necessitating moral and regulatory interventions [1][2].

### **Socialism: Philosophical and Economic Perspectives**

Socialism, in contrast, advocates for collective ownership, wealth redistribution, and state intervention to achieve social equality. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in their seminal works, critique capitalism as exploitative, arguing that it alienates labor and concentrates power among elites [3]. Socialist frameworks aim to address these injustices by promoting economic equality and social welfare. Modern interpretations of socialism, including democratic socialism, attempt to balance state control with individual freedoms. Scholars note that socialist systems have historically succeeded in providing basic services such as healthcare, education, and social security. However, they have also been criticized for inefficiencies, bureaucratic overreach, and suppression of individual initiative [3]. From a Christian theological standpoint, socialism resonates with biblical themes of justice, equality, and communal living. The early church, as described in Acts 2:44–45, practiced a form of economic sharing that aligns with socialist ideals. However, critics argue that enforced redistribution through state mechanisms may contradict the voluntary nature of Christian charity and stewardship.

### **Christian Economic Thought and Ethical Frameworks**

Christian scholarship has long engaged with economic systems, seeking to align them with biblical teachings. Theologians such as John Wesley and contemporary scholars like Ronald Sider emphasize economic justice, stewardship, and the moral obligation to care for the marginalized [2][3]. Catholic Social Teaching, particularly encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum* and *Caritas in Veritate*, advocates for a balanced approach that upholds both human dignity and the common good. The literature consistently highlights stewardship as a central principle, presenting resources as God-given and requiring responsible management. It also underscores justice as a guiding value, insisting that economic systems must promote fairness and reduce inequality. Love, particularly in its agape form, is emphasized as a transformative force that should shape economic relationships through compassion and selflessness. Community is equally central, with a strong emphasis on collective well-being rather than excessive individual accumulation. These principles often position Christianity as both a critique and a corrective to capitalism and socialism. Capitalism is challenged for fostering greed and systemic inequality, while socialism is questioned for potentially undermining personal responsibility and freedom.

### **The Kingdom State: Toward an Integrative Paradigm**

Recent scholarship explores integrative models that transcend the binary opposition of capitalism and socialism. The “Kingdom State” is conceptualized as a theological-economic framework grounded in biblical governance principles. It is not merely a hybrid system but a transformative paradigm that redefines economic activity as an extension of divine purpose. The Kingdom State draws from biblical governance models, including Old Testament theocratic structures and New Testament teachings on servant leadership, while also incorporating ethical economics that prioritize justice, fairness, and sustainability. It further aligns with transformational leadership theory, emphasizing moral leadership and societal transformation. Unlike capitalism, the Kingdom State rejects absolute individualism, and unlike socialism, it avoids coercive collectivism. Instead, it promotes responsible ownership, voluntary sharing, and community-centered development. Scholars

argue that this model aligns with principles of distributive justice while preserving human agency and innovation.

### **Gaps in Literature and Emerging Needs**

Despite extensive scholarship on capitalism, socialism, and Christian ethics, there remains a notable gap in fully developed frameworks that integrate these domains into a cohesive system. Most studies either critique existing systems or propose partial reforms rather than offering a comprehensive alternative. There is limited empirical research on faith-based economic systems, and insufficient exploration of governance structures within theological models. Additionally, practical implementation strategies for integrating biblical principles into modern economies remain underdeveloped. The Kingdom State seeks to address these gaps by providing a holistic model that is both theoretically grounded and practically applicable.

### **Conclusion**

The literature reveals that capitalism and socialism each offer valuable insights but remain inherently limited in addressing the full spectrum of human needs, including material, social, and spiritual dimensions. Christian economic thought provides a critical evaluative framework that emphasizes values transcending purely economic considerations. The Kingdom State emerges as a compelling alternative, rooted in biblical theology and informed by socio-economic theory, offering a vision of an economy that is productive, equitable, and spiritually aligned. Future research should focus on operationalizing this model and assessing its viability within contemporary global contexts.

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in a conceptual and interpretive framework. The primary objective is to develop and critically analyse the “Kingdom State” as an integrative socio-economic model that engages with capitalism, socialism, and Christian ethical thought. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study deals with philosophical, theological, and ideological constructs that require interpretive analysis rather than numerical measurement. The design is primarily descriptive and analytical, with elements of comparative and theoretical synthesis to evaluate existing economic systems and construct a new conceptual model.

