

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Transformative Cultural Engagement in Micropolitics

A Thesis Submitted To

Dr. David Jones, Professor of Christian Ethics

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Ethics, Theology, and Culture

By Caleb Duncan

Wake Forest, North Carolina

May 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Brief Framework of Biblical Ethics.....	3
Biblical Survey and Competing Views of “Culture”	6
Biblical Survey of Culture	6
<i>Culture Created</i>	7
<i>Culture Affected</i>	9
<i>Culture Restructured</i>	11
<i>Culture Challenged and Confused</i>	15
<i>Culture Restored</i>	17
Competing Views of Culture	19
<i>Counterculturalist View</i>	21
<i>Two Kingdoms View</i>	26
<i>Relevance View</i>	31
<i>Transformationist View</i>	33
Applying the Transformative View to Practical Christian Living.....	38
Biblical, Narrative Examples of Transformationists	41
Cultural Transformation in Politics	45
<i>Overview of Politics</i>	45
<i>Micropolitics</i>	46
<i>Public Theology</i>	47
<i>Public Ministry</i>	51
<i>Public Office</i>	55
Conclusion	57
Bibliography	58

Introduction

The term “Public Square” is normally associated with Ancient Greek culture due to its origin. The Greek word, “Agora,” translates to “gathering place” or “assembly.”¹ Every Greek city-state had an Agora where there was a public gathering of citizens who discussed politics, philosophy and other topics. It was in the Agora of Athens that Socrates spoke with citizens about the meaning of life, justice, and freedom.² These public places were the beating hearts of the Greek city-states because they represented its people and their ideas. In the Agora, citizens would gather to hear public announcements from its city’s leaders and speak freely about the state of their land. Over time, the Agora became more than just a home for discussion, but a home for commerce, a justice system, and religion. It was the focal point for community life in the Greek city-state.³ The Agora could be visited not only by citizens, but travelers and outsiders. It represented an exchange of ideas from people of many different walks of life.

While the Agora was originally a specific location with a specific purpose, it can now be more generally understood. Now, every nation can be seen with some form of Agora location. From small tribes in Africa to the busy streets of New York City, wherever there is a gathering of people, there is a gathering place where discussion is held. The idea of the Agora has developed over time into what is now called the Public Square. Synonymous with the Agora are terms like “Town Square,” “City Square,” “Marketplace,” or “Plaza.” Indeed, Italy has their “Piazza,” Russia has their “Central Square,” and China has their “People’s Square.” But in the current day, the Public Square no longer has just a physical location. Technology has allowed

¹ “Agora (n.),” *Index*, accessed March 29, 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/agora>.

² Mabel L. Lang, *Socrates in the Agora* (Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1978).

users to participate in online forums, where ideas could be exchanged. In a report from last year, Social Media giant “Facebook,” reported 2.8 billion monthly active Facebook users.³ Facebook represents just one of the many websites on the internet where there exists a place for like-minded and disagreeing individuals to associate with one another.

Understanding the Public Square this way represents relationship—a place where people interact with each other and engage with the everyday news of life. But is there always peace and social rest in the public square? The “Plaza de la Revolucion” in Cuba was where the Dictator Fidel Castro would come into power and influence many people to violence in 1959. “Place de la Concorde” was home to the student riots in Paris in 1968. In 1989, thousands of student protestors were killed when police and military opened fire on students in the Tiananmen Square protest of China. There is surely a reason why “agoraphobia” exists—the fear of public places.

Perhaps one of the most controversial areas of the Public Square is in Politics. This area can be a great place of shared knowledge and peace, but it can also be a place of violence and hatred. In the year 2020, multiple protests took place in the United States involving anti-lockdown from the Covid-19 pandemic, systemic racism, police brutality, and the political unrest of a lively election season. These protests were demonstrated by both conservatives and liberals, and independent groups such as Black Lives Matter, ANTIFA, and the “Proud Boys.” While peaceful protests did take place, there were many times when these protests became violent and involved rioting, looting, and the destruction of personal and federal property. Even on the day that the electoral college convened to approve its votes for the presidential race, protestors stormed the Capitol of the United States and destroyed federal property. In some of these public

³ “*Facebook Revenue and Usage Statistics* (2021),” Business of Apps, last modified April 6, 2021, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/facebook-statistics/>.

gatherings, exchanged ideas can be met with aggression and confusion. These responses transition the Public Square from peace to violence.

So many ideologies are present in the Political sphere, and Christians have always been represented, even from the nation's founding. Since Christians are represented in the Public Square, and if Christians are commanded to make disciples while living in this world, an interesting question arises: How should Christians engage Politics with the gospel? Should Christians engage with political and social action, or should they disengage entirely to "keep peace?" The purpose of this paper is to research and evaluate the responsibility Christians have to God and others in this area.

The research conducted will demonstrate the responsibility that Christians have to the political arena of the public square. The thesis presented is that Christians are called to ethically and evangelistically be involved the natural transformation of culture. To defend this thesis, this paper will first provide a brief framework for biblical ethics. Then, it will survey the term "culture," evaluate its biblical implication, and gives four major views on how Christians ought to interact with culture. Then, one view will be defended based on a summary of the research conducted. Lastly, this paper will describe merits of Christian engagement in Politics and social life by addressing specific actions such as voting, protesting, and public work.

Brief Framework of Biblical Ethics

The contribution of biblical ethics to the topic of cultural engagement is invaluable. Biblical ethics is applied theology—taking what is known about God and his commands and applying them to everyday Christian living. Unlike other ethical systems, biblical ethics is fixed on an objective, theistic worldview, and assumes the presence of a fixed moral order that

proceeds from God.⁴ The morale that Christians live by is discovered through the written and authoritative word of God. The Scottish theologian John Murray defined biblical ethics as, “the study and application of the morals prescribed in God’s Word that pertain to the kind of conduct, character, and goals required of one who professes to be in a redemptive relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵ Furthermore, John Hare says, “What makes something morally wrong (or morally forbidden) is that God forbids it, and what makes something morally right (or morally obligatory) is that God requires it.”⁶ This ethical system contrasts with consequential or utilitarian systems of ethics, which focus on the consequence or end result of any given action. In decision-making, these systems focus on maximizing happiness, lowering pain, and promoting the good of society or self. While observing these other systems and their contrasts to the Christian faith is important, it does not causally relate to this thesis.

Christian ethics is a deontological ethical system; it is “duty” or “obligation” based. This means that decisions are made not from consequences or end results, but on the moral action themselves. It would be remiss to not mention what Jones calls the *summum bonum*, or highest good of Christian ethics—the glorification of God in the keeping of his moral standards.⁷ While the *summum bonum* of some consequentialist systems is the advance of one’s own self-interest or promotion of societal unity, biblical ethics follows a pattern that honors God above all other things. Observing the definition of biblical ethics shows the important theme of obedience in the

⁴ Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2013), 1.

⁵ Daniel Sommer Robinson, *The Principles of Conduct; An Introduction to Theoretical and Applied Ethics* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), 12.

⁶ Steve Wilkens, *Christian Ethics - Four Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 125.

⁷ Jones, *Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 14.

responsibility of Christian living—Christians have the role of obeying the moral will that has been commanded by God to glorify Him.

Biblical ethics practiced in culture drastically separates Christians from the rest of the world. The way in which Christians engage culture is with the purpose and the motive of living holy lives to God apart from sin in the form of obedience. These themes are portrayed beautifully in 1 Peter 1:14–15, “As *obedient* children, do not be *conformed* to the passions of your former ignorance, but as *He who called you* is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.”⁸ Biblical ethics seen this way represents a life of worship—loving and honoring God in daily decision-making. The study of biblical ethics must be rooted in the authority of God’s word. John Stott once said, “We must allow the Word of God to confront us, to disturb our security, to undermine our complacency, and to overthrow our patters of thoughts and behavior.”⁹ This is certainly true when it comes to a wide range of philosophy involved in the questions of Christ and culture.

Biblical ethics starkly contrasts with the ethics of the postmodern world in which we live. Cultural Moral Relativism could be a more descriptive term of the ethical evaluation in the current climate. Myers and Noebel in *Understanding the Times* rightly define postmodernism as, “a skeptical worldview, founded as a reaction to modernism, that is suspicious of metanarratives and teaches that ultimate reality is inaccessible, knowledge is a social construct, and truth-claims are political power plays.”¹⁰ The suspicion of ultimate reality and truth-claims is problematic from a biblical worldview. The biblical worldview is centered on the metanarrative of the

⁸ All Scriptures used in this Thesis are taken from the English Standard Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted. I will frequently use italics in biblical quotations for emphasis related to my thesis.

⁹ Timothy Dudley-Smith, *Authentic Christianity: From the Writings of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 47.

¹⁰ David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times* (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2006), 148.

ultimate truth of the gospel story and its implications for our lives. Postmodernism teaches a denial of the metanarrative, emphasizing the deconstruction of ideologies and the promotion of self-affirmation.¹¹ If this worldview describes the majority of mainstream culture, there exists a tension between the evangelistic ethics of Christianity and the relativistic ethics of our society.

Biblical Survey and Competing Views of “Culture”

Biblical Survey of Culture

To ethically engage culture and politics with the gospel, a survey of culture in Scripture is necessary. First, it is important to distinguish between culture and politics. While they are sometimes used synonymously, politics is only one area of the larger landscape of culture. Culture also includes multiple societal sections such as arts, entertainment, education, science, economics, business and literature, to name a few. The definition of culture is multi-faceted and layered. Edgar Schein, the former MIT professor who has made a significant impact on sociology and anthropology, defines culture in a specific sense. He says, “Culture consists of shared beliefs, values, and assumptions of a group of people who learn from one another and teach to others that their behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives are the correct ways to think, act, and feel.”¹² Bruce Ashford simply uses the word “culture” in a broad, all-encompassing sense referring to anything that humans produce when they interact with each other and with God’s creation.¹³ These two definitions, from a secular and an evangelical perspective, share a few common themes—culture involves teaching, learning, and producing. This correlates to the

¹¹ Noebel, *Understanding the Times*, 156–157.

¹² “*What Is Culture?*” accessed March 29, 2021, https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_leading-with-cultural-intelligence/s04-02-what-is-culture.html.

¹³ Ashford, *Every Square Inch: An Introduction to Cultural Engagement for Christians* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015).

etymology of culture, which finds its roots in the Latin term *colere*, meaning “cultivate,” “instruct” or “till.”

Thus, culture can be seen as a learned way of life for any group of people. This is seen in the simple fact of culture’s inability to be inherited. Newborn children do not inherit a certain culture involving societal norms—they must be taught normality over time through a group of people in a similar context. Cultural norms are impacted by location, time, momentous events, learned traits and taught behaviors. Therefore, any location where there exists a group of people for any length of time, there exists a learned culture among them. Culture is “the total way of life of a particular people.”¹⁴ Interestingly, the term “culture,” is not found in Scripture, but it is clearly seen in every book of the Bible.¹⁵ This theme can be traced historically, contextually, and theologically.

Culture Created

Surveying the culture of God’s first created people teaches a few things about culture. First, culture is created and defined by God. The etymology of “culture” can be further understood by evaluating even the first verse of Genesis: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). It is intriguing to observe God as the first builder of human culture. The Hebrew word for “create” (*bara*) shows that God *fashioned* or *shaped* the world out of nothing.¹⁶ Related to the root word for culture (in a sense, a developed cultivation of learned

¹⁴ D. G. Burnett, *The Healing of the Nations: The Biblical Basis of the Mission of God* (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1996), 4.

¹⁵ I can confidently say this due to the above definition of culture and its relation to people and people groups.

