



*How Should Christians Relate to Culture and Society?
Part 6 – Prescribing A Way Forward*



The Road Map:

- Week 1: Should Christians Be Involved?
- Week 2: Avoiding the Trap of Civic Religion
- Week 3: Should Christians Withdraw / Set Themselves Apart?
- Week 4: Can Christians Change Culture or Society?
- Week 5: Christian Political Engagement



The Result of Christian Political Engagement

1. The public witness of the church has become largely political.
2. Politics cannot answer most of the pressing issues in society, nor reach their root causes (i.e., declining family values, inequality, loss of decency, vulgarity, mistreatment of the elderly, poverty).
3. Both the Christian Right and the Christian Left have been largely ineffective, similarly plagued by misinformation, selective view of the facts, and a sense of injury and anger / reaction over the views of the other.
4. The focus on politics has taken away the church's focus on other areas: philosophical, scientific, intellectual, artistic and literary efforts that might have had a greater influence on culture.

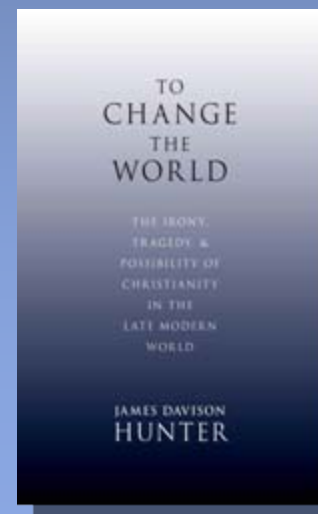
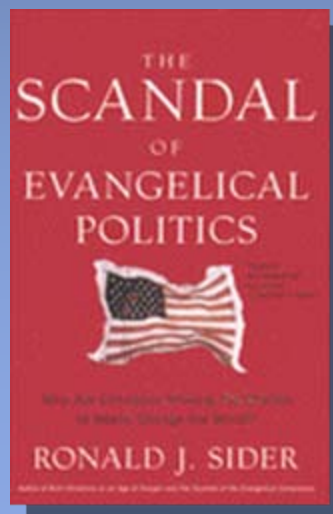
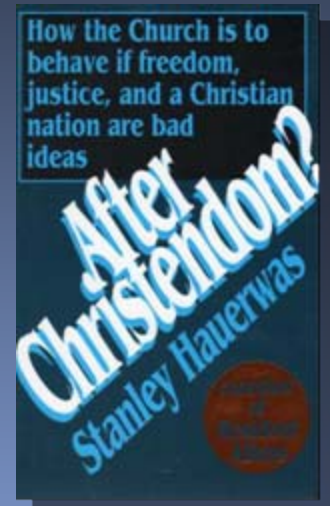
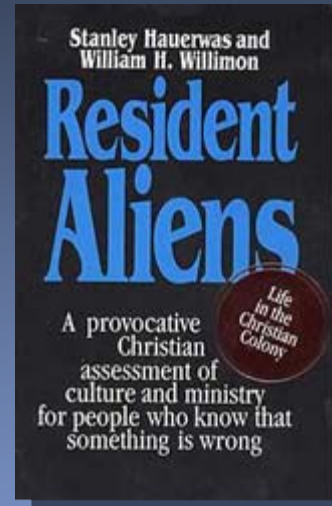
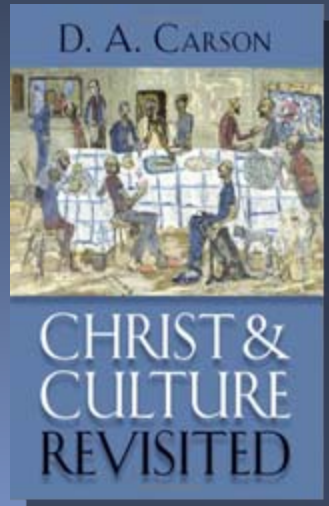
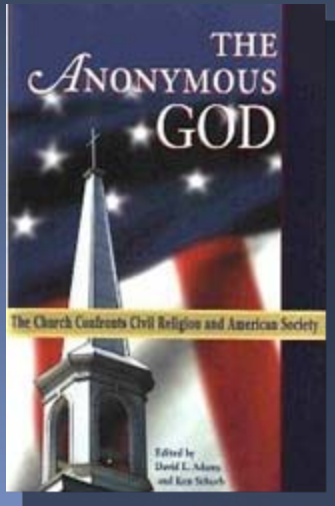


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- Week 2: Avoiding the Trap of Civic Religion
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- TONIGHT:** Formulating a Way Forward



Read Along:





The Big Picture

- ◆ Everything is not broken in the church.
- ◆ The Church remains the Body of Christ in the world.
- ◆ God is still very much at work in the world, and God is still in control.
- ◆ The Church is still very much involved in:
 - Proclaiming the gospel
 - Caring for the needs of the community
 - Making disciples
 - Leading worship / inviting people into communion
 - Educating people about God and the Bible
 - Interceding in prayer for others locally and globally



So What's the Problem?

