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TIMOTHY KELLER



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Center Church

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THE CULTURAL RESPONSES OF THE CHURCH

In response to the cultural crisis that has shaken so many evangelicals out of their pietistic stance, Christians (particularly in the United States) have been answering the question of how to relate to culture in four basic ways, which I will call the Transformationist model, the Relevance model, the Counterculturalist model, and the Two Kingdoms model.¹ In the previous chapter, we sketched out the historical emergence of these views and some of their animating ideas, and in the following chapters we will address them in greater detail. I believe that setting out these four basic categories is a clarifying and important preparation to developing a Center Church vision for cultural engagement.

DIFFERENCES AMONG NIEBUHR'S MODELS

Niebuhr understood his first two models to be extreme opposites — “Christ against culture” sees culture most negatively, as an expression of human fallenness, while “Christ of culture” sees it most positively, as an expression of God’s gracious activity. The other three models — “Christ above culture,” “Christ and culture in paradox,” and “Christ transforming culture” — are positions between the two extremes, with “Christ above culture” having the most positive view of culture of these three.

Perhaps an illustration can help us distinguish the differences among the models within Niebuhr’s framework. Think of a particular cultural product — say, a computer. The “Christ against culture” person may refuse to use it because it undermines human community. The

THE PROBLEM WITH MODELS

Over the last three decades, the alternatives that have emerged to the pietistic stance roughly resemble many of the models laid out in H. Richard Niebuhr’s classic book *Christ and Culture*.² Niebuhr lays out five basic ways of relating Christ to culture:

1. **Christ against culture:** a *withdrawal* model of removing oneself from the culture into the community of the church
2. **Christ of culture:** an *accommodationist* model that recognizes God at work in the culture and looks for ways to affirm this
3. **Christ above culture:** a *synthetic* model that advocates supplementing and building on the good in the culture with Christ
4. **Christ and culture in paradox:** a *dualistic* model that views Christians as citizens of two different realms, one sacred and one secular
5. **Christ transforming culture:** a *conversionist* model that seeks to transform every part of culture with Christ

Niebuhr considered the first model far too naive about the power of redemption and our escape from the effects of original sin. But he considered the second model far too untroubled by the cultural status quo and the ongoing reality of sin. He saw the third model as being at the same time too sanguine about both culture *and* Christ, lacking a sense of the importance of divine judgment, while he saw the fourth model as too pessimistic about the possibility for cultural improvement. Of all the models, Niebuhr considered the last model to be the most balanced — neither as pessimistic about culture as the sectarians and dualists nor as naively optimistic as the accommodationists and synthesists.

Still, even though Niebuhr presented these five models as distinct ways of understanding the rela-

tionship between Christ and culture, he acknowledged the “artificiality” of talking about models. He wrote, “When one returns from the hypothetical scheme to the rich complexity of individual events, it is evident at once that no person or group ever conforms completely to a type.”³ Niebuhr admitted that the sketching of models and categories has its pitfalls, namely, that some people conform well to a type, but many others do not.

Why use models at all then? I believe there are two reasons. The first one Niebuhr himself states: “The method of typology . . . has the advantage of calling to attention the continuity and significance of the great *motifs* that appear and reappear in the long wrestling of Christians with their enduring problem. Hence it also helps us to gain orientation as we in our own time seek to answer the question of Christ and culture.”⁴ In other words, each of the models has running through it a motif or guiding biblical truth that helps Christians relate to culture. Each model collects people and groups who have stressed that motif, and by doing so, it helps us see the importance of that particular principle.

The second way the use of models helps us is by their very inadequacy. Many people and groups do not fit into any one category because they sense (rightly) that no one model can do justice to all of the important biblical themes. Within each model, then, there will be some who will be better at incorporating insights from other models, and some who conform exclusively to a type. So the fact

Why use models at all? Because each of the models has running through it a motif or guiding biblical truth that helps Christians relate to culture.

that models often fail as descriptors is instructive in itself.⁵ Through their limitations, models encourage church leaders to avoid extremes and imbalances and to learn from all the motifs and categories.

We can’t make sense of what people do without

“Christ of culture” person will adopt it fully, assured that it is something God has brought about. The “Christ above culture” person will also adopt it but only use it for the purposes of evangelism and Christian teaching. The “Christ and culture in paradox” person will use the computer with some wariness and take great care not to indulge too deeply. Finally, the “Christ transforming culture” person will study the effects of computers on human relationships, communities, and character and then develop particular ways to use computers that do not undermine but instead support human flourishing as the Bible defines it.

Since I adapted this illustration from an article written for students on the website of Calvin College, some readers may rightly discern a Transformationist slant in this illustration.⁶ Still, it is helpful.

relating them to others and noticing continuities and contrasts. This is the nature of modeling. Nevertheless, none of us like to be put into a category. Though I will show there are a variety of positions even within a particular model, some readers will still feel pigeonholed and should keep in mind that I am going to be expounding the sharpest and clearest versions of these positions. I realize that not everyone who identifies with a movement holds all its views in precisely the same way, and so I will necessarily have to flirt with overgeneralization. Yet if church and culture truly is the issue below the waterline of many of our struggles as the church, I believe it is critical to make and study maps of this particular landscape.

THE TRANSFORMATIONIST MODEL

The first model for cultural engagement is the Transformationist model, which engages culture largely through an emphasis on Christians pursuing their vocations from a Christian worldview and thereby changing culture. Since the lordship

NIEBUHR AND SUBSEQUENT MODELS

Niebuhr's work has been subjected to innumerable critiques. One set of critiques comes from proponents of particular views who believe Niebuhr caricatures them. Another critique is that Niebuhr assumes the "Constantinian settlement," namely, that Christianity will be a society's established faith in some way. This is true to some extent, as Niebuhr does assume an identification of the majority of the citizenry with mainline Protestantism. Critics charge that if you assume that the era of "Christendom" is over, you have to redo all the categories—and you come up with those who hold that Christendom was a good idea (formal state or informal coercive social power as ways to promote the Christian faith) and those who do not.⁷ Others have argued that each of the five models have at least two approaches—a healthy and an unhealthy one. Still others say that Niebuhr's work assumes monolithic, nonpluralistic cultures and is therefore less relevant today.

In D. A. Carson's book-length biblical critique of Niebuhr, he concludes that the second model ("Christ of culture") is wrong and unbiblical, and that all of the rest of the models have biblical warrant and may be valid for a particular time and setting, but none can be said to do justice to all the biblical themes and teachings about culture.⁸

Despite the withering criticism, most of the alternative approaches to culture that are proposed and promoted today correspond generally to Niebuhr's categories. It won't be hard to see the relationship of the four approaches I am identifying to the historic models of Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*. They are not identical, and yet the four models presented in this chapter correspond roughly to Niebuhr's "Christ transforming culture" (Trans-

of Christ should be brought to bear on *every* area of life—economics and business, government and politics, literature and art, journalism and the media, science and law and education—Christians should be laboring to transform culture, to (literally) change the world. As we said earlier, this model is heavily indebted to the work and thought of the Dutch theologian and political leader Abraham Kuyper.

Kuyper contributed two fundamental insights to this debate. First, in every sphere of life Christians are to think and act distinctively *as* Christians. They do so because all cultural behavior presupposes a set of (at least implicit) religious beliefs. Everyone worships and is moved by some ultimate concern, and whatever this concern is will shape their cultural products. Kuyper's second basic insight is this: "Christians should articulate their way of thinking, speaking, and acting... in the course of interacting with non-Christians in our shared human practices and institutions."⁹ In other words, if as a Christian I am conscious of my Christian beliefs as I am living and working, these beliefs will affect everything I do in life. My culture making will move a society in a particular direction, and consequently I will be changing culture.

Though I am labeling as Transformationist those who center their engagement with culture on Kuyper's two key insights, it is important to note that the particular modes of application and implementation differ significantly among the various camps within this model. As we mentioned earlier, one of the groups is the Religious or Christian Right, who see cultural change effected primarily through political and issue-based activism. The language of the Religious Right includes calls for believers to penetrate cultural institutions, work out of a Christian worldview, and transform the culture in the name of Christ. The early architects of the movement (such as Francis Schaeffer, Chuck Colson, and others) based much of their work on Kuyper's insights. A 2008 article in *Perspectives*, a journal of politically progressive Calvinists, even lamented that the basic ideas of Kuyper—someone whom progressive neo-Calvinists consider their intel-

lectual hero—had now become the basis for much of the Christian Right in the United States.¹⁰ The Christian Right, of course, believes that a consistent biblical worldview leads to a conservative political philosophy.

Many have also pointed out the connections between Kuyper and a much smaller movement known as Christian Reconstructionism or theonomy.¹¹ This movement is based on the writings of Rousas Rushdoony, who advocated basing the modern state on biblical law, including much of the "civil law" portion of the Mosaic legislation.¹² Those in this camp envision a repristinated Christendom in which the government overtly supports the Christian faith and provides only limited tolerance for members of other faiths. Rushdoony often spoke of the "heresy of democracy."¹³ Others outside of the United States have also made a case for a "confessionally Christian state."¹⁴

The original group in North America that invoked Kuyper for cultural engagement was comprised of neo-Calvinists. Yet this group differs sharply from the Christian Right and the Reconstructionists in several ways, most noticeably in their *politics*. The Christian Right is politically conservative, seeing low taxes and deregulated business as proper expressions of the biblical principles of individual freedom and private property. The neo-Calvinists, however, are center-left in their politics, seeing a progressive tax structure, strong labor unions, and

The Transformationist model engages culture largely through an emphasis on Christians pursuing their vocations from a Christian worldview and thereby changing culture.

more centralized economies as appropriate political expressions of the biblical principles of justice. And while those in the Christian Reconstructionist camp have taught that the civil government should be explicitly committed to biblical truth and standards, the neo-Calvinists speak instead of

formationist), "Christ of culture" and "Christ above culture" (Relevance), "Christ against culture" (Counterculturalist), and "Christ and culture in paradox" (Two Kingdoms).

James Hunter (*To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in Late Modernity* [New York: Oxford University Press], 2010) critiques three of Niebuhr's models under the titles "Defensive Against" (Transformationist), "Relevant To" (Relevance), and "Purity From" (Counterculturalist). His critiques are helpful for better understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Niebuhr's original models.

"principled pluralism"—the belief that Christians in government should seek principles of justice that can be recognized as such by nonbelievers because of natural revelation or common grace, and yet these principles clearly align with biblical principles as well.¹⁵

A second difference among the groups within the Transformationist model is in their overall strategy for *engagement*. The Christian Right typically seeks cultural change through targeted political activism against abortion and same-sex marriage and for the promotion of the family and traditional values. The strategy of the neo-Calvinists has focused primarily on education. A large network of Christian schools and colleges endeavor to produce students who "think Christianly" within every academic discipline and work in every field out of a Christian worldview. This view has influenced other evangelical colleges, publishing houses, and even a parachurch campus ministry—CCO (formerly Coalition for Christian Outreach).¹⁶

A third difference is *theological*. One of the main differences between the neo-Calvinists and the Religious Right has to do with neo-Calvinists' belief that Christians do not rely on the Bible alone when seeking guidance regarding business, art, and vocation. They teach that we can discern many of

WOLTERSTORFF ON KUYPER'S "FUNDAMENTAL POINT"

Reformed philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff writes the following:

I have been a Kuyperian ever since coming of age. Whether Kuyper was talking about education, politics, economic activity, art, or whatever, always it was his view that Christians are called to think, speak, and act *qua* Christians within these shared spheres of human activity. He thought that there was indeed a distinctly Christian way of thinking, speaking, and acting in such spheres—though it was by no means his view, contrary to that of a good many of his followers, that *everything* the Christian thinks, speaks, and does is different from that of all non-Christians. Likewise he thought that Christians should articulate their way of thinking, speaking, and acting not off in their own corner somewhere but in the course of interacting with non-Christians in our shared human practices and institutions. These views underlay everything Kuyper said about the Christian in the social world. They constitute a highly distinctive position. And as I said, this position continues to shape my own way of living as a Christian in the social world.¹⁷

God's intentions for our life in the world by looking at creation, at "general revelation."¹⁸ In other words, while neo-Calvinists believe there is a distinctively Christian way to carry out our cultural activity, they believe non-Christians can intuitively discern much of how God wants humans to live in culture. I believe this view helps neo-Calvinists make common cause with nonbelievers and adopt a far less combative stance in the public sphere.

Though we see clear differences among the various camps in the Transformationist model, all people working within this model share several commonalities.

1. They view "secular" work as an important way to serve Christ and his kingdom, just as is ministry within the church. They understand Christ's saving purposes as including not only individual salvation but also the renewal of the material world. Therefore, Christians should not only build up the church through Word and Sacrament but also work to restore and renew creation.

Theologian Herman Bavinck taught that God's saving grace "does not remain outside or above or beside nature but rather . . . wholly renews it."¹⁹ Theologian Geerhardus Vos, following Bavinck, sees the kingdom of God operating in the world in two ways: first, *within the church* as it ministers in Word and sacrament, and second, when Christians live lives *in society* to God's glory. Vos writes, "There is a sphere of science, a sphere of art, a sphere of the family and of the state, a sphere of commerce and industry. Whenever one of these spheres comes under the controlling influence of the principle of the divine supremacy and glory, and this outwardly reveals itself, there we can truly say that the kingdom of God has become manifest."²⁰

2. Even more than the other models we will examine shortly, Transformationists celebrate and assign high value to Christians who excel in their work and enter spheres of influence within business, the media, government and politics, the academy, and the arts.²¹ This is due, I think, to the fact that Transformationists truly believe secular vocations are an authentic way of bearing witness to Christ's kingdom. In addition, those who embrace this model are more likely to see the importance of human institutions for shaping culture and therefore stress the importance of Christians living and working in them.²²

3. All those in this category believe that the main problem with society is a secularism that has disingenuously demanded a "naked public square." In the name of tolerance and neutrality, secularist elites have imposed a particular worldview on society, forbidding believers from striving to see their beliefs and values reflected in culture. The assumption behind this is that Christians have been passive or that they have fallen into "dualism"—keeping their

faith and beliefs strictly private and not letting them influence and change the way they live in public life. As I will show later, I believe this is largely a correct assessment and an important plank in the development of a faithfully biblical approach to culture.

PROBLEMS WITH THE TRANSFORMATIONIST MODEL

We can identify several significant problems with the Transformationist model, but I will begin by noting the movement of self-correction already going on within this model, especially within the neo-Calvinist part of the spectrum, and so my critique largely conforms to what members of the movement themselves are saying.²³

1. The conception of "worldview" in Transformationism is too cognitive. The idea of "biblical presuppositions" is often understood as purely a matter of bullet-point beliefs and propositions. James K. A. Smith has written a book-length criticism of this aspect of "Christian worldview" movement titled *Desiring the Kingdom*.²⁴ Smith, a Calvin College professor, doesn't deny that ultimately everyone has a worldview. But he argues that a person's worldview is not *merely* a set of doctrinal and philosophical beliefs completely formed by reason and information. A worldview is also comprised of a set of hopes and loves—"tacit knowledge" and heart attitudes—that are not all adopted consciously and deliberately. They are more the result of experience, community life, and liturgy (or daily practices).

