

To Change the World: The Iron, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World

James Davison Hunter

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Essay I - CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD-CHANGING

Chapter One = CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE TASK OF WORLD-CHANGING

1. “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). In the Hebrew derivations, the key verbs are *abad* and *shamar*. The former can be translated as work, nurture, sustain, and husband; the latter means to safeguard, preserve, care for, and protect … active verbs that convey God’s intention that human beings both develop and cherish the world in ways that meet human needs and bring glory and honor to him. … human beings are the … world-makers.
2. People fulfill their individual and collective destiny in the art, music, literature, commerce, law, and scholarship they cultivate, the relationships they build, and in the institutions they develop—the families, churches, associations, and communities they live in and sustain—as they reflect the good of God and his designs for flourishing.
3. To be Christian is to be obliged to engage the world, pursuing God’s restorative purposes over all of life, individual and corporate, public and private. This is the mandate of creation.
4. The Presbyterian Church USA aims at “renewing the church to transform the world,”³ The Episcopal Church declares that a “revolution” (of justice and peace) “is precisely what God’s work, God’s mission, is all about.”
5. It is fair to say that in each organization and all the people they represent, differences notwithstanding, the idealism about fulfilling the mandate of creation is sincere, the efforts are earnest, and the intentions are undoubtedly honorable. But is that enough?
6. I contend that the dominant ways of thinking about culture and cultural change are flawed, for they are based on both specious social science and problematic theology.

Chapter Two - CULTURE: THE COMMON VIEW

1. The essence of culture is found in the hearts and minds of individuals—in what are typically called “values.”
2. A worldview, as Charles Colson has defined it, is “the sum total of our beliefs about the world,
3. The heart of the controversy over human origins “is not science; it is a titanic struggle between opposing worldviews—between naturalism and theism.... Only when Christians understand this,” he argues, “will we stop losing debates.”
4. Colson then lays out four objectives: “First, Christians must be good citizens. Second, Christians must carry out their civic duty in every walk of life. Third, Christians must be engaged directly in politics. Fourth, the church must act as the conscience of society, as a restraint against the misuse of governing authority.”
5. . the real leverage for cultural change comes from transforming the habits and dispositions of ordinary people.”
6. that “the responsibility of Christians in our own time remains as it was in Paul’s—to radically transform culture, not by imposing values from above, but through a subtler yet more powerful process—living a vocation of love in the day-to-day reality of our lives.”
7. “Enlighten the people generally,” he wrote in 1816, “and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day.”
8. Evangelism is not only a means of saving souls but of transforming individuals and, in a roundabout way, the culture.
9. As the logic goes: if people’s hearts and minds are converted, they will have the right values, they will make the right choices, and the culture will change in turn.
10. Interestingly, this emphasis on values, choice, and spiritual renewal has also predisposed nearly everyone to focus on politics as the central means of changing the world. The reasoning goes like this: bad law is the outcome of bad choices made by individual politicians, judges, and policy makers.³⁴ Thus, changing the world requires that individual Christians vote into office those who hold the right values or possess the right worldview and therefore will make the right choices.
11. “Christian people,” he continues, “have an equal opportunity to set good public policy, not merely to protest after bad policy has been set.”
12. “How small of all that human hearts endure, that part which laws or Kings either cause or cure.”
 - a. Government is the hard work of creating a background order, but it is not the main substance of life. As Samuel Johnson famously put it, “How small, of all that human hearts endure,/That part which laws or kings can cause or cure.” Government can set the stage, but it can’t be the play.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/03/opinion/brooks-the-stem-and-the-flower.html#:~:text=As%20Samuel%20Johnson%20famously%20put%20it%2C%20E2%80%9CHow%20small%2C,play.%20It%20is%20just%20too%20balky%20an%20instrument.>

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13. "What Congress can accomplish with a Republican President will be incredible. It will be nothing less than a rediscovery of the values that made America a great nation and that have made Americans a good people."
 - a. <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/rediscovering-our-american-values-the-real-state-the-union>
14. A third tactic that emanates from this working theory is a tactic of changing the culture through a renewal of civil society—the institutions that mediate between citizens and the state and market.
15. "there is a strong hint in the pages of history that voluntary associations became the means of social correction when other forms of public action, such as legislative change, fell short.
16. Illustrations of these voluntary social movements include, among others, the fatherhood movement, the marriage movement, the character movement, and the teen-abstinence movement.
17. Cultures change when people change or, as Charles Colson puts it, "transformed people transform cultures."
18. "cultural transformation is brought about by personal transformation."56 Second, cultural change can be willed into being. Cultural change, then, is purposeful and planned, insofar as the decisions that transformed individuals make are rational and consistent, and their choices conscious and deliberate. As the spokesman for "Renew our Culture" puts it, "where there is a will for healthier culture there is a way."57 "Dare we believe that Christianity can yet prevail?" asks Charles Colson. "We must believe it. . . . this is an historic opportunity."58 Third, change is democratic—it occurs from the bottom up among ordinary citizens, ordinary people.
19. If you have the courage and hold to the right values and if you think Christianly with an adequate Christian worldview, you too can change the world. This account is almost wholly mistaken.