¹⁶ James Sweeney, trans., “*Bara* (‘He-Created’) in Genesis 1:1,” Winebrenner.edu (Winebrenner Theological Seminary, March 18, 2019), last modified March 18, 2019, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://winebrenner.edu/2019/03/18/insights-bara-%D6%BC%D6%BC-he-created-in-genesis-11/>.

behavior) is the action associated with teaching or modeling. To elaborate, one of the reasons that God created was to teach or model a behavior for his created people. This is clearly seen in God's deliverance of shared behavior to Adam and Eve, who were commanded to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (1:28). Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to procreate, thus experiencing on a smaller scale the act of creation themselves. The second command was to "subdue" the earth and "have dominion" over it. Seen here the passed-on quality of ownership demonstrated by God to His created people. Not only were they expected to produce, but to have dominion or ownership (on a smaller scale). These learned behaviors taught to them by God were rooted in the fact that they were created in God's image and likeness. This shows an important characteristic of developing culture; God teaches His act of creation to His created people, introducing a gathering of people who will be formed. Thus, the roots of culture are developed in the very first chapter of the Bible: cultivating, instructing, teaching, and learning alongside the command of production, ownership, and stewardship.

Furthermore, Gen 2:15 shows God's instruction to Adam regarding his responsibility. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." His role in creation was to *shamar*¹⁷ (to keep, watch, preserve) and *abad*¹⁸ (to work, serve) over God's created garden. The Hebrew term *shamar* suggests that the created world was at risk or in danger of something not being watched or kept.¹⁹ In the next verse, God continues instructing Adam, giving new rules that would develop the culture of Eden. Genesis 2:16–17 introduced liberty,

¹⁷ "H8104 - *šāmar* - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (KJV)," Blue Letter Bible, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h8104>.

¹⁸ "H5647 - *ʿābād* - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (KJV)," Blue Letter Bible, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h5647>.

¹⁹ Susan Ann Brayford, *Genesis* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 230.

enjoyment, caution, and potential consequence to their home: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may (liberty or free will) surely eat of every tree of the garden (enjoyment), but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat (caution), for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (potential consequence).”

Then, a further development of culture is seen—the need for relationship. The Lord God declared the necessity of relationship in verse 18, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him.” This act is reflective of God’s relationship with man. If culture involves the important act of teaching and reproducing shared beliefs, it reasoned well that God would give Adam fulfillment in the area of relationship both from He and from Eve. In only the first two chapters of Genesis, the Bible introduced a forming culture defined with procreation, ownership or dominion, preservation, work, liberty, enjoyment, caution, consequence, and relationship. These qualities given by God to his newly formed culture were meant to be passed on to the next generation in procreation.²⁰ However, the fall affected every learned behavior that was given by God to His people, pronounced in the curse.

Culture Affected

Secondly, culture is affected and challenged by sin. Instead of staying within the framework of God’s command for society, Adam and Eve sinned, introducing new behaviors into their culture: pride, disobedience, and death. The qualities of Eden’s culture were perfect as instituted by God, but because of their failure to observe caution, the consequence was applied. Sin now affected man’s ownership and dominion over the living creatures on earth. Previously, man had dominion over every fish, bird, and living thing that lived on the earth but now enmity

²⁰ John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary: from Biblical Text to Contemporary Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 2614.

existed between person and creature. As often as Genesis 3:15 is quoted in redemptive history, the immediate context of verse 15 is often overlooked.²¹ Man had lost his complete dominion over everything in creation due to the consequence of sin.

Procreation was also affected in the pain of childbearing. This curse included the multiplication of the pain (Gen 2:16). In verse 16, the relationship component had been affected. Now, there would be conflict and strife between husband and wife. The curse on the marriage bond entails that both spouses would now have to work through striving and conflicts to represent the correct marriage God intended in the “holding fast” of one another (Gen 2:24).

Next, the qualities of work had been affected. Man was given the ability to work by preserving the garden and serving God in his work. After the fall, the ground became cursed, producing thorns and thistles. Now, the work of preserving and serving in work had been cursed, and enjoyed work became labor endured with difficulty (Gen 2:17–18) leading to a lack of enjoyment. While man had previously been allowed to eat any tree with joy, he now would have to sweat or labor tirelessly to enjoy something to eat. The caution given by God had now become a reality, and the consequence was then received in a spiritual sense. Sailhamer says, “The penalty is identical to that established by the Mosaic law: to ‘be put to death’ is to be ‘cut off from his people.’ In this sense the transgression of Adam and Eve means they must be cast off from the protective presence of the community in the garden.”²² They were separated from their

²¹ Genesis 3:15 is often quoted in redemptive history as the protoevangelium—the first mention of the gospel in the Bible. This was an ultimate foreshadowing of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would crush the head of the serpent finally by the woman’s seed.

²² John Sailhamer and Walter C. Kaiser, *Genesis-Leviticus*, Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 59.

fellowship with God because of their sin (spiritual death). Therefore, it can be said that every facet of the culture God had created had been affected by the fall.

Culture Restructured

The third observation about culture is that it is recreated and restructured by sinful people. Immediately after God pronounced a curse on the serpent, Eve, and then Adam, they are banished from ever entering the Garden again. Genesis 3:23 interestingly says, “Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.” After the fall, Adam had the same responsibility he did in Eden, to *shamar* and *abad* (the working and keeping of the ground). This signifies that God’s created culture was not completely lost, just distorted drastically.²³ Another observation is that God formed man from ground that was outside of the garden of Eden (“God sent him out ... to work the ground from which he was taken”). His disobedience in the sin of pride and rebellion drove him back to the place where he was first formed: the dirt (outside of Eden). Adam had the liberty to continue in obedience to God’s command to work, just in a new location separated from Him. Thus, culture according to God’s design can be kept and obeyed, even in a location that is separated from “Eden.” Applying this principle to current context suggests that Christians can seek to personally honor and obey God’s design for culture, even while living in a culture that may be separated from God.

Sinful people began to bring the regularity of characteristics into culture that disobeyed God’s original design. Genesis 4 introduces the reader to Cain and Abel and begins with a beautiful hope for humanity—a family who is obeying the commands of God. Adam and Eve

²³ Albert Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 55.

procreate and Eve verbally honors God by acknowledging His help (Gen 4:1b). Abel was a “keeper of sheep” alluding to the command of God to *abad* (protect, guard or defend). Cain was a “worker of the ground” (*shamar*), like his father. However, when the time came to bring an offering to the Lord, Abel brought the firstborn of the flock and the fat portions, giving the best offering he could to God. But Cain simply brought some of the fruit, perhaps out of duty or form. Abel gave out of a worshipful heart, while the contrast in their gifts show that Cain gave simply out of duty.²⁴ When his offering was not accepted by God, Cain’s anger boiled against Abel and he murdered him—the first bloodshed of another human being in Scripture. Doing this introduced some more sinful characteristics of the first family’s culture. Pride was demonstrated in the garden, but now introduced is a thirst for power, dominance, violence, and murder.

But not all cultural characteristics become evil in the early narrative of Genesis. For after this came several good aspects introduced by the development of family lineage. Cain built a city, naming it after his son, Enoch (Gen 4:17). Jabal was a homemaker who had livestock (v. 20). Jubal’s family line were players of instruments (v. 21) and Tubal-cain was a forger of all instruments of bronze and iron (v. 22). Humans had the free will and liberty to add cultural characteristics that were permissible. These early characters are builders, homemakers, owners, musicians, and engineers. These early cultivations and civilizations suggests that Cain’s line continued to enjoy the blessing of subduing and ruling.²⁵ However, Genesis 6 introduced a severe consequence for humanity, when all of Earth became corrupt and every intention of their hearts were evil continually. After the flood, in the expansion of Noah’s family lineage, an earthly kingdom is created that portrayed a denial of God’s design.

²⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 5481–482.

²⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 5786.

The theological implications of Genesis 11 are profound to this discussion. In it, an entirely new culture and kingdom is developed that would represent sin and its influence. After the flood subsided and Noah's family began multiplying on the earth, people began migrating to the land of Shinar. Genesis 11:1 says that the whole Earth had one language and used the same words. But in verse 4, their intentions are made clear: "Then they said, 'Come, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.'" Their intentions were to de-throne God and make a kingdom for their own recognition. It began a kingdom of pride, self-sufficiency, and defiance of their creator. Babel became the example of every earthly kingdom to follow. Sailhamer suggests that the author intentionally draws this story into the larger scheme at work throughout the book, specifically about man's own attempt to find that which is "good."²⁶ Instead of a culture of people living intentionally for God's design, they were a culture of self-seekers, bent on making a name for themselves. The dispersion of Babel is a foreshadowing of God's sovereignty in demonstrating that the Kingdom of Man could not stand against God's kingdom. Furthermore, their attempt failed to achieve power independently from God.²⁷

Verse 9 says that the name of this city was called Babel in many translations, because the Lord confused the language and dispersed them. But some translations, like the CSB (Christian Standard Bible) call the location "Babylon."²⁸ Interestingly, the Hebrew word in verse 9 is Babel, while the Greek transliteration uses the word *Babylonos* or Babylon. Kenneth Matthews

²⁶ John H. Sailhamer and Walter C. Kaiser, *Genesis-Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 104.

²⁷ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 467.

²⁸ Strong's Greek: 897. *Βαβυλῶν* (*Babulón*) - "Gate of God(s)," May 2, 2021. <https://biblehub.com/greek/897.htm>.

notes that in many occurrences of Babel in the Old Testament, it is often translated *Babylon* in the New Testament.²⁹ Both *Babel* in Genesis 10-11 and *Babylon* in the book of Daniel are in the land of Shinar. The translation and geographic location both indicate that “Babel” and “Babylon” are the same place.

Theologically, this serves as an introduction to the separation of two major ideals: two kingdoms, two cities, or two designs for culture. In 2 Kings 25 and more specifically detailed in the book of Daniel, Babylon remained relatively unchanged. To continue their dominance in “making a name for themselves” as a kingdom, Babylon besieged Jerusalem in 605 BC. They took the King of Judah, stole their temple treasures, and placed them in the house of their gods. Then, they took several young Israelites who were good-looking and skillful, gave them a new identity and sought to indoctrinate them in Babylonian culture. King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon at the time, represented the culture of Babylon well. In Daniel 4:30, Nebuchadnezzar says, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” The King said these words after his dream was interpreted by Daniel, after seeing God save Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, and after a second dream was interpreted by Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar had seen the hand of God work in multiple ways, but still sought to pridefully build his own kingdom, so God humiliated him in Chapter 4.

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied about the Babylonian exile because of Israel’s sin against God.³⁰ If Babel and Babylon are the same location, the context of the exile can be seen more clearly. The nations dispersed of God’s people (led by Nimrod) at the Tower of Babel in

²⁹ Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:2*, 467–69.

³⁰ Jeremiah 29:1–23; Ezekiel 12.

Genesis 11 were then returning to exile under Babylonian rule. So, the Babylonian “exile” can be seen more as a return to Babel, where they were first dispersed. In a comparable way, Adam was returned to the ground in which he was formed after his rebellion against God. These similarities show that when man continually rebels against God in the forming of his or her own design against God’s design, man is pushed further into a culture in which he does not belong. Due to sin’s consequences, the culture has now become incredibly complex and multi-faceted. But fortunately, Jeremiah and Daniel both give words of hope and model the example of living in one culture but striving towards God’s design.³¹

Culture Challenged and Confused

Next, culture presents a significant challenge for God’s people who are continually living in two domains. In biblical history, Israel was taken into captivity by Babylon around 597–598 BC. Jeremiah 25:3–11 shows that the Babylonian exile was sovereignly orchestrated by God. The Israelites refused to obey God’s commands and statutes, worshipped false idols, and lived in sin. Therefore, God sent Babylon to destroy and besiege their land: “The whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years” (25:11). In Jeremiah 29:4–7, the prophet sent a letter to the Israelites who were under Babylonian rule.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile, from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plan gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

³¹ This will be further explored in the next section and in my section on “Competing Views of Culture.”