2. Transformationism is often marked by "an underappreciation for the church . . . For [Transformationists], the implication is that the 'real action' is outside the church, not the church itself."²⁵ What really gets many Transformationists excited is not building up the church but penetrating the bastions of cultural influence for Christ. The problem here is twofold. First, just as pietism tended to lift up full-time ministry and denigrate secular vocations, Transformationism can lead to the opposite extreme. Much of the excitement and creative energy ends up focusing on cosmic or social redemption rather than on bringing about personal conversion through evangelism and discipleship. Second, as James K. A. Smith points out, worldview formation happens not

just through education and argument (the neo-Calvinist emphasis) or mainly through politics (the Christian Right approach). Rather, it derives from the narratives we embrace, especially those that give us a compelling picture of human flourishing that captures our hearts and imaginations. These narratives are presented to us, not mainly in classrooms, but through the stories we absorb from various sources.²⁶ Smith insists, therefore, that the liturgy and practices of church communities are critical for the formation of worldview. This is an important corrective—it balances the Kuyperian emphasis on penetrating the cultural institutions with the Counterculturalists' stress on the importance of Christians belonging to "thick" Christian communities (we will look at this in more detail shortly).

3. Transformationism tends to be triumphalistic, self-righteous, and overconfident in its ability to both understand God's will for society and bring it about. One writer refers to a "hubris that one has both access to the power to get at the root of the problem and then the wisdom to know how to better the structures of society with insights from the gospel."²⁷ Part of this tendency to hubris is an overconfidence that we can glean from Scripture easily applied principles for economics, art, and government.²⁸ Neo-Calvinist philosopher Richard Mouw has joked that neo-Calvinists "seem to have an unusual facility for finding detailed cultural guidance in the biblical record."²⁹ This could readily be said of the Christian Right and the theonomists as well. The danger is that we may be tempted to think we can envision virtually an entire Christian

THE MESSAGE GETS THROUGH

Neo-Calvinist Al Wolters writes, "In spite of human perversity, some of God's message in creation gets through [to non-Christians] . . . Even without God's explicit verbal positivization of the creational norms for justice and faithfulness, stewardship and respect, people have an intuitive sense of normative standards for conduct."³⁰

POLITICS AND CULTURAL CHANGE

James Hunter's claim that political activism does not typically lead cultural change is supported by an interesting finding in Robert Putnam and David Campbell's *American Grace*. Today's young adults are surprisingly united in saying that one reason they have turned from the church is the antihomosexual activism of the Religious Right. So why are young adults much more liberal in their views regarding homosexuality, so liberal, in fact, that they find the traditional Christian position on sex to be offensive and harmful? Putnam and Campbell, among other reasons, say "TV and the movies normalized homosexuality during this period."³¹ In other words, while some Christians were hoping that legislation would change people's attitudes, it was pop culture, the academic institutions, the arts, and the media that were shaping the popular mind. Public policy is only now beginning to follow suit.

Since James Hunter is seeking to correct an imbalance — an overreliance on politics and activism for cultural change — he could be read as proposing that believers should not be involved in politics or government. This is not what he is doing. Christians have a high calling to represent Christ in *all* vocations — in the public sphere as well as in the church.

culture. This is a failure to discern the Bible's redemptive historical story line. There is no book of Leviticus in the New Testament dictating what to eat, what to wear, or how to regulate a host of cultural practices. While there are important biblical values and principles that give guidance to Christians in business or public service — particularly a Christian vision of human flourishing — there are no detailed biblical plans for running a company or a government. In addition, Transformationists

can be overconfident about their ability to create cultural change. Slogans such as "taking back the culture" and the very phrase "transforming culture" itself lead to expectations that Christians can bring about sweeping changes. But as James Hunter masterfully shows, human culture is extraordinarily complex and not controllable by any one means. All changes that Christians can produce will be incremental.³²

4. Transformationism has often put too much stock in politics as a way to change culture.³³ Hunter points out that government/politics is only one set of institutions in the cultural matrix, and he argues that the Religious Right, at least, has overestimated the influence of this institution. In general, he argues, politics is "downstream" from the true sources of cultural change, which tend to flow in a nonlinear fashion from new ideas produced in the "cultural centers" — the academy, the arts, the media companies, and the cities. Scholars generate new theories, some of which win the field and begin to hold sway. People influenced by the theories begin to act on them in other cultural institutions — teaching in schools, publishing books, producing plays and movies, using the narrative to cover the news — and slowly public opinion begins to shift. On the basis of this public opinion, laws begin to be passed.

An illustration is sexual harassment laws. Imagine trying to get harassment laws passed anywhere in America in 1910; it would have been impossible. A sea change had to come in our thinking about sex, gender roles, and human rights through all the various cultural institutions — all before laws could be introduced. Politics helps to cement cultural changes, but it typically does not lead them.

5. Transformationists often don't recognize the dangers of power.³⁴ As James Hunter points out, it is impossible for Christians to avoid the exercise of power in society.³⁵ Yet just as the pietistic stance underestimates the importance of human institutions, the activism of the Transformationist model often underestimates the danger of Christians becoming too absorbed in seeking and exercising power. Some Transformationists seem to think they cannot initiate any cultural changes unless

Christians as a bloc gain political clout, but there are numerous examples of how the church loses its vitality when Christianity and the state are too closely wedded.³⁶ Miroslav Volf writes, "Christian communities [should be] more comfortable with being just one of many players, so that from whatever place they find themselves — on the margins, at the center, or anywhere in between — they can promote human flourishing and the common good."³⁷ Volf speaks of two "malfunctions" that a religious faith can exhibit in its relationship with culture. One he calls "idleness," and the other "coerciveness." Idleness — cultural withdrawal and passivity — is not a temptation for Transformationists, but coerciveness can be. Volf argues convincingly that Christianity, when true to its biblical self, is not a coercive faith. A proper understanding of the gospel, of the cross, and of Christian ethics would make it impossible for Christians to use power to oppress.³⁸ But it is not at all impossible to lose sight of these realities and to use power coercively in Christ's name. The Afrikaner supporters of Abraham Kuyper, for example, did so when justifying the brutal policies of apartheid in order to maintain a "Christian culture."³⁹ By setting our sights on gaining and retaining political influence, it is possible to miss the biblical themes of how God regularly works among the weak and the marginal and of how any truly Christian society must promote *shalom* — peace and justice for every citizen. One of the more worrisome aspects of the Religious Right to this point has been the apparent absence of concern for the poor.

THE RELEVANCE MODEL

The second contemporary model of cultural engagement we will call the Relevance model.⁴⁰ As with the Transformationist model, very different groups operate within it, and the spectrum here is even broader than that within the other categories. Indeed, many of these groups are pointedly critical of one another, and would cringe at the word *relevant* as a description of their ministry. Nevertheless, I think the word helps us identify a common thread connecting all of these movements and writers.

In H. Richard Niebuhr's scheme, his second and third models are the most positive toward culture.

Niebuhr describes those of the second type — "the Christ of culture" — as being "equally at home" within the church and out in the culture.⁴¹ This model sees Christianity as being fundamentally compatible with the surrounding culture. Those who embrace this model believe that God is at work redemptively within cultural movements that have nothing explicitly to do with Christianity. It sees Christ at work in all "movements in philosophy toward the assertion of the world's unity and order, movements in morals toward self-denial and the care for the common good, [and] political concerns for justice."⁴² It is not just that these things are good in some general way — they are the work of God's Spirit. For Niebuhr, liberal theology was an example of this model. Liberal churches do not believe in an infallible Bible, an historical incarnation, an atoning sacrifice on the cross, or a literal resurrection. They reject any "once for all-ness" regarding Christian doctrine and salvation. They see God continually revealing new things and doing new things in history and culture.⁴³

Another more recent expression of this approach is liberation theology, which grew out of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America in the late twentieth century.⁴⁴ Liberation theology understood sin and salvation in radically corporate categories, so that Christian salvation is equated with liberation from unjust economic, political, and social conditions. Liberation theology fits the "Christ of culture" pattern because it sees movements of political liberation from oppression as God's work in the world — a work that the church should join. And so liberation theology "[obliterates] the distinction between the church and the world by identifying the purpose of God with the present historical situation."⁴⁵

Niebuhr's third model is "Christ above culture" (also called the synthesist position). This approach has a stronger view of "the universality and radical nature of sin" than the second model, but nevertheless continues to have a very positive view of culture. The synthesists tend to be "both-and" people who feel no need to rethink and remake cultural products but rather to adopt them and supplement

them with Christian faith. This model seeks to “build from culture to Christ.”⁴⁶ Niebuhr names as the prime example of this model Thomas Aquinas, who sought to “synthesize the ethics of culture with the ethics of the gospel” rather than “transform” the ethics of culture with the gospel.⁴⁷

The animating idea behind these approaches is that God’s Spirit is at work in the culture to further his kingdom; therefore Christians should view culture as their ally and join with God to do good.⁴⁸ The primary way to engage culture, then, is for

The animating idea behind the Relevance model is that God’s Spirit is at work in the culture to further his kingdom.

the church to adapt to new realities and connect to what God is doing in the world. Christians and churches that emphasize these ideas — those who embrace the Relevance model — share several common characteristics.

1. In general, they are optimistic about cultural trends and feel less need to reflect on them, exercise discernment, and respond to them in discriminating ways. Even one of the milder forms of the Relevance model — the seeker church movement — is much more sanguine about both modern capitalism and psychology than other models, and so it borrows heavily from the worlds of business and therapy without giving a great deal of thought to whether such methods import an underlying worldview and so reshape Christian ministry in the world’s likeness.

2. People operating within this model put great emphasis on the “common good” and “human flourishing.” They emphasize the modern church’s failure to care about inequality, injustice, and suffering in the world. They call the church to work for justice in society, and they declare that only when it does so will it regain the credibility to speak to society about God. They see God at work outside the church, moving history toward greater recon-

ciliation of individuals, races, and nations through various movements of liberation. Christians are to join in what is already happening — efforts to work against hunger, improve social conditions, and fight for human rights.

3. Those who hold to this model seldom speak of a Christian worldview. The very concept of “worldview” assumes a much greater gap or antithesis between Christian truth and human culture than this (more optimistic) model sees. Perhaps another reason Relevants do not talk much about worldview is that so many of them are sharply critical of the Religious Right. They intentionally avoid the negative rhetoric of “dying” or “declining” culture — or of “losing” or “winning” the culture — that characterizes that particular movement.

4. Relevants seek to engage culture by reinventing the church’s ministry to be more relevant to the needs and sensibilities of people in the culture and more committed to the service and good of the whole human community. While not condoning immorality and relativism, they locate the main problem in the church’s incomprehensibility to the minds and hearts of secular people and its irrelevance to the problems of society. The church has lost touch with the people and the times, this group observes. It has failed to adapt to cultural changes. While others think Christians have become too assimilated to the world around them, this group assumes that, on the contrary, Christians are too withdrawn into their own subcultures, too hostile and condemning of nonbelievers, and too disconnected from them.

5. Adherents of this model make little distinction between how individual Christians should act in the world and how the institutional church should function. Every other model makes more of this difference, speaking of different “spheres” or “kingdoms,” arguing that — no matter what individual Christians may do — there are some inappropriate ways for the organized church to engage culture. Relevants, however, issue a blanket call for the church to become deeply involved in the struggle for social justice. The mainline Protestant churches have for years seen their denominational agencies

actively lobbying for legislation and engaging in direct political action. Many of the emerging churches also sense a mandate to become directly involved in justice issues in their locale without calling for any discriminating reflection on how politically involved they should be as an institutional body.

Whom, then, do we place within this category?

At one end of the spectrum, I put many of the older evangelical megachurches. Robert Schuller, a pioneer of the megachurch movement, was extremely open about how he applied the techniques of business and therapy to church ministry. In his book *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*, he lists “seven principles of successful retailing” and insists that any church that wants to grow must apply them directly to the church’s ministry, including “excess parking.”⁴⁹ Unfortunately, Schuller was just as open about reshaping doctrine along the lines of contemporary psychology, proposing that sin be redefined as a lack of self-esteem.⁵⁰ More doctrinally orthodox leaders such as Rick Warren and Bill Hybels have deliberately sought to be explicit about sin and judgment.⁵¹ Nevertheless, churches that we could characterize as being in the seeker church movement still rather heavily rely on techniques of business, marketing, technology, and product development; have a strong emphasis on self-fulfillment and the practical benefits of faith to individuals; and use a language sometimes light on theological particulars.⁵² They speak often about the need for the church to be “relevant” but little about Christian worldview or thinking out how to integrate one’s faith with one’s work and vocation.

Further along the spectrum, into the middle of this model, I would put many of the newer emerging churches, particularly those inspired by the old Emergent Village organization led by Brian McLaren and Tony Jones.⁵³ The emerging church strongly rejected the boomer-led megachurches as market driven, “canned,” and “consumerist.” They especially criticized the individualistic cast of these ministries and (at least in the 1970s and 1980s) their relative lack of involvement in care for the poor and in the struggle for justice in society. And yet their critiques have been more grounded in cultural anal-

ysis than in biblical and theological exegesis. That is, the main operating principle of the emerging church is its choice to adapt to the postmodern shift rather than to confront it.⁵⁴ An influential text that embodies this understanding of the church and mission is *Missional Church*, edited by Darrell Gruder.⁵⁵ This book is a compendium of contributions that do not agree on all points. Some are more in line with the “Counterculturalist” model discussed below. But they agree on a couple of basic points, namely, that the kingdom of God is primarily a new social order of peace and justice that God is bringing about now in the world, and that the church’s calling is to bear witness to it. The job of the church, in this view, is to discover what God is doing out in the world and to get involved with it.⁵⁶

Finally, at the other extreme of the spectrum within this model, we might place those in mainline, liberationist theology groups. While many in the emerging church seek to blend doing justice with doing evangelism, many believe that doing justice essentially *is* doing evangelism. In this view, the gospel is the good news of the coming kingdom of peace and justice, and so, rather than calling for individual conversions, they invite individuals to join the church in order to work for justice. By the middle of the twentieth century, the World Council of Churches had interpreted the *missio Dei* — the mission of God — as God already at work in the world redeeming the whole creation by setting up a new social order of economic justice and human rights. It is not, they said, that the church has a mission and God blesses it, but that God has a mission already out in the world and the church must join it. “The world sets the agenda for the church” was their slogan.⁵⁷

PROBLEMS WITH THE RELEVANCE MODEL

As with the Transformationist model, we can identify several significant problems with the Relevance model.

1. By adapting so heavily and readily to the culture, such churches are quickly seen as dated whenever the culture shifts or changes. The most visible case study is the fast decline of the mainline Protestant denominations. Ironically, it

was their very adaptation to culture — their efforts to become relevant — that led mainline Protestantism to a place where it is now considered to be irrelevant and out of touch with the culture. Because they have removed the supernatural element and downplayed doctrinal beliefs, mainline churches appear to most people to be no different from any other social service institution. When a church becomes an organization that only offers social services, counseling, and other community activities, the questions many ask are, “Why does it exist? Why do we need this institution when it is doing, often somewhat amateurishly, what so many secular institutions are doing more effectively?” Many churches, in the name of adapting to the culture, have lost their distinctives and, consequently, the cultural power of Christianity.⁵⁸

Even those in this category who are not theologically experimental — such as the evangelical seeker churches and many in the emerging church — place a heavy emphasis on adapting *methods* to new cultural realities. This often means such ministries look dated very quickly, unlike those in liturgical and traditional churches. Robert Schuller’s church heavily adapted to the World War II generation and began graying by the 1980s, and the same is true of many seeker churches today.