Chapter Three - THE FAILURE OF THE COMMON VIEW

1. in America today, 86 to 88 percent of the people adhere to some faith commitments. And yet our culture—business culture, law and government, the academic world, popular entertainment—is intensely materialistic and secular. Only occasionally do we hear references to religious transcendence in these realms, and even these are vague, generic, and void of particularity. If culture is the accumulation of values and the choices made by individuals on the basis of these values, then how is it that American public culture today is so profoundly secular in its character?
2. Jews have never comprised more than 3.5 percent of the American population. Yet, as David Hollinger has shown, the contribution of the Jewish community to science, literature, art, music, letters, film, and architecture is both brilliant and unrivaled.
3. gay community. At most 3 percent of the American population, their influence has become enormous;
4. The Apparent Problem But why? The advocates of the dominant strategies of cultural change all tend to agree, in effect, that the reason Christians do not have more influence in shaping the culture is that Christians are just not trying hard enough, acting decisively enough, or believing thoroughly or Christianly enough.
5. The Real Problem
6. idealism is a principle and tradition in metaphysics that maintains that something "ideal" or nonphysical is the primary reality.
7. it is ideas that move history.
8. Mind and spirit are fused.
9. image this perspective offers is of culture, somehow, free-floating in the ether of consciousness. Change consciousness and one changes culture. But are ideas, values, and worldviews singularly important to cultural change?
10. The irony is this: the idealism expressed in the worldview approach is, in fact, one manifestation of the very dualism its proponents are trying to challenge. Idealism reinforces that dualism by ignoring the institutional nature of culture and disregarding the way culture is embedded in structures of power.
11. Thus, if one is serious about changing the world, the first step is to discard the prevailing view of culture and cultural change and start from scratch.
12. Andy Crouch, "If we want to understand culture, then, it's always best to begin and end with specific cultural goods."26 "Culture is the accumulation of very tangible things—the stuff people make of the world."
13. "The only way to change culture is to create more of it."
14. societies are, in effect, constituted by the aggregate of individuals consuming a range of cultural goods,
15. this perspective fails to recognize and address the relationship of culture to the dynamics and structures of power that operate in the world
16. The model of cultural change on offer, then, implicitly operates within the framework of a market populism.

Chapter Four - AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN ELEVEN PROPOSITIONS

1. Seven Propositions on Culture
 - a. PROPOSITION ONE: CULTURE IS A SYSTEM OF TRUTH CLAIMS AND MORAL OBLIGATIONS

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- i. they are embedded within narratives that often have overlapping themes and within various myths that often reinforce common ideals.
- ii. it operates far below what most of us are capable of consciously grasping.
- b. PROPOSITION TWO: CULTURE IS A PRODUCT OF HISTORY
 - i. culture is much less an invention of the will than it is a slow product of history.
 - ii. Experienced as internal law and external necessity, habitus represents “the past which survives in the present” or, as he puts it elsewhere, it is “history turned into nature,” second nature, if you will.
- c. PROPOSITION THREE: CULTURE IS INTRINSICALLY DIALECTICAL
 - i. To put it bluntly, culture is as much an infrastructure as it is ideas. It takes shape in concrete institutional form. One must view culture, then, not only as a normative order reflected in well-established symbols, but also as the organization of human activity surrounding the production, distribution, manipulation, and administration of those symbols. Another way to say this is that culture is intrinsically dialectical. It is generated and exists at the interface between ideas and institutions; between the symbolic and the social and physical environment.
 - ii. Institutions cannot exist without the individuals who make them work, but individuals cannot be understood outside of the institutions that form them and frame all of their activity. That
- d. PROPOSITION FOUR: CULTURE IS A RESOURCE AND, AS SUCH, A FORM OF POWER
 - i. culture can be understood as symbolic capital.
- e. PROPOSITION FIVE: CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL ARE STRATIFIED IN A FAIRLY RIGID STRUCTURE OF “CENTER” AND “PERIPHERY”
 - i. With cultural capital, it isn’t quantity but quality that matters most.
- f. PROPOSITION SIX: CULTURE IS GENERATED WITHIN NETWORKS
 - i. When the world’s need is most acute, great leaders rise to the occasion and provide the courage and vision to address that need. “In all epochs of the world’s history, we shall find the Great Man to have been the indispensable savior of his epoch.”
 - ii. the key actor in history is not individual genius but rather the network and the new institutions that are created out of those networks.
- g. PROPOSITION SEVEN: CULTURE IS NEITHER AUTONOMOUS NOR FULLY COHERENT
 - i. culture—as ideas and institutions—is mixed together in the most complex ways imaginable with all other institutions, not least of which in our own day are the market economy and the state. The relationship of culture to the economy is especially complex in contemporary America because so much of what drives and sustains the economy and so much of what it sells is knowledge, information, images, symbols, entertainment, … government is inextricable from the work of culture. In some ways, the expansion of the state in the last several decades is due to its growing role in the production of knowledge and information.
 - ii. Culture also is composed of innumerable fields—relatively distinct and often-overlapping regions of meaning, activity, networks, and relationships, as well as rules and interests.
 - iii. Ideas Sometimes Have Consequences: Four Propositions on Cultural Change
 - iv. not all ideas have consequences, and among those that do, some have greater consequences than others.