- ◆ We have declared our intent to change the world outside the church.
"change the world" = make the world look and act like us.
- ◆ We have become obsessed with politics and engaging the state.
- ◆ We have (in America) confused our nationalism and ideology with a Christ-centered approach to engaging society.
- ◆ Culture has shaped the Church more than the Church has shaped culture.
- ◆ We have never developed a cohesive, well-thought-out approach to how we should engage society.



So Should We Just Withdraw?

- ◆ Some Christians have withdrawn.
(Examples: Amish Mennonites; Monks and the New Monasticism)
- ◆ It might not be possible for Christians to withdraw from the effects of culture, although Christians can withdraw from affecting culture.
- ◆ But even in our desire to “withdraw” or “stand apart” or simply return to “the church being the church,” we are schizophrenic in our approach.

Would we get involved in:

Marching against laws allowing same-sex marriage?

Lobbying for an increase in the minimum wage?

Protesting a factory that uses undocumented laborers?

Denouncing government programs that support abortion?

Petitioning schools that refuse to educate teens about abstinence.



Should We Avoid Politics Altogether?

- ◆ Personal decision in accountability to God as to where to invest your talents.
- ◆ If you engage politics, always hold your motives and ideologies to scrutiny.

American



Conservative



Republican



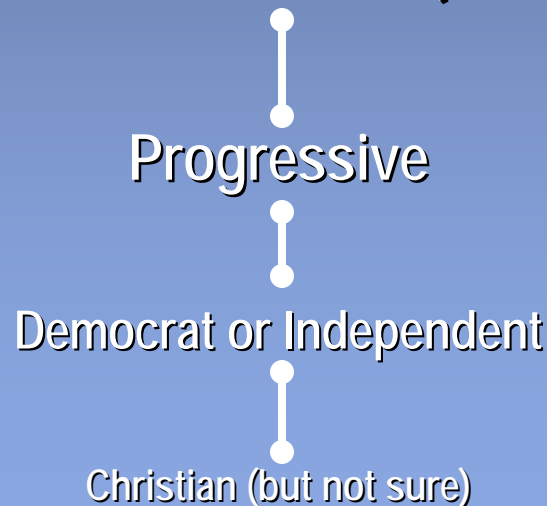
Christian



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Rebel With A Cause (Or Several)





Should We Avoid Politics Altogether?

- ◆ Personal decision in accountability to God as to where to invest your talents.
- ◆ If you engage politics, always hold your motives and ideologies to scrutiny.
- ◆ Remember that politics is not a solution for most of what ill's society. Question whether other institutions of society are better able to address the issue (academia, business, the church, the arts/media, etc.)
- ◆ Pay attention to the limits of governance and the compromises of pluralism.
- ◆ Develop a Christ-centered methodology for political engagement, grounded in the narrative of the God's story as expressed in the Bible.

RECOMMEND: "The Scandal of Evangelical Politics" – Ron Sider



So How Should Christians Relate to Society?