2. A second critique has to do with the attitude this stance takes toward doctrine. Earlier, we discussed the need for contextualization, emphasizing that true contextualization begins with Scripture as a normative, nonnegotiable truth. But in this model — especially in its extreme forms — culture becomes normative over Scripture. Of all the models, this one most often downplays the need for both theological precision and the insights of Christian tradition. More than any other model, this approach encourages us to minimize or reengineer traditional doctrines in order to adapt to new cultural realities. Many young Christian leaders are moving in this direction, even though they are aware of the mistakes of the older liberal churches. Some raised in evangelical circles now call themselves “post-evangelical.” They say they believe the ancient, orthodox creeds of the church, but beyond

that, they do not wish to debate doctrine. They argue, for example, that the traditional evangelical belief in the inerrancy of the Bible is “rationalistic” and that the classic doctrines of substitutionary atonement and forensic justification are “individualistic.” They are reluctant to speak of any doctrinal boundaries, of any inviolable beliefs that cannot be compromised.

3. Most of the different groups in the Relevance model share a significant emphasis on doing justice, on caring for the environment, and on carrying out various forms of social service. When these concerns are emphasized, evangelism and conversion may still be acknowledged and tacitly affirmed, but sometimes as no more than lip service. **The main energy behind churches that follow this model is often directed not toward the teaching of the gospel and seeking conversions but toward producing art, doing service projects, or seeking justice.** Churches that lose their commitment and skill for vigorous evangelism will not only neglect their primary calling, but will inevitably fail to reproduce themselves. It takes new converts and changed lives for churches to truly be of service to the community.

While the second and third criticisms are more appropriate to churches at the liberal end of the spectrum, the evangelical megachurches are open to the criticism that by overly adapting to methods of secular management and therapy, the church has been diluted into a dispenser of spiritual goods and services and turned its members into an audience of consumers. Traditional churches — with their emphasis on theological training, catechesis, and liturgical and ecclesiastical practices — produced real character and ethical change, but this kind of spiritual formation often does not occur in the typical evangelical megachurch.⁵⁹

4. It is especially in this model that the distinctiveness of the Christian church begins to get blurry. Traditionally, the church has been seen as the only institution that ministers the Word and the sacraments; that determines what is the true, biblical preaching of the Word; and that brings people into a community governed and disciplined

by called and authorized leaders. In the Relevance model, however, the importance of such distinct ministry fades. What matters is not what happens inside the church, but out in the world. If, as some propose, God’s mission advances through historical processes moving toward increasing economic justice and social equality, this “removes the church from the equation of how God works in the world.”⁶⁰

THE COUNTERCULTURALIST MODEL

The third of our four models is what we will call the Counterculturalist model. I’ve given it this name because those within this model place their emphasis on the church as a *contrast society* to the world. And while other models of cultural engagement speak about the important concept of the kingdom of God, this model strongly emphasizes that the kingdom is manifest primarily as a church community in *opposition* to the kingdom of this world.

1. Those operating in this model do *not* see God working redemptively through cultural movements outside the church. Even the pietistic stance held hope that enough evangelistic work would eventually reform society, but this model does not agree. Human society will be what it has always been — the realm of “empire,” of “the powers,” of capitalistic markets, oppressive governments, and other social systems that crush people in order to increase the power of their leaders. Those in the Counterculturalist camp use the term *empire* to deliberately underscore how, even in a world of democracy and pluralism, oppression continues. They bluntly declare that we should not expect to see lasting improvements in society and harbor little hope that the culture can be transformed along Christian lines.⁶¹ Their emphasis is on the dissimilarity between the kingdom of this world — a set of systems based on power and human glory — and Christ’s kingdom, a community based on love, service, and the surrender of power. As Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon have written, “The world, for all its beauty, is hostile to the truth.”⁶²

2. This model calls the church to avoid concentrating on the culture, looking for ways to become relevant to it, reach it, or transform it. In fact, the

church should not be focusing on the world at all. If there is a cultural crisis today, they say, it is because the culture has invaded the church, and that consequently *the church is not truly being the church*. The church is to be a counterculture, an alternate human society that is a sign of the kingdom to the world. It should not try to turn the world into Christ’s kingdom. Rather, the best thing the church can do for the world is to exhibit Christ’s kingdom to it, largely through the justice and peace of its community.

The Counterculturalist model places its emphasis on the church as a *contrast society* to the world.

3. This model levels sharp criticisms against the conservative evangelical church (particularly the Christian Right), the liberal mainline church, and the new evangelical megachurch. In their view, virtually all branches of the church in the West today have been corrupted by the “Constantinian error” of seeking to reform the world to be like the church. Counterculturalists predict that when Christians try to make the world more like the church, they succeed only in making the church like the world. Invariably, our attempts to influence or transform culture will become corrupted by power and dominated by the political economy of capitalism and liberal democracy. When this happens, the church will have prostituted itself and will no longer have anything of value to share with the world.

Those who adopt the Counterculturalist model look at the liberal mainline Protestants and note how they have become the “Democrat Party at prayer.” They look at the Religious Right and see much the same thing — the “Republican Party at prayer.” They believe that politicization — on both sides of the political spectrum — has alienated much of the populace and weakened the church’s witness. Those who follow this model also criticize the evangelical megachurches as they try to be relevant and meet felt needs. This, they point out, only

turns the church into a consumerist mall of services that reflects the reigning spirit of the world — the spirit of self-absorbed market capitalism. By simply giving people what they want, churches fail to confront the innate selfishness and individualism being nurtured by modern capitalism.

4. Counterculturalists insist that instead of trying to change the culture through this consumeristic narrative, the church needs to follow Christ “outside the camp” and identify with the poor and the marginalized. It needs to have thick, rich, liturgical worship that shapes Christians into a new society. The church does not “advance,” “build,” or “bring” the kingdom; it is to be a *sign* of the future kingdom to the world as it seeks to be a new human society ordered on the basis of God’s law and salvation. Real Christianity, says the Counterculturalist thinker, is a life of simplicity, of material self-denial for the sake of charity, justice, and community. It means decreasing both geographical mobility (committing to a local church and a neighborhood) and social mobility (giving away large amounts of your income to those in need).

Who are the Counterculturalists? James Hunter has observed that of all the current Christian models for relating Christianity to culture, this approach has the most intellectual firepower behind it. Many Counterculturalists are scholars/writers who teach at or are associated with Duke University Divinity School, including Stanley Hauerwas, William Willimon, and Richard Hays. They are mainline Protestants dubbed by some as “neo-Anabaptists,” who draw inspiration not so much from the magisterial Reformation (Lutheran and Calvinist) but the Radical Reformation of sixteenth-century Europe. The Radical Reformers demanded a sharp distinction between church and state, were often pacifists who refused to serve in the military, formed tight communities that were virtually or literally communes, and called on believers to avoid political entanglements.⁶³ In addition there are the actual Anabaptists — the churches that have descended directly from the original Anabaptist churches, especially the Mennonites and the contemporary Amish and Hutterites. John Howard Yoder’s book

The Politics of Jesus is an important guide to those who follow this model.⁶⁴ Another scholarly movement in this category is the “Radical Orthodoxy” of John Millbank and Graham Ward.⁶⁵

Many who have been placed in the broad category of the emerging church also fall into this category, including evangelical thinkers such as David Fitch and Shane Claiborne. Claiborne is the most prominent member of a movement called the “new monastics.” Like others influenced by the Anabaptists, they severely criticize capitalism and “empire.”⁶⁶ They emphasize strong multiracial, cross-class Christian community; a simple lifestyle; practical engagement with the poor; contemplative spirituality; and a prophetic stance against big corporations, the military, and consumer capitalism. The new monastics, though eschewing the idea of cultural transformation, tend to support liberal political policies, which puts them at loggerheads with the Religious Right and, typically, with evangelicals who remain in the pietistic stance. This also marks them out as different from seeker church leaders such as Bill Hybels and Rick Warren, who have tended to be more centrist or apolitical.⁶⁷

The first two models we’ve examined (the Transformationists and Relevantists) have typically contained a diversity of groups and thinkers whose practices and rhetoric differ quite widely. This is less true in this model. Of course, one could place the Amish at one end of the spectrum, representing those who take the spirit of a “counterculture” as literally as possible. In the middle of the spectrum are the new monastics, who live more within the mainstream culture than do the Amish but still create intentional communities and often live together in urban neighborhoods in direct contact with the poor. At the other end of the spectrum are those whose churches are not literally communal but whose theology is driven by the themes and motifs of the Counterculturalist model.

PROBLEMS WITH THE COUNTERCULTURALIST MODEL

As with the Transformationist and Relevance models, we can identify a number of significant problems with the Counterculturalist model.

1. Critics of the Counterculturalist model charge that it is more pessimistic about the prospect of social change than is warranted.

To use a justly famous example, didn’t Wilberforce accomplish a true and good social change when he and his allies worked to abolish slavery in the British Empire?⁶⁸ Was that an illegitimate project? It seems so, according to this model. A much subtler yet powerful example is the Christianization of Europe. Christianity permanently altered the old honor-based European cultures in which pride was valued rather than humility, dominance rather than service, courage rather than peaceableness, glory more than modesty, loyalty to one’s own tribe rather than equal respect for all individuals. Even though there is today some slippage in Western society back toward that pagan worldview, today’s secular Europeans are still influenced far more by the Christian ethic than by the old pagan ones. And, by and large, Western societies are more humane places to live because of it. In other words, Christianity transformed a pagan culture.

The Counterculturalist model rightly warns us against triumphalism. But assuming we are willing to leave behind our utopian dreams of creating a Christian society or a “redeemed culture,” history teaches us that it is indeed possible to improve and even transform some social structures. D. A. Carson writes the following:

*Sometimes a disease can be knocked out; sometimes sex traffic can be considerably reduced; sometimes slavery can be abolished in a region; sometimes more equitable laws can foster justice and reduce corruption . . . Yet in these and countless other ways cultural change is possible. More importantly, doing good to the city, doing good to all people (even if we have special responsibility for the household of faith), is part of our responsibility as God’s redeemed people.*⁶⁹

2. The Counterculturalist model tends to demonize modern business, capital markets, and government. There is a constant critique of capitalism (in almost all its forms) and a depiction of most businesspeople as greedy and materialistic. Also, its pacifism often goes beyond the simple refusal to engage in taking life in combat to the depic-

DIFFERENCES AMONG COUNTERCULTURALISTS

The Counterculturalist model is far from monolithic. At the popular level, much of the rhetoric of younger leaders and new churches inspired by this model sounds almost *anti-cultural*, as if *human* culture is something to be replaced with a *pure Christian* one. Most thoughtful thinkers in this category, however, do believe in some measure of necessary contextualization, but of all the “models of contextualization” laid out by Stephen Bevans in his helpful text *Models of Contextual Theology*, his Countercultural model is the most confrontive of and the least adaptive to present cultural realities.⁷⁰

Bevans outlines five models of contextualization, moving from the most positive toward the surrounding culture to the most negative. They are, in that order, called the “Anthropological,” “Praxis,” “Synthetic,” “Translation,” and “Countercultural” models. The last is associated with Hauerwas, Yoder, and Newbigin. Bevans argues that the Countercultural model gets the reputation for being nothing more than “culture bashing,” but that thinkers such as George Hunsberger and Lesslie Newbigin, while highly critical of Western culture, nonetheless still believe the gospel must be “clothed in symbols which are meaningful” to the culture we are trying to reach.⁷¹

tion of all human government as inherently violent. This view discourages Christians from getting involved in the business world (except for small entrepreneurial ventures with high social consciousness) or in politics (except at local levels in order to change neighborhood dynamics). James Hunter argues that, ironically, the Counterculturalists have in many ways been unintentionally shaped by late

modern Western culture. In particular he refers to the movement's "neo-Nietzschean politics," which fuels resentment against power rather than appealing to truth, persuasion, and reasoned discourse. Hunter shows how, despite Counterculturalists' claim to eschew power and politics, this may be the most profoundly political of all the models:

In some respects, neo-Anabaptists politicize their engagement with the world even more than the Right and the Left because they cast their oppositions to the State, global capitalism and other powers in eschatological terms. To literally demonize such powers as the State and the market as they do means that they draw much of their identity and purpose in the here and now through their cosmic struggle with them. . . . Their identity depends on the State and other powers being corrupt.⁷³

Hunter then quotes Charles Matthewes as saying that neo-Anabaptists have a "passive-aggressive ecclesiology." That is, while claiming to refuse to be sullied by politics, they use the language of politics as much or more than any model, and while professing to avoid power, they use power language to demonize their opponents.

3. The Counterculturalist movement fails to give sufficient weight to the inevitability of contextualization, of a Christian community necessarily relating and adapting to the surrounding culture. As one writer observed, "The idea that the church can sustain itself as a discrete culture reflecting Christian values, isolating itself from the competing values of the secular world, is a problematic premise."⁷⁴ For example, Chinese Christians will certainly be shaped profoundly by their Christian faith. The current culture in China is the result of several traditions and worldviews — Confucianism, animism, and secular materialism. Christianity will certainly affect believers' "Chinese-ness." And yet, Chinese Christians are still Chinese. Think next of Finland. Finnish culture is the result of both Lutheranism and secularism. Orthodox Christians there will be quite different from much of Finnish culture and yet will still be Christian Finns, not Christian Americans or Christian Chinese. Their Christian Finnish-ness is not identical to Christian Chinese-ness. A pan-European/African

multiethnic congregation in urban Germany will be different yet again.

Not only will Christians unavoidably be influenced by culture; they will unavoidably change the culture. All communities and individuals do, to some extent, shape the culture around them simply by living their lives. To give a specific example, when a group of new monastic, middle-class Christians moves into a poor community to serve it, they change it culturally by their very arrival. Their presence in the neighborhood changes property values, as well as the various flows of social, financial, and human capital in and out of the neighborhood. We can't avoid changing the culture. Speaking more generally, the way Christians choose to spend their time and money and how they do their work in the world will all necessarily be shaped by their Christian beliefs and priorities. These will in turn have an impact on how other people live their lives. James Hunter has noted that the separatism of the neo-Anabaptists stems in part from their almost wholly negative view of social power as evil. But everyone has social power, argues Hunter. So in the end, Counterculturalists are more involved in culture than their model admits.

4. A fourth criticism focuses on doctrine. Many in both the contemporary and the classic Anabaptist traditions are happy to affirm general evangelical statements of doctrine such as the Lausanne Covenant. However, because Anabaptist theology stresses the horizontal aspects of sin (e.g., abusing creation, violence in human relationships) and sometimes places less emphasis on the vertical (e.g., offending the holiness of God) in its understanding of Christ's work, **it tends to downplay the doctrines of justification and substitutionary atonement.** Often the primary understanding of the atonement is a form of *Christus Victor*, in which Christ defeats the powers on the cross. Some Anabaptist theologians strongly reject the notion of propitiation (that the cross satisfied the wrath of God) as a "violent" theory of the atonement.

5. Perhaps unintentionally, this model may undermine a church's emphasis and skill at evangelism — even more than the Relevance

model may. The Counterculturalist advocates understand the Christian community itself — its unity and social patterns — as being *the* way of proclaiming the gospel to the world. They believe that "belonging precedes believing" and that evangelism consists of drawing people into an attractive community of love that is promoting justice in the world. This often means, practically, that the church puts little or no thought into how to clearly communicate verbally the gospel message in calling individuals to repentance. As we observed earlier, any element within a model that cuts off the motivation for vigorous evangelism can undermine the entire model. Without a steady stream of new converts and changed lives, the vitality and vision of the model cannot be fully realized.