2. Four Propositions on Cultural Change

- a. PROPOSITION EIGHT: CULTURES CHANGE FROM THE TOP DOWN, RARELY IF EVER FROM THE BOTTOM UP
 - i. culture is about how societies define reality—what is good, bad, right, wrong, real, unreal, important, unimportant, and so on. This capacity is not evenly distributed in a society, but is concentrated in certain institutions and among certain leadership groups
 - ii. Cultural change is most enduring when it penetrates the structure of our imagination, frameworks of knowledge and discussion, the perception of everyday reality.
- b. PROPOSITION NINE: CHANGE IS TYPICALLY INITIATED BY ELITES WHO ARE OUTSIDE OF THE CENTERMOST POSITIONS OF PRESTIGE
- c. PROPOSITION TEN: WORLD-CHANGING IS MOST CONCENTRATED WHEN THE NETWORKS OF ELITES AND THE INSTITUTIONS THEY LEAD OVERLAP
- d. PROPOSITION ELEVEN: CULTURES CHANGE, BUT RARELY IF EVER WITHOUT A FIGHT

3. Against idealism, the view that ideas move history, we now see ideas inexorably grounded in social conditions and circumstances (and not just material objects). Against individualism, which influences us to view the autonomous and rational individual—even if a genius—as the key actor in social change, we now see the power of networks and the new institutions that they create, and the communities that surround them that make the difference.

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4. What this overview teaches is that cultures are profoundly resistant to intentional change—period.
5. The most profound changes in culture can be seen first as they penetrate the linguistic and mythic fabric of a social order. In doing so, it then penetrates the hierarchy of rewards and privileges and deprivations and punishments that organize social life. It also reorganizes the structures of consciousness and character, reordering the organization of impulse and inhibition.
6. evangelism, politics, social reform, and the creation of artifacts—if effective—all bring about good ends: changed hearts and minds, changed laws, changed social behaviors. But they don’t directly influence the moral fabric that makes these changes sustainable over the long term.
7. one of the most powerful transatlantic social reform movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the temperance movement. This movement failed, of course, not least because it did not and could not address the culture of restraint on which the particular interest of temperance depended.
8. Invitations by Christian leaders to fast and pray are most worthy, but their main effect will be to renew the church rather than keep America from “losing its soul.” All such engagement may be worthy, but if the end is to “save civilization,” it most certainly is naïve. By themselves or even together, evangelism, politics, and social reform, then, will fail to bring about the ends hoped for and intended. The important qualification one must make in all of this is that even when successful, change does not always occur in the direction that people propose or with the effects for which people hope. There are almost always unintended consequences to human action, particularly at the macro-historical level and these are, often enough, tragic. The architects of the Enlightenment who understood the power of science and predicted the progressive amelioration of human suffering through it, would never have desired or predicted the development of nuclear weapons. The Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century never would have imagined that the turn toward individual conscience and moral asceticism would have contributed to an economic system that would “act back” on the culture as a cause of secularization.

