

On Earth As It Is In Heaven, Pt. 13

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(Based on Brian Mattson's series)

Christ Transforms Culture, Pt. 1

How does our heavenly citizenship relate to our earthly life?

ALL of the others views have a major besetting sin—the dividing up of reality into a higher and lower realm of existence, and relegating the 'lower' realm to the dustbin of history.

Back to practical—how then should we live?

Sobering end last week—ideas have consequences. Church became an accomplice to slavery.

“Not obligated to provide God's perspective. Also 1930's Germany. Resistance self-serving.

The point: we don't say 'make a decision for Christ', we say 'make every decision for Christ'.

Highlights the issue of how allegiance to Jesus informs everything we think and do.

In the 3 legit options we found the same exact problem each time:

The redemptive grace of God in Christ is seen as incompatible with God's creation.

Creation (nature), with man as God's fruitful regent, exercising godly dominion (culture), is seen as not belonging in the realm of grace (God's redeeming activity).

It either competes with it, supplements it, or exists side-by-side.

Why? Why is God's good creation seen as irredeemable?

Nature/Grace Dualism.

Rooted in Greek philosophy, “neo-platonism”, long history of trouble-making in the Church.

Again, divides reality into 'higher/lower' realms, and sees the higher as closer to God.

It sees the 'lower' as either evil (or hopelessly corrupted), incomplete, or significantly less important.

This is an instinctive reaction to the fact that life is hard.

The man 'under the sun' rightly yearns for something better “up there”, and the bible teaches this distinction.

But...

It all rides on how we understand the difference.

In all other views that we examined, there is something about the creation itself that makes it incompatible with eternal glory.

1. It's evil (or utterly corrupted)—that's the gnostic or anabaptist view.

2. It needs a supernatural supplement to make it worthy of glory.

3. It simply exists on a lower level and has an expiration date.

The problem is not that life can be lousy at times—the problem is that N/G dualism ascribes the problem to creation itself.

But the problem isn't with God's creation—He made it very good!

The Heavens still declare the glory of the Lord and “the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” Psalm 19

Thorny ground still gives us food. He created, and blessed it, and rested on the 7th day.

No 'plan B'. Creation, existing with man as God's regent, was always destined to enter that Sabbath-rest of God, glittering in imperishable glory (Bavinck)

Transformation model, sparked by the reformation's overthrow of Rome's N/G dualism, is the only option of relating to the world around us that doesn't wrongly ascribe the blame of our “down here” problems to creation itself.

Instead, it puts the focus on sin, and not the substance, or stuff.

We all, to some degree, have been influenced by N/G dualism.

To the degree that we divide things up into secular/sacred, material and redemptive, natural and supernatural, just like a ledger book with two columns.

Not just messy theology, but messy lives!

If this N/G dualism is embraced, it will pull you in one of two directions. If one is consistent, you will:

Either be a legalist, or you will be an antinomian.

Ex: If you're engaged in the 'higher realm' pursuits, you will be engaged in the 'lower realm' pursuits as little as possible. You will retreat from what you regard as trivial affairs.

It may look like throwing your TV away.

You may quit your job and enter into 'full-time' ministry, Fully devoted now.

These are fine, but is you do these things based on N/G dualism, you can't help but think that the 'grace' you are entering into is closer to God. Legalism.

Our twisted, self-righteous mind can't help but think that God is more pleased with us.

N/G dualism is the trunk of a tree that produces the branch of legalism.

Or, conversely, you may think that since God isn't all that concerned with the lower realm, or that they really aren't intertwined (He just cares about souls, after all), then you live in the world just like everyone else does. Anti-nomian. You end up involved with business, education, marriage just like everyone else, with no distinctive difference.

2 sides of the same dualistic coin. Early 1st-century too—rigorous self asceticism, or flagrant sexual license. Rome in renaissance—lots of bastard children produced by celibate bishops!)

But it closer to home than we may want to admit. We laugh at fundies with their aversion to electric guitars.

But, we're ready to embrace the food fads. Corn is killing us.

This really affects how we think and live. Do we 'baptize' culture, or remain passive? We ultimately divide ourselves this way.

The alternative is to fully grasp that God's creation is not evil, or hopelessly corrupt, or lost, or inferior, or incomplete, or is a 'Plan B', and is NOT the source of our problems.

The problem is SIN—grace is not opposed to nature, grace is violently opposed to sin.

Nature/grace, creation/recreation are seamlessly compatible.

Sin/grace are mortal enemies. *That's* where the 'dualism' lies.

Coming weeks we'll look at the doctrine of creation and the one true dualism to be found. Creator/creature.

Those are the two realities.

The fall, and sin. Augustine's view of sin as privation. Sin isn't a created thing, it's an ethical virus that attaches itself to things and corrupts things.

Screwtape: "The enemy made the pleasures. Our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage humans to take the pleasures which our enemy has produced, at times or in ways or in degrees which He has forbidden."

Upshot: Since sin has no independence, and only latched onto creation, then creation is redeemable.

Sin can be removed, and the creation saved.