

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CULTURE OF MAN

Apologetics

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0. INTRODUCTION

- CULTURE – a complex, but absolutely necessary topic for a Christian!
- dissatisfaction with culture → looking for a *counter-culture* → John Stott's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount

"Enterprise culture" ... Contemporary societies have become, some authorities claim, "culture-societies" ... Entertainment is said to be the USA's biggest export now... → leisure activities [During, S. *Cultural Studies*]

- → culture as religion (⇒ debacle of *multiculturalism*)
- the word "culture" – ambiguous; meanings:
 - breeding, education, sophistication
 - elevation, enlightenment, erudition
 - ideas, values of a people arts and sciences, civilization, convention, customs, development, ethnology, folklore, folkways, grounding, habit, humanism, knowledge
 - development of land agriculture

0.1. "CULTURE" IN THE BIBLE

- **Gn 1:27-28** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and **fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion** (פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹּשׁוּהָ וּרְדוּ) over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
- **Gn 2:7-8** then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a

garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

- **Gn 2:15** The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden **to work it and keep it.**
(לְעֹבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ)

0.2. "CULTURE" IN LANGUAGE

0.2.1. LATIN

- *colo, colere* colui, cultus; to live in, inhabit; tend, care for; to bestow care upon, care for;
 - Of the gods: to frequent, cherish, care for, protect, guard, watch over, be the guardian of
 - Of religious service: to honor, revere, reverence, worship
 - Of friendship, allegiance, etc.; to honor, esteem, love, adhere to, cherish

0.2.2. SLOVAK

- 1. súhrn duchovných a materiálnych hodnôt vytvorených človekom v procese historického vývinu, civilizácia (najmä technický pokrok): antická, európska kultúra, civilizácia; šíriť kultúru, civilizáciu, vzdelanosť (vedomosti získané vzdelávaním): vzdelanosť národa
- 2. istý stupeň dokonalosti, kultivovanosť: kultúra, kultivovanosť bývania, správania, vycibrenosť, vybrúsenosť: hlasová vycibrenosť, vybrúsenosť
- 3. obyč. mn. biol. laboratórne pestované mikroorganizmy: kultúry baktérií

0.2.3. GERMAN

- *Kultur*, civilization, cultivation

0.3. "CULTURE" IN SCIENCES

0.3.1. AGRICULTURE, BIOLOGY

- plants, bacteria...

0.3.2. HISTORY; SOCIOLOGY

- [Wiki] Culturology or science of culture is a branch of social sciences concerned with the scientific understanding, description, analysis, and prediction of cultures as a whole.
- civilization
- popular culture

[Tom Breen *The Messiah Formerly Known as Jesus*] A recent study shows that eight out of ten Americans say they worship God primarily through rock concerts, extreme sports, and T-shirts. Today's Christians believe it's possible to be religious by shopping, watching TV, listening to their iPods, or applying fish bumper stickers to their cars.

0.3.3. ANTHROPOLOGY; CULTUROLOGY

- the sum of typical activities of tribes, nations, social groups...
- "customs"

Culture is not a thing or even a system: it's a set of transactions, processes, mutations, practices, technologies, institutions, out of which things and events (such as movies, poems or world wrestling bouts) are produced, to be experienced, lived out and given meaning and value to in different ways within the unsystematic network of differences and mutations from which they emerged to start with.¹

1. CULTURE AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

- (1) national culture, (2) global culture, (3) therapeutic culture, (4) popular culture, (5) political culture,
- culture and ethics → axiology
- Culture → a grid for assessment, value judgments (good ↔ bad scale; beautiful ↔ ugly;)

¹ DURING, S. *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction*, London : Routledge, 2005, p. 6.

...**cultural identity** is what is most meaningful to most people. People are discovering new but often old identities and marching under new but often old flags which lead to wars with new but often old enemies... [HUNTINGTON, S.P. *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 20]

1.1. IDENTITY

- family → name, dignity,
- place → home; security; sense of belonging...
- customs → ethics; behavior;
- industry → ways of production and creativity;

1.2. MEANING

- language → understanding
- folklore; religion; worldview → values
- philosophy → rational explanation of values

1.3. HOPE

- social positions → goals
- worldview → imagination

2. HUMAN CULTURE AND THE LIVING GOD

2.1. NEUTRAL

- language (used both for secular ideas and preaching of the gospel)
- architecture (housing, urbanism...); national costumes; folk art...