Chapter Five - EVIDENCE IN HISTORY

1. All cultural developments at that time depended on the overlapping social networks associated with familial ties, ethnic or geographic origins, occupations, and cultic interests, and Christianity was no different; in this case, its dependence was on the social networks of kinship, work, and faith among Diaspora Jews.⁴ Yet another dynamic was the fact that the Roman world was unified and dominated by Greek language and culture.
2. Scriptural studies and argumentation cited the Septuagint not from the Hebrew original
3. The urban centers of the Mediterranean became the foci of cultural production in the growing church.
4. Rome, the center of the empire that became the geographical center of the church too.
5. the church fathers—including Justin Martyr, Anthony the Great, Tertullian, Ambrose of Milan, Jerome, Basil the Great, Gregory of Tours, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, St. Cyprian of Carthage, St. Gregory (the miracle worker), Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, and Augustine—were born into families that were either prosperous, highly educated, or of high social standing.
6. The urban centers of the Mediterranean also became the setting for various voices in different parts of the empire to be heard and to engage each other.
7. education was exceptionally important, for much of the spiritual and cultural creativity of the church resided in the establishment and transformation of the schools of that time.
8. quantity and quality of intellectual output. By the second century, hostility among Christians to Greek philosophy was beginning to wane. The schools themselves brought together both the catechetical and classical learning by “correlating the higher learning from the Greco-Roman world with the special insights into the nature and purpose of God in the biblical tradition.”¹³ Christian intellectuals, then, not only understood their own theological and biblical tradition, but also had knowledge of the leading ideas of the culture.
9. second reason for the influence of the schools was institutional. The educational system of the Roman Empire was the paideia—
10. its upper echelons were occupied by highly cultivated persons, drawn from the class of urban notables.”²⁴ What this meant was that the new power of Christian bishops amounted more to a “reshuffling” than to a true cultural change.
11. In the Roman Empire, the ecclesiastical provinces were often the same as the civil provinces.
12. The influence of the monasteries was multiple. As mentioned, they were centers of learning.
13. Though outside of the Greco-Roman world, Ireland’s monasteries and those they spawned in England and on the Continent became the premier scholarly and educational centers of the Western world.
14. the monasteries were outposts of evangelization.
15. The dependency of the church on the largesse of benefactors was not without moral tension.⁴⁴ Even so, the resources the nobility provided were essential.

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16. It is not unfair to say that the church in these centuries was an *adelskirche*, a German term that means “the church of the nobility.”
17. The Carolingian Renaissance
18. “Dark Ages,” there were pockets of cultural activity everywhere. As we have seen, monasteries proliferated and were hives of cultural work and achievement that preserved much of the literature of antiquity and extended the reach of Christian and Roman civilization. In the middle of this period, from the late eighth through the ninth century, there was an exceptional flurry of high cultural production referred to as the Carolingian Renaissance, in which education, literature, law, theology, architecture, art, and music all flourished.
19. the Irish monastics who evangelized the area, built monasteries, and educated the nobility had laid a stable foundation for societal reform of a more genuine Christian character.
20. Central to the reform of the time was the successful mobilization of the Frankish aristocracy by the higher-level leadership of the church. Emblematic of these overlapping networks was the relationship between Charlemagne and Alcuin, an English monk of the Benedictine order.
21. Charlemagne’s court library contained Christian texts such as illustrated Bibles, commentaries from the patristic age, liturgical books, guides to ascetic discipline, and prayer books, but also some of the great pagan texts from ancient Greece through late antiquity—
22. Through a series of royal decrees, all clerics were required to learn how to read and write and be in possession of the basic knowledge necessary for the performance of their clerical responsibilities.
23. the Reformation was an intellectual and moral revolution, originating within the theological faculty of a German university, which challenged and offered a bibliocentric alternative to late medieval theology and religious practice. Foundational to this revolution was the fact that the leading reformers were all scholars of the first order.
24. Also foundational to the intellectual success of the Reformation was its strategic alliance with the humanist movement,
25. Though Luther and Calvin are given the greatest credit, the movement itself had its roots in and was perpetuated by a wider network of theologians, professors, and students operating through associated universities and academies.
26. Successor Movements: Awakenings, Antislavery Reform, Revival
27. Consider the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s. George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and the Wesley brothers—John and Charles—attract most of the attention from historians and for good reason. Yet they were hardly alone in this effort. These men were part and parcel of a vibrant transatlantic network of relationships committed to the renewal of Christian faith.
28. exceptionally well educated at elite universities—
29. Anglican missionaries from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts were well established throughout the colonies by the 1730s, supporting missionaries, providing libraries, and setting up charity schools.
30. George Whitefield who was the catalyst for the broad trans-colonial and transatlantic revival that has come to be known as the Great Awakening.⁸⁵ One reason was that Whitefield was seemingly ubiquitous. He not only traveled extensively through England and Wales, but he made seven trips to the colonies and fourteen to Scotland. He was also a central figure in a far-reaching epistolary network that included hundreds of ministers, evangelists, financial backers, printers, and ordinary laypeople. Most important, he was personally and regularly in correspondence with the main revival figures in Britain and America.
31. British abolitionism
32. No one studying abolition would deny the critical role played by Wilberforce and Evangelical conviction, yet the larger story of the British abolitionist movement is considerably more complicated, unfolding along dynamics that are now familiar. For one, the cultural backdrop of the late eighteenth century was defined by the progressive intellectual ideas of the French and Scottish Enlightenment—
33. appeal to the national interests of the British Empire. The thought among many in the political classes was that it was in the interest of Great Britain to at least partially ban the slave trade precisely because a considerable part of the slave trade contributed toward the economic growth of the colonies of Britain’s enemies—
34. Wilberforce was not an isolated actor but was surrounded and supported by a network of friends, associates, and sympathizers. Those closest to him were known as the Clapham Circle. One can count over two dozen leaders from the highest echelons of business, church, literary life, and government and politics who were connected and worked together in this common cause. These individuals either came from or operated within the centers of cultural influence.
35. Consider the Enlightenment. new mercantilism within each national context was both economic growth and political stability. National treasuries swelled with unprecedented surplus wealth. It was in this way that the state became a source of patronage, channeling its capital into science, architecture, the arts, and philosophy.
36. Where cultural production had remained squarely under the patronage of religious authorities through the early seventeenth century, a new and alternative cultural economy was now developing that competed with and eventually superseded that of the church.