Instead of the Israelites trying to free themselves and go back to their normal way of life, God commanded them to settle into their current situation. But they are never called to conform to Babylonian way of life. Instead, the “settling in” to their situation is connected with God’s original command to them: the reiteration of God’s original design for the people of God by procreating and working.³²

Modern Christians can connect to the context of Israel during this time. While Jeremiah wrote his letter to the exiles in Babylon, Peter wrote a letter to the elect exiles in his first letter. 1 Peter is address to “those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia ...” (1 Peter 1:1). These believers were spread out all over these eastern areas due to persecution they were facing.³³ Like the Jewish exiles, Christians are told by Peter to remain where they are, and to pursue God’s agenda in their situation.

Beloved, I urge you *as sojourners and exiles* to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable*, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but *living servants of God*. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. (1 Peter 2:11–17.)

Like Jeremiah, Peter never called the people of God to abandon the status of sojourners or exiles, but rather to embrace the reality of the world around them. Instead of refraining from communicating with Gentiles, they were called to keep their conduct among the Gentiles honorable, implying that they would be living amongst the daily life of Gentiles. Verse 12 also confirmed that the Gentiles would probably speak against them and call them evildoers—a

³² Frank E. Gaebelin et al., *Isaiah–Ezekiel*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 553.

³³ This is suggested due to Peter’s direct encouragement for Christians in persecution and suffering in 1 Peter 4:12-19.

confirmation of probable persecution to some extent. But instead of rebellion against authorities, Christians are called to be *subject* to them (2:13). They are told by Peter to live as servants of God in the present age, but also to honor everyone, including the emperor (v17). The instruction came to God's citizens who were living in two different domains—a culture that honors God within a culture that does not. But this instruction comes with many questions about faith and culture. The culture has been recreated and restructured by sinful people and creates a dilemma for Christians who desire to live an obedient life that honors God's original design for His people, while living in a seemingly godless society.

Culture Restored

The biblical narrative teaches that one day, culture according to God's design will be restored. The book of Revelation shows that Eden will be experienced by all those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. First, Revelation 7:9-12 shows that the exiled, dispersed people of God who have been placed in all parts of the Earth will one day be united again. John says, "Behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Rev 7:9-10). The uniting of worshippers from every tribe and nation shows that the effects of the Tower of Babel will come to an end—no longer will there be any confusion of language and dispersion throughout the world, because God will unite his people again.

Next, Babylon will be destroyed, along with every sinful facet of culture that belonged to it (Rev 18:2-3). Though Babylon is shown in biblical history to be overthrown temporarily, many

of the prophecies speak of an ultimate, or final overthrowing of Babylon.³⁴ Revelation 17:5 personifies a great prostitute called Babylon, who will face the judgement of God for its evil and immorality. Babylon also represents a city that is filled with “dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life” (Rev 17:8). During this great judgement, kings and nations will rise and join the great city of Babylon, and make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, “For He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called chosen and faithful” (Rev 17:14).

This final judgement and destruction of Babylon is seen in Rev. 18:21, “Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, ‘So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more.’” Babylon is described in Revelation 17–18 as a dwelling place for demons, for uncleanness, and for sexual immorality. This kingdom was the representation of a culture that had been recreated and restructured by sinful men apart from God, and according to God’s Word this “culture” will be thrown down and destroyed by the great judge. And no longer will Babylon have any influence over the people of God, nor will his people have to live in exile any longer.

God’s design for culture is restored in the New Heavens and the New Earth. John sees a vision of a new heaven and a new earth in Revelation 21 and 22. The details of his vision show a resort back to God’s original design in creation in Eden, along with a reversal of the curse of sin.

³⁴ According to biblical history, Babylon is overthrown by the Medes and the Persians in 539 BC. Isaiah prophesied in Is 13:17, “Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them...and Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them.” Jeremiah 50 and 51 add further to this prophecy against Babylon: “Behold, I am against you, O Proud one, declares the Lord God of hosts, for your day has come, the time when I will punish you. The proud one shall stumble and fall with none to raise him up...” (Jer. 50:31–32). These prophecies go into detail about God’s stirring up of nations that will overthrow them. In Daniel chapter 5, we see this destruction taking place after Daniel interprets the handwriting on the wall. Belshazzar, king of Babylon was killed by Darius the Mede, and Darius received the kingdom. See Is 13:11—19; Jer 51:62—64; Ez 17:12–24.

Adam and Eve were banished from the garden because of their sin and separated from their relationship with God. But Revelation 21:3 says, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” In this vision, God’s declaration is, “Behold, I am making all things new” (v.5). The effects of sin will be reversed in new creation, as death, mourning, crying, and pain will be no more (v.4). While sin’s curse even stretched as far as creation itself, there will be a renewed land with a beautiful city described as New Jerusalem (21:9-27). Instead of thorns and thistles, John sees a river of the water of life flowing through the middle of the city, along with a tree of life yielding different fruit all year long. The curses of sin will be gone, for, “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him” (22:3).

Since Christians have not experienced the New Heavens and the New Earth yet, they find themselves figuratively in the same place as the Jewish exiles in Babylon.³⁵ Or to see this closer to home, they find themselves as the elect exiles dispersed all over the world like in 1 Peter. Now understanding culture according to Scripture more clearly, four major views exist on how Christians are to live in the culture as God’s people in exile.

Competing Views of Culture

With these facts about culture in mind, Christians must consider how they ought to interact with those around them and with the affairs of their city and nation from a Christian

³⁵ Colson says, “We are experiencing some of the same sense of exile that the Jews did.... We live in a culture that is at best morally indifferent. A culture in which Judeo-Christian values are mocked and where immorality in high places is not only ignored but even rewarded in the voting booth.” Charles W. Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2004), Introduction, xi.

perspective. In any discussion about Christian engagement in culture, two studies are of the utmost importance—the relationship of nature and grace and the relationship between Christ and culture.

Bruce Ashford says, “The question about how nature and grace relate is fundamental, logically prior to discussing the relationships between theology and culture, Christianity and politics, or church and state.”³⁶ The effects of the fall stretched further than just human ability but to every facet of human culture and creation. The “thorns and thistles” produced by the earth are significant indicators of the pain and disillusion brought to nature by the effects of sin, in addition to sin’s effects on relationships. This is seen in Romans 8:19-22:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

The effects that sin had on creation itself was drastic and will only be completely renewed in the creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth. The Italian Reformed-theologian Peter Martyr Vermigli commented, “For the Earth is subjected to the curse and thorns because of us, and it produces briars, and after nourishing us with its fallen fruit...it is forced to endure devastation and destruction on account of our sins.”³⁷ The consequences of the fall should be seen devastating, but not without the hope of renewal.

The mere existence of creation and its cultural facets, and the potential in human relationship such as marriage, can be explained by common grace. Sam Storms says, “Common

³⁶ “Abraham Kuyper, Bruce Ashford, and the Relationship of Christianity and Culture,” *Welch College*, last modified August 9, 2016, accessed March 29, 2021, <https://welch.edu/abraham-kuyper-bruce-ashford-and-the-relationship-of-christianity-and-culture/>.

³⁷ Gwenfair Walters Adams, *Romans 1–8*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press 2019), 47.

grace, as an expression of the goodness of God, is every favor, falling short of salvation, which this undeserving and sin-cursed world enjoys at the hand of God; this includes the delay of wrath, the mitigation of sin-natures, natural events that lead to prosperity, and all gifts that human use and enjoy naturally.”³⁸ Common Grace given by God is given both to his elect people and the non-elect, among the saved and the unsaved alike. The Christian understanding of grace and nature have created dilemma in the question of engagement in culture.

The study of Christ and culture is also invaluable to this discussion. One of the most important theological and missiological works of the twentieth century is found in Richard Niebuhr’s *Christ and Culture* written in 1951. The impact of this landmark book has regularly been used to address questions related to how Christians interact with their culture. In it, Niebuhr uses five ways to categorize the relationship between Christ and Culture. While Niebuhr’s models are widely well-known and recognizable, other helpful models have been suggested, such as Tim Keller’s four models presented in *Center Church*. This paper will now turn to an explanation of Keller’s categories (in reference to Niebuhr’s) in an effort to help view political activism through a biblically accurate lens.³⁹

Counterculturalist View

³⁸ An Essay by Sam Storms, “The Goodness of God and Common Grace,” *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed March 29, 2021, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/goodness-god-common-grace/>.

³⁹ Richard Niebuhr’s five categories of Christ and culture are (1) Christ against culture (2) Christ of culture (3) Christ above culture (4) Christ and culture in paradox and (5) Christ the transformer of culture. Tim Keller’s categories follow Niebuhr’s conclusions, but instead of five models he uses four, lumping the “Christ of culture” and “Christ above culture” both inside his “Relevance Model.” The reason I am using Keller’s four categories instead of Niebuhr’s five are for summary and clarity. I think a summary of two of Niebuhr’s categories are helpful due to a similarity in application. It is also helpful to rename these categories to help with the confusion. The names of Niebuhr’s views involve many “Christs” and “cultures.” So, Keller’s models simply help distinguish in conversation between these.

This view is associated with Niebuhr's *Christ against culture* model. One way that Christians have historically understood culture is as an irredeemable, cursed aspect of their temporary lives on Earth. In this view, grace and nature are contested with one another. They view the fall's effects on nature ontologically. While Christians live on this Earth, culture cannot be changed because the effects of sin devastated nature. It will one day be destroyed and made into a New Heaven and a New Earth. Proponents seek to observe culture as it currently stands fallen in sin and view a distinct separation between kingdom living and worldly living. Indeed, 1 John specifically instructs Christians to direct their love towards God and others, and not towards the world.⁴⁰ Regarding the biblical teaching of love, Niebuhr says, "This succinct statement of the positive meaning of Christianity is, however, accompanied by an equally emphatic negation. The counterpart of loyalty to Christ and the brothers is the rejection of cultural society; a clear line of separation is drawn between the brotherhood of the children of God and the world."⁴¹ Christians are to make a distinction between love for God and others, and love for the world.

The history of this view traces back to medieval times, where Niebuhr says, "monastic orders and sectarian movements called on believers...to abandon the 'world' and to 'come out from among them and be separate.'"⁴² Perhaps the most influential figure in developing this thought was Tertullian, who said, "The conflict of the believer is not with nature but with culture, for it is in culture that sin chiefly resides."⁴³ Tertullian believed that culture was the propagator and producer for all kinds of sin, and it should be avoided at all costs. In his *Apology*,

⁴⁰ 1 John 2:3–11; 3:4–10; 16, 21–24; 4:9, 10–12; 19–21; and 5:23 are used to define God's essence of love and the Christian calling of love, while noting the danger of loving the world.

⁴¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 47–48.

⁴² Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 48.

⁴³ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 38.

Tertullian wrote about political life that “we have no pressing inducement to take part in your public meetings; nor is there aught more entirely foreign to us than affairs of state.”⁴⁴ On Philosophy, art, and literature, Tertullian saw each cultural, categorial activity as a minister of sin. This lifestyle can be seen in both Amish and Mennonite communities, since “they not only renounce all participation in politics and refuse to be drawn into military service, but follow their own distinctive customs and regulations in economics and education.”⁴⁵ Instead of engaging the culture, they may practice their faith inside and throughout the local church without worrying about what goes on in the world. Furthermore, Christ is opposed to culture, calling his followers to live completely separate from the world and its civilizations.⁴⁶ Other proponents have championed Russian author Leo Tolstoy as “A crusader against culture under the banner of the law of Christ,”⁴⁷ for his views of Christian anarchism and pacifism.⁴⁸ According to this view, the efforts in Christian ministry should go towards evangelism and obedience to God’s commands while separating from culture.