THE TWO KINGDOMS MODEL

Of the four models I am sketching, this final one — the Two Kingdoms model of cultural engagement — may well be the least-known among evangelical Christians in the United States. However, in its Lutheran form it has a long and venerable pedigree, as well as a place in Niebuhr's catalog of models (as "Christ and culture in paradox"). More recently, a number of conservative Reformed writers have undertaken a fresh articulation of this approach, claiming that it is the view John Calvin took of the relationship of Christ to culture and vigorously arguing for it on principles of Reformed theology, particularly as a counterpoint to the neo-Calvinist Transformationists who follow Kuyper.⁷⁴

The name "Two Kingdoms" comes from the core teaching that God rules all of creation, but he does so in two distinct ways. First, there is the "common kingdom" (often called the earthly or even "left-hand" kingdom) established through the covenant with Noah in Genesis 9.⁷⁵ In this realm, all human beings are members, and people know right and wrong through natural revelation or common grace. According to Romans 1:18–32 and 2:14–15, the light of nature and the human conscience give all human beings intuitions about God's standards of behavior, as well as wisdom and insight so that sin in the world is restrained. For example, even if

someone does not believe the biblical teaching that God made man in his own image, nevertheless the sacredness and dignity of every human being can be known intuitively without belief in the Bible. Christians should be willing to work alongside non-Christian neighbors as co-citizens, sustained in their life together by God's common grace. Believers do not try to impose biblical standards on a society but instead appeal to common understandings of

"Two Kingdoms" comes from the teaching that God rules all of creation through the "common kingdom" in which all people operate by natural revelation and the "redemptive kingdom" in which Christians are ruled by special revelation.

the good, the true, and the beautiful shared by all people. We love and serve our neighbors in this common kingdom.

In addition to the common or earthly kingdom, there is the "redemptive kingdom" (sometimes called the "right-hand kingdom"), established with Abraham in Genesis 12. Only Christians are members of this kingdom, and they are ruled not through common grace and natural revelation but through the special revelation of God's Word. They are nurtured within the church by means of preaching and the sacraments. In this view, building up the church — evangelism, discipleship, Christian community — is the only truly redemptive "kingdom work."

This twofold framework for the nature of God's rule is the animating principle of this model. Two Kingdoms advocates believe the main problem today is the confusion of these two kingdoms, whether by the liberal church striving for relevance or by newer conservatives trying to transform culture. From this conviction flow the following features of the Two Kingdoms model for relating Christ to culture.

1. Two Kingdoms proponents, unlike those in the Counterculturalist model (or those who take the pietistic stance), place a high value on Christians

LUTHER ON WORK AS A CALLING FROM GOD

Martin Luther was particularly helpful in his emphasis that all secular work is a calling from God. In his exposition of Psalm 147, Luther teaches that, while God can feed us directly, he feeds us through the work of others, so that the farmer, the milkmaid, and the grocer are all doing God's work. When Luther comments on verse 13 ("he strengthens the bars of your gates"), he argues that, while God could protect our cities directly, instead he guards us with laws from good legislators and lawyers, with good order from wise rulers, with security through skillful police and soldiers. Luther concludes, "These are the masks of God, behind which he wants to remain concealed and do all things."⁷⁶ In other words, *all* work, even the most menial, is the way in which God does his work in the world, and therefore all work is a calling from God.

pursuing their work in "secular" vocations. We must not think we can only serve God within the church. All work is a way to serve God and our neighbor.

2. The Two Kingdoms model differs significantly from the Transformationists in their counsel on *how* Christians should do their work in the world. While Christian work in the common kingdom has dignity and usefulness, Two Kingdoms advocates tell believers they are not to look for "uniquely 'Christian' ways of doing ordinary tasks."⁷⁷ A word that is conspicuously absent from Two Kingdoms discourse on secular work is the term *worldview*. As co-citizens in the common kingdom, Christians do not have unique ideas of the common good and human flourishing that non-Christians cannot intuitively know. There is no distinctively Christian civilization. Thus, according to the Two Kingdoms model, believers are not creating *distinctively* Christian culture.⁷⁸ They should not try to change

culture so that it reflects Christian beliefs, nor should they think they are to "heal" creation. God's ruling power in the common kingdom is only to restrain evil — not to improve the culture by diminishing the effects of sin on human society. All that occurs in this realm is "temporal, provisional, and bound to pass away" — "not matters of any ultimate or spiritual importance."⁷⁹ When Christians are doing their work in the world, they are serving God and their neighbors, but they are not restoring creation or moving culture into a more Christian direction. Here Two Kingdoms thinkers join with the Counterculturalists in their criticism of Transformationism. The job of the church, they say, is not to change society but to simply be the church. There is no warrant for us to seek to create a Christian society.

3. Two Kingdoms proponents part ways not only with Transformationists but also with Counterculturalists over their view of human government and the general world of commerce. While Transformationists see the secular state as a huge problem, and Counterculturalists see it as a seat of violence and empire, the Two Kingdoms model sees a secular, neutral state as exactly what God wants, *not* a state coercively imposing religious values.⁸⁰ The Two Kingdoms view generally says the same thing about commerce and capital markets. These are not demonic (as the Counterculturalist says) or so fallen that they need to be redeemed (as the Transformationist says). They are spaces of common grace where Christians should pursue their callings with skillfulness and joy. Christians should not feel guilt and "unbiblical pressure" to establish Christian theories or practices of business or government.⁸¹

4. As a direct implication of everything we have said, Two Kingdoms advocates are very guarded about how much improvement, if any, Christians can expect to see in culture. They counsel us to avoid not only triumphalism but also great optimism. The Two Kingdoms model "demands limited and sober expectations . . . The [common] kingdom, regulated by natural law, is severely limited in what it can attain."⁸² As we have noted, God's common kingdom is predominantly a force for restraining

disorder, not for building a new order. As VanDrunen argues, everything here on earth except for our souls and resurrection bodies is going to be destroyed. Nothing we do in the common kingdom, therefore, is of lasting importance. In the end, we should not expect too much out of this life — we should set all our hopes fully on the future hope of Christ's final salvation and return.

Is there a spectrum within this model, as we have seen to one degree or another in the others? Yes, there is. First, there is a distinction between the traditional Lutheran understanding of the Two Kingdoms and the recent version being promoted by conservative Reformed authors. Luther did not see the Two Kingdoms as the realm of the world and the church, but as the realm of the physical and the spiritual. For Luther, then, the visible, institutional church was actually part of the "temporal" kingdom in which even church government was ordered with a form of law, while the invisible church was the mystical communion of saints who live together under grace and in freedom.⁸³ Luther — and Lutheranism — did not believe, then, in as radical a disjunction between church and state as is set forth by contemporary Reformed Two Kingdoms advocates. Luther and Calvin called on kings and nobles to make Protestant reform the law of their lands.

There is also something of a spectrum within the Reformed Two Kingdoms camp. As we have seen, proponents of the Two Kingdoms view by and large resist the Transformationist idea that our worldview makes believers' work in the world profoundly different from that of nonbelievers. Two Kingdoms authors say that by means of common grace, not the Bible, God lets believers and nonbelievers know what they need to know to fulfill vocations in the world. Typical of this perspective is T. David Gordon, writing in *Modern Reformation*, where he strenuously argues that Christians out in the world do *not* do their work differently than nonbelievers do.⁸⁴ In his writings, Gordon insists that Christians do not labor in a "distinctively Christian" manner, nor do they seek to change the world or society.⁸⁵ David VanDrunen chimes in with this observation: "Generally speak-

ing, believers are not to seek an objectively unique Christian way of pursuing cultural activities."⁸⁶

However, Michael Horton, a prominent Two Kingdoms theologian and an editor of *Modern Reformation*, has taught that Christians *should* "pursue their vocation in a 'distinctively Christian' way."⁸⁷ This is a real difference, based perhaps on somewhat different views of the power of common grace or the purpose of Scripture, and yet with regard to Christian worldview, both thinkers are much more like each other than they are like Transformationists.⁸⁸ While Horton studiously avoids the term *worldview*, he has written that the form of Christians' work in the world *is* distinct from that of non-Christians, and that, while the institutional church should not be aiming to change the world, individual believers should be "salt" and should seek to reform society. He writes the following:

*The biblical drama, doctrines, and doxology yield a discipleship in the world that does indeed transform. It never transforms the kingdoms of this age into the kingdom of Christ (for that we await the King's bodily return); however, it does touch the lives of ordinary people every day through ordinary relationships. Not everyone is a William Wilberforce, but we can be glad that he was shaped by the faithful ministry of the Anglican Calvinist John Newton and committed his life to the extirpation of the slave trade.*⁸⁹

THE CREATION MANDATE

Two Kingdoms authors part ways with neo-Calvinists over the "creation mandate" of Genesis 1 and 2. Neo-Calvinists see God as giving Adam (and therefore all human beings) a mandate to create culture, to do work and develop the creation (see Gen 1:26–28; 2:15). Yet Two Kingdoms authors insist that the work God gave to Adam — to guard and cultivate the garden — has been fulfilled by Christ, and therefore "Christian" cultural endeavors should *not* be understood as getting back to Adam's original task.

NOT DISTINCTIVELY CHRISTIAN

In the final chapter of *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, "Education, Vocation, and Politics," David VanDrunen first says "there are many unique things about Christians' cultural activity," but then he explains that the main way they are distinct is "subjectively," that is, in their motivation to do things wholeheartedly for the Lord (pp. 167–68). When he asks if Christian work is "objectively" distinctive—that is, distinctive in its actual form or content, not just in motivation—he answers in the negative. He then reiterates what he has stated in the rest of his book—that the normative standards for cultural activity are not *distinctively* Christian; they are common grace norms available to all.

Later, in the context of a discussion of education, VanDrunen bluntly states that "neither the church nor the family ... has competence to impart a comprehensively detailed world and life view." If the modifier "comprehensively detailed" is strong enough, it is unlikely that any neo-Calvinist would disagree with VanDrunen. No one who advocates a Transformationist perspective believes there is a New Testament version of the book of Leviticus that dictates the Christian way to eat and dress. But in the context, VanDrunen hints that when a school or family tries to teach children a worldview, they are usurping the place of the minister, who is to teach the Bible to the youth inside the church (pp. 177–78.)⁹⁰

As we have seen, this is different in content and in spirit from what many other Two Kingdoms advocates have written. It gives more weight to the concept of worldview (without using the word), to

the idea that the culture is fallen and distorted by sin, and to the hope that cultural reform is desirable and possible.

PROBLEMS WITH THE TWO KINGDOMS MODEL

Several problems have been cited with the Two Kingdoms model.⁹¹

1. The Two Kingdoms model gives more weight and credit to the function of common grace than the Bible does. Two Kingdoms authors insist that Christians do not need to bring their understanding of the Bible and the gospel to bear on public life in order to strengthen it, because society is and can be kept healthy through the light of natural revelation given by God to all people. While this rightly highlights what the Bible says about the existence of common grace, it does not do equal justice to the biblical teaching that human beings suppress the truth they have (Rom 1:18–32) and therefore do *not* read natural revelation rightly. When John Calvin speaks of natural revelation in his *Institutes*, he strikes the balance perfectly. He writes the following:

Let that admirable light of truth shining in [secular writers] teach us that the mind of man, though fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God's excellent gifts. If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonor the Spirit of God ... Those men whom Scripture (1 Cor 2:14) calls "natural men" were, indeed, sharp and penetrating in their investigation of inferior things. Let us, accordingly, learn by their example how many gifts the Lord left to human nature even after it was despoiled of its true good.⁹²

And yet, just before this passage Calvin writes that while it is true that "in man's perverted and degenerate nature some sparks still gleam ... [the light is nonetheless] choked with dense ignorance, so that it cannot come forth effectively ... [His] mind, because of its dullness ... betrays how incapable it is of seeking and finding truth."⁹³ Two Kingdoms advocates have often written as if natural law and common grace are enough to guide human beings—without the light of the Bible—to build a society

that is peaceful and prosperous, one that fits human nature and destiny. But this seems to go beyond what the Bible teaches, namely, that human beings usually distort, suppress, and deny the natural revelation of God.

2. Much of the social good that Two Kingdoms people attribute to natural revelation is really the fruit of the introduction of Christian teaching—of special revelation, if you will—into world cultures. For example, Nicholas Wolterstorff has argued that the very idea of human rights came out of Christian teaching on the image of God. It did not develop, and perhaps could not have developed, out of other views of human nature.⁹⁴ Now, for highly complex reasons, the idea of human rights has gone global. Samuel Moyn has recently argued that human rights have filled the enormous vacuum left by the collapse of revolutionary socialism, as well as most other credible frameworks for grounding moral values and justice.⁹⁵ But we should still ask, "Where did the idea of human rights come from?" Since so many secular people support it, does this mean it is a product of natural revelation? No—it is the product of various factors. The world has been exposed to biblical teaching and has taken this insight of special revelation and given it a more universal, non-Christian meaning. But the basic ideas of inherent human dignity, the importance of forgiveness rather than vengeance, the importance of philanthropy and charity—all of these grew out of Christian civilization, for they were virtually absent in Western pagan and Eastern civilizations.⁹⁶ They now seem to have become permanent fixtures of contemporary Western life, even though the original basis for them, the Christian faith, has been largely abandoned by the culture.

Is it right, then, to strictly say that culture is ordered by natural revelation and hold that the Bible should not be brought to bear on public life? As Dan Strange observes, quoting Peter Leithart, the real condition in most Western societies is one of "middle grace"⁹⁷—a complex interaction of concepts introduced from the Bible that get traction broadly for a host of other reasons, which we could eventually come to see as common grace.

A famous example is the abolitionist movement, led by evangelical Christians such as William Wilberforce and others. Christian leaders of the movement were inspired by views of human nature taken from the special revelation of the Bible. And yet they would have never been successful in their endeavors unless many non-Christian people had found the call to abolish slavery resonating in their hearts and consciences as well—the product of common grace. The question is whether non-Christian religions and people could have originally produced the idea that slavery per se is wrong. Historically, this idea grew out of Christian reflection on the idea of the *imago Dei*.⁹⁸ In other words, slavery could not have been abolished without common grace, but it would never have been abolished with *only* common grace.

3. The Two Kingdoms model implies or teaches that it is possible for human life to be conducted on a religiously neutral basis. This model wants the state to be secular and neutral. It denies the need for a Christian perspective on law, government, economics, and art. But it can be argued that the secular state is not only an undesirable goal. In the end, it is an impossibility. A secular state is really a myth—a disingenuous product of the Enlightenment.⁹⁹ As we observed in the chapters on contextualization, our practices are unavoidably grounded in fundamental beliefs about right and wrong, human nature and destiny, the meaning of life, what is wrong with human society, and what will fix it. All of these working assumptions are based on nonprovable faith assumptions about human nature and spiritual reality. Michael Sandel, who teaches a popular course on justice at Harvard University, states that all theories of justice are "inescapably judgmental." He goes on to observe that you cannot hold a position on financial bailouts, surrogate motherhood, same-sex marriage, affirmative action, or CEO pay without assuming some underlying beliefs about "the right way to value things." For example, when one person says women should have the right to choose an abortion while another says women shouldn't have that choice, each is valuing things differently—a valuation

BORROWED CAPITAL

In his history classes, C. John Sommerville used to demonstrate to students how thoroughly Christianized they were, even those who were atheistic or antireligious. He would list the values of shame-and-honor cultures (like those of pagan northern Europe before the advent of Christian missionaries) and include values like pride, a strict ethic of revenge, the instilling of fear, the supreme importance of one's reputation and name, and loyalty to one's tribe. Then he would list corresponding Christian values, which had been hitherto unknown to the pagans of Europe—things like humility, forgiveness, peaceableness, and service to others, along with an equal respect for the dignity of all people made in God's image.¹⁰⁰ Many of Sommerville's most antireligious students were surprised to learn just how deeply they had been influenced by ways of thinking and living that had grown out of biblical ideas and been passed on to them through complex social and cultural processes.