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37. where the state provided both vast economic and administrative resources as well as freedom for intellectual and artistic innovation—e.g., France, England, Prussia, and Scotland—the Enlightenment flourished.

Chapter Six - THE CULTURAL ECONOMY OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

1. Within social life, one can make broad analytic distinctions between the major realms of social life—the economic, the political, and the cultural. Of course, such distinctions are finally unsatisfactory because, as I have noted, each area infuses the others. Money the most visible way American Christianity influences the larger society today is in the political realm.
2. High-profile Catholic and Evangelical politicians, judges, and operatives may have received most of the attention in recent years but they are not the most important players on the landscape. Christian communities are also represented within the realm of the higher-end public policy think tanks (such as the Heritage Foundation and the Ethics and Public Policy Center) but rarely as such; that is, these think tanks are not explicitly providing the Evangelical view of this issue or the Catholic perspective on that issue. Though very much present within this area, policy-oriented intellectual work is also not the place where Christians of any stripe make their most significant mark. Rather **the greatest strength and energy over recent decades has come from faith-based pressure groups and their leaders.**
3. The collapse of the so-called WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) establishment in the post–World War II period changed a great deal in America. Protestant domination in economic life dissipated at the least, and if Christians retain an influence qua Christians in the corporate world, it is in ways that are more self-consciously pietistic.
4. **On the face of it, faith-based philanthropy is impressive. Though the giving is not insignificant by any measure, compared to the larger universe of foundation giving, the amounts are relatively small**
5. Evangelical foundations, the focus of giving has long been on missionary work and evangelism, Evangelical college and seminary education, and welfare organizations engaged in relief, development, and other social services.
6. In 2004, the Ford Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation gave a combined total of over \$200 million dollars in grants to “arts and culture.”¹⁸ In the largest Catholic and Evangelical foundations, \$10,706,335 was given to arts and culture.
7. very few resources within the Christian community, in all of its diversity, go to supporting leadership in developing cultural capital in the centers of cultural production.
8. from the colonial period certainly through the mid-nineteenth century, many if not most of the leading institutions of cultural production in America reflected or were informed by certain assumptions and understandings of historical Christianity. Christian faith had been enormously influential in the culture precisely because it has had a principal if not hegemonic role in the culture-producing institutions of society.
9. There was a time when pronouncements from the National Council of Churches or from the major mainline denominations, such as the United Methodist or Episcopal Churches, would attract enormous public attention and, in turn, generate significant public debate.
10. the distinctiveness of mainline Protestant identity has largely dissolved since the 1960s.
11. Cultural production within the Catholic Church is mainly but not exclusively oriented toward serving its lay constituencies. Perhaps the biggest change has been in the decline in numbers of priests and men and women religious, all of which has created staffing shortages for its schools and charities. In the higher reaches of intellectual and literary production in the larger world outside of the Catholic enclave, Catholics have been more successful and better integrated than other Christian traditions.
12. Much of the contemporary Evangelical world was initially created in reaction to the secularization of the mainline Protestant institutions in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. This was especially true in the case of the prominent Evangelical colleges and seminaries—Baylor in 1845, Taylor in 1846, Wheaton in 1860, Calvin in 1876, Gordon in 1889, Biola in 1908, Messiah in 1909, and so on. Many of these institutions are economically viable, and the quality of students, faculty, and scholarship has improved considerably over the decades. These schools draw almost exclusively from the Evangelical community, and as teaching institutions they are embraced by the community and serve its needs well. As scholarly institutions, however, the schools and their faculty are in a tough spot. The schools and faculty operate between the standards of scholarship and career mobility set by the secular academic establishment and the commitments of their faith community. Here they find they are doubly marginalized. Scholars are marginalized from the larger intellectual culture, especially to the extent that they pursue Christian distinctions in their work, yet they are also marginalized within Evangelicalism because of this community’s long-standing tradition of anti-intellectualism—a tradition well documented by Richard Hofstader and Mark Noll.²¹ It does not help that the teaching loads of most Christian colleges are often twice that of elite secular colleges, not to mention research universities. **Many Evangelical scholars are committed to academic excellence, but they work in a community that neither values it highly nor supports it generously.** In terms of general cultural production, Evangelicalism is the standout. yet overall this cultural productivity is characterized by at least three features.