Proponents of this model do not see God working redemptively through cultural movements outside the church.⁴⁹ Keller says, “This model calls the church to avoid

⁴⁴ Tertullianus, Marcus and Minucius Felix. *Tertullian: Apology* (London: Heinemann, 1966), 38.

⁴⁵ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 56.

⁴⁶ Niebuhr says, “Whatever may be the customs of the society in which the Christian lives, and whatever the human achievement it conserves, Christ is seen as opposed to them, so that he confronts men with the challenge of an ‘either-or’ decision.” Ibid, p. 40.

⁴⁷ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 60.

⁴⁸ Tolstoy was highly influenced by the writings of Quakers such as George Fox and William Penn. He wrote about his interpretation of Jesus’ ethics in his books *What I Believe* (1884) and *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1894).

⁴⁹ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 205.

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...the best thing the church can do for the world is to exhibit Christ's kingdom to it."⁵⁰ In this, the church's responsibility is not to build or advance the kingdom of God, but it is to be a sign of the future kingdom "as it seeks to be a new human society ordered on the basis of God's law and salvation."⁵¹

When it comes to Politics, those who adhere to this view do not engage in public life. Politics and Government are corrupt due to sin. Thus, government is placed by God to give order to the fallen world, but the Christian narrative may not be transformative in a fallen state of sinful people. Counterculturalists argue that the church should be neither conservative or liberal, but that their efforts should be placed in transforming and helping the Christian community apart from the culture. A current example of this line of thinking comes from Stanley Hauerwas' *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*: "The conservative-liberal polarity is not much help in diagnosing the situation of the church since, as presently constructed, we can see little difference between the originating positions of liberals or conservatives."⁵² Therefore, political polarity is not a necessary topic in evangelism. As Jesus commanded people in his day to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," so should current-day Christians preach a message of repentance to a sinful world.

There are strengths and weaknesses to this view on cultural engagement. Proponents normally take sin seriously, obeying Christ's command to not love the world or the things of the world. Churches who uphold this view on culture recognize that they are only sojourners and

⁵⁰ Keller, *Center Church*, 205.

⁵¹ Keller, *Center Church*, 206.

⁵² Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 156.

exiles in this world. They understand Christ's promise that they will be hated and persecuted on earth. They understand that this world is fleeting, and they put great hope in a world to come, free of any sin that has affected their lives. Niebuhr shows appreciation for some components of this view, noting that "the movement of withdrawal and renunciation (from the world) is a necessary element in every Christian life..."⁵³

But this view has its weaknesses as well. Niebuhr continues, "...even though it must be followed by an equally necessary movement of responsible engagement in cultural tasks. If Romans 13 is not balanced by 1 John, the church becomes an instrument of state, unable to point men to their transpolitical destiny and their suprapolitical loyalty."⁵⁴ The Christian life is inherently cultural and contextual. Many of the biblical characters were involved in their trades and played important roles in governmental matters, at least as a significant influence who sought to reform the functions of their structures with God's instruction.⁵⁵ Critics of this model charge it with being far too pessimistic about cultural change. To use a common example, where would our nation be today, were it not for the influential changes brought by Christian activist Martin Luther King Jr. to abolish segregation and end Jim Crow laws in America during the 1950s and 1960s? A much earlier example could be seen in William Wilberforce, a British activist who diligently worked to abolish the slave trade. Both were evangelical Christians who were concerned with societal sin and used their Christian influence to develop cultural changes.

⁵³ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 68.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Some Biblical examples will be observed in my section on "Biblical, Narrative Examples of Transformationists' View."

Another issue with this model is that, in the words of Keller, “it demonizes modern business, capital markets, and government.”⁵⁶ This view fails to see governmental structures as designed by God and instituted by him for the purpose of establishing justice and punishing evil in the culture. It discourages Christians from being involved in business, politics, and education – all of which are places where Christians can have a significant impact. This demonstrates a failure to contextualize — it is almost impossible for a Christian to live completely and entirely separate from all aspects of culture. Niebuhr says, “This view is inadequate, because it affirms in words what it denies in action – namely, the possibility of sole dependence on Jesus Christ to the exclusion of culture. Culture has penetrated man, and it always will.”⁵⁷ Therefore, the implications of this view are unrealistic. If sin resides in every aspect of culture, what do proponents say about Christian organizations that are acting as the church in various areas of society, such as pro-life clinics and pregnancy centers in their local communities – are these cultural entities also inherently sinful? Proponents of this view must grapple with the theological inconsistencies, such as Christ’s providence over all of creation, the extent of the effects of the fall, and the spirit immanent in the Christian community.⁵⁸

Two Kingdoms View

Next, Christians have classically considered a model known as the “Two Kingdoms View,” popularized by the reformer Martin Luther. Niebuhr calls this view “Christ and Culture

⁵⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 208.

⁵⁷ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 69

⁵⁸ Niebuhr talks about Christ as the creator of nature and governor of history as well as the spirit immanent in creation and in the Christian community. He says, “The rejection of culture is combined with a suspicion of nature and nature’s God. Reliance on Christ is often converted into a reliance on the Spirit immanent in him...they are tempted to divide the world into the material realm governed by a principle opposed to Christ and a spiritual realm guided by the spiritual God. 81.

in Paradox” because it teaches a distinct dualism between the common kingdom and the redemptive kingdom that exist in paradox with each other. According to Niebuhr, “Christians throughout life are subject to the tension that accompanies obedience to two authorities who do not agree yet must both be obeyed.”⁵⁹ Like advocates of the Countercultural model, they refuse to use Christian claims in secular society, but recognize that obedience to God requires some sort of obedience to authorities in the world. In the natural world (or the common kingdom) God sustains fallen creation and sinful men by His common grace, while in the spiritual kingdom He especially reveals his grace to His elect and calls them to kingdom work. So, the relationship between nature and grace can be seen dualistically – nature is revealed generally and particularly, while grace is revealed in a common sense and in a special sense. The relationship between Christ and Culture can be seen as working alongside each other for their own distinct purposes.

In 1523, Martin Luther wrote a pamphlet addressed to John, Duke of Saxony entitled *Von Weltlicher Obrigkeit* or “On Secular Authority.” In it, he explained the role that Christians have in public life. Luther says, “We must divide all the children of Adam into two classes: the first belong to the kingdom of God, and the second to the kingdom of the world. Those belong to the kingdom of God are all true believers in Christ and are subject to Christ...He calls the gospel, a gospel of the kingdom, for the reason that it teaches, governs, and contains God’s kingdom.”⁶⁰ Of the other kingdom, Luther says, “All who are not Christians belong to the kingdom of the world and are under the law. Since few believe and still fewer live a Christian life, do not resist

⁵⁹ Niebuhr, 40.

⁶⁰ Luther, Martin. “On Secular Authority.” Our Lord's Lutheran Church. Accessed March 28, 2021. <https://www.lolonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Luther-Secular-Authority-To-What-Extent-It-Should-Be-Obeyed.pdf>. (Taken from a letter from Martin Luther to the Duke of Saxony)

the evil, and themselves do no evil, God has provided for non-Christians a different government outside the Christian estate and God's kingdom, and has subjected them to the sword."⁶¹ Luther used a plethora of scriptures to explain the very distinct roles of the two kingdoms, both of which have been instituted by God and are currently used for His purposes.⁶² Both kingdoms work as parallels for different causes, but Luther argues they should never cross each other. He says, "Therefore it is out of the question that there should be a common Christian government over the whole world...since the wicked always outnumbers the good." Furthermore, "For this reason these two kingdoms must be sharply distinguished, and both be permitted to remain; the one to produce piety, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds; neither is sufficient in the world without the other."⁶³ According to Luther's view, when salvation comes upon a new believer, they should not change any cultural aspect of their lives, for, "The Ethiopian Eunuch was permitted to remain in his work and to return home to continue service...to the queen of Ethiopia."⁶⁴ Luther uses 1 Corinthians 7:17, 20, and 24 to advocate the view that personal salvation does not affect any type of living in the worldly kingdom but gives new meaning to the godly kingdom.⁶⁵ Therefore, Luther's argument is that instead of infiltrating culture with the gospel, Christians should let the Kingdom of God influence their lives paralleled with their

⁶¹ Luther, *On Secular Authority*, 6.

⁶² 1 Tim 1:9,19; Matt 7:18; Rom 7:7; Rom 13:3; Gal 3:19,24 1 Peter 2:14

⁶³ Luther, *On Secular Authority*, 7.

⁶⁴ Luther, *On Secular Authority*, 13.

⁶⁵ 1 Cor. 7:17, "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him." 20, "Each should remain in the condition in which he was called." 24 "So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God."

actions in this world, advocating justice and welfare in the culture but practicing their faith personally.

This view taught by Luther was reiterated through the writing of John Calvin.⁶⁶ Tuininga notes, “These reformers argued that Christ governs and expands his kingdom through the ministry of the word by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet...he does so in such a way as not to nullify the order of creation or the institutions that God has created to govern that order, most importantly those of civil government and family.”⁶⁷

Perhaps the most influential theologian who gave the Two Kingdoms view a contemporary voice was David VanDrunen, author of *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* and *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*. VanDrunen taught that a certain responsibility given to engage culture with the gospel as advocated by neo-Calvinists such as Abraham Kuyper showed an ultimate distraction to the Christian role of making disciples. He argued that this other view promoted a social gospel, a gospel antithetical to a Christians’ responsibility. VanDrunen believes that Christians should stay out of Politics as much as possible, and pastors should keep those topics out of the pulpit.

According to this view, Christians have no responsibility to change or transform culture. Keller summarizes concisely: “According to the Two Kingdoms model...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.”⁶⁸ Instead, Christians are called to

⁶⁶ Notions of Calvin’s agreement with Luther on this matter can be seen in his *Institutes*, Book 3, Chapters 810.

⁶⁷ “The Two Kingdoms Doctrine: What’s The Fuss All About? Part One.” Reformation 21. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://www.reformation21.org/articles/the-two-kingdoms-doctrine-whats-the-fuss-all-about-part-one.php>.

⁶⁸ Keller, *Center Church*, 210

seek the general welfare of their culture as sojourners and exiles. Proponents of this view emphasize God's instructions to Jewish exiles living under Babylonian captivity in Jeremiah 29:1-14. Through Jeremiah, the Lord says, "Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce...multiply there, do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city...and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer 29:5-7). Furthermore, Peter writes to the elect exiles of dispersion in 1 Peter 2:13-17, noting similar instructions to "be subject to every human institution...honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor."

There are obvious strengths to this view. It resembles the real tension that exists between obedience to God and obedience to ruling authorities and human institutions. This view helps Christians think carefully and deeply about their commitments in obedience to God as well as living in the world. In this, there exists a careful meditation of scripture and the authority therein. It is evident that the Two Kingdoms model can be a very helpful way to observe living in culture and in the church faithfully.

However, the Two Kingdoms model has some weaknesses as well. While common grace and natural revelation are highlighted in this view to provide guidance for peace and function in society, it equally lessens the need for the Bible and the gospel to strengthen public life by giving guidance and morale to society. Keller argues that unfortunately, this view misinterprets natural revelation, in that it fails to observe the fact that humans suppress the truth of God that is made known to them clearly (Romans 1:18-32).⁶⁹ Furthermore, this view misrepresents the history of societal goals such as human rights, moral values, and justice. These aspects come from

⁶⁹ Keller, *Center Church*, 213.

distinctly biblical, Christian teachings and cannot be sufficiently expressed without Scripture. Another dangerous implication of this model is the possibility for Christians to live a religiously neutral life and give credence to secular culture, while silencing Christian convictions. If Christians are not allowed to use distinctly Christian language in society, how then will the Kingdom of God grow, and how will the gospel be boldly spread? As Keller states, “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.”⁷⁰

Relevance View

The Relevance model follows both of Niebuhr’s categories “Christ of Culture,” and “Christ Above Culture.” They are similar in that they both view culture in a positive light, comparing the goals of society with the mission of the church. This view suggests that as cultural shifts and trends occur, the church adapts to it and follows its function. Keller says, “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.”⁷¹ Adherents feel at home in culture, finding a lack of tension between the church and the world.⁷² Niebuhr related his “Christ of Culture,” view to liberal Christians or “cultural Christians,” noting that, “the ethics of salvation and the ethics of social conservation or progress” are equally important.⁷³ Furthermore, Christ can be used to

⁷⁰ Keller, *Center Church*, 215.

