

On Earth As It Is In Heaven, Pt. 3  
Tim Bushong  
(Based on Brian Mattson's series)

Review: H. Richard Niebuhr “Christ and Culture”.

Christ Against Culture  
Christ of Culture  
Christ Above Culture  
Christ in Paradox with Culture  
Christ Transforming Culture.

Our Christian response to the surrounding culture will also be based on 3 crucial, vital points: (3)

1. Our view of creation itself (What is this thing that God made?)
2. Our view of creation post-fall (What is this thing that God made that we messed up?) and
3. Our view of creation in the future, or “eschatologically” (What's it going to be at the end?)

Written in 1951, before the advent of postmodernism (1) (after 'modernism;)

What's modernism? (2) Enlightenment-based, like to build huge philosophical systems cemented together with the mortar of reason. (3) Confident in the superiority of reason, and ergo made their systems objectively factual. Modernism is represented by the ideal of the intelligent philosopher-king.

No more conjecture, opinion, or belief—just pure fact. Trains run on time, society is fair, everything runs smoothly. Woodrow Wilson, modern progressives (no number after a trillion, please...)

Problem:

(4) This ideal of an omniscient state, run by an elite group of czars, brought about the 20<sup>th</sup> c.

Pomos seek to destroy the foundations of modernism—meta-narratives are for the “haves”.

(5) All appeals to a universal, objective standards and truth are viewed with suspicion by the pomo.

Pomo there's no “True Truth”, there are only “truths”. Nothing is settled, and everything is uncertain.

So, for the Pomo, everything is called into question, including Xianity, because it is also a product of this now-debunked 'modernist' system; it is not transcendent, but is a result of bad cultural movement—we're ust one of many equally legit views.

(6) For the Pomo, there is no way to judge the superiority or inferiority of a culture; there's no bird's-eye view. To judge a culture would be modernist, empiricist, and even racist.

“Multi-culturalism”: In one sense, we Xians should be the most multi-cultural; Rev. 5:9; 14:6, Gal. 3:28.

What they mean is that there is no way to make any discerning value-assignment (judge) regarding any culture at all. (7) Pomo multi-culturalism wants to clean up and cleanse the modernism that brought about the bloodiest century ever, but their cleaning solution is *pure acid*. (8)

Everything is leveled, nothing is legit, and everything is viewed with suspicion and open to question.

Meet or eat? (“love or eat?”). Pomo anthropologists and sociologists have *no answer* to this.

“Meet or eat?” comes from Don Carson, who wrote *Christ and Culture Revisited*. A critique.

Three problems that we have to acknowledge:

1. Classification systems are not set in stone—they are not airtight containers. They're guesstimates.

It is rare (9) that anyone is completely consistent and stuck in only one category.

We're human beings: fallible, fallen people.

Amish/buggies, fundies/TV—they're inconsistent. Even me—how do you redeem some things?

We're usually a combination of the 5. But—this will help us think clearly and clear away our assumption.

2. Carson attempts to show that the 5 are not really in conflict, but are perspectives on the issue, determined by our own individual situation (N Korea vs. Victorian England). More of a spectrum than a hard/fast...

(See the 5 blind men and the elephant)

But—do they only seem complementary, or contradictory?

Aside from #2, all of the other 4 do have distinct biblical impulses (10) because the Bible speaks to us in our differing circles. Robust enough to deal with anyone anytime anywhere.

It both condemns bad culture and affirms influencing culture. So...

Is there “good” in every one of the systems? Bad and ugly, too.

Begs the question: what IS the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly?

Can we all just get along?

Sounds like bi-partisan politics. Always a compromise, always an accommodation, and at the expense of one or the other. If the goal that is achieved is reached by capitulation, then it's not good!

3. These are real views, not just abstract ideas. Can you take the #1 position, keep the good (high view of sin), reject the bad (low view of creation) and still be, in a reasonable way, and #1? No. Only with major modifications can these be seen as complementary views. Brings us to our problem: Says who?

Q: Do we have a way to decide which is the G, B, and U?

Carson: The model that retains most of the biblical non-negotiables. Resolved only by the one that is more consistent with the Bible.

Or, is there one of these views that can incorporate the good from each of the others, yet still retain its own individual features?

THAT is the debate—the very thing that I think is good in my view is considered bad from the other person's view.

Impasse? No.

(11)

God had spoken—He does not leave us there. Pomo would lead us right to the impasse, but not Xianity.

Hard? Yes. Difficult? You bet, but the (12) good needs to be separated from the bad theology and the ugly fruit.

Yes—there is one view that can do all of this!