### **Philosophical Orientation**

The study is guided by a critical-interpretivist philosophical stance. This orientation assumes that economic systems are not value-neutral but are shaped by underlying ideological, moral, and theological assumptions. It further recognises that reality, particularly in socio-economic and theological discourse, is socially constructed and must be interpreted within historical and cultural contexts. The Kingdom State framework is therefore developed through a synthesis of biblical theology, socio-economic theory, and ethical critique, allowing for a holistic interpretation of economic life from a Christian worldview.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Data for this study is collected through secondary sources, primarily involving a systematic review of literature. This includes academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theological writings, economic theories, policy documents, and classical texts. Foundational works such as Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* [1], Marx

and Engels’ *The Communist Manifesto* [3], and Piketty’s *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* [2] form the core economic literature base. In addition, theological sources such as biblical texts, Christian social teaching documents, and writings from Christian economists and theologians are included to provide a faith-based interpretive lens. The study also incorporates comparative doctrinal and ideological texts to examine how capitalism and socialism have been interpreted across different historical and intellectual traditions. This ensures a multidimensional understanding of the subject matter.

### **Data Analysis Approach**

The study employs thematic and comparative analysis techniques. Thematic analysis is used to identify recurring patterns and concepts within the literature, particularly around themes such as wealth distribution, justice, stewardship, economic efficiency, and human dignity. These themes are then categorised and interpreted within both economic and theological frameworks. Comparative analysis is used to evaluate capitalism and socialism side by side, identifying their strengths, weaknesses, and ethical implications. This comparison forms the basis for constructing the Kingdom State model, which seeks to integrate valuable elements from both systems while addressing their limitations through Christian ethical principles. A conceptual synthesis approach is then applied to develop the Kingdom State framework. This involves integrating insights from economics, theology, political philosophy, and ethics into a unified theoretical model.

### **Validity and Trustworthiness**

To ensure credibility and academic rigour, the study employs triangulation of sources by drawing from economics, theology, and political philosophy. Source credibility is ensured by prioritising peer-reviewed academic literature and historically established theoretical texts. The interpretive consistency of the analysis is maintained through continuous comparison between economic theories and biblical principles. Dependability is enhanced through a transparent documentation of the analytical process, ensuring that the development of the Kingdom State framework can be logically traced from existing literature. Confirmability is achieved by grounding interpretations in verifiable scholarly and scriptural sources rather than subjective opinion alone.

### **Limitations of the Methodology**

This study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and theoretical analysis, which restricts its ability to provide empirical validation of the Kingdom State model. The absence of field-based data or case studies means that the framework remains conceptual rather than tested in real-world socio-economic environments. Additionally, interpretations of biblical texts and economic theories may vary depending on theological and ideological perspectives, which introduces a degree of subjectivity into the analysis. Despite these limitations, the methodology is appropriate for an exploratory and conceptual study aimed at theory development rather than empirical testing.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study maintains academic integrity by properly acknowledging all sources used in the development of the analysis. Intellectual property rights are respected through accurate citation of authors and texts. Furthermore, the integration of theological material is handled with interpretive care to avoid misrepresentation of

biblical teachings or doctrinal positions. The research remains non-invasive as it does not involve human participants or sensitive field data.

## **Findings**

### **Overview of Emergent Themes**

The analysis of literature on capitalism, socialism, and Christian economic thought reveals several consistent and interrelated findings. Across the reviewed sources, it becomes evident that no single economic system sufficiently addresses the full spectrum of human needs, particularly when viewed through a Christian ethical framework that integrates material, social, and spiritual dimensions. Instead, each system contributes partial insights while also presenting structural and moral limitations that necessitate a more integrative framework, which is conceptualised in this study as the Kingdom State.

### **Findings on Capitalism**

The literature indicates that capitalism is highly effective in promoting innovation, productivity, and economic growth. Classical and contemporary economic thought consistently affirms that market-driven systems generate efficiency through competition and individual enterprise [1]. The principle of private ownership is strongly associated with economic motivation and wealth creation, contributing significantly to global development and technological advancement.

However, a major finding is that capitalism inherently produces inequality due to its structural dependence on accumulation and competitive advantage. Wealth concentration emerges as a recurring outcome, as noted in Piketty's analysis of long-term capital accumulation trends [2]. This creates socio-economic disparities that challenge ethical principles of justice and equity, particularly from a Christian standpoint. Furthermore, the literature reveals that capitalism lacks internal moral mechanisms to regulate greed, exploitation, and environmental degradation, thereby requiring external ethical or governmental intervention to mitigate its excesses.

### **Findings on Socialism**

The findings on socialism highlight its strong emphasis on equality, redistribution, and collective welfare. Socialist systems demonstrate effectiveness in ensuring access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and social protection. Marxist analysis provides a critical framework for understanding structural inequality and labour exploitation within capitalist systems [3]. However, the literature also reveals persistent challenges within socialist implementations, particularly related to efficiency, innovation, and bureaucratic complexity. State-controlled systems often reduce individual economic agency and may result in reduced productivity and dependency on centralized governance structures. While socialism aligns closely with biblical themes of community and shared resources, its enforced redistribution mechanisms raise ethical tensions regarding voluntary generosity versus state compulsion.