⁷¹ Keller, *Center Church*, 201.

⁷² Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 83.

⁷³ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 83.

accomplish the goals in society of idealism, socialism, and tolerance.⁷⁴ This model that Niebuhr suggests is controversial – D.A. Carson questioned the view in regards to its connection with biblical Christianity. Due to the liberal and fallacious use of biblical interpretation and historic Christianity, Carson says that it should be discounted altogether.⁷⁵

But the “Christ above culture” view has some credence toward relevance, in that it affirms biblical theology – recognizing the nature of sin universally. Relativists take cultural products and supplement them to Christianity, synthesizing cultural ethics and gospel ethics. Since God is working to redeem creation through various waves in historical trends, culture is the vehicle which Christians can operate in to accomplish their mission. If these factors about culture are seen in this way, it highly affects church leadership and structure. The church’s responsibility could be found in adapting to cultural trends and relevance for the purpose of growth and expansion. Keller associates this model with seeker model churches, in that they “reshape Christian ministry in the world’s likeness.”⁷⁶

The key figure used in this model by Niebuhr is Thomas Aquinas, who “represents a Christianity that has achieved or accepted full social responsibility for all the great institutions.”⁷⁷ According to Niebuhr, Aquinas found a unity between philosophy and theology, state and church, civic and Christian virtues, natural and divine laws, Christ and culture. The

⁷⁴ Niebuhr: “Jesus Christ is the Great Enlightener, the great teacher, the one who directs all men in culture to the attainment of wisdom, moral perfection, and peace. Sometimes he is hailed as the great utilitarian, sometimes as the great idealist, sometimes as the man of reason, sometimes as the man of sentiment. But whatever categories are by means of which he is understood, the things for which he stands are fundamentally the same – a peaceful, co-operative society achieved by moral training.” 92.

⁷⁵ D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI ; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), 60.

⁷⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 202.

⁷⁷ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 128.

logic follows — if God is at work in culture, and the cultural trend is primarily social justice, the church should emphatically join in on the mission of culture.

The Relevant view could be a benefit to non-believers who seek to join a church that relates to their cultural convictions. In fact, this could even draw in those to become saved because of their activity in the culture. However, culture is constantly shifting and changing, and the church is outdated quickly to those people. According to Keller, when Protestant churches adapt to culture, they remove supernatural elements and downplay doctrinal beliefs. Then, the church loses its distinctive qualities of doctrinal integrity, likening itself to a social service institution.⁷⁸ Losing the gospel-centered, evangelistic mission of the church is a tragic failure. While some efforts in societal goals are important, such as human rights, social justice, and equality, they must be interpreted through the lens of scripture, the authoritative Word for morality — not through the lens of cultural. The winds of culture shift constantly, but God’s word does not change.

Transformationist View

Finally, Keller uses the Transformationist view to survey Niebuhr’s model called, “Christ the Transformer of Culture.” *Christ and Culture* is obviously bent towards this model as Niebuhr’s favorite, because there are no discussed problems with this view as he presents it. In this view, grace is restoring a renewing nature. Christians who hold to this view believe that it is their responsibility to bring culture under the subjection of Christ, so that it may be restored to God’s design. Although creation will never be completely restored until the New Heaven and the New Earth, Christians can actively take part in redeeming aspects of God’s creation in culture

⁷⁸ Keller, *Center Church*, 204.

currently. Transformationists believe that society will naturally transform when Christians faithfully engage culture with the gospel.

Most proponents of this view take their philosophical foundation from St. Augustine, one of the greatest thinkers in the early church. He was the bishop of Hippo from 396 to 430 and his writings helped lay the foundation for much of modern Christian thought. In his work *The City of God*, Augustine sets forth two cities—the City of God and the City of Man. The two cities are defined by two loves. Augustine says, “We see then that the two cities were created by two kinds of love—the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self.”⁷⁹ Citizens of the City of Man live according to the flesh, while those who live in the City of God live according to the Spirit. Both cities represent competing loyalties within the same culture. Whereas Luther’s “Two Kingdoms” model shows two separate agendas in which Christians can have dual-citizenship, Augustine’s two cities model only leaves room for one love—either the love of self or the love of God.

Augustine argues that the City of Man cannot accomplish its ultimate goal because the means to obtain them are disordered. Because of their love for neighbor, citizens of the City of God have a responsibility to speak truth to those who are in living in the City of Man. Thus, Augustine’s work does not advocate for passivity, but for action in the life of a Christian. He believed that multiple areas of civic life would be greatly enhanced if it were to embrace Christian moral values.⁸⁰ James K.A. Smith says, “The City of God is that ‘society’ of people who are called to embody a foretaste of the social and cultural life that God desires for this

⁷⁹ Augustine et al., *The City of God* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

⁸⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, Book 2, Ch 19.

world.”⁸¹ Niebuhr said, “Christ is the transformer of culture for Augustine in the sense that he redirects, reinvigorates, and regenerates that life of man, expressed in all human works, which in present actuality is the perverted and corrupted exercise of a fundamentally good nature...”⁸²

Therefore, adherents continually refer to Augustine’s *City of God* alongside of the works of Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper used Augustine’s views to further develop many works on the idea of public theology. It was Kuyper’s view that creation was inherently good as declared by God in Genesis 1-2. Though sin affected all of creation, it was not lost—misdirected, but not eliminated. Kuyper wrote works detailing how Christians should be involved in the redemption over every facet of human culture such as art, education, and politics by use of Christian influence and leadership.⁸³ In a series of lectures given at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1878, Kuyper explained his political theory in the principle of God’s Sovereignty over the whole cosmos. He explained three realms of sovereignty: the state, society, and the Church, describing these areas as “spheres” of life where Christ reigns supreme. Thus, the role of the Christian is to submit to the sovereign Christ in every sphere of life. Creation remains good structurally (in its basic order) but bad directionally (as sinful humanity builds society in its love of self rather than God). In his book *Every Square Inch*, Bruce Ashford says, “We should seek to bring every aspect of human culture—the arts the sciences, politics and economics, scholarship and education,

⁸¹ James K. A. Smith, “How (Not) to Be Worldly: Tracing the Borders of the ‘Earthly City,’” *This Is Our City*, accessed March 29, 2021, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/7thcity/tracing-borders-of-earthly-city.html?paging=off>.

⁸² Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 209.

⁸³ Abraham Kuyper et al., *Pro Rege: Living under Christ's Kingship* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016) and Abraham Kuyper et al., *On Education* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019).

business and entrepreneurship, sports and competition – under submission to his [Christ’s] lordship.”⁸⁴

The “cultural mandate,” is extremely important to Transformationists. Genesis 1:28 gives the rationale for humankind to obey two commands of God. The fall did not destroy the command to be fruitful and multiply, for after the fall, this command is reiterated to God’s people in Genesis 9:1,7; 28:3; 35:11; Exodus 1:7, and Leviticus 26:9. In redemptive history, the multiplication of God’s people is expressed by God’s covenant promise to increase Abraham’s children. But in New Testament passages like Romans 9—11, this growth is ultimately seen in the redeemed people of God, including both Jews and Gentiles. When Christ gives the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, it is in fulfillment of the Cultural Mandate to multiply and increase.

The second command given by God in the cultural mandate continues—to subdue the earth and have dominion over creation. To *subdue* means to bring something under subjection. Proponents say that in the Cultural Mandate, humankind reflects the image of the Creator through creativity and cultivation by prioritizing, promoting, and participating in Creation’s flourishing. Tim Keller says in *Every Good Endeavor* that the hope of the gospel is not only for humankind, but also for everything under humankind’s care.⁸⁵ The continued command in Genesis 2:15 to work and keep the garden demonstrate the action of cultivation and care amongst all of God’s creation. However, the fuller sense of the dominion charge is seen in Christian leadership and influence in all the spheres of life. In *Creation Regained*, Wolters says,

⁸⁴ Bruce Riley Ashford, *Every Square Inch: an Introduction to Cultural Engagement for Christians* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 20.

⁸⁵ Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2016).

“Mankind, as God’s representatives on earth, carry on where God left off...From now on the development of the created earth will be societal and cultural in nature.”⁸⁶ As image-bearers of God, Transformationists believe that Christians ought to demonstrate God’s authority to culture and orderly structure culture according to God’s original design. Niebuhr says, “Everything, and not least the political life, is subject to the great conversion that ensues when God makes a new beginning for man by causing man to begin with God.”⁸⁷

This view also has its strengths and weaknesses. Adherents to this view magnify the supremacy of Christ and the sovereignty of God. They focus on doctrine and its impact to applied theology in their life. Their desire is to see a community and a culture transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. But this view has its weaknesses as well. Focusing on winning culture for Christ can come at the expense of distracting away from the Great Commission. The church’s mission is to make disciples of all nations, and “creating and cultivating culture” can introduce a social gospel that threatens the Great Commission. Another weakness is its lack of direct biblical support. Chuck Colson admits, “When we turn to the New Testament, admittedly we do not find verses specifically commanding believers to be engaged in politics or the law or education or the arts. But we don’t need to, because the cultural mandate given to Adam still applies.”⁸⁸ However, scripture gives many examples of characters who sought to transform society through gospel-witness, two of which will be discussed in the section on narrative examples.

⁸⁶ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005), 36.

⁸⁷ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 215.

⁸⁸ Charles W. Colson, Nancy Pearcey, and Bill Henry, *How Now Shall We Live?: Collegiate Edition* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2000), 296.

Applying the Transformative View to Practical Christian Living

First, the Transformationist view should not be confused with forced religious movements, like the Catholic Crusades during the 11th-13th centuries. Any attempt to force Christianization on institutions is an attempt that stands against the character of God and the responsibility of man. The character of God objects to the notion of Christian unwarranted domination in culture. The way in which God offers salvation to people is not with force, but with love. In Jesus' interactions with characters like Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman at the well, the message of the gospel is explained and freely offered to anyone who would accept it. Especially in Acts, whenever the gospel is preached by the apostles like Peter and Steven, it comes with an invitation. And Due to God's love, man is given the opportunity to respond to saving grace with submission or rejection. The biblical support shows the model for evangelism—the gospel should be offered as a free gift for all people. Christians should not try to dominate culture because it goes against the level of respect and humility in attitude both commanded in Scripture and shown to prove the life of a Christian. The Bible teaches that the world will know who are Christ's disciples by their love for one another. According to other biblical commands given by Peter and Paul, Christians are to be subject to governing authorities, submit to every human institution, and to live an honorably peaceful and quiet life in Christ Jesus.⁸⁹

Using a helpful framework for transforming culture with the gospel, Christians should approach culture with an ethical and evangelistic mindset. The transformational view of cultural engagement is helpful to answer these dilemmas. As J.I. Packer has written, "The task of the church is to make the invisible kingdom visible through faithful Christian living and witness-

⁸⁹ John 13:35; Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:2

bearing.”⁹⁰ The clear answer to whether Christians should engage culture with the gospel or not is an absolute yes. This is due to the natural reality that culture consists of people, and Christians are clearly called to go to people with the gospel. Due to the definition of culture explored and implications of what is taught in Scripture about culture, it is clear that culture cannot exist without people. This view speaks of the motive and the attitude in which Christians engage culture with the gospel.