His point was that much of what is good and unique about Western civilization is actually "borrowed capital" from a Christian faith, even though the supernatural elements of the faith have been otherwise neglected of late in the public sphere.

always based on moral beliefs that are not scientifically based. These implicit assumptions are acts of faith, and therefore there can ultimately be no neutral, secular state. All cultures and governments will be animated by certain of these acts of faith and not by others.¹⁰¹

Sometimes Two Kingdoms advocates will ask advocates of the Transformationist model, "What is the Christian form of auto repair? How should we

do dentistry from a Christian worldview?" The fact that Christians and non-Christian dentists fill cavities in the same way shows that indeed we do share common intuitions about life and our common humanity in the *imago Dei*. And Two Kingdoms advocates are correct that the Bible is not a comprehensive handbook for running a business or doing plumbing. We quoted Two Kingdoms theologian T. David Gordon in a footnote earlier in this chapter: "The Bible is sufficient to guide the human-as-covenant community — that is, as a Christian living in the covenant community — 'but not sufficient to guide the human-as-mechanic, the human-as-physician, the human-as-businessman, the human-as-parent [or spouse] ... or the human-as-legislator.'"¹⁰² Michael Horton has likewise written, "There is no difference between Christians and non-Christians with respect to their vocations ... If Christians as well as non-Christians participate in the common curse and common grace of this age in secular affairs, then there is no 'Christian politics' or 'Christian art' or 'Christian literature,' any more than there is 'Christian plumbing.'"¹⁰³

The critics' response is that the Bible doesn't give a comprehensive handbook for *anything*, not even for being the church or living a Christian life. Gordon is right to say that the Bible does not give us all we need to know to be good parents or spouses. It leaves many details up to us — but what it does tell us is profound and powerful and makes Christian marriages different from those based on other worldviews and philosophies of life. The Bible speaks to an enormous range of cultural, political, economic, and ethical issues that have a marked impact on every area of life. Historian John Sommerville argues that Western society's most pervasive ideas — such as the teachings that forgiveness and service are more admirable than saving face and revenge — have deeply biblical roots that are very different from the shame-and-honor cultures in the pre-Christian Western Hemisphere (see sidebar on "Borrowed Capital"). Theologian Michael Allen reminds us that "Christian faith has [necessarily] cultural implications."¹⁰⁴ Many have argued that the very rise of modern science could

have only occurred in a society in which the biblical view of a sole, all-powerful, and personal Creator was prevalent.¹⁰⁵ It seems naive to claim that Christian faith does not unavoidably shape culture in deep ways.

The issue of slavery provides an interesting example of how Christianity changes culture. While Christians are usually criticized for having waited so long to abolish slavery, Miroslav Volf points out how even in the New Testament the gospel was sounding its death knell. Paul told Philemon, a Christian slave owner, to receive and treat his slave Onesimus as a "beloved brother" not only "in the Lord" but "in the flesh" (Phlm 16 ESV). New Testament scholar Douglas Moo explains that Paul used the phrase "in the flesh" to refer to "that aspect of human life that is bound by earthly oriented interests (cf. NJB, 'on the natural plane')."¹⁰⁶ So Moo concludes that although Onesimus will technically remain Philemon's slave for the time being, "Paul is saying in effect, 'Your relationship with Onesimus will no longer be dictated by your legal relationship (master-slave) but by your spiritual relationship (brothers).'"¹⁰⁷ This is to transform the use of power within the relationship that, as Volf states, "Slavery has been abolished even if its outer institutional shell remains as an oppressive reality."¹⁰⁸

As we reflect on these examples, we see that while the New Testament may not give believers direct calls to *transform society*, the gospel faith of Christians clearly had immediate and far-reaching impact on social and economic relationships, and not only strictly within the church. Indeed, then, Christian faith touches on and affects *all of life*, and to claim otherwise is to be less than fully faithful to the biblical or historical record.

4. The Two Kingdoms model produces a form of "social quietism." According to the Two Kingdoms approach, Christians should not be overconfident of our ability to improve or move the world to a greater reflection of Christian values. This approach, while it neutralizes the triumphalism of some elements of the Christian Right, can lead to the opposite error. As Kevin DeYoung states, this model shows an "unwillingness to boldly call

THE TWO KINGDOMS AND LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

Lutheran theology has historically promoted the Two Kingdoms understanding of how to relate Christ to culture. D. A. Carson quotes Robert Benne, a Lutheran theologian who is critical of aspects of his own tradition:

Were this version of Lutheran theology taken to its logical conclusion it would deprive the gospel of any intellectual content and the [civil] law of any moral content. The biblical narrative and theological reflection on it would not be given any epistemological status to engage secular learning. It would champion a form of Lutheran quietism in the realm of education. Much as German Lutherans in the 1930s separated the two kingdoms (government under law separated from Christianity under the gospel) and allowed the Nazi movement to go unchecked by appeal to the intellectual and moral content of the Christian vision, so this approach would allow modern secular learning to go unchallenged by that vision.¹⁰⁹

Christians to work for positive change in their communities and believe that change is possible."¹¹⁰ Michael Allen points to the uncomfortable case of the mid-nineteenth-century Southern Presbyterian Church in the United States and its doctrine of the "spirituality of the church." In his 1859 "Address to All the Churches of Christ," J. H. Thornwell laid out a classic Two Kingdoms view, insisting that "the provinces of church and state are perfectly distinct, and the one has no right to usurp the jurisdiction of the other ... The state looks to the visible and the outward; the church is concerned for the invisible and inward ... The power of the church is exclusively spiritual."¹¹¹ He goes on to defend the refusal of the Southern church to condemn slavery. Allen argues that the "spirituality of the church" teaching continued to affect Southern churches even into the

civil rights era, where “many leaders and congregations objected to denominational support of social and political goals.”¹¹²

5. The Two Kingdoms view contributes to too great a hierarchy between clergy and lay-people. While many adherents of the Two Kingdoms model encourage Christians to excel in their vocations and see them as a way to serve God, they do not view such work as “kingdom work.”¹¹³ The Two Kingdoms churches will in the end, then, be less celebrative of Christians in secular vocations than will the Transformationists. Not only that, but often within the church itself, the Two Kingdoms emphasis on the ordained ministry of the Word and sacrament can lead to “an exaggerated distinction between laity and church officers (e.g., evangelism is the responsibility of elders and pastors not of the regular church members.)”¹¹⁴

COMING TOGETHER ON CULTURE?

In late 2011, I wrote a blog post titled *Coming Together on Culture*. I noted that despite the division over Christ and culture in the Christian church today, I perceived that a percentage of people in each camp were listening to the critiques and were incrementally (and almost secretly) making revisions that moved them closer toward the other camps and positions.

In my blog post, I summarized the Transformationist and Two Kingdoms views, arguing that while each model had some imbalances, many were recognizing them and incorporating insights from various models:

Transformationism is seen as too triumphalistic, coercive, naive about sin, and often self-righteous. It does not appreciate sufficiently God's common grace given to all people. It may not prepare Christians well to make common cause with nonbelievers for the common good, or to appreciate the goodness of all work, even the most "menial" kind. It is criticized for putting too much emphasis on the intellect — on thinking out your philosophical worldview — and not enough on the piety of the heart and the reordering of our loves. It is critiqued for putting too much hope in and emphasis on Christians taking political power...

*The Two Kingdoms approach is seen as too pessimistic about the possibility of social change. Paradoxically, many holding this position are also too naive and optimistic about the role of common grace in the world. They argue that Christians can work beside nonbelievers on the basis of common moral intuitions given to all by natural revelation... The Two Kingdoms approach gives too little weight to the fact that every culture is filled with idols, that sin distorts everything, that there can be no final neutrality, and that we need Scripture and the gospel, not just natural revelation, to guide us in our work in the world.*¹¹⁵

The post generated some resistance. Michael Goheen, a noted author from the Kuyperian movement, countered that he and coauthor Craig Bartholomew (along with others), while solidly in the Transformationist camp, had “appropriated the work of Newbigin and would espouse a more missional Kuyperianism. That is, social engagement is not first of all to change society — that may happen but... the goal... is to witness to the lordship of Christ over all areas of public life and to love our neighbor as we struggle against dehumanizing idolatry.”¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, Michael Horton, a prominent Two Kingdoms theologian, wrote a post in response to mine, similarly objecting to the depiction of the Two Kingdoms position. Although six years

A percentage of people in each camp is listening to the critiques and is incrementally making revisions that move them closer toward the other camps and positions.

ago he had written, “There is no difference between Christians and non-Christians with respect to their vocations” and “there is no ‘Christian politics’ or ‘Christian art’ or ‘Christian literature,’ any more than there is ‘Christian plumbing.’”¹¹⁷ he now wrote, “Nothing in the 2K [Two Kingdoms] view entails that ‘Christians do not, then, pursue their vocation in a “distinctively Christian way” or ‘that neither

the church nor individual Christians should be in the business of changing the world or society,” and he added that Christian-led social reforms were good things.¹¹⁸

These two writers, however, despite their valid concerns about caricature, provide evidence that indeed there may be a “coming together on culture” among Christians. Mike Goheen’s emphasis, still clearly within a Kuyperian model, has incorporated insights and critiques from other sources. And while many Two Kingdoms proponents indeed

deny that (apart from their inner motivations) Christians do their work in a distinctive way or that they should be involved in trying to change society, Michael Horton’s comments show an admirable facility to learn from the strengths and the critiques of other views. In the hope that I can contribute to this growing convergence, I turn now to some admirable examples of balance with regard to this issue, followed by an analysis of how the four models can relate more appreciatively to the insights of the others.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. This chapter summarizes four models of cultural response:

- Transformationist model
- Relevance model
- Counterculturalist model
- Two Kingdoms model

Which of the four models most closely represents your own? Which models were you unfamiliar with? Which critiques did you particularly resonate with, and which (if any) did you find yourself objecting to?

2. Keller writes, “The fact that models often fail as descriptors is instructive in itself.” Models are often inadequate, particularly when we are looking at the sharpest and clearest version of a position.

Yet their very inadequacy can help us by revealing the limitations of a particular view and encouraging us to avoid extremes. With this in mind, how would you summarize the greatest strength of each model? What do you believe is the biggest problem or weakness with each model?

3. Take some time to identify the various streams of theology that have shaped your thinking about the gospel and culture, noting the authors, mentors, traditions, articles, conferences, personal experiences, and biases that have influenced you. Has a particular stream of thought dominated your thinking about the church and culture, or have you been influenced by multiple streams? Which ones? Who were the key voices that shaped your practice into what it is today?

CHAPTER 16 – THE CULTURAL RESPONSES OF THE CHURCH (pages 194–217)

1. I know many of my readers are not ministering in the United States. However, because of its reach, the U.S. church's struggles have ripple effects everywhere. Those ministering in other countries may uncritically adopt materials forged in the United States because they don't know the background debates and perspectives the material represents. So I hope this description helps readers understand not only the U.S. situation but their own as well. For example, while there is no exact analogy to the Religious Right in the UK, other forms of the "Transformationist" category are present. I expect, therefore, that most of this chapter will be of some help to those who minister in cities around the world.
2. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1956). This summary is based on that of George Hunsinger as outlined in R. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010), 168.
3. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 44.
4. Ibid.
5. Indeed, I'll go so far as to say that whenever a thinker (such as Newbigin) doesn't fit well into one model, it is a sign of strength.
6. See Timothy Keller, "Niebuhr's Christ and Culture," www.calvin.edu/academic/rit/webBook/chapter7/niebuhrTech.htm (accessed January 31, 2012).
7. See Craig A. Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).
8. See D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).
9. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "In Reply," *Perspectives: A Journal of Reformed Thought* (February 2008), www.roa.org/page.aspx?pid=3772 (accessed January 31, 2012).
10. Steve Mathonnet-VanderWell, "Reformed Intramurals: What Neo-Calvinists Get Wrong," in *Perspectives* (February 2008), www.roa.org/page.aspx?pid=3771 (accessed January 31, 2012). *Perspectives* was previously titled *The Reformed Journal*, and in the 1970s and 1980s it was the main forum for Kuyperian neo-Calvinist writers such as Nicholas Wolterstorff, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Mouw, George Marsden, and others. See Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), which shows the links between Kuyper, Schaeffer, and Colson (pp. 121, 139) and Schaeffer's role in the early formation of the Christian Right (pp. 192–227).
11. See Jeff Sharlet, *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 342–50, 429; see also Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer*, 192–227, for the connections between the thought of Rousas Rushdoony, John Whitehead, and Francis Schaeffer as it helped influence the beginnings of the Christian Right.
12. See Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1990); Gary North and Gary DeMar, *Christian Reconstructionism: What It Is, What It Isn't* (Tyler, Tex.: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991). Reconstructionists have not called for a Christian minority to take power and impose biblical moral law on the majority but instead believe that Christianity will grow among the population in the future until there is a Christian consensus, and then biblical law—including execution for idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, etc.—will be put into effect.
13. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, 100, 214, 747.
14. See David Field, "Samuel Rutherford and the Confessionally Christian State," <http://davidpfield.com/other/RutherfordCCS.pdf> (accessed January 31, 2012).
15. For a conservative Transformationist critique of the neo-Calvinist idea of "principled pluralism," see Field, "Samuel Rutherford and the Confessionally Christian State," 27–32.
16. This is, of course, a generalized statement. There are those within the Christian Right who use an educational strategy. Chuck Colson employs a predominantly educational strategy—worldview education—for cultural transformation, though clear political overtones often come through in his training and publications. And, by the same token, I understand there have been political movements, particularly within Canada, associated with neo-Calvinism.
17. Wolterstorff, "In Reply."
18. See Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 27–39.
19. Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace," trans. R. C. Van Leeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 59–60, 61.
20. Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 163. As soon as he says this, however, Vos goes on to make it clear that this does not mean the institutional church should have political power or control society through the state. Rather, the kingdom of God manifests itself in society outside the church as regenerate individual Christians do their work and live their lives to God's glory. Here he honors the important "sphere sovereignty" teaching of Kuyper. Vos defines the kingdom in this way: "The kingdom means the renewal of the world through the introduction of supernatural forces" (p. 192). By this he means it is not just a subjective experience of God in the heart, but the power of God that has come into the world through a great series of "objective... facts and transactions" purposed to eventually overcome all sin, evil, suffering, and death in the world.
21. While many who hold to the Two Kingdoms model encourage Christians to excel in their vocations and see this as serving God in general, most strongly disagree that such work is *kingdom* work or that it furthers Christ's saving purposes. So, ultimately, I believe "Two Kingdoms" will in practice be less celebrative of Christians in secular vocations than will the Transformationists.
22. For a good, brief overview of the importance of institutions, see Hugh Heclo, *On Thinking Institutionally* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm, 2008).
23. For a book that provides something of this kind of self-examination and correction for the Christian Right, see Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner, *City of Man: Religion and Politics in a New Era* (Chicago: Moody, 2010). Gerson and Wehner are political conservatives who are critical of the Religious Right, warning of the danger of identifying the City of God with any particular political agenda. The book calls Christian readers to a much more measured and chastened—but still moderately conservative—political engagement.
24. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). Smith, citing Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, proposes that the term "social imaginaries" would be a better term than "worldviews."
25. Mathonnet-VanderWell, "Reformed Intramurals." This article lists a series of criticisms of Transformationism from within the neo-Calvinist movement.
26. I do not have room here to review Smith's important book. In brief, I believe his thesis is largely correct, especially in his dependence on Augustine, who argues that worldviews are the product of "the order of our loves," not merely our doctrine. However, I think the book tends to buy too deeply into Aristotle over Plato. Plato taught that right action follows from right thinking—"as we think so we are," while Aristotle taught that right thinking follows from right action and behavior—"we become what we do." I think Christians should be careful not to lift up either thinking or behavior as the key. An overly Platonic view will indeed see teaching and preaching as the main way we change lives, while an overly Aristotelian view will tend to see liturgy and the sacraments as the main way. But the key is the heart. The heart's commitments are changed through repentance—which involves both thinking and behavior. As Thomas Cranmer taught us to pray, "Grant... that our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, may in all things obey thy blessed will; through the same thy son Jesus Christ our Lord" (C. Frederick Barbee and Paul F. M. Zahl, *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 12).
27. Mathonnet-VanderWell, "Reformed Intramurals."
28. "The Christian way to eat your peas," as one anti-Transformationist wag once put it to me.
29. Quoted in Mathonnet-VanderWell, "Reformed Intramurals."
30. Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 28–29.
31. Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 128.
32. See James D. Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3–98.
33. Ibid.
34. As we will see, while many Counterculturalists are too afraid of exercising power in society, many Transformationists are not afraid enough.
35. Hunter, *To Change the World*, 35.
36. See D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 145–204. For a defense of Christendom, see Peter Leithart, *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2010). For a strong critique of Christendom—and how wielding political power corrupts the church—see the works of John Howard Yoder.
37. Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 79.
38. Ibid., 17–21, 37–54.
39. See Mathonnet-VanderWell, "Reformed Intramurals."
40. Here I remain close to the terminology of James Hunter, who names this approach "Relevant To."
41. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1956), 80.
42. Ibid., 106.
43. See ibid., 84, 90.
44. See the movement's most seminal book, written by the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutierrez (*A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1971]).
45. Harvie Conn, "The Mission of the Church," in *Evangelicals and Liberation*, ed. Carl Amerding (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977), 81. Conn brilliantly points out that liberation theology is indeed too "worldly"—too willing to "baptize" historical/cultural trends as the redemptive work of God. But, he argues, conservative evangelicals who accept an unjust social status quo (and enjoy its benefits) instead of fighting against it are ironically doing just what the liberationists are doing, though in reverse. They are baptizing the historical/cultural order as God's work. Conn writes (p. 82), "In spite of the apparent differences between the revolutionary and the conservative, there is basically one essential

