

On Earth As It Is In Heaven, Pt. 8
Tim Bushong
(Based on Brian Mattson's series)
Christ In Paradox With Culture

How does our heavenly citizenship relate to our earthly life?

Quick cultural moment assessment.

Moral Majority in the late 70's/early 80's. (1)

Mostly Southern Baptists—C against C dispy's began to engage culture with abandon.

Fell apart around 2000. Leaders gave up in cynical exhaustion. Results fall short of expectations.

Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson—*Blinded By Might*.

Now, we are seeing a swing in the opposite direction—back to your Church and to your priorities, a la anabaptist traditions—a movement away from cultural engagement.

Xian political engagement has always been met with horror by the cultural left elite (“Aaaa—theocracy!!!”), and met with scorn and derision.

There is now, coming from reformed men, a movement to pry us away from the public assessment of the Church as a Republican lobbying firm, a movement that attacking Evangelical cultural engagement by arguing for an inviolable sacred/secular distinction.

Really wild—stunning reversal. (2) Jerry Falwell *should* have been proud of these guys as a baptist.

Brass/sinking ship. (3) Now, the reformed men are asking the same question of the baptists. The worldly renaissance man is asking the monk “Why are you bothering with worldly pursuits?”

Why? Disillusionment. Maybe...

Concern for idiocy! Reactions to excesses (priorities)

How about the celebration of the new? “Old” is damaged goods.

In *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*, Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh can scarcely veil their contempt for conservative Xian activism—it represents the modernism that we must get beyond.

So trashing traditional versions of evangelical cultural engagement is cool. (3)

The is the younger gen's version of liberation's (rebellion?) thrill.

Obama t-shirt/ “God is not a Republican” bumper sticker.

To be unlike their boring and out-of-date modernist parents.

And—they're getting their permission from certain men with reformed credentials. (4)

Horton, Van Drunen, R. Scott Clark, and Darryl Hart—Westminster West. Escondido Theology.

It's called “2-Kingdom” theology. (5)

Primary popularizing proponent of this is David Van Drunen.

Luther's “God's left hand/right hand”, Calvin's “civil/spiritual” categories.

Van Drunen's formulation distinguishes the “civil” kingdom from the “spiritual” kingdom. (6)

The *civil* kingdom “pertains to temporal, earthly, provisional matters, not matters of ultimate and spiritual importance. For Calvin..., the civil kingdom included matters of politics, law, and cultural life more generally. The ends of the civil kingdom were not salvation and eternal life but a relatively just, peaceful, and orderly existence in the present world in which Christians live as pilgrims away from their heavenly homeland.”

Van Drunen's basic position is that *natural law* is God's law for “civil” matters, and supernatural revelation is his law for “spiritual” matters. Van Drunen defines natural law as “the moral order inscribed in the world and especially in human nature, an order that is known to all people through their natural faculties

(especially reason and/or conscience) even apart from supernatural divine revelation that morally binds the whole human race.”

The *spiritual* kingdom “is also ruled by God, but he rules it not only as creator and sustainer, but also as its redeemer in Christ. This kingdom pertains to things that are of ultimate and spiritual importance... Insofar as this spiritual kingdom has earthly existence, Calvin believed it must be found in the church and not in the state or other temporal institutions.”

Van Drunen says,

“Although necessarily existing together and having some mutual interaction in this world, these two kingdoms enjoy a great measure of independence so that each can pursue the unique work entrusted to it.”

Three considerations:

1. Although it divides into 2 distinct realms. This does not disparage the secular realm like the C Against C model does. The created order is good, and is governed and sustained by God.
2. Not the antithesis between the K of Light and the K of darkness, or of good and evil. They're two distinct realms over which God rules. It's a bit like last week's “good to great” model.
3. Unlike last week's “Above” ladder/dimmer switch view, this view is more concerned with eternal vs. temporal, provisional vs. ultimate, and therefore is not concerned with 'sanctifying' those former earthly concerns. For the reformed 2K advocate, the redemptive aspect of God's rule does not impinge on the civil realm, or vice versa. One is not designed to do anything to the other. They are independent of each other. They are not independent of God.

We should never think of our cultural, artistic, or political endeavors as furthering the Kingdom of God. (7)

This system is neat and tidy, even utilizing traditionally-reformed categories that we all would basically agree with.

Covenant of Works=The Civil Kingdom, based on law, retribution, and coercion.

Covenant of Grace=The Spiritual Kingdom. Based on love, grace, and mercy.

“Fundamental to this (two kingdoms) doctrine is that fact that while God, in the progress of redemptive history, would choose out of the world a people of his very own, he has also preserved a common, cultural realm in which those who love him and those who do not must live and work together. It is this common realm, consisting of *both* believers and unbelievers, that constitutes the civil kingdom.”

After distinguishing the spiritual from the civil kingdoms, Van Drunen proceeds to argue the role of natural law in each of these spheres.

Van Drunen argues that “in a certain sense, Scripture is not the appropriate moral standard for the civil kingdom”.

Why not? He argues that “Biblical morality is characterized by an indicative-imperative structure. That is, all of its imperatives (moral commands) are preceded by and grounded in indicatives (statements of fact), either explicitly or implicitly. The most important indicative that grounds the imperatives in Scripture is that the recipients of Scripture are the covenant people, that is, members of the community of the covenant of grace.”

OK—fine, right? But listen to his conclusion:

“Since membership in the civil kingdom is not limited to believers, the imperatives of Scripture do not bind members of that kingdom. These imperatives are not “directly applicable to non-Christians.”

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