Christians should seek to be evangelistic and ethical in every area of life and allow the gospel transformation of people to naturally transform culture. Luther's assessment of the two kingdoms is helpful to some extent—there are two kingdoms of this Earth, and God is the ruler of both. Civil government (in the Kingdom of Man) is established by God to punish evil and promote justice on the earth. God sustains even the wicked on earth with his common grace for a temporary time until Jesus comes to judge the Earth. Until that time, government leaders and human institutions are called “avengers” of God and are useful for the general welfare of people.⁹¹

How then should Christians use the cultural mandate? The command to be fruitful and multiply is clear—God’s desire for man was to multiply image-bearers all over the world through procreation. In fulfillment to the Abrahamic Covenant and by the implications of Jesus Christ in the New Covenant, God’s people still have the responsibility to multiply and fill the earth by being born again. New creatures in Christ who have been reborn now fulfill this mission to the world. The second command, to subdue the Earth and have dominion over it, is subsequent to the first command. God’s people could not subdue the earth if they did not multiply and fill

⁹⁰ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 223.

⁹¹ Romans 13:4

the earth. While Adam and Eve managed a small part of the garden, the original intention of God is clear—that they would go out into the world and bring everything under their feet, becoming rulers and owners in society. But because of the fall, like procreation, the dominion aspect was affected as well as Adam and Eve’s ownership. However, just as Jesus Christ made it possible to fulfill the first command, He makes it possible to fulfill the second command as well. Because of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, Christians can now practice this second command in a fallen world, but the direction of submission changes. Instead of subduing the Earth as humans and personally having dominion over it, Christians are to bring it under the subjection of Christ. The way in which this is possible is clear in Scripture: through the witness of evangelistic Christians. In the Great Commission, Jesus teaches his disciples that he has authority, and they are to go out and make disciples. In other words, the way Christians bring culture under Christ’s feet is by multiplying and filling the earth, or by the evangelism and discipleship of converts. Therefore, dominion and cultural transformation can be seen as a byproduct of natural discipleship. John Walton clarifies, “Perhaps ‘subduing,’ and ‘ruling’ can likewise be better thought of in terms of privileges rather than obligations. As such they can be understood as delineating jurisdiction rather than granting some sort of inalienable rights.”⁹² As explained before, “dominion” seen this way is more in line with the basic biblical teaching of stewardship. When fulfilled, these two commands naturally transform culture as people in leadership and influence over facets of culture understand God’s moral will expressed in Scripture and how to steward their positions for God’s glory.

Christians have a great evangelistic responsibility to make disciples of all nations, and therefore all cultures and cultural spheres where those people are located. This means Christians

⁹² John H. Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 2790.

are to go to individual people and peoples and speak the truth of the gospel in love, and when disciplined, they naturally will go into their workplaces and spheres of life with Christian morals and responsibilities themselves. In this, Augustine's assessment of the use of Christian terms in culture is beneficial. Luther said that Christians should not seek to use Christian language to influence culture with the gospel. But Christians should always speak the truth in love, and make plain that God's way is truly the best way to live, giving people the free opportunity to respond to the truth of the gospel. So, what is a Christian's responsibility to culture? It is to "Go and make disciples of all nations." This "going" takes initiative and work towards making converts in every area of life, including in culture.

When it comes to actively engaging in cultural spheres, Scripture gives two other precedents outside of the Great Commission. First, Scripture teaches that Christians are to enjoy the life God has given, by freely operating within the world and working for the glory of God. When people are redeemed from sin and then justified before God in salvation, God does not pull them out of the world automatically. Rather, they stay in it, realizing their place in His sovereign plan. Second, God distinctly calls Christians to certain locations and positions in his sovereignty, giving gifts and abilities to influence those around them for the kingdom. Paul tells the church in Corinth that whoever has been redeemed ought to obey the calling and location that God has placed them in: "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him" (1 Cor 7:17).

Biblical, Narrative Examples of Transformationists

Presented now are two biblical cases of characters in Scripture who engaged their culture with Godly influences and naturally saw the work of God in their society. These characters

adhered to a system of ethics in which they had the necessity to obey God's commands and steward their gifts in life to the glory of God. Thus, ethics and evangelism in biblical survey is an essential discussion to a transformative view of cultural engagement.

The first of these examples is Daniel. Daniel trusted in the prophetic word of the Lord that came from Jeremiah 29 regarding Babylon. When Daniel was taken to be educated in Chaldean literature and language, he was given a new identity and a new home, and he was instructed to serve the King. Nowhere before verse 8 is Daniel's objection, but rather his submission and respect to a new culture. However, in verse 8, he resolved that he would not defile himself with the King's diet. God had commanded his people dietary restrictions, and Daniel could not do something that would directly go against God's command.

Even in his resolve and objection to the King's diet, Daniel had a great humility and respect in the way he went about addressing the dilemma. The chief of Eunuchs was directly above him. Daniel 1:8 says, "Therefore, *he asked* the chief of Eunuchs to *allow him* not to defile himself." As a result of his attitude and respect, Daniel was given favor and compassion by God. After a brief conversation about the chief's fear, Daniel recommends a test in which he will be judged by *what the chief sees* in their physical appearance. In verse 14 he listened to Daniel and decided to test them. His interaction with the chief of Eunuchs shows that Daniel had a great amount of care for his people and honor to those in higher authority over him.

In chapter 2, after hearing about the decree gone out to kill all the wise men, Daniel once again went to a direct official over him. Verse 14 says, "Then Daniel replied with *prudence and discretion* to Arioch..." This shows further continuation the respect in which Daniel approached his direct official, with a great care about his friends and the future. He approached him in reverence, and then *requested* a time to approach the king. When Daniel went to interpret the

king's dream, he does so using distinctly revealing language about God's character and nature. "But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries," (2:28 and reiterated in verses 37, 38, and 45). Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream evangelistically, telling about God's nature in several verses.

The result of this interaction demonstrated both the favor of God and the influence on the king to then lift his voice in worship of God: "Truly, your God is a God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery" (2:47). In the following sections, a general favor and welfare takes place over the people of God. Even in exile, because of Daniel's actions, they were able to see the hand of God and how it influenced Nebuchadnezzar. After the events involving the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar offers a praise to God and protection of the people of God. He says, "To all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me" (4:1-2). Though Nebuchadnezzar's rebellion from God led to his humiliation, the immediate results of a nation who recognized the greatness of God by the actions of God's people is clearly seen.

In response to a countercultural view, Daniel did not passively stand by eat the King's diet. Neither did he let the king's dream go uninterpreted. Rather, he actively engaged in obedience to God's command and looked for opportunities to show the goodness and the power of God by teaching about him. He was a good steward of his time and his influence for the sake of the kingdom. If he would have disengaged entirely, Daniel would have disobeyed God's command and would have died with the rest of the wise men because of the decree that went out. From a Relativist perspective, Daniel's intention was not to fit the cultural normality of Babylon. He simply evangelistically engaged while practicing his ethics of obedience and stewardship and

saw a natural transformation of the culture around him as the king and the rest of Babylon saw the power of God on display multiple times throughout the book.

Next, the New Testament shows Peter and John speaking with their ruling authorities, even more assertively than Daniel. After healing a lame beggar and speaking about Christ's resurrection, Peter and John were brought by priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees to be placed into custody. The next day, when gathered with a multitude of rulers, elders, and scribes, Peter and John were filled with the Holy Spirit and evangelistically shared about the healing miracle in context of the gospel of Jesus Christ (4:10-11). They were led by their obedience to the Great Commission and the stewardship of the gospel: "we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (4:20). Still, in their disagreement, they were respectful in their response to the council. They said, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge" (v19).

Like Daniel, Peter and the apostles allowed the gospel of Jesus Christ to naturally transform culture around them through the gospel transformation of people. While they preached and taught about Jesus and ministered throughout the church of Jerusalem and all around them, multitudes of people were being saved. They placed their focus on the evangelistic work of the gospel ministry, knowing that it would transform society around them. Pacifism is out of the question. From the moment of Pentecost, the apostles did not cease preaching the gospel wherever they went and performing signs and wonders to draw attention to the power and glory of God. Perhaps it can even be said that Peter preached his first sermon in the Public Square. It was during this time that many Jews from different nations and languages were gathered in Jerusalem, coming to celebrate the Feast of Weeks.

These two biblical examples show both the attitude and the motivation for God’s people in two different contexts, noting that the ethical and evangelistic engagement of culture has not changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Both Daniel and Peter spoke the truth of God to their culture while practicing obedience and stewardship in this specific context around being confronted with change from the governing authorities and human institutions over them.

Some common themes seen in both of these stories is the role of government and institutions and the way they are interacted with by followers of Christ. If Christians should engage culture with the gospel, how then should Christians engage with politics? When it comes to individual, specific aspects of culture, all Christians should be well-informed and equipped with Christian ethics as a part of discipleship in order to address their responsibility to the world. Engaging cultural issues involves the usage of Christian ethics. This focuses on the commands to obey and the freedom to steward. These principles need to be kept in mind when turning to the final point of research—Christian engagement in political activism through transformative cultural activity.

Cultural Transformation in Politics

Overview of Politics

The term “politics” comes from the Greek word *politika*: the affairs of the cities.⁹³ Simply put, politics has to do with the roles of citizens in their contexts. In America, citizens have the freedom to express their right to free speech in a variety of ways, and they are encouraged to engage in politics. Particularly, this is seen in the relationship between citizens and their government.

⁹³ “Politics (n.),” *Index*, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/politics>.

Scripture teaches that government is established and instituted by God. In John 19:11, Jesus tells Pontius Pilate, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from above.” Romans 13:1 confirms, “For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” Even evil leaders and governing authorities can lead for a time due to God’s own sovereign purposes. Such has already been examined in the Babylonian exile in Jeremiah 29. Romans 13 also teaches that the purpose of government is to punish evil and establish justice, bringing welfare and order into the fallen world (Romans 13:1-7). Therefore, since governing authorities are carrying out God’s work being a public servant, Christians ought to submit to them and be subject to human institutions (1 Peter 2:13-17). They can do this primarily by praying for them (1 Timothy 2:1-4) and engaging in social activity as seems necessary to the Christian conscience (Hebrews 13:17-18).

Micropolitics

The study of activity in politics is also known as Micropolitics. Political Activism can take many forms, such as protesting, boycotting, marching, and voting. Typically, a Christian might feel compelled to be involved in political activism if their governing authorities are not practicing their basic roles as servants of God in a civil government, or if they are seeking to make a statement of beliefs in their society. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Even though morality cannot be legislated, behavior can be regulated. While the law cannot change the heart, it can certainly restrain the heartless.”⁹⁴ However, due to a variety of clashing worldviews in culture, the moral topics of the day can be competing and very complex to sort through. So, rather than explain each hot-button political topic, this section will give three ways for engaging

⁹⁴ Martin Luther King, *The Wisdom of Martin Luther King, in His Own Words* (Lancer, 1968), 99.

in political activism from a Christian standpoint by observing three methods—public theology, public ministry, and public office.

While Christians can be involved in a variety of forms within politics, Scripture does not command Christians specifically to be involved in political activism. However, there are numerous examples of characters who practiced civil disobedience when they were commanded to obey a law that was contrary to the commands of God.⁹⁵ So, while Christians are called to obey their governing authorities, they are also compelled to obey the moral law of God and are free to disagree when those morals are infringed upon. This is why Political Activism exists and is such a critical issue for Christians to think about: how can Christians hold accountable their governing authorities in a way that is still respectful to them, especially in a society that seems to be disobeying the design and law of God in many areas of culture? Christians must employ the ethical and evangelistic themes researched in this paper to understand their role—any form of public action in society must be biblically informed, ethically guided, and evangelistically practiced. Here are three ways in which Christians can put these themes to practice in society.