1. Recognize that We are Aliens in this World.

1 Peter 2:11 – “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.”

2. Recognize that we still reside in society, and that authority comes from God.

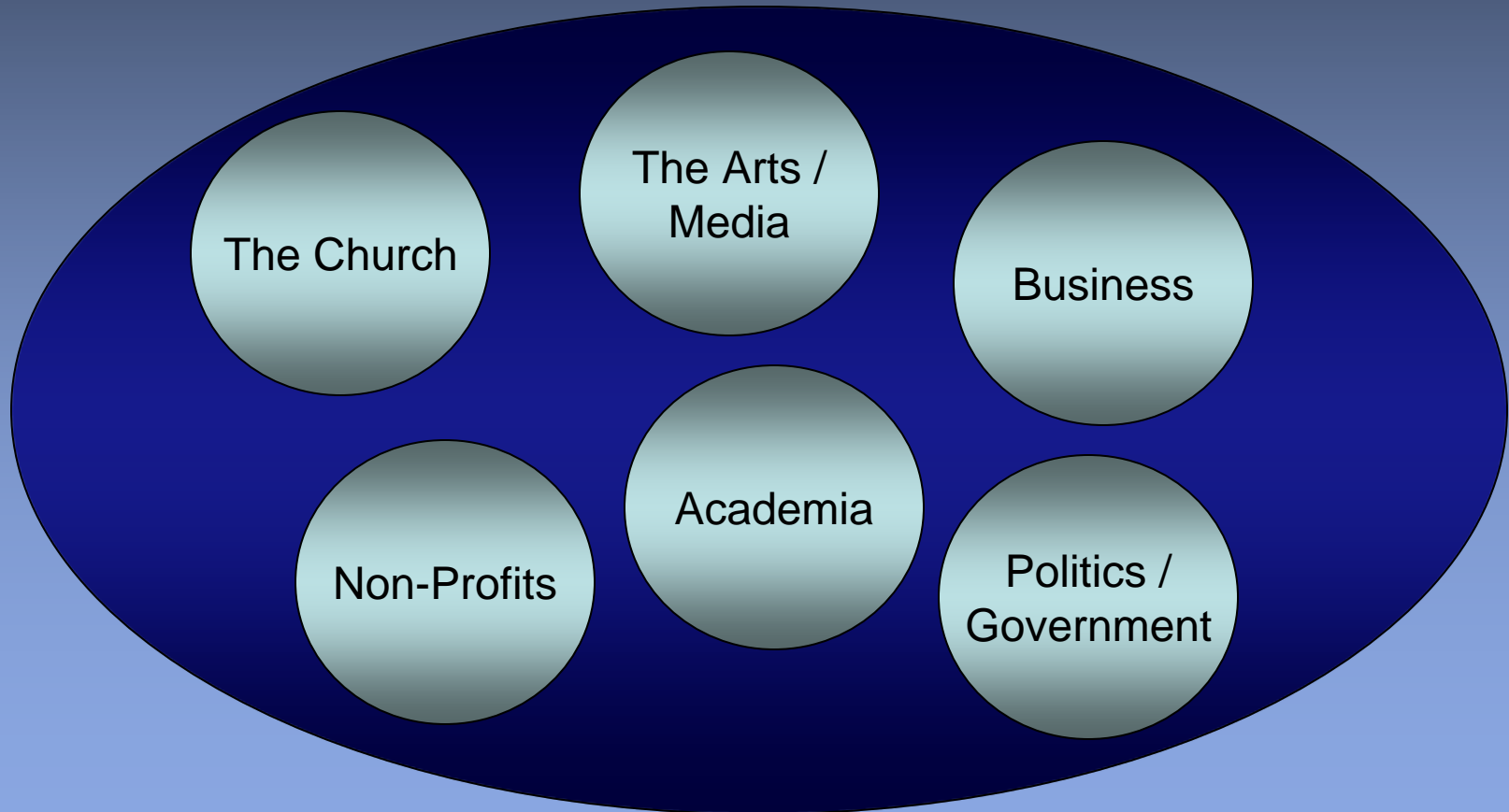
1 Peter 2:13 – “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority institute among men: whether to the king, as supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.”

Romans 13:1 – “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”



So How Should Christians Relate to Society?

3. Recognize that society and culture includes far more than simply church and state.





How Did Jesus Relate to Society?

1. Jesus' power derived from complete intimacy and submission to the Father.

"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

John 12:49-50



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"Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'

"Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Matthew 4:8-10



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"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:25b-28



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"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross."

Philippians 2:5-8



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"Not only in His sacrificial suffering and death, . . . but in the time, attention, effort and resources he gave to address the needs of others – caring concretely for those who were fearful, hungry and thirsty, poor, humiliated, despised, demon-possessed, discriminated against, confused, blind, sick, paralyzed, diseased and dying."

James Davison Hunter



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"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village."

Luke 9:51-56



How Did Jesus Relate to Society?

1. Jesus' power derived from complete intimacy and submission to the Father.
2. Jesus rejected status, reputation and privilege.
3. Jesus' power in the Kingdom is defined by compassion.
4. Jesus was non-coercive with those outside the faith.
5. Jesus practiced a "faithful presence."
 - God pursues us first and continually;
 - God identifies with us, our joys and our sorrows;
 - God offers us life, in the present world and in the one to come;
 - God's way is one of sacrificial love.



Go and Do Likewise . . .

The Church's should be

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- We pursue others first and continually;
- We identify with others in their joys and our sorrows;
- We offer life, in the present world and in the one to come;
- We follow the way of *sacrificial love*.



Go and Do Likewise . . .

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:

"Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce.

Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.

Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Jeremiah 29:4-7



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INTERACTIVE



Participate, ask questions, talk back...

What if we listened to what everyone had to say — and discovered that God can speak through us all? After all, we all learn better when we talk things out, hear different points of view, and give room for the Spirit to speak through our deliberation.

[Read more](#)

THOUGHTFUL



Test everything, hold on to what is good...

Many hours of research are dedicated to prepare each one of our series. We explore the scriptures, the breadth of Christian scholarship, contemporary authors, and consider a wide range of sources outside of our faith.

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FAITHFUL



Set apart Christ as Lord...

We all have questions. But we learn together in a way that tackles the deepest part of our doubts while making sure that our purpose is clear: to always know the reason for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, and to be prepared to share that answer with everyone who asks us about that hope.

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