- agreement – both identify the purpose of God with the present historical situation. In one there is conformity to the status quo; in the other a conformity with the revolution.”
46. This is the way George Hunsinger summarizes this model. Hunsinger’s useful summary of Niebuhr’s models is found in R. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010), 168. Hunsinger adds that Niebuhr found the “Christ above culture” model “at one and the same time too credulous about culture and too conciliatory about Christ, lacking an adequate sense of divine judgment.”
 47. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 130; see D. A. Carson’s treatment of the “Christ above culture” pattern in *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 20–22.
 48. While the Two Kingdoms also has a positive view of God’s activity in the world, it makes a very sharp distinction between what God does in the world and in the church: it would never say that God’s work in the world, apart from the church and the preaching of the Word, is redemptive or something the church must adapt to and join with.
 49. Robert Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities* (Glendale, Calif.: Regal, 1975).
 50. Robert Schuller, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1982), 14.
 51. Bill Hybels and Rick Warren are friends of mine, and I can vouch for the fact that, despite a deluge of withering criticism of their churches from across the spectrum, they have not simply recoiled or responded harshly. They have listened to their critics, even the severest, with humility and appreciation and have continually made adjustments to their ministries. For example, see the self-critique by Bill Hybels and Greg Hawkins, *Reveal: Where Are You?* (South Barrington, Ill.: Willow Creek Association, 2007).
 52. Gary Pritchard’s PhD dissertation provided one of the first major critiques of the seeker church movement. A popular version of his Northwestern University doctoral thesis was published later as *Willow Creek Seeker Services: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).
 53. As we will see below, many emerging churches fit better into the Counterculturalist model than they do into this one.
 54. Ultimately, this is the same path that seeker churches and liberal churches follow; they are simply adapting to a different dominant culture.
 55. Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
 56. See *ibid.*
 57. See J. C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 19–20. See *The Church for Others and the Church for the World: A Quest for Structures for Missionary Congregations* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967). For a good discussion of the recent history of the *missio Dei* concept and of how it grew out of new theological understandings of the Trinity and the kingdom of God, see Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 17–40. We address the missional church in detail in part 6.
 58. This effect was predicted by J. Gresham Machen in *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923).
 59. See Kent Carlson and Mike Luekin, *Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2011).
 60. Van Gelder and Zscheile, *Missional Church in Perspective*, 70.
 61. As we will see, the Two Kingdoms model also teaches that Christians should not try to transform culture along Christian lines, but it is much more sanguine about society as a whole and about the goodness of Christian participation in secular callings.
 62. Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 47.
 63. James Hunter calls adherents of this model “Neo-Anabaptists” and gives a particularly insightful critique in *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 150–66.
 64. John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).
 65. Radical Orthodoxy at first glance may seem to have little to do with Anabaptists, since it is a contemporary movement of largely High Church Anglicans. Yet it levels a similar critique at modern secular thought and culture as that offered by Hauerwas (see James K. A. Smith, *Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004]).
 66. See Shane Claiborne, *Jesus for President: Politics for Ordinary Radicals* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008). Claiborne is known for his “litany of resistance”: “With governments that kill . . . we will not comply. With the theology of empire . . . we will not comply. With the hoarding of riches . . . we will not comply. To the peace that is not like Rome’s . . . we pledge allegiance” (quoted in Ron Cole, “The Subversive Alternative Language of the Kingdom . . .” [October 11, 2007], http://thewearypilgrim.typepad.com/the_wearypilgrim/2007/10/the-subversive-.html [accessed February 1, 2012])).
 67. For more on the new monasticism, see Jonathan Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre’s After Virtue* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1998); Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today’s Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008).
 68. It is worth observing that Wilberforce, who himself could be put in the “Christ transforming culture” model, was nonetheless helped immensely by Quakers and other Protestants from an Anabaptist tradition on how to relate to culture.
 69. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 218.
 70. See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2004), 32, 119.
 71. *Ibid.*, 119, 175 n.8.
 72. Hunter, *To Change the World*, 164.
 73. Van Gelder and Zscheile, *Missional Church in Perspective*, 142.
 74. David VanDrunen (*Living in God’s Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010]) provides an accessible exposition of the Two Kingdoms model from the perspective of Reformed covenant theology. For summaries of the positions and arguments on both sides of this controversy within the conservative Reformed world (particularly in the U.S.), see the article by British scholar Dan Strange, “Not Ashamed! The Sufficiency of Scripture for Public Theology,” *Themelios* 36.2 (July 2011): 238–60, http://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/journal-issues/36.2/Themelios_36.2.pdf (accessed January 30, 2012).
 75. See VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, 75–76.
 76. Martin Luther, “Commentary on Psalm 147,” in *Luther’s Works: Selected Psalms III*, vol. 14, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1958), 114–15.
 77. VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, 27.
 78. *Ibid.*, 62.
 79. Quoting VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, 26, and Strange, “Not Ashamed!” 244, respectively.
 80. See Strange, “Not Ashamed!” 245. “[For the Two Kingdoms view] the secular state is . . . one of the triumphs of the West.”
 81. VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, 27.
 82. David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2006), 40.
 83. See William Wright, *Martin Luther’s Understanding of God’s Two Kingdoms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).
 84. T. David Gordon, “The Insufficiency of Scripture,” *Modern Reformation* 11 (January–February 2002): 19. Gordon writes, “The Bible is sufficient to guide the human-as-covenanter, but not sufficient to guide the human-as-mechanic, the human-as-physician, the human-as-businessman, the human-as-parent, the human-as-husband, the human-as-wife, or the human-as-legislator.” See also his response brought about by criticism of his original article (“Response from T. David Gordon,” *Modern Reformation* 11 [May–June 2002]: 46).
 85. See Gordon, “Insufficiency of Scripture,” 11. I am also basing this statement on hundreds of comments and posts on Two Kingdoms websites.
 86. VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, 168.
 87. See Michael Horton, “Christ and Culture Once More,” White Horse Inn Blog (December 17, 2011), www.whitehorseinn.org/blog/2011/12/17/christ-and-culture-once-more/ (accessed February 2, 2012).
 88. Here is another example of differences within a model or category. Many proponents of the Two Kingdoms approach teach that this material world will burn up completely, and so nothing we do here—other than the spiritual work of evangelism and building up the church—will transfer over into the new heaven and new earth. However, Michael Horton (*The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011], 348, 989–90) seems to follow Herman Bavinck and others in saying that this material world will not be completely annihilated and replaced by a new one, but rather the present one will be “transitioned” and renewed, along with our bodies. David VanDrunen (*Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, 65–66) takes the position that our bodies will be resurrected and renewed, but nothing else in creation will be renewed—it will all be burned up and replaced.
 89. Horton, “Christ and Culture Once More,” White Horse Inn Blog (December 17, 2011). Horton’s blog post was written in response to my post on Christ and culture in which I had summarized the Two Kingdoms position. Horton states (quoting my post), “Nothing in the 2K [Two Kingdoms] view entails that Christians do not, then, pursue their vocation in a distinctively Christian way” or “that neither the church nor individual Christians should be in the business of changing the world or society.” As I’ve shown, many Two Kingdoms proponents—including VanDrunen—say the opposite. Horton also writes that, while the church as an institution should not be trying to reform society, Christian individuals should be (as “salt”) and can be part of major movements such as the abolition of slavery.
 90. VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, 167–68, 177–78.
 91. A good place to start for a Two Kingdoms critique is Daniel Strange, “Not Ashamed!” 238–60. While Strange focuses on recent exchanges within the Reformed world, the broad outlines of his summaries and criticisms hold for the broader conversation between models as well. For a general critique of the Two Kingdoms model, both Lutheran and Reformed, see Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 210–18.
 92. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:273–75.
 93. *Ibid.*, 1:270–71.

WHY ALL THE MODELS ARE RIGHT ... AND WRONG

Earlier, we acknowledged the fact that dividing people into broad categories, or models, always has pitfalls. Some people conform well to the type, while others do not. Within a given model, we can find areas of pointed disagreement. And as we've seen in the case of the Christ and culture issue, people change; thoughtful proponents of certain models are always open to having their views tempered and enriched by insights from the others. We see also a growing body of work that appreciates and criticizes the various Christ and culture models and calls for a nuanced and balanced approach. I have cited several of these already — by Miroslav Volf, D. A. Carson, James Hunter, and Dan Strange.¹ Perhaps the best reason for hope in a balanced Christ and culture model is the example of individuals whose thought and practice defy being contained within a single model.

Lesslie Newbigin, for instance, is often cited by Transformationists, Counterculturalists, and Relevantists, even though they may not share all his doctrinal views. Counterculturalists respond to his stress on the church community itself as “the hermeneutic of the gospel,”² while Transformationists appreciate his emphasis on training Christians to integrate their faith with their work and influence culture.³ For nearly everyone thinking about culture, Newbigin's analysis of the post-Christian character of the West is seminal. Most startling of all, Newbigin argues for the possibility of a government that is overtly based on Christian values. He contends that the logic of the cross should lead such a government to be noncoercive toward minorities, committed to the common good of all, and therefore could still allow a pluralistic society to flourish. It is an explicitly Christian political vision that does not sound quite like Christian Reconstructionism, with

its claim that democracy is a “heresy,” or like the principled pluralism of neo-Calvinism.⁴

Another hard-to-classify thinker is Jim Wallis, the author of *God's Politics*.⁵ Wallis is a strong supporter of leaders of the new monasticism (part of what we are calling the Counterculturalist model). He wrote the foreword to Shane Claiborne's manifesto, *The Irresistible Revolution*, and yet he also calls Christians to invest in electoral politics, causing James K. A. Smith to ask whether Wallis promotes a “Constantinianism of the left.”⁶ He writes that Wallis focuses on “‘people of faith’ getting out the vote, lobbying congress, and doing everything they can to marshal the political process to effect prophetic justice.” Wallis might be classified, then, as someone in the Relevance model, like mainline Protestants, or perhaps as a Counterculturalist. It is hard to say.

Yet another prominent example of a theologian who inspires reflection across the categories is N. T. Wright. Counterculturalists appreciate his reworking of the doctrine of justification so that salvation is not so much a matter of individual conversion as it is becoming part of a new community.⁷ But Wright is not a Counterculturalist. He calls Christians to engage directly with the culture, suggesting that “through the hard work of prayer, persuasion, and political action, it is possible to make governments ... see that there is a different approach than unremitting violence.” This he calls “restorative justice” and cites the example of Desmond Tutu in South Africa. He goes on to speak of calling governing authorities to keep in check those who through greed and force would otherwise exploit the poor and weak.⁸ In this he sounds somewhat like the liberal political side of the Relevance model.

Wright sometimes sounds like a neo-Calvinist when he calls Christians to “advance the healing of

94. See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 44–64; see also Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law, and Church Law 1150 to 1625* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). In chapter 1, Wolterstorff points out that before the Christian idea of *imago Dei*, no society thought of every single human being as equal in dignity and worth. Human beings were judged by various “capacities,” and any group that lacked, say, rationality or some other virtue was considered worthy of being slaves. Even Aristotle said some people were born to be slaves.
95. See Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).
96. See David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009). Hart makes a case for these and many other “givens” of modern life coming from biblical understandings of things.
97. Quoted in Strange, “Not Ashamed!” 255–56.
98. See Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 291–366.
99. See Strange, “Not Ashamed!” 248.
100. See C. John Sommerville, *The Decline of the Secular University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 69–70.
101. Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009), 261.
102. Gordon, “Insufficiency of Scripture,” 19.
103. Michael S. Horton, “How the Kingdom Comes,” *Christianity Today* 50.1 (January 2006): 42, www.christianvisionproject.com/2006/01/how_the_kingdom_comes.html (accessed February 2, 2012).
104. Allen, *Reformed Theology*, 174. For example, justification by faith alone undergirds ethnic harmony within the people of God (see Gal 2–3). Similarly, the doctrine of Christ's resurrection threatens to undo various economic and political practices that developed around idol worship in Asia Minor (Acts 17:19).
105. See Stark, *To the Glory of God*; Diogenes Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1989).
106. Douglas Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 422.
107. Ibid.
108. Volf, *A Public Faith*, 92.
109. Quoted in Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 212.
110. Kevin DeYoung, “Two Kingdom Theology and Neo-Kuyperians,” <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2009/08/14/two-kingdom-theology-and-neo-kuyperians/> (accessed February 6, 2012).
111. Quoted in Allen, *Reformed Theology*, 170–71.
112. Ibid., 172.
113. See p. 229 for Geerhardus Vos's argument that this is not the case, that laypeople doing work that honors Christ in the world is a sign of God's redemptive kingdom. David VanDrunen (*Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 190) comments, “The gospel ministry is not just one profession among many. The Lord Jesus and his apostles never lamented the lack of good engineers or gave instructions for training electricians, but Christ did say, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.’” VanDrunen goes on to make clear he believes that when Jesus speaks of “laborers,” he is referring to ordained ministers.
114. DeYoung, “Two Kingdom Theology and Neo-Kuyperians.”
115. Tim Keller, “Coming Together on Culture, Part 1: Theological Issues,” http://redeemercitycity.com/blog/view.jsp?Blog_param=400 (accessed February 6, 2012).
116. Ibid. See Mike Goheen's comment on the blog.
117. Horton, “How the Kingdom Comes.”
118. Horton, “Christ and Culture Once More.”

the world" with "art, music, literature, dance, theater, and many other expressions of human delight and wisdom," and urges artists to "join forces with those who work for justice."⁹ He concludes *Simply Christian* this way:

We are called to be part of God's new creation, called to be agents of that new creation here and now. We are called to model and display that new creation in symphonies and family life, in restorative justice and poetry, in holiness and service to the poor, in politics and painting.¹⁰

FINDING A WAY FORWARD

As we consider the various models and see thinkers who have learned from models other than their own, and as we witness those who have seemed to transcend or incorporate several models, how do we situate ourselves in the debate? How do we make choices about the proper way for Christians to relate to culture?