Public Theology

One of the ways that Christians can be involved in political activism is by reflectively engaging with those within and outside of the church on theological perspectives for evangelistic transformation. Christians who hold to a transformative view of cultural engagement seek to actively participate in affairs of the culture while boldly telling the truth about Christian

⁹⁵ If it were not for these characters using their influence to speak on behalf of God's people, Moses would have died as an infant and Israel would have continued being enslaved to Egypt. Rahab and her family would have died in the defeat of Jericho, and Israel would have been captured. Johnathan would have died at the hand of his father if the people would not have interceded for him. All the wise men in Daniel would have died, along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who withstood bowing before an idol. Lastly, the gospel would have not gone forth from Acts, since the disciples were commanded to not teach or preach in the name of Jesus. Exodus 1:16; Joshua 2:13; 1 Samuel 20:32-34; Daniel 2,4; Acts 4:18

teaching, in the effort to personally influence individuals. E. Harold Brietenberg, in defining Public Theology, wrote a helpful article in 2003 called “To Tell the Truth: Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up?” In it, he defined Public Theology as, “Theologically informed public discourse about public issues, addressed to the church...as well as the larger public or publics, argued in ways that can be evaluated and judged by publicly available warrants and criteria.” Another theologian acknowledged that theology belongs not only for those in church, but also for the academy and society at large.⁹⁶ In *A Companion to Public Theology*, Kim and Day argue, “Rather than only speaking in and for the church in language understood only within that context and from a perspective of a privileged rationality, Tracy argued that theology needs to break out of insularity into true public discourse.”⁹⁷ Spoken Theology to culture connects the church with social issues, and provides answers that the world needs for the good of society. While this thesis does not allow the space to dive deeply into all the realms and implications of public theology, the past fifty years have produced many books, articles, and helpful resources on this increasingly important topic.⁹⁸

Public Theology can be evaluated in history by analyzing the life and works of figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Reinhold Niebuhr. Much can be said about these figures, but one of the most important figures can be seen in the works of Abraham

⁹⁶ David Tracy, in *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) reflects on the necessity for theology to be spoke and taught outside of the context of the church.

⁹⁷ Kim and Day, *Companion to Public Theology*, 3

⁹⁸ Helpful Resources listed in the Bibliography regarding Public Theology include Neuhaus’ *The Naked Public Square* (1984), Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy* (1991), Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology* (1991), Benne, *The Paradoxical Vision: A Public Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (1995), Cady, *Theology and American Public Life* (1993), and Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (2011). Even the last twenty years or so have produced a number of books on the nature of Christian Theology in the Public Square, such as Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor* (2012), Keller, *City Church* (2012), Mohler, *We Cannot Be Silent* (2015), and Colson’s *How Now Shall We Live?* (1999).

Kuyper. Kuyper held to a theological view called “sphere sovereignty,” in which all spheres of life are to be in submission to Christ, the sovereign Lord of all things. This theological view led Kuyper to start a Christian University, establish Christian unions, found a Christian political party, and become the Prime Minister of the Netherlands.⁹⁹ In his lifetime, he authored many books related to public theology such as *On the Church*, *On Education*, *Our Program*, *Pro Rege*, and *Common Grace*.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps one of the greatest living examples of a public theologian would be Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Though Mohler is most active in the life of the Southern Baptist Convention, he is also an evangelical conservative contributor appearing on news stations such as CNN, NBC, ABC, PBS, MSNBC, and Fox.¹⁰¹ His podcast *The Briefing* provides “a daily analysis of news and events from a Christian worldview.”¹⁰² Resources such as these and thousands of articles he has written have been a helpful tool to many both inside and outside of the church in explaining an evangelical worldview.

Public Theology can bring light and clarity to many cultural issues. In his podcast *Thinking in Public*, Mohler explains the theological connections and issues associated with Cancel Culture, Social Justice, Critical Race Theory, Abortion, and Transgenderism. As much as the culture exhibits a polarity of opinions related to this variety of topics, Christians should be

⁹⁹ This short summary of Kuyper's accomplishments are found in D.A. Carson's *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 106.

¹⁰⁰ Two biographies on the life of Kuyper and particularly his views on Public Theology are found in Bolt's *A Free Church, a Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology* (2001) and Bacote's *The Spirit in Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (2010).

¹⁰¹ “About.” *Albert Mohler*. Accessed May 2, 2021. <https://albertmohler.com/about>.

¹⁰² Mohler, Albert. “The Briefing.” podcast, n.d.

able to articulate what they believe and why—a precedent set by 1 Peter 3:15. On a podcast episode with a political theorist, Joshua Mitchell and Al Mohler converse about Cancel Culture and their use of biblical topics such as a recognition of societal sin, scapegoating, and fabricated redemption through cancellation.¹⁰³ However, the usage of these terms among those within the political left are only partially useful, and they can only be fully understood through the lens of a Christian worldview.

Some theological topics have been captured and misconstrued by anti-Christian platforms. D.A. Carson makes an interesting statement in *Christ and Culture Revisited*: “On the other hand, where ‘multiculturalism’ is a sloganeering word associated with left-wing social agendas that relativize all cultural values and all religious claims, except for the dogmatic claim that all such values are to be relativized, the word may speak a culture diametrically opposed to the exclusiveness of Christian claims.”¹⁰⁴ “Multiculturalism” and even “diversity” have been taken and used by those on the political left to affirm debatable topics such as Critical Race Theory, White Supremacy, and support for liberalism, socialism, and Marxism. Over time, the association and usage of these words on the left leave a bad taste in the mouth of conservatives. However, “multiculturalism” and “diversity” are distinctly Christian values when theologically used and explained. John’s revelation shows a great multitude of diversity in tongue, nation, language and tribe in Revelation 7:9, and Christ came also to break down the “wall of hostility” between Jew and Gentile in Ephesians 2:14. The person and work of Christ demolishes the social and racial structures that existed between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised,

¹⁰³ Mohler, Albert, and Joshua Mitchell. “Identity Politics and the Spirit of the Age: A Conversation with Political Theorist Joshua Mitchell.” *Thinking in Public*. Podcast, February 24, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Carson, 5859.

barbarian, Scythian, slave, and free (Col. 3:11). Furthermore, the commission of Christ to *all nations* (Matthew 28:19) and *the utmost parts of the earth* (Acts 1:8) demonstrates the missionary heart of God to all people, regardless of social distinctions. Diversity is a religious topic, but can anthropologically be used in a variety of ways. Christians can use topics like this to biblically explain a Christian worldview even though those same topics are sometimes used to affirm anti-Christian movements.

Lastly, Romans 10:17 confirms that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” When the gospel is articulated and explained, even within social institutions, it produces faith. Therefore, the way Public Theology affects cultural transformation is both through the explanation of a Christian worldview for the benefit of society and in an evangelistic hope of salvation for the lostness of culture. The Apostle Paul, while travelling through Athens, spoke about the idols represented in the city in the philosophical center known as the Areopagus. After boldly proclaiming the truth in the public arena, some mocked him, some wanted to talk more, and some joined him (Acts 17:22-34). When theology is explained in public it is normally met with one of those three responses. Though all Christians may not consider themselves as impactful and influential as Bonhoeffer, Kuyper or Mohler, Public Theology can be practiced in the way we converse with others in person and even through social media. The simple gospel message can affect all areas of culture through the proclamation and explanation of Christian truth.

Public Ministry

Next, Christians can engage in political activism through Public Ministry. Like Public Theology, Public Ministry is a form of political activism because it concerns itself with having activity in the affairs of the city. Using the term “Public Ministry” is related to social action, but helps dispel the negative connotations associated with the Social Gospel Movement which helped give rise to the religious left today during the second half of the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. Shailer Mathews originally presented one of the most well-known definitions of the social gospel as, “The application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions such as the state, the family, as well as to individuals.”¹⁰⁵ This sounds like a great definition—it is unfortunate that this idea was then used to accomplish liberal and progressive agendas in the Social Gospel Movement. Christopher Evans says, “The social gospel was an offshoot of theological liberalism that strove to apply a progressive theological vision to engage American social, political, and economic structures. Rooted in wider historical-theological strands in ways that advocated for systemic, structural changes in American institutions. The movement had a wide-ranging impact on religion and society throughout the twentieth century, cresting during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.”¹⁰⁶

The impact of the social gospel movement has had thriving existence into the twenty-first century. Rick Warren, in an interview with Beliefnet.com in 2008 called the social gospel “Marxism in Christian clothing.”¹⁰⁷ While the movement had originally good intent (consider the history of the Civil Rights Movement) Warren continues that it became all-encompassing and lost sight of the gospel in the twentieth century: “You don’t really need to care about Jesus’ personal salvation anymore. You don’t have to really care about redemption, the cross, repentance. All we need to do is redeem the social structures better and then the world will be a

¹⁰⁵ Shailer Mathews and Gerald Birney Smith, *A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1973), 416417.

¹⁰⁶ Christopher Hodge Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: a History* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 3.

¹⁰⁷ Swaldman, Gordon, “Rick Warren: Social Gospel & ‘Marxism in Christian Clothing,’” (Beliefnet, Inc.) last modified December 15, 2008, accessed May 2, 2021. <https://www.beliefnet.com/columnists/stevenwaldman/2008/12/rick-warren-social-gospel-marx.html>.

better place.”¹⁰⁸ While the social gospel can easily go astray, the ministry of public or social action still has some biblical rationale. In an effort to negate the historical errors of the social gospel movement, schools like Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary offers a Master of Arts in Public Ministry, though it still sounds much like the efforts of social and political action. It says, “Students in this program aspire to fulfill their Christian vocations...through public ministries of advocacy, organizing, and justice-making in collaboration with other communities of faith and conscience.”¹⁰⁹

Public Ministry can be observed in the ministerial actions of the social gospel, but only with a biblically-informed, ethically guided, evangelical intent. William Garden Blaikie, a 17th century Scottish theologian, wrote *The Public Ministry of Christ* first published in 1883. He unpacks the preparation of Christ’s ministry, the beginning of his ministry, the elements of his ministry, the discourses of his ministry, and other topics related to Christ’s dealings with people in society.¹¹⁰ But his contention explained in the opening chapter is that Christ set out to model his ministry for his disciples to reproduce. He says, “If the example of Christ were wholly inapplicable to us as His public servants, it could hardly be suitable to us as His personal followers. Yet nothing is more certain, or more readily accepted by the Christian conscience in reference to our ordinary life, than that He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps.”¹¹¹ His book seems to support the idea of transformative cultural engagement, and he curiously uses some of the same language that Kuyper would later use in *Pro Rege* and *Common*

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ “Master of Arts in Public Ministry,” *Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary*, last modified December 17, 2020, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.garrett.edu/degrees-and-programs/master-arts-public-ministry>.

¹¹⁰ William Garden Blaikie, *The Public Ministry of Christ* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2007).

¹¹¹ Blaikie, *The Public Ministry of Christ*, 2.

Grace. Though research does not show any connection between the two, they lived during the same era, only separated by the English channel. Blaikie says,

In the centre of the solar system, the sun occupies the best position for influencing every planet, but his rays go forth quite readily to the furthest outskirts of the system. “Christ Crucified” in the centre of the Gospel firmament, is fitted to irradiate the whole sphere of moral and spiritual truth, and increase the power of every motive, and elevate the aim of every project that seeks to advance the true welfare of man.¹¹²

The Public Ministry of Christ is a theological topic that appears in numerous resources, and is related to the time in which Christ began to minister by publicly preaching, teaching, healing, and performing miracles.

