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Christ and Culture Part 3

By Aleck Cartwright

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5.Christ and Vocation

Then Jesus said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

As the second part of this series on Christ and culture, Christ and vocation should be understood as the domain where God is revealed to society in our day to day lives.

To understand the relationship between Christ and vocation, we cannot keep them rigidly compartmentalised. Your vocation is your cross. You are the cross that God's life hangs upon and as such your work is a powerful witness of your faith and testimony. If we understand that Christ lives in us, we see that He also walks down the street in us and goes to work in us, all to reveal His life and purposes in us.

So if we understand this right, your vocation is very important to God. It is not a timid accommodation to prevailing culture. This is truly where Christ and culture collide! An opportunity to live the Christian life in practical ways with the support of God's grace. You can confront the world by Christ in you through your chosen line of work. No matter what part of society you work in, God's purposes are made clear within the principles for each domain. Be it education, church, economics, education, family, science, the arts or government, as individuals we have the responsibility and calling to be Jesus with skin on in our workplace.

By calling Christians into the world, we are also calling them to be truly out of this world in their expression of Christ. People will notice the statement your life will make when you live with them and protest worldly corruption and idolatry in your sphere of influence.

We must bear our message into public life, not just when we are hymn-singing in church, for that is what salt and light should be, at all times and in all places. Somehow we have decided that only the spiritual sphere is regarded as within the competence of divine claim and command, whereas the secular sphere is where only economic, political and social laws apply. We have become existentialists and agnostic, not Christian.

Christ and Culture Part 3

Sometimes we are called to patient endurance of an oppressive government, as in the case of Zimbabwe, the church has not taken up arms, instead opting to pray for the salvation of members in government and protest through vocation, and if that fails then to put their trust in God's ability to raise up an enemy for the oppressor. But in some cases, Christians are not only permitted but also required to fight the kingdom, in that situation, the correct vocation may be one of soldier. The opposition against Nazi Germany was one such case where the leader was not divinely instituted and was intent on destroying Christianity and monotheistic worldview, to replace it with an idolatrous nationalism. It was morally right to fight that war.

In the case where a government is ordained by God, a Christian in his vocation may have less incentive to call for such significant reforms. Sadly, we live in an age where irresponsibility is rife and

abandonment of vocation is widespread, particularly the most important of vocations, parenthood. Day-care allows even those who can afford to raise their own children to abdicate that responsibility. Since a vocation is a cross, surely abandonment of it must be sin.

Also since God is an innovator and His creativity knows no bounds, both the form and content of our vocations should be developed by those of us who partake of His life. Thus we can improve, adapt and innovate in our work to make it more fruitful and more useful. Techniques in so called "secular advances" can be implemented without sin, a Christian designer looks to new designs and material, not scripture necessarily, to develop his craft. A Christian car manufacturer seeks to develop the best car using the best materials on offer. On the other hand a Christian doctor should protest any requirement for him to perform an abortion as part of his vocation under God.

This is the criteria for knowing the redeemable and non-redeemable aspects of a culture. The paradox of divine nature dwelling in a human believer with an unrenewed mind and God's principles in each domain of society. The idea that Christ lives in you, though you still fail, and are above the law, yet obey the law in your daily vocation, protesting where it becomes necessary to uphold God's glory.

This view avoids self-righteous separatism on the one side and double-minded irresponsibility on the other. It affirms any earthly calling as not in itself sinful, and secular techniques can be embraced in so far as they affirm the word of God. Temporal authority should be respected and tyrannical leadership endured provided it is instituted by God, though not without protest from within one's vocation (the role of the suffering servant); but when government is by nature directly opposed to Christ it must be resisted, even with force.

Reform and innovation are considered good, so long as the fruits it bears are good and demonstrate the love of God. We need to be aware of God's transforming nature as well as Satan's degrading nature in the world. Where the word is revealed in truth and faithfulness transformation of culture will occur through individual members of the body of Christ. You cannot make men good through the law but good society is impossible without good men.

There is enough evidence today in the world to prove that law acting on people without any inner transformation struggles to control anyone, but where the two are held in tension, Christ in us expressed as us, we find a force for change, within and without.

This option also reminds us of our humility and humanity in Christ and our failings and predisposition to sin, as well as shattering any dreams of any kind of utopian society on earth. While at the same time

denying ourselves and taking up our vocations and following Christ through costly witness, and protest and a willingness to allow our lives to be the cross that Christ hangs upon to the glory of God.

Ultimately the cross is where life and death meet and Christ and humanity are reconciled. This is where Christ and culture collide, through Christ in you, as you. Where Christ and culture collide.

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Aleck is a missionary and communicator who believes that there are two hands by which God shows His love to man through the gospel. Salvation and social action, where Christ in us is expressed as us. (Colossians 1:27)

Christ and Covenant

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The Covenant and Christ

All are under sin, whether under the law or barbarians, and apart from the Law we are all in need of righteousness. Not one of us can stand before God righteous apart from Christ in us as our righteousness. God does have a covenant with Israel as His chosen race and we as believers are grafted onto the chosen race by grace. This is where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free for we are all in Christ, and there is a level playing field for all mankind who are made partakers of divine nature.

We as Gentiles never become Jews, except in the spiritual sense we become circumcised in our hearts having the law of God written on our hearts and in our minds. In Christ we realise the fulfillment of the law in our lives. We cannot attain to it and neither can the Jew, so whether we are under the law or not, we are all facing the wrath of God towards sin. Where God will judge us for what we have done according to Paul's gospel, which is Christ in us, the hope of Glory.

We as gentiles do by nature that which is required by the law because we have Christ the fulfillment of the Law at work within us. What a wonderful position to be in before God. Israel is still God's chosen people and as such they have the protection and covenant of God.

Sin is what all men have and righteousness is what all men need.

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Aleck is a missionary and author, to learn more go to www.god-life.com.



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