### **Findings on Christian Economic Thought**

A significant finding is that Christian economic thought does not fully align with either capitalism or socialism but instead presents a distinct ethical framework grounded in biblical principles. The literature consistently identifies stewardship, justice, compassion,

and community as central Christian economic values. These principles transcend structural economic models and instead focus on moral responsibility in the use and distribution of resources. Biblical narratives, particularly in the New Testament, reflect both communal sharing and personal responsibility, suggesting a balanced approach rather than a rigid economic system. The early church model demonstrates voluntary economic sharing driven by spiritual conviction rather than legal enforcement. This creates a theological tension between freedom and responsibility that neither capitalism nor socialism fully resolves.

### **Findings on the Need for an Integrative Model**

A major finding of this study is the clear conceptual gap between existing economic systems and Christian ethical expectations. The literature strongly suggests that capitalism prioritizes efficiency over equity, while socialism prioritizes equality over efficiency. Neither system fully integrates moral, spiritual, and communal dimensions into its structural design. This gap provides the foundation for the emergence of the Kingdom State concept. The findings indicate growing scholarly interest in hybrid or integrative models that move beyond ideological binaries. The Kingdom State is therefore supported by literature as a necessary conceptual response to systemic limitations within both capitalism and socialism.

### **Findings on the Kingdom State Concept**

The synthesis of literature reveals that the Kingdom State functions as a normative framework rather than a purely economic system. It integrates market efficiency, social justice, and biblical ethics into a unified model of governance and economic life. The key finding is that this model prioritises moral governance, voluntary economic participation, and community-centered development. Unlike capitalism, it rejects unrestricted individualism and wealth accumulation as ultimate goals. Unlike socialism, it rejects coercive redistribution and excessive state control. Instead, it promotes responsible stewardship, ethical entrepreneurship, and distributive justice guided by spiritual and moral principles. The findings further suggest that the Kingdom State is best understood as a transformational paradigm that redefines economic activity as service-oriented and purpose-driven, rather than profit-centred or state-controlled.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is constructed to provide an interpretive structure for understanding the interaction between capitalism, socialism, and Christian economic thought, culminating in the conceptualisation of the Kingdom State. It integrates three principal domains of theory: economic liberalism, socialist political economy, and Christian theological ethics. These domains are not treated as isolated systems but as interrelated perspectives that collectively inform a more holistic model of socio-economic organisation grounded in moral and theological principles.

### **Classical Economic Liberalism**

The first theoretical pillar is classical economic liberalism, primarily derived from Adam Smith's theory of market equilibrium and the "invisible hand" mechanism [1]. This framework assumes that individuals acting in self-interest within competitive markets unintentionally contribute to overall economic efficiency and societal welfare. It further emphasises private property rights, limited government intervention, and market-driven allocation of

resources. Within this study, economic liberalism is used to explain the strengths of capitalism, particularly its capacity for innovation, productivity, and wealth creation. However, the theory also exposes structural weaknesses, particularly its inability to self-correct distributive inequalities. This limitation is significant when assessed against ethical frameworks that prioritise justice and equity, particularly within Christian moral thought.

### **Marxist and Socialist Political Economy**

The second theoretical pillar is Marxist and socialist political economy, grounded in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels [3]. This theory critiques capitalism as a system characterised by class struggle, exploitation of labour, and unequal ownership of the means of production. It proposes collective ownership and redistributive mechanisms as solutions to structural inequality. In this framework, socialism is used to interpret the ethical demand for equality and social welfare. It provides a structural critique of capitalism's concentration of wealth and power. However, Marxist theory also reveals limitations, particularly in its tendency toward centralised control and reduced individual economic agency. These limitations are critical in evaluating the viability of socialism as a comprehensive economic system.

### **Christian Theological Ethics**

The third and central pillar of the theoretical framework is Christian theological ethics. This perspective is grounded in biblical teachings concerning stewardship, justice, love (agape), and community. It is informed by both Old and New Testament principles, as well as Christian social teachings that emphasise human dignity and moral responsibility. This framework introduces a non-economic but normative dimension into the analysis. Unlike capitalism and socialism, which are primarily structural and material systems, Christian ethics introduces transcendental moral accountability into economic life. The doctrine of stewardship reframes ownership as delegated responsibility under God, while justice is understood not only as legal fairness but as moral equity. Community is emphasised as a covenantal relationship rather than a transactional arrangement.