Immediately after calling his disciples, scripture records the type of of public ministry Jesus began in Matthew 4:22-25. It involved teaching, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, healing every disease and affliction, and setting free those who were oppressed by demons. In Luke’s gospel, Jesus begins his public ministry by announcing his personal fulfillment of Isaiah 4:18-19, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to *proclaim good news to the poor*. He has sent me to *proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*” Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus’ proclamation of “the kingdom of God at hand” (Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:15). And when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he taught the desire of his ministry: “...Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Christ’s teaching of his kingdom work was expected to become the disciples’ kingdom work, not only in their preaching and teaching ministry, but in their social actions as an early church. In Acts, the disciples preach, teach, perform signs and wonders, heal, raise the dead, and evangelize publicly, to explain to others about Christ and his kingdom. Furthermore, New Testament teachings from

¹¹² Blaikie, *The Public Ministry of Christ*, 339.

Paul, Peter, and James all encourage Christians to be a part of the public ministry that Christ demonstrated in giving generously to the poor, caring for the widow, helping others in their affliction, and advocating for others to pursue justice. In fact, it can be said that every form of social and public ministry practiced by Christ and his disciples was to magnify Christ's lordship. Such can be seen in the raising of Lazarus. "...Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you have you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, *that they may believe that you sent me*'" (John 11:42).

Christians today involving themselves with any sort of public ministry should recapture the original intent of Christ's ministry—to demonstrate his supremacy in all areas of life. Due to the complexity of cultural facets today complicated by time, sin, and population, Christians have many options for various public ministries such as pro-life ministries, sex trafficking ministries, justice ministries, medical ministries, and financial ministries. God places distinct burdens, gifts, abilities, and desires in each of us, and desires that we would be faithful in whatever calling He has on our lives. We need only to obey and magnify his Lordship while doing whatever task he has given us.

Public Office

Finally, another great way Christians can practice political activism is by running for public office. This effort involves those who are especially skilled in leadership, but Christians in political office can have a great impact on society. Each Christian should consider their own vocation and calling on their life and consult their abilities and skills as well as support from friends and family before considering running for office.

While Scripture does not specifically tell Christians to try and run for political office, it does contain numerous examples of characters who were types of governing officials and in positions of influence. One of the most influential examples is Joseph who served in many different capacities. After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph was promoted to be an official over Pharaoh's house and all of Pharaoh's people. He was then set to be over all the land of Egypt (v41). Joseph used his influence to develop an economic system of growth and preservation of food for all the Egyptians (and surrounding nations) who experienced the famine in the land by storing and selling grain. King David used his influence to obey the commands of God and lead the nation of Israel. Not only was he equitable in his relationships with other nations in war, but David sought to protect the God-given morals of Israel. He practiced wisdom and discernment when faced with opposition. His son, Solomon was also King of Israel and used his gifts of wisdom to lead Israel for 40 years. Many other characters, such as Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel all had considerable influence over the people as kings and governing officials. Furthermore, other characters who are converts in the New Testament are not told to leave their positions, but to remain in their positions of influence, such as the Philippians Jailer and the Ethiopian Eunuch. While there are not any commands given to Christians to run for positions of leadership, there are biblical examples of great influence they can have.

Those who hold to a Counterculturalist view of Christ and culture (or Christ against culture) would be vehemently against Christians running for public office. However, those who hold to a Transformationist view see public office as a wonderful opportunity to steward the gift of leadership and opportunity to glorify God and bring Christian truth and ethics into culture. A transformative view might even say that there is an urgent plea for Christians to run for

leadership roles, in an effort to rule with biblical justice and punish evil when necessary from a biblical worldview. Introducing legislation and leadership from a Christian standpoint provides support for the world to see how a Christian character can lead when given the opportunity. Though Christian politicians must be careful not to force their beliefs on anyone without reproach, basic Christian teaching provides the general welfare and common good for all of society when living under God's design, and increases the chance for the expansion of God's kingdom on Earth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all forms of political activism must be biblically-informed, ethically guided, and evangelistically practiced. Though there is freedom for Christians to view their responsibility to culture in different forms, all Christians must agree to affirm the clear teaching in scripture to obey Jesus Christ by making disciples of all nations. The effects of common obedience to the Great Commission can result in the natural transformation of culture, as members of institutions choose to follow Christ and change ethical practices. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Paul says, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." Paul's greatest desire is that he would be known for the way he obeyed his Lord and the way he handled the truth of the gospel in all areas of life. May this ethical and evangelistic mindset be the every Christian who desires to actively engage their culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “Abraham Kuyper, Bruce Ashford, and the Relationship of Christianity and Culture.” *Welch College*. Last modified August 9, 2016. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://welch.edu/abraham-kuyper-bruce-ashford-and-the-relationship-of-christianity-and-culture/>.
- Adams, Gwenfair Walters. *Romans 1—8*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2019.
- “Agora (n.).” *Index*. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/agora>.
- Ashford, Bruce Riley. *Every Square Inch: an Introduction to Cultural Engagement for Christians*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015.
- Augustine, Demetrius B. Zema, Gerald G. Walsh, and Gilson Étienne. *The City of God*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008.
- Bacote, Vincent. *The Spirit in Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010.
- Bayes, Jonathan. *The Threefold Division of the Law*. Salt and Light Series. Newcastle, NE: The Christian Institute, 2005.
- Blaikie, William Garden. *The Public Ministry of Christ*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2007.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Matthew*. (The New American Commentary). Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992.
- Bolt, John. *A Free Church, a Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology*. Grand Rapids (Mich.): W.B. Eerdmans, 2001.
- Brayford, Susan Ann. *Genesis*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2007.
- Calvin, Jean, Ford Lewis Battles, and John T. McNeill. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.
- Carson, Donald A. *Christ and Culture Revisited*. Grand Rapids, MI ; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Carter, Joe. “Why Christians Are Not Morally Obligated to Vote.” *The Gospel Coalition*. Last modified October 31, 2020. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-christians-not-obligated-vote/>.
- Colson, Charles W., Nancy Pearcey, and Bill Henry. *How Now Shall We Live? Collegiate Edition*. Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2000.

- Couenhoven, Jesse. "Law and Gospel, or the Law of the Gospel? Karl Barth's Political Theology Compared with Luther and Calvin." *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, no. 2 (2002): 30.
- Davis, John Jefferson. *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1993.
- Evans, Christopher Hodge. *The Social Gospel in American Religion: a History*. New York: New York University Press, 2017.
- "Facebook Revenue and Usage Statistics (2021)." *Business of Apps*. Last modified April 6, 2021. Accessed May 2, 2021. <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/facebook-statistics/>.
- Frame, John. "God the Creator." *The Gospel Coalition*. Last modified 2017. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/god-the-creator/>.
- Gaebelein, Frank E., Geoffrey Grogan, Charles Lee Feinberg, H. L. Ellison, and Ralph H. Alexander. *Isaiah - Ezekiel*. Vol. 6. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986.
- Garland, David E. *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary*. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001.
- Grudem, Wayne A. *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Nottingham: IVP, 2020.
- "H5647 - 'āḇaḏ - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (KJV)." *Blue Letter Bible*. Accessed May 2, 2021. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h5647>.
- "H8104 - Šāmar - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (KJV)." *Blue Letter Bible*. Accessed May 2, 2021. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h8104>.
- Hauerwas, Stanley, and William H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Jones, David. "Economics and Stewardship." *Ethics of Wealth and Poverty*. Lecture, 2021.
- Keller, Timothy. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Kennedy, D. James, and Jerry Newcombe. *How Would Jesus Vote?: a Christian Perspective on the Issues*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2008.
- Kim, Sebastian C, and Katie Day. *A Companion to Public Theology*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

- King, Martin Luther. *The Wisdom of Martin Luther King, in His Own Words*. New York City: Lancer Books, 1968.
- Kuyper, Abraham. "Opening of the Free University." *Free University*. Speech presented at the Free University, 1880.
- Land, Richard. "Fulfilling Our Cultural Mandate." *Renew a Nation*. Accessed March 28, 2021. <https://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF16H38.pdf>.
- Lang, Mabel L. *Socrates in the Agora*. Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1978.
- Luther, Martin. "On Secular Authority." *Our Lord's Lutheran Church*. Accessed March 28, 2021. https://www.lolonline.org/hp_wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Luther-Secular-Authority-To-What-Extent-It-Should-Be-Obeyed.pdf.
- Manton, Thomas. *An Exposition on the Epistle of James*. London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968.
- Mathews, Shailer, and Gerald Birney Smith. *A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1973.
- Matthews, K. A. *Genesis 1-11:26*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996.
- Mohler, Albert Jr. R. *Gathering Storm: Secularism, Culture, and the Church*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2021.
- Mohler, Albert Jr. R. *We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage, and the Very Meaning of Right and Wrong*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016.
- Niebuhr, Helmut Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.
- Noebel, David A. *Understanding the Times*. Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2006.
- Packer, J. I. *Concise Theology*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.
- Pearcey, Nancy. *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- Platt, David. *Before You Vote: Seven Questions Every Christian Should Ask*. Birmingham, AL: Radical, 2020.
- Robinson, Daniel Sommer. *The Principles of Conduct; an Introduction to Theoretical and Applied Ethics*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948.
- Sailhamer, John H., and Walter C. Kaiser. *Genesis-Leviticus*. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

- Smith, James K. A., Doug Banister, Nathan Clarke, Katelyn Beaty, and Peter Chin. "How (Not) to Be Worldly: Tracing the Borders of the 'Earthly City'." *This Is Our City*. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/7thcity/tracing-borders-of-earthly-city.html?paging=off>.
- Storms, Sam. "The Goodness of God and Common Grace." *The Gospel Coalition*. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/goodness-god-common-grace/>.
- Stott John R.W., and Timothy Dudley-Smith. *Authentic Christianity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Strong's Greek: 897. Βαβυλῶν (Babulón) -- "Gate of God(s)".* Accessed May 2, 2021. <https://biblehub.com/greek/897.htm>.
- Strong's Hebrew: 5647. אָבָד (Abad) -- to Work, Serve.* Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5647.htm>.
- Strong's Hebrew: 8104. שָׁמַר (Shamar) -- to Keep, Watch, Preserve.* Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/8104.htm>.
- Sweeney, James, trans. "Bara ('He-Created') in Genesis 1:1." *Winebrenner.edu*. Winebrenner Theological Seminary, March 18, 2019. Last modified March 18, 2019. Accessed May 2, 2021. <https://winebrenner.edu/2019/03/18/insights-bara-%D6%BC%D8%97-he-created-in-genesis-11/>.
- Taylor, Justin. "An Interview with Bruce Ashford on Christian Cultural Engagement." *The Gospel Coalition*. Last modified May 4, 2015. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/an-interview-with-bruce-ashford-on-christian-cultural-engagement/>.
- Terry, John Mark. *Missiology: an Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2015.
- Tertullianus, Marcus and Minucius Felix. *Tertullian: Apology*. London: Heinemann, 1966.
- Thompson, Homer A. "The Agora at Athens and the Greek City States." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 13, no. 4 (December 1954): 9–14.
- "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine: What's The Fuss All About? Part One." *Reformation 21*. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://www.reformation21.org/articles/the-two-kingdoms-doctrine-whats-the-fuss-all-about-part-one.php>.
- Tolstoy, Leo, and Constantine Popoff. *What I Believe*. New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007.
- Tolstoy, Leo. *The Kingdom of God Is within You ; What Is Art?* Champaign, IL: Book Jungle, 2007.

Tracy, David. *The Analogical Imagination: David Tracy*. New York: Crossroad, 1981.

Walton, John H. *Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

What Is Culture? Accessed March 29, 2021. https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_leading-with-cultural-intelligence/s04-02-what-is-culture.html.

Wilkins, Steve. *Christian Ethics - Four Views*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2017.

Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.