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13. First, the works that are produced are almost exclusively directed to the internal needs of the faithful.
14. Second, this cultural productivity all tends to operate closer to the margins than to the center of the broader field of cultural production.
15. individual Evangelicals can be found everywhere—in elite research universities, university presses, think tanks and the like—and there they make important contributions. But except for a few areas such as philosophy and American religious history, where they have had a significant presence and influence, their number tends to be very small and their broader impact of no great consequence.
16. Since the 1960s, none of the movements in contemporary Christianity have been prominent in creating, contributing to, or supporting structures in the arts, humane letters, the academy, and the like;
17. In terms of the cultural economy, however, Christians in America today have institutional strength and vitality exactly in the lower and peripheral areas of cultural production.
18. problem. It's amazing the lack of leadership. Evangelicalism is a bunch of personalities who either are so hung up on their own kingdoms . . . or are so anti-intellectual that [issues of vision and leadership] are just out of their purview.”²⁵ A second matter, in this regard, concerns the strong indications that for all the deep belief, the genuine piety, the heroic faith, and the good intention one finds all across American Christianity today, large swaths have been captured by the spirit of the age.

Chapter Seven - FOR AND AGAINST THE MANDATE OF CREATION

1. The mandate of creation is central to who Christians are before God. This mandate calls for obedience, yes, but this should not be viewed as a heavy burden. Indeed, in fulfilling this mandate Christian believers become more of who God intends them to be. Importantly, this is not a mandate for a few but for all—all are participants, all are enjoined to participate in ways framed by the revelation of God's word in the creative and renewing work of world-making and remaking. And it is in the divine nature of this work that vocation is imbued with great dignity. It is, in part, the appeal to every person, regardless of stature, giftedness, achievement, wealth, power, or personality that makes the Gospel so radical. Every person is made in God's image and every person is offered his grace and, in turn, the opportunity to labor together with God in the creation and recreation of the world.
2. the populism that is inherent to authentic Christian witness is often transformed into an oppressive egalitarianism that will suffer no distinctions between higher and lower or better and worse. At its worse, it can take form as a “tyranny of the majority” that will recognize no authority, nor hierarchy of value or quality or significance.
3. The creation mandate inevitably leads Christian believers to a transformative engagement with the culture in which they find themselves. Yet by its very nature, this engagement will not be neutral in character. Whether we like it or not, merely engaging the culture implies the issue and exercise of power.
4. power and politics are a very large part of what has made contemporary Christianity in America appalling, irrelevant, and ineffective—part and parcel of the worst elements of our late-modern culture today, rather than a healthy alternative to it.
5. the antidote to “seizing power” in a new way is a better understanding of faithful presence
6. Theology moves in the opposite direction of social theory – the vocation of the church is to bear witness to and to be the embodiment of the coming Kingdom of God – “what matters is the new creation (Gal 6:15) . . . will include networks (and communities) of counter-leaders operating within the upper echelons of cultural production and social life generally.

Essay II - RETHINKING POWER

Chapter One - THE PROBLEM OF POWER

1. THE MANDATE OF CREATION is a source both of glory and of shame for the Christian community.
2. When faith and its cultures flourish, they do so, in part, because it operates with an implicit view of power in its proper place. When faith and its cultures deteriorate, they do so, in part, because it operates with a view of power that is corrupt.

Chapter Two – POWER AND POLITICS IN AMERICAN CULTURE

1. ONE OF THE ENDURING QUESTIONS of the social sciences is the question of how societies hold together. The classic answer to this question was that “traditional” (that is, agrarian, economically undeveloped, and non-urban) societies were held together mainly by beliefs held in common by all of its members. Modern societies, by contrast, are held together through social and economic interdependence. While power—the exercise of coercion or the threat of its use.
2. the final repository of legitimate force is found in the state. Clearly the state is not the exclusive domain of power in the modern world, nor are its instrumentalities the only means for the ordering of social life. But it is the final repository of legitimate force
3. the legitimacy of a democratic state to exercise force derives from the sanction of the people.