As we have seen, each of the four models has biblical support, and each effectively responds to a key problem the church faces in relating to culture. For example, is the lack of vibrant, courageous, effective evangelism a major problem that needs to be addressed? Certainly. But what about the failure of Christians to live out their worldview in the institutions of culture? Isn't it a major problem that Christians are vastly underrepresented in many sectors of the cultural economy? Absolutely. In the visual arts, literature and poetry, theater and dance, academic and legal philosophy, academic think tanks, major research universities, leading opinion magazines and journals, high-end journalism, most major foundations, public television, film, and high-end advertising agencies — there are few or no recognizably Christian voices.

And have we seen the church faithfully standing up for justice on behalf of those in need? Large segments of the Bible-believing church in the United States once supported the institution of slavery — supported by (flawed) biblical exegesis. This mistaken accommodation to cultural values led to an enormous loss of credibility for the church.¹¹ And this wasn't just a onetime event either. In the

twentieth century, large segments of the church also supported segregation.

Yet we could also argue that the greatest problem for the church today is our inability to connect with nonbelievers in a way that they understand. Isn't it a major issue that the evangelical church exists as a subcultural cul-de-sac, unable to speak the gospel intelligibly to most Americans, and is perceived to be concerned only with increasing its own power rather than with the common good? Of course it is. Early Christian bishops in the Roman Empire, by contrast, were so well-known for identifying with the poor and weak that eventually, though part of a minority religion, they were seen to have the right to speak for the local community as a whole. Caring for the poor and the weak became, ironically, a major reason for the cultural influence the church eventually came to wield. If the church does not identify with the marginalized, it will itself be marginalized. This is God's poetic justice.

But perhaps the heart of the problem is our communal "thinness," the lack of distinctiveness in our own Christian communities. Isn't the church's real challenge today not only the views we hold but also our failure to practice a distinctly different way of life? Some evangelical Christians may refrain from drinking alcohol, but they are still as individualistic and consumeristic, as materialistic and obsessed with power pursuits, as everyone else. This is an enormous problem for our witness in the world.

Perhaps the problem, then, is in the ways we have repeatedly attempted to wield political clout and forcefully bring back a Christian-dominated society. Have our goals been misplaced? Have we been compromised by our focus on securing power and control through political means? Many, including sociologists Robert Putnam and David Campbell, have argued convincingly that this focus — this idol — is a real problem for the church today.

In short, the answer to all of these questions is *yes*. When we look at each of these models from some distance, it is clear that they all identify a real problem with the church and its witness in the culture. So it is not hard to see why each model has committed adherents. Each one is on to some-

thing — an essential truth about the relationship of the gospel to culture — that is extremely important. And yet none of them, taken alone, give us the full picture. None of them have been able to win the field. The core diagnoses of each model are correct and essential, yet incomplete. As a result, the core prescriptions are admirable and necessary, yet unbalanced. Is there a way forward?

TWO QUESTIONS ABOUT CULTURE

I believe most of these concerns can be reduced to two fundamental questions. The first question deals with our attitude toward cultural change: *Should we be pessimistic or optimistic about the possibility for cultural change?* The second question exposes our understanding of the nature of culture itself and speaks to its potential for redemption: *Is the current culture redeemable and good, or fundamentally fallen?* Our answers to these questions reveal our alignments with biblical emphases as well as our imbalances.

CULTURAL CHANGE: PESSIMISTIC OR OPTIMISTIC?

James Hunter argues that culture changes mainly (though not exclusively) from the top down rather than from the grassroots up.¹² Cultural changes tend to flow out of urban and academic centers. But these changes are typically not initiated by the innermost elites with the highest positions of prestige, for they have a vested interest in the status quo. Nor are they started by grassroots people at the periphery of cultural power, for they are often powerless to effect lasting change, being altogether shut out of institutions and cultural sectors that shape social life and thought. Instead, it is the "outer elites" — usually young men and women who are either low on the ladder of the highest-prestige institutions, or in the less influential or newer institutions — who initiate these changes.¹³ In addition, the culture changes more readily when networks of common cause overlap different cultural fields, when the networks that initiate a change include people from the worlds of business, the academy, the arts, the church, and multiple other disciplines, all working together. Still, this is never a simplistic process or

formula for effecting change. Because culture is a product of history, not merely of ideas, it has a kind of erratic inertia. It doesn't change easily or without a fight.¹⁴ But it can, in the end, be changed.

This complex and rich understanding of cultural change throws a new light on each model. Each model has a tendency, especially among some of its more strident proponents, to be either *too optimistic* or *too pessimistic* about culture change. And within the groups that tend toward optimism, they tend to be too limited in their understanding of how culture can be changed. Some see the importance of arguing

Each model contains an essential truth about the relationship of the gospel to culture. And yet none of them, taken alone, give us the full picture.

for truth claims, while others put more emphasis on the importance of communities and of historical processes — but any one of these can be the crucial factor in a culture shift. All of them can play a part, and none of the current models give equal or adequate weight to them all.

CULTURE: REDEEMABLE, OR FUNDAMENTALLY FALLEN?

D. A. Carson helps address the second question about the nature of culture when he points out how each of the models for cultural engagement fails to do justice to the fullness of the biblical story line or "metanarrative" — the great turning points and stages in the history of God's redemption: (1) creation, (2) the fall into sin, (3) redemption first through Israel and the law, then through Christ and the new covenant, and finally (4) heaven, hell, and the restoration of all things.¹⁵ The Two Kingdoms model puts emphasis on the goodness of the material *creation*, the strength of the image of God in all human beings, and God's common grace to all people. Transformationists put greater emphasis on the pervasive effects of the *fall* into sin on all of life, on the antithesis between belief and unbelief, and

on the idols at the heart of every culture. Counterculturalists stress the form of God's *redemption* throughout history, namely, by calling out and creating a new people, a new humanity, that exhibits to the world what life under Christ can and should look like. Finally, many of those in the Relevance category put great weight on God's *restoration* of

Each model tends to overlook the implications of the points on the biblical story line other than the one around which it finds its center of gravity.

this creation, on the healing of the nations, and on the resurrection from the dead.

All of these points on the biblical story line are covered well by the sum of the four models, and the implications of each point of the story line for relating Christ to culture are being faithfully thought out and applied. The problem, however, is that each model tends to overlook the implications of the points on the story line other than the one around which it finds its center of gravity. Two Kingdoms people are criticized for being naive about how people truly need the Scripture and the gospel, not just general revelation, to guide their work in the world. Transformationists are charged with being combative and triumphalistic, unable to appreciate the work and contributions of nonbelievers. Counterculturalists are said by critics to make such a sharp distinction between the world and the church that they end up missing some of the implications of both creation and fall — they underestimate the levels of sinfulness inside the church and of common grace at work in the world. The reality of sin that remains in believers means that the church is never nearly as good and distinctive as its right beliefs should make it; common grace in nonbelievers means that the world is never as bad as its wrong beliefs should make it. Finally, those in the Relevance category are often criticized for forgetting that the kingdom of God in the world is both “already” and “not yet.” God is going to restore

the creation, but he has not done it yet. To overlook the intransigence and darkness of human culture is to fail to take seriously enough the doctrine of the fall. To put more emphasis on serving the common good than on evangelizing the lost is to forget the “particularity” of redemption, of God's calling a people to himself. “In short,” Carson concludes, “it appears that some, and perhaps all, of [these models] need to be trimmed in some way by reflection on the broader realities of biblical-theological developments.”¹⁶

BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

To move forward, we must seek theological balance, and by this I do not mean some midpoint between liberal and orthodox theology. Rather, D. A. Carson speaks of allowing the various points of biblical theology to “control our thinking *simultaneously and all the time*.”¹⁷ To flesh this out, we'll briefly survey the basic theological ideas that have special relevance for Christian cultural engagement and give initial direction about the specific balance we need to maintain in each area.¹⁸

CREATION

The doctrine of creation tells us, first of all, that the material world is important. Unlike other ancient creation accounts, the earth is not the result of a power struggle between deities, but is a work of art and love by one Creator. A major part of God's work is his delight in continuing to sustain and cultivate creation (Pss 65:9–13; 145:21; 147:15–20). If God himself does both of these things — if he both cultivates and sustains the material creation *and* saves souls with his truth — how can one say that an artist or banker is engaged in “secular” work and that only professional ministers are doing “the Lord's work”?

In the Genesis creation account, Adam and Eve are called to be fruitful and multiply, to have dominion (Gen 1:26–28). Michael Allen writes, “Sandwiched as it is between divine declarations of creation's goodness, this calling suggests that familial, social, political, and economic activities are part of God's good intentions for the world.”¹⁹ The garden is given to human beings to care for and cultivate

(Gen 2:15). A gardener does not merely leave a plot of ground as it is but rearranges the raw material so it produces things necessary for human flourishing, whether food, other materials for goods, or simply beautiful foliage. Ultimately, all human work and cultural activity represent this kind of gardening.

FALL

Michael Allen observes, “Death and sin limit the potential of culture, inasmuch as they skew the desires and abilities of cultural agents, who now pursue the wrong rather than the good.”²⁰ Genesis 3:17–19 describes God's curse that falls after Adam and Eve sin. The text shows us that sin infects and affects every part of life. In a suggestive passage, Francis Schaeffer summarizes it this way:

We should be looking now, on the basis of the work of Christ, for substantial healing in every area affected by the fall...

Man was divided from God, first; and then, ever since the fall, man is separated from himself. These are the psychological divisions...

*The next division is that man is divided from other men; these are the sociological divisions. And then man is divided from nature, and nature is divided from nature... One day, when Christ comes back, there is going to be a complete healing of all of them.*²¹

So sin affects everything — not just hearts, but entire cultures, every area of life. The doctrine of sin cuts two ways. On the one hand, it means we must not think we can escape from sin and its effects by withdrawing into our countercultures; nor, on the other hand, can we forget that sin infects the way all work and culture making are done or that idols are at the core of every culture. Thus, under the category of “fall” we must take into account the complementary truths of God's curse and his common grace (see sidebar on “The Antithesis”). Any goodness in the world — any wisdom or virtue — is an undeserved gift from God (Jas 1:17). Common grace is not special or saving grace; it is a restraining force that allows good things to come in and through people who do not know Christ's salvation.

A particularly important passage for this doctrine

THE ANTITHESIS

Daniel Strange, in his essay “Not Ashamed!” writes the following:

Under “Fall” we must reckon anthropologically with the complementary truths of the “antithesis,” common grace, and the image of God. The “antithesis” is God's judicial curse sovereignly inflicted on humanity in Genesis 3:15 and which from then until now puts enmity between followers of God and followers of Satan at all levels, intellectual and moral, individual and societal. The antithesis is *principally* “the diametrical opposition between belief and unbelief and therefore between belief and any compromise of revealed truth” [quoting John Frame]. The Bible presents this stark contrast between belief and unbelief in many ways: light and dark, death and life, those who are blind and those who can see, covenant keepers and covenant breakers, those in Adam and those in Christ. I stress *principally* because as well as affirming the truth of the antithesis we must also affirm two other biblical truths. First, as believers we know in practice that a version of the antithesis still runs through our own hearts as we daily deal with our indwelling sin, sin which is a contradiction according to who we are in Christ. Second, we note an analogous inconsistency in the unbeliever.²²

is God's blessing of Noah in Genesis 8–9, where God promises to bless and sustain the creation through means *besides* his redeemed people.²³ John Murray writes that common grace is “every favour of whatever kind or degree, falling short of salvation, which this undeserving and sin-cursed world enjoys at the hand of God.”²⁴

This biblical understanding of our fallenness — cursed yet still sustained by non-salvific grace — is crucial for relating Christ to culture. The

CULTURAL MODELS AND ESCHATOLOGY

In *Reformed Theology*, Michael Allen suggests that eschatology—how you think about the last things—will have an impact on your Christ and culture model. Premillennialists are the most pessimistic about cultural change, postmillennialists are the most optimistic, and amillennialists hold a variety of stances.

An aspect of eschatology is one's belief in how much, if any, continuity there will be between this world and the next. Second Peter 3:10–12 and Revelation 21:1 state that the physical elements of this earth will melt and be destroyed by fire, but Romans 8:19–22 speaks about nature being liberated from its bondage to decay and about our bodies being “redeemed.” Taking these two sets of texts together leads us to affirm that some of this present life and world survives and is renewed and that some of it is destroyed.

world is inherently good and sustained by common grace—yet it is cursed. Christians are redeemed and saved—yet they are still filled with remaining sin. The battle line between God and idols not only runs through the world; it runs through the heart of every believer. So the work and cultural productions of Christians and non-Christians will have both idolatrous and God-honoring elements in them. Cultural products should not be judged as “good if Christians make them” and “bad if non-Christians make them.” Each should be evaluated on its own merits as to whether it serves God or an idol.

Against this background doctrine of the fall we remember Jesus' call to his disciples to be “salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13). Salt kept meat renewed so that it did not go bad. The salt metaphor does indeed call Christians to go out and be involved with the world—salt cannot do its work unless it is distributed. Christians are to penetrate all the arenas of

society. But being salt means having a restraining influence on a society's natural tendencies to decline and fall apart. While social engagement is necessary and can be fruitful, we should not usually expect to see grand social transformations.

So while the doctrine of creation shows us the goodness of work and of so-called secular callings and gives us a vision for culture building, the doctrine of the fall warns us against utopianism and triumphalism.

REDEMPTION AND RESTORATION

The coming of Christ—his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension—holds great significance for cultural engagement. One of the most important aspects of the Christian understanding of Christ's salvation is that it comes in stages. As Francis Schaeffer has pointed out, sin has ruined and defaced every aspect of life, and so Christ's salvation must also renew every aspect of life—it must eventually free us totally from the curse on sin. As Isaac Watts wrote, “He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.”²⁵

And yet Christ's saving and ruling power, often spoken of under the heading of “the kingdom of God,” comes to us in two great stages. As Geerhardus Vos has observed, the kingdom of God is “the realm of God's saving grace,” which is entered now through the new birth and faith in Christ (John 3:3, 5; Col 1:13).²⁶ In this sense, the kingdom of God is already here (Matt 12:28; Luke 17:21; 21:31). But the kingdom is also, according to Vos, a realm of “righteousness and justice and blessing.” It is a new social order (1 Pet 2:9) that shows itself especially in the church. The Psalms vividly tell us that God's ruling power will heal not only human social problems but also nature itself, which is currently subject to decay (Rom 8:20–25). Psalms 72, 96, and 97 tell us that under the true king, grain will grow on the tops of mountains (Ps 72:16), and the fields, flowers, rocks, and trees will sing for joy (Ps 96:11–13). Herman Bavinck has noted that grace does not remove or replace but rather restores nature. Grace does not do away with thinking and speaking, art and science, theater and literature, business and eco-

nomics; it remakes and restores what is amiss.²⁷

To use Francis Schaeffer's terminology, the spiritual alienation between God and humanity is removed when we believe; we are justified and adopted into his family. But the psychological, social, cultural, and physical effects of sin are still with us. We can expect to see some healing now, yet full healing and removal of those results await the last day. So the kingdom of God, though “already” truly here, is “not yet” fully here (Matt 5:12, 20; 6:33; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23–24).²⁸

Schaeffer suggests we can expect to see “substantial” healing now throughout the created order—but what does this really mean? Just how “already” and how “not yet” is the kingdom? Michael Allen puts it pointedly: “The real issue in the relationship of Christianity and culture, therefore, is . . . in what time and at what pace will these things happen?”²⁹

Closely related to the question of *when* we see the fruit of the inaugurated kingdom is the question of the relationship between the church and the kingdom. Sometimes the Bible talks about the kingdom as though it operates inside the realm of the church alone; at other times it speaks as if it is outside the church, incorporating the entire world.³⁰ Just as the biblical teaching on our fallenness gives us complementary truths that we must resolve to hold in balance—the curse and common grace—so too does the biblical teaching on Christ's redemption. His saving power is already at work, but not yet fully here. This saving power is at work in the gathered church, but it is not exclusive to the church. Here again we see why the different models are correct—and yet how easily they can become reductionistic and unbalanced. We should expect healing from sin in all areas of life—private and public, within the church and out in culture. We must see the gathered church as the great vehicle for this restoration—and yet individual Christians out in the world can be said to be representatives of the kingdom as well. We cannot separate our spiritual or church life from our secular or cultural life. Every part of our life—vocational, civic, familial, recreational, material, sexual, financial, political—is to be presented as a “living sacrifice” to God (Rom 12:1–2).