### **Integration and Conceptual Synthesis**

The Kingdom State emerges as an integrative theoretical construct that synthesises the strengths and addresses the limitations of the three frameworks. It is positioned as a meta-framework rather than a competing economic ideology. Its theoretical foundation rests on the intersection of efficiency (from capitalism), equity (from socialism), and morality (from Christian ethics). Within this synthesis, economic activity is reinterpreted as a moral and spiritual responsibility rather than a purely material pursuit. Markets are retained as tools for efficiency, but they are ethically regulated to prevent exploitation. Redistribution is acknowledged as necessary for justice, but it is reframed within voluntary and morally guided stewardship rather than coercive state control. Governance is therefore understood as morally accountable leadership rather than purely administrative or ideological authority.

### **Core Propositions of the Framework**

The theoretical framework advances several key propositions. First, economic systems are not value-neutral but are inherently shaped by moral and theological assumptions. Second, neither

capitalism nor socialism independently provides a complete solution to human socio-economic needs. Third, Christian ethics provides a normative corrective that can guide economic systems toward justice, compassion, and sustainability. Fourth, the Kingdom State functions as an integrative paradigm that aligns economic efficiency, social equity, and spiritual responsibility within a unified conceptual model.

### **Conceptual Model of the Kingdom State**

The Kingdom State is conceptualised as a three-dimensional framework. The first dimension is economic functionality, which ensures productivity, innovation, and resource efficiency. The second dimension is social justice, which ensures equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity. The third dimension is spiritual-moral governance, which ensures that economic activity is guided by ethical and biblical principles. These dimensions are interdependent. Economic functionality without justice leads to inequality, justice without functionality leads to inefficiency, and both without moral governance lead to ethical decay. The Kingdom State therefore seeks equilibrium among these dimensions. The theoretical framework demonstrates that the Kingdom State is not an isolated theory but a synthesis of established economic and theological traditions. It builds upon classical liberal economics, critiques from socialist theory, and normative Christian ethics to construct a holistic interpretive model. This framework provides the intellectual foundation for understanding how economic systems can be reimaged within a 21st-century Christian worldview that values both material prosperity and spiritual integrity.

### **Conclusion**

This study set out to examine capitalism and socialism through the interpretive lens of 21st-century Christian thought and to develop a conceptual framework referred to as the Kingdom State. The analysis demonstrates that both capitalism and socialism are intellectually robust and historically significant systems, yet each remains incomplete when evaluated against a holistic understanding of human flourishing that includes economic, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Capitalism, as evidenced in the literature, is highly effective in generating innovation, productivity, and economic expansion. Its reliance on market mechanisms and individual initiative has contributed significantly to global development. However, its structural tendency toward wealth concentration and inequality exposes a moral and distributive gap that challenges Christian ethical concerns regarding justice, stewardship, and care for the vulnerable [1][2]. Socialism, on the other hand, offers a strong corrective emphasis on equality, redistribution, and collective welfare. It highlights legitimate concerns regarding exploitation, poverty, and structural injustice within capitalist systems. Yet, its practical applications often reveal inefficiencies, bureaucratic rigidity, and limitations on individual economic freedom, raising concerns about sustainability and human agency within centrally controlled systems [3]. Christian economic thought introduces a distinct and normatively rich framework that transcends both systems. It emphasises stewardship, justice, love, and community as foundational principles for economic life. Unlike secular economic models, it situates economic activity within a moral and theological context, asserting that wealth and resources are ultimately entrusted responsibilities rather than absolute possessions [2]. In synthesising these perspectives, the Kingdom State emerges as a conceptual

framework that seeks to integrate the efficiency of capitalism, the equity concerns of socialism, and the moral and spiritual grounding of Christian ethics. It does not function as a replacement ideology but as a reorientation of economic thought toward a values-based and ethically accountable system. Its central contribution lies in reframing economics as a form of stewardship under divine principles, where markets, governance, and community life operate in moral alignment rather than ideological isolation [1]

The study concludes that the Kingdom State provides a viable theoretical response to the limitations of existing economic systems. It offers a balanced vision in which economic productivity is preserved, social justice is prioritised, and spiritual accountability is central. However, as a conceptual model, it remains primarily theoretical and requires further development through empirical research, policy simulation, and contextual application to assess its practical feasibility [1]. Ultimately, the Kingdom State invites a rethinking of economics not merely as a system of wealth production and distribution, but as a moral enterprise that reflects divine order, human dignity, and communal responsibility. It challenges the 21st-century Christian to engage economic life not as a neutral arena, but as a space of ethical stewardship and transformative influence [2].

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