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4. at the root of every social order is coercion or the threat of its use.
5. since the New Deal: a tendency toward the politicization of nearly everything.² If modern politics is the sphere of leadership, influence, and activity surrounding the state, politicization is the turn toward law and politics—the instrumentality of the state—to find solutions to public problems. The biggest problem is how to create or reinforce social consensus where little exists or none could be generated organically. This is demonstrated by the simple fact that the amount of law that exists in any society is always inversely related to the coherence and stability of its common culture: law increases as cultural consensus decreases.
6. Institutions such as popular and higher education, philanthropy, science, the arts, and even the family understand their identity and function according to what the state does or does not permit. Groups (women, minorities, gays, Christians, etc.) have validity not only but increasingly through the rights conferred by the state.
7. in response to a thinning consensus of substantive beliefs and dispositions in the larger culture, there has been a turn toward politics as a foundation and structure for social solidarity. But politicization provides a framework of expectations and action and very little substantive content. In a diverse society, ideological polarization is a natural expression of the contest to provide that content.
8. Every area of civil life has been politicized ... strained by ideological conflict ... family life ... marriage, divorce, gender roles, sexuality ... education, science and technological innovation arts news media.
9. Throughout history, political revolutions were palace revolutions ... average people were mostly peripheral to the event
10. The identity of public actors is determined to a large degree by their partisan attachments ... This is not only seen in how we tend to label people and their actions and motivations ideologically as conservative, liberal, traditionalist, progressive, feminist, fundamentalist, and the like ... identity becomes so tightly linked with ideology, that partisan commitment becomes a measure of their moral significance; of whether a person is judged good or bad. This is the face of identity politics
11. The Conflation of the Public with the Political
12. we find it difficult to think of a way to address public (by which I mean collective, common, or shared) problems or issues in any way that is not political ... public life tends to be reduced to the political
13. Politicization means that the final arbiter within most of social life is the coercive power of the state. When politicization is oriented toward furthering the specific interests of the group without an appeal to the common weal, when its means of mobilizing the uncommitted is through fear, and when the pursuit of agendas depends more on the vilification of opponents than on the affirmation of higher ideals, power is stripped to its most elemental forms. Even democratic justifications are not much more than a veneer over a will to power. The actions themselves may be within the bounds of legitimate democratic participation, yet the basic intent and desire is to dominate, control, or rule.
14. Postmodernists ... every aspect of social life comes down to power and domination
15. The politicization of everything is an indirect measure of the loss of a common culture and, in turn, the competition among factions to dominate others on their own terms.
16. What adds pathos to our situation is the presence of what Nietzsche called “ressentiment.” His definition of this French word included what we in the English-speaking world mean by resentment, but it also involves a combination of anger, envy, hate, rage, and revenge as the motive of political action. Ressentiment is, then, a form of political psychology.
17. Ressentiment is grounded in a narrative of injury or, at least, perceived injury; a strong belief that one has been or is being wronged.
18. Over time, the perceived injustice becomes central to the person’s and the group’s identity.
19. In this logic, it is only natural that wrongs need to be righted.
20. What I am describing is neither the stuff of political theory nor political science. Rather it is a realm one could call political culture—
21. Nietzsche was mostly right; that while the will to power has always been present, American democracy increasingly operates within a political culture—that is, a framework of meaning—that sanctions a will to domination.
22. three of these positions—the conservative, progressive, and neo-Anabaptist positions—because in contemporary America, these are the most prominent. They are, in effect, “political theologies,” and they are powerful in part because they are shrouded by compelling myths that give voice to the ideals and public identities of different parts of the Christian community.
23. What is interesting in these accounts is not so much their particular ideology, as their disposition toward public life more broadly. A group’s ideology may be (and often is) related to its temperament but these are not the same thing. The concern of this essay, then, is primarily with how Christians from different perspectives relate to the larger public culture. In this way I am less concerned with the patterns of Christian political engagement than with the nature and character of that engagement.