THE GOSPEL AND THE KINGDOM

It is evident that one of the main reasons for many of the divergent approaches to cultural engagement—among many aspects of ministry today—is the differing views of the nature of the kingdom. I recommend an older work that provides unusual balance and biblical insight—Geerhardus Vos's *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*.³¹

Vos summarizes his exegesis and findings in a final chapter titled “Recapitulation.” There he states that the kingdom of God “means the renewal of the world through the introduction of supernatural forces.” For Vos, the kingdom is not just a subjective experience of God in the heart, but the power of God come into the world through a series of “objective facts and transactions” purposed to eventually overcome all sin, evil, suffering, and death in the world.

Vos helpfully observes in the Bible three aspects of the kingdom that must be kept together. First, it is *the realm of God's saving grace*. Because salvation is by grace, not works, God is King and Sovereign of our salvation. Second, it is *the realm of righteousness and justice*. A kingdom always operates according to the norms of the King. So the kingdom of God is a new way of living and a new set of relationships and social arrangements. Third, it is *the realm of blessing and joy*. God's future power, which will renew all creation, is present in our lives now.

Vos teaches that the kingdom of God mainly operates through the church, but that it also operates through Christians who integrate their faith and their work.

Undoubtedly the kingship of God, as his recognized and applied supremacy, is intended to pervade and control the whole of human life.

in all its forms of existence. This the parable of the leaven [Matt 13:33] plainly teaches. These various forms of human life have each their own sphere in which they work and embody themselves. There is a sphere of science, a sphere of art, a sphere of the family and of the state, a sphere of commerce and industry. Whenever one of these spheres comes under the controlling influence of the principle of the divine supremacy and glory, and this outwardly reveals itself, there we can truly say that the kingdom of God has become manifest.³²

Vos immediately makes it clear, however, that the institutional church should not have political power or control society through the state.

So Vos states, in summary, that (1) the main way to see the kingdom forces of God at work is in the institutional church, whose main job is to minister through the Word and sacrament to win people and disciple them in Christ, and (2) when Christians are living in society to God's glory, this, too, is a manifestation of the kingdom of God.

Without this rare balance, there is a tendency to see the kingdom as either strictly spiritual and operating within the church or mainly social and operating in the liberation movements out in the world. Vos's biblical balance will enable us to avoid imbalances in the cultural engagement and missional church debates in particular. I recommend reading his book carefully and in its entirety.

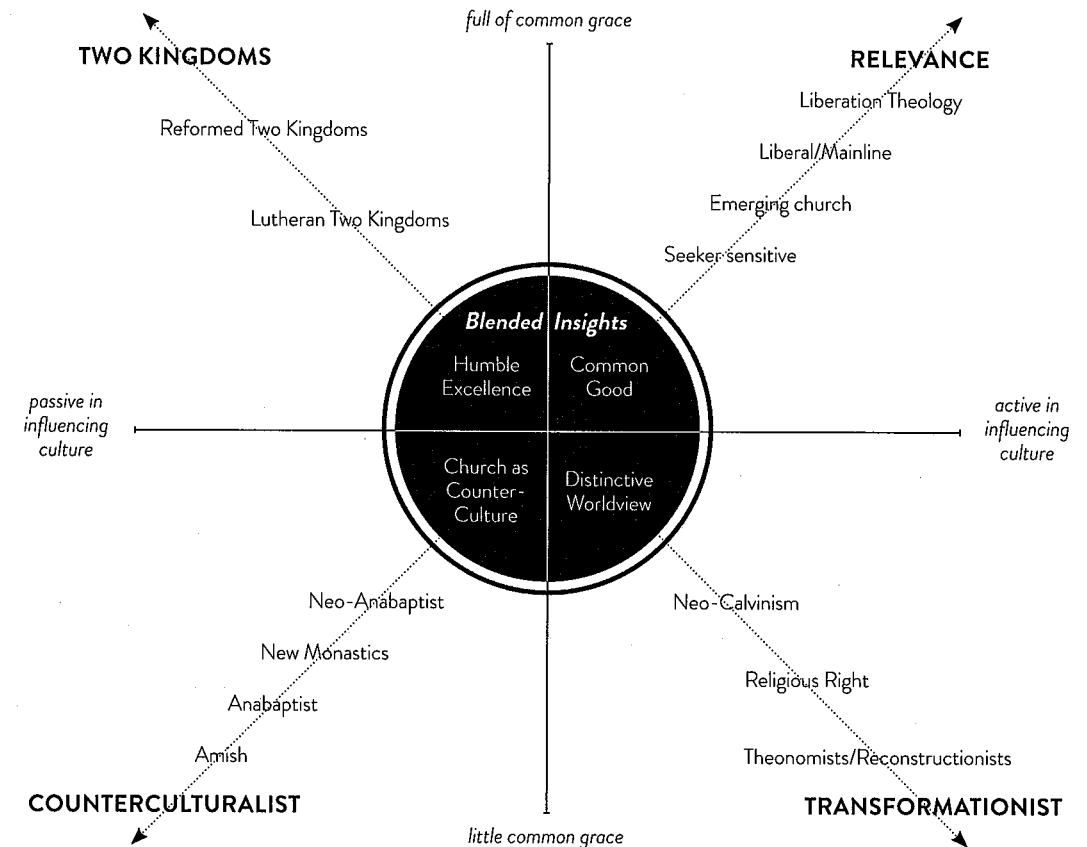
THE LANDSCAPE OF CHRISTIAN CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

What do we learn from this brief survey? The word *balance* thrusts itself on us yet again. The biblical material calls for a balance not of compromises but of "being controlled simultaneously and all the time" by

time" by all of the teaching in Scripture. A survey of the various Christ and culture models demonstrates precisely what D. A. Carson suggests — that indeed each of them fails to be controlled by all the biblical teaching *all the time*. Do those within the Two Kingdoms model do justice to the cultural mandate, the pervasive nature of idolatry, the insufficiency of natural revelation, and the reality of the kingdom outside the church? Does the Transformationist model do full justice to the "not yet-ness" of the kingdom, to how much Christians participate with all humans in the common curse and common grace, or the lack of clear calls to "take the culture" in the New Testament? Do those in the Relevance model do justice to the depth and pervasiveness of idolatry in all hearts and cultural products, the particularity and offense of the gospel, and, again, to the not yet-ness of the kingdom? Do the Counterculturalists do justice to the "already" nature of the kingdom or to their participation with the rest of the world in common curse and common grace? I think the answer to all these questions is, "Not sufficiently."

The biblical material calls for a balance not of compromises but of "being controlled simultaneously and all the time" by all of the teaching in Scripture.

I have been making the case that each model is biblically unbalanced. That is, each has a pivotal theme that is true but insufficient, and the more we reductionistically apply that theme to cultural engagement without reference to other themes in the Bible, the more unbalanced the theological vision and the less fruitful the work. To visually represent this, I have created an illustration in which the four models are graphed against two axes. The vertical axis represents the *nature* of our cultural world ("Is the current culture redeemable and good, or fundamentally fallen?"). At the top is the belief that the world is full of strong common grace, that



nonbelievers can readily understand natural revelation, and that God is at work in many ways in the world. At the bottom of the spectrum is the belief that the world is a dark and evil place, that God's natural revelation is hard to read, and that God's activity happens in and through the church alone. The horizontal axis represents the spectrum of views on our attitude toward cultural *change* ("Should we be pessimistic or optimistic about cultural change?"). On the left end of the spectrum is the belief that we should not actively try to change culture; on the right hand is the belief that we should be active in culture and optimistic about our efforts to change it.

The Transformationist and Countercultural-

ist models are in the bottom half of the diagram because they share a lack of faith in common grace and a conviction of a radical antithesis between the world and the values of God's kingdom. As a result, they emphasize the need for a strong, prophetic critique of the idols of the culture. The Two Kingdoms and Relevance models are on the top because they are much more positive about finding common ground with nonbelievers in the culture.

The Two Kingdoms and Counterculturalist models are on the left because they both believe that strong Christian attempts to "engage" and "transform" lead to syncretism and compromise. Both call Christians to simply "be the church" rather

than seek to change the culture. Meanwhile, the Relevantants and Transformationists are on the right because they both spend much time reflecting on culture and enthusiastically calling Christians to become involved in culture in order to influence it for Christ. Each of the models on the right criticizes the two on the left for dualism and withdrawal.

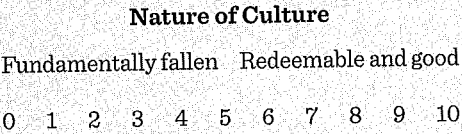
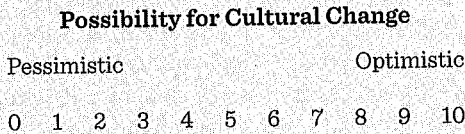
If we ended this discussion here, it might lead to the conclusion that we can simply combine all the

best of the models, leave out the extremes, and find ourselves with a perfectly balanced and faithful “über-model” that all of us should follow. To conclude this would be simplistic and incorrect. In my final chapter on this subject, I will lay out guiding principles for being faithful, balanced, and skillful in relating Christianity to culture in a fast-changing world — regardless of which model most shapes our own practice.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

- 1. Keller writes, “Some people conform well to the type, while others do not. Within a given model, we can find areas of pointed disagreement... Thoughtful proponents of certain models are always open to having their views tempered and enriched by insights from the others.” What in this chapter challenged or provoked you? What did you find helpful? What did you disagree with?
- 2. This chapter provides two fundamental questions about culture to consider:
 - Should we be pessimistic or optimistic about the possibility for cultural change?
 - Is the current culture redeemable and good, or fundamentally fallen?

How would you answer each of these two questions? On a scale from 0 to 10 (0 = not at all, and 10 = highly), how optimistic are you about the ability of believers to change culture? On the same scale, how redeemable do you believe culture to be? Do you find yourself leaning in one direction or the other on each question? If so, why?



- 3. D. A. Carson speaks of allowing the various points of biblical theology to “control our thinking simultaneously and all the time.” How do the elements of the biblical story line affect your understanding and practice of cultural engagement?
 - creation
 - the fall
 - redemption and restoration
- 4. Examine the illustration representing the Center Church model of cultural engagement. Where would you place yourself on this illustration? Where would you place each of your ministry colleagues and leaders? How can the different emphases within your team help to create a balanced, faithful perspective on cultural engagement?

CHAPTER 17 – WHY ALL THE MODELS ARE RIGHT ... AND WRONG (pages 223–32)

1. See especially Daniel Strange, “Evangelical Public Theology? What on Earth? Why on Earth? How on Earth?” in *A Higher Throne: Evangelicals and Public Theology*, ed. Chris Green (Nottingham, UK: InterVarsity, 2008).

2. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 222–33.

3. Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 143–44. Here Newbigin cites Herman Dooyeweerd and seems conversant with and supportive of themes associated with neo-Calvinism.

4. See Lesslie Newbigin, Lamin Sanneh, Jenny Taylor, *Faith and Power: Christianity and Islam in “Secular” Britain* (London: SPCK, 1998), 20–24, 144–61. The father of Christian Reconstructionism, Rousas Rushdoony, calls democracy a “heresy” (*The Institutes of Biblical Law* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980]), 100, 214, 747.

5. Jim Wallis, *God’s Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get It* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 2005).

6. See James K. A. Smith, “Constantinianism of the Left?” <http://forsclavigera.blogspot.com/2005/05/constantinianism-of-left.html> (accessed February 6, 2012).

7. N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). Wright argues (p. 119) that justification isn’t “so much about soteriology as about ecclesiology; not so much about salvation as about the church.” He writes, “The gospel creates, not a bunch of individual Christians, but a community. If you take the old route of putting justification, in its traditional meaning, at the centre of your theology, you will always be in danger of sustaining some sort of individualism” (pp. 157–58). In part 6 (“Missional Community”), I explain why I think this kind of reengineering of the classic gospel is problematic.

8. N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 2006), 226.

9. *Ibid.*, 235–36.

10. *Ibid.* See Wright’s articulation of a “Christian worldview” using the traditional neo-Calvinist categories of creation-fall-redemption-restoration (*The New Testament and the People of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 132).

11. See Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

12. James D. Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 41–42.

13. *Ibid.*, 42–43.

14. *Ibid.*, 37–38, 43–44.

15. See D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 44–58.

16. *Ibid.*, 60.

17. *Ibid.*, 59, emphasis his.

18. Another, shorter survey of these biblical-theological points is found in R. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010), 157–69.

19. *Ibid.*, 159.

20. *Ibid.*, 160.

21. Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1970), 65–66. Schaeffer expands on this idea of substantial healing from the results of sin in *True Spirituality* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1971).

22. Daniel Strange, “Not Ashamed!” *Themelios* 36.2 (July 2011): 65, http://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/journal-issues/36.2/Themelios_36.2.pdf (accessed January 30, 2012).

23. For a short but comprehensive list of biblical examples of common grace, see Allen, *Reformed Theology*, 162.

24. John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 2:96.

25. Charles Wesley, “Joy to the World,” emphasis mine.

26. For Vos’s view, see sidebar on “The Gospel and the Kingdom” on pp. 229–30.

27. See, e.g., Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 2: God and Creation*, ed. J. Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004). The editor writes that “the teaching that ‘grace restores nature’ is seen as one of the key elements in Bavinck’s theology” (p. 10).

28. A good summary of the teaching on the “present (yet) coming kingdom” is found in Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. J. Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

29. Allen, *Reformed Theology*, 164; see Douglas Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49 (2006): 449–88.

30. See D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 82. Some people read the parable of the weeds in Matthew 13 as being about true and false Christians within the church, but in the parable the kingdom is a field, and in Jesus' explanation he says, "the field is the world" (v. 38), not the church. Louis Berkhof (*Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 570) writes, "The visible church may certainly be said to belong to the kingdom, to be a part of the kingdom, and even to be the most important visible embodiment of the forces of the kingdom . . . [But] the kingdom may be said to be a broader concept than the church, because it aims at nothing less than the complete control of all the manifestations of life. It represents the dominion of God in every sphere of human endeavor." Berkhof represents the views of Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and Geerhardus Vos as well.
31. Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1998).
32. *Ibid.*, 162–63.