

On Earth As It Is In Heaven, Pt. 14

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(Based on Brian Mattson's series)

Christ Transforms Culture, Pt. 2

How does our heavenly citizenship relate to our earthly life?

ALL of the others views have a major besetting sin—Nature/Grace Dualism.

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

Gen. 1:1: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

This, of course, is the one true dualism to be found. Creator/creature.

Reality (not created reality) is essentially and irreducibly two—you have God over here, and you have everything else over there. They can never be confused, mixed, commingled, they can never be seen as two facets of the same thing or two sides of the same coin (pantheism), or two opposites ends of a spectrum.

God is the infinite, eternal, independent, self-existent, creator.

Creation is finite, temporal (time-bound), utterly dependent, existing only by the will and power of another—God Himself. Creation absolutely needs God's sustaining power at every moment of its existence, but God has no need for creation.

Heb. 1:3: “The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, *sustaining all things by his powerful word*. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven”, “In Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17) and “In Him we live, move, and have our being.” (**Acts 17:28**)

He makes it, He upholds it, He sustains it, not out of any necessity, but purely by His free and unfettered good pleasure. God and His creation are not on the same level in any way. Ontological distinction, and not of 'degree'.

This means that the “one-ism” of the east, or of the gnostics, or even of our more modern materialistic “scientism” is utterly out of the question. We are NOT divine—and nothing at all in the created order is worthy of service.

This has a further implication—everything on this side of the ledger is a creature, separate and distinct.

Not to say that there's no hierarchy in creation—humans at the top.

But these categories don't in any way denote proximity to God. We alone are created in God's image—both our material bodies and our immaterial souls—we are unique in all of creation this way.

C.S. Lewis conjectures that this is the reason Satan rebelled—because God created us, and we are “revolting hybrids”.

Our souls can't function properly without our bodies, and our bodies die without our soul. No 'dimmer switch' in a creator/creature distinction.

If we're Trinitarian, then we can believe this stuff. He has existed forever as Father, Son, and Spirit, and that means that God is totally relationally satisfied. His creation fulfills no lacking relational aspect of God's being. And this means that because God is personal, and independent from His creation, and that creation is totally dependent on His, then God is always personally present everywhere in His creation. There's nothing outside of His sovereign authority, and there is no where we can go from His presence.

Psalms 139: 7-8: “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.”

Paul tells us that “what may be known about God is plain to them, *because God has made it plain to them.* For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Rom. 1:19-20)

There is no realm of neutrality in all of creation, no where where we are not confronted by God's truth. We all live coram deo, 24/7, and for the unbeliever this is not good news, but for us it is exceedingly good news: No aspects of our lives are in vain, no vocation, no detail, no little nook or cranny that isn't redeemed by our omnipresent gracious Lord. This truth utterly debunks any nature/grace dualism.

But there is yet one more division to consider: Across the horizontal plain, there is the distinction between those who trust, obey, and believe the voice of God, and those who do not. If God is constantly revealing Himself, then this reality is also constantly confronting everyone. The truth is that, if left to ourselves, we will take this glorious knowledge of God and suppress it. Hold it down. The issue is this:

These are the only two options we have. There is no third way—no non-committal way of living, and we either worship God, or we worship created things. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31)

This ethical reality forms a backbone for the entire Bible. It starts with a formal declaration of war in Gen. 3. Assaulted by Satan, to corrupt God's creation, like a “9/11” strike. Openly contradicting God, imputing impure motives to God, Satan brought no 'third way', it was all-or-nothing. Adam and Eve threw their lot in with the terrorist. But this was just the sucker-punch that brought about the declaration of war.

God said to Satan in Gen. 3 “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

God Himself divides humanity into two sets of people: seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. God declares the ultimate division within His creation: not “nature/grace”, but “for me or against me”.

And don't miss the incredible grace here: Adam and Eve made a pact with Satan, sold their souls to Him, and in Gen. 3 God buys them back. He tears up the contract between them, dresses them in bloody garments, and declares that they are on His side! Where there was conspiracy, there is now “enmity”. “Traitorous Edmond' has become 'Edmond the Just”.

God promises that the fruitful union of Adam and Eve would produce offspring who would one day crush the serpent. BTW, they believed and trusted God on this, since Adam names his wife “Eve”, which means “life”, or “mother of all the living”.

This is the great battle, the ultimate war which will decide the fate of God's creation. Will creation reach its destination? Yes! But this war continues to this very day.

Next story—Cain and Abel, the genealogy of Cain, then the birth of Seth, then the genealogy of Seth. So right away we see a sifting and a distinguishing of two peoples, which corresponds with the enmity, and continues throughout Genesis.

Noah and his family, Shem's descendants are separated from his brothers in Gen. 10, Abraham and his seed are chosen out of all to be God's treasured possession. Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Israelites over Canaanites.

The whole Bible is infused with this principle: Will God's people worship Him, or will they “do what is right in their own eyes”?

The Psalms: Psalm 1 contrasts the blessed man who prospers with the wicked who blow away like chaff. Psalm 2 contrasts the rebellious kings with those who "kiss the Son".

Proverbs: Wise and Foolish.

The Prophets: constantly calling people to righteousness—serve God, or serve the idols of Babylon.

Jesus Christ—either for me or against me.

Paul—wisdom of the world, or the wisdom of God.

The natural person or the spiritual person.

The mind of the flesh, or the mind of the Spirit.

The domain of darkness or the kingdom of his beloved Son.

For John, it is those who abide in the light, or those who are in the darkness

Revelation, it is ultimately those inside the City of God who have washed their robes, and those who are outside the City of God, forever banished from blessing.

Two kinds of people, two kinds of hearts, two ways of living.

Why do I make this effort to emphasize all of this as related to our interaction with culture?

No where is there a "common realm" where our allegiances are unimportant, where are commitment to Christ is peripheral, or where God is not concerned with how we comport ourselves, especially as concerning the culture around us. This is precisely where the battle is being fought.

The Transformationist Model represents the truly centrist wing of historic, orthodox Christianity. It sees an important role for Christianity in leading human culture according to the directives of God's Word, with a view to transforming every area of life. The Transformationist Model sees the significance of this world in light of the world above and seeks to promote God's will on earth as it is in heaven. It promotes godly culture instead of an ungodly culture. (Ken Gentry)