2.2. INDEPENDENT/RESISTENT

- ways of life that are *not anti-God*, but may become that, when change is necessary for the sake of the Kingdom (example: choosing a partner to marry)
- occupations; lifestyle; customs; (→ **1Cor 7:24** So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God)
- habits; traditions; ingrained opinions/worldview attitudes

2.3. IDOLATRY

- “idol” εἰδωλον – a likeness, representation, of a god, namely, an image.
- “idolatry” – worship of idols Lat. idololatria — Gr. eidololatreia.'
- “culture” → “cult” → religion → worship
- [Webster] “the worship of idols or excessive devotion to, or reverence for some person or thing”
Idolatry is wanting something else more than we desire God.

Friedrich Nietzsche claims idolatry is the worship of a transcendent God at the cost of finite man. Karl Marx maintains it is the deification of money. Francis Bacon argues that it is sophistry in the face of logic. For Theodor Adorno, it is the claim to have arrived at a truly just society.²

- nationalism; heroes; artists; historical figures...
- myths; pre-Christian religions
- secularism (this world the highest value)
 - [PEARCEY]³ (1) The Church of Physics: Idol of Matter (2) Hume Meets the Klingons: Idol of the Senses (3) Kant’s Mental Prison: Idol of the Mind (4) The Artist as God: Idol of the Imagination
 - human rights over the rights of God
- popular culture
 - beautiful body; powerful artistic experience (music, arts)

² BATMOTZKY, L. *Idolatry and Representation*, New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 3.

³ PEARCEY, N. *Finding Truth*, Crossway Books, 2005.

- deification of sex
- eating, drinking, traveling...

3. THE KINGDOM OF GOD HUMAN CULTURE

- **Rom 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,
- **Rom 14:17** For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of (1) righteousness and (2) peace and (3) joy in the Holy Spirit.
- The Beatitudes: (1) the poor in spirit, (2) those who mourn (3) the meek (4) those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (5) the merciful (6) the pure in heart (7) the peacemakers (8) those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (9) ... on my account
- The “culture of the Holy Spirit” → permeating *culture* (ways of living) with the inward attitudes of Jesus Christ
- The Kingdom of God → a mustard seed change

3.1. TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

[John Stott] *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Christian counter-culture)

- culture is *temporary* (this world has been created as temporary)
- analogy with the incarnation of the Son of God
 - → Chalcedon, (1) ἀσυγχύτως (2) ἀτρέπτως – (3) ἀδιαίρετως (4) ἀχωρίστως
 - culture is part of the *natural* and should be sacrificed to God to become *spiritual*...

3.2. SOME KINGDOM OF GOD PRINCIPLES TO TRANSFORM CULTURE

...If the world is getting worse, and if only Jesus at his coming will put it right, the argument runs, there seems no point in trying to reform it meanwhile. “Adopting political programs is like cleaning the staterooms on the Titanic after it has hit the iceberg“... [STOTT, J. *Issues Facing Christians Today*]

3.2.1. INWARDNESS (NOT FORM)

- culture → forms of expression (→ empty etiquette); religion → rules, laws,
- The Kingdom: heart religion → attitudes; motives

3.2.2. FUNCTIONALITY (NOT POSITION)

- culture → hierarchies of positions;
- The Kingdom: service and gifts → ministry and

3.2.3. FELLOWSHIP (NOT INSTITUTION)

- culture → set of institutions; organizations; corporations...
- The Kingdom: κοινωνία → love; unity; purpose; spiritual togetherness

3.2.4. FRESHNESS (NOT CUSTOMS, HABITS)

- culture → habits, customs, traditions
- The Kingdom: the Spirit → freshness of experience en-thusiasm (**John 3:8** **The wind blows** where it wishes)

3.2.5. SPIRITUAL POWER (NOT JUST RHETORIC)

- culture → poetry; religious rhetoric; beautiful words; wise sayings...
- The Kingdom:

3.3. GOD – THE “CHIEF GARDENER”

- **John 15:1** "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser (γεωργός)⁴.
- **1Cor 3:5-9** What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he

⁴ husbandman

who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

- Human culture needs perpetual and constant transforming power of God, who is working on Christians (beginning with the heart) who, in turn, apply themselves to transforming culture.

4. TO REMEMBER

- Culture is an inevitable environment and means of existence for human beings.
- Christians both accept and use culture as a gift of God for living and counteract and transform culture as a worldly anti-God power.
- The only power for real transformation is the Holy Spirit beginning from the changed heart attitudes towards God.