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Chapter Three - THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

1. Christians who are politically conservative want what all people want: namely, to have the world in which they live reflect their own likeness. The representation of social life they imagine and desire is not a reflection of the reality they live, but rather their highest ideals expressed as principles for ordering individual and collective passions and interests. It is a vision of human flourishing, but one obviously framed by the particularities of their distinct worldview.
2. challenge to the truths of the Christian faith and the traditions and scripture that express them, but there has been a challenge to the very concept of truth as well. And there has been a challenge to the moral authority of the church.
3. when the Bible and Foxe's Book of Martyrs were the two books that could be found in nearly everyone's home; a time when the church was held in high regard even if its practices were not observed, and its truths were respected, even if they were not embraced.
4. mythic ideal concerned with the “right-ordering” of society.
5. The founders were Christian in conviction or, at least, their sentiments and principles were influenced strongly by Christian faith.
6. Richard Neuhaus – The notion that religion is the first political institution of American democracy would strike many people today as rather odd. That was, however, the argument made by Alexis de Tocqueville in the 1830s. ... The audacious thing, the unprecedented thing, about the American regime is that it deliberately makes itself vulnerable to a higher sovereignty ... so the doctrine became established that the state is not to establish a doctrine regarding the most binding things
7. For politically conservative Christians, America is clearly moving in the wrong direction.
8. The reason for this moral decline is the “growing hostility towards all things religious”;6 “the secularization of our country.” ... the secular-liberal takeover of the judiciary the greatest assault representative self-government has ever faced
9. The sense of injury to country, culture, and faith is perceived to be unrelenting.
10. The conclusion is unavoidable: “nothing short of a great Civil War of values rages today throughout North America.
11. The place of prayer for politically conservative Christians is certainly not perfunctory but most sincere.
12. At the same time, there is a call to action and action means “changing the government policies and laws which create an environment in which immorality and parental neglect are allowed to flourish.”
13. tax code
14. For this reason, as well as for reasons of theological principle, conservative Christian political organizations claim to be nonpartisan. However, they are nonpartisan only in a technical sense. Though not without some qualification, the reality is that they are decidedly partisan on behalf of the Republican
15. A second characteristic is the clear desire and ambition for dominance or controlling influence in American politics and culture.
16. “recapture America’s values,” to “win the new civil war.”
17. The hope Christian conservatives place in politics is quite astonishing.
18. For a minority of Evangelicals and Fundamentalists, restoration means returning to a Christian America.
19. Restoring America begins with recapturing the original American vision of a just society ... bringing our nation back to God
20. conservative Christians are often called the “useful idiots of the Republican party.”
21. the established Christian Right it is undergoing a crisis and a transformation. One transformation within politically conservative Christian circles is a shift in emphasis away from politics per se. There is a recognition that politics may not be quite as important as they have thought and that “culture” may be a bigger problem after all.
22. 7 mountains of culture – government, education, media, arts and entertainment, religion, family, business
23. TM Moore - Moore identifies the social evil of our times as a secular postmodernism—“The Lie [that] has inundated the unbelieving world and swept into the Church, and as yet not been fully exposed and forcefully evicted.”
24. continues to reflect the same language of loss, disappointment, anger, antipathy, resentment, and desire for conquest.¹³⁰ This is because the underlying myth that defines their identity, their goals, and their strategy of action has not changed.

Chapter Four - THE CHRISTIAN LEFT

1. progressives have always been animated by the myth of equality and community and therefore see history as an ongoing struggle to realize these ideals.
2. legacy of the Enlightenment. It is crystallized in the rallying cry of the French Revolution: its threefold ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The key word in the progressive lexicon, and arguably the paramount virtue, is justice. Justice, though, is defined as economic equity—the equality component. Within the contemporary left, there is a tension between the communitarian wing and the social libertarian wing, and the dividing line is far from clear-cut. Over the course of the last two centuries, liberalism has had less to say about “fraternity,” though socialism has made this a central part of its agenda. In contemporary America, most secular progressives define the “liberty” component in terms of individual

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autonomy and the freedom to choose one's own lifestyle; that is, in terms of sexual identity and practice, relationships, entertainment, and so on. But religiously oriented progressives, Christians among them, tend to lean toward the communitarian side of this divide. For these, liberty is understood largely as liberation; often enough this means freedom for individuals and communities from poverty caused by economic domination and exploitation of the wealthy.

3. The biblical tradition that Christian progressives appeal to is the prophetic tradition in its condemnation of the wealthy for their abuse of the poor, the weak, and the marginalized.
4. It is the vision of the eschaton that Christian progressives see themselves working hard to realize.
5. Politically progressive Christianity achieved its apex of visibility and influence in the middle decades of the twentieth century.
6. the strongest manifestation of the Christian Left in these years was outside of the United States in the form of liberation theology and its attending movements of liberation in the Third World, especially in Latin America. Liberation theology shared affinities with black and feminist theologies, but beginning in the 1960s, it was primarily Catholic in its institutional expression. It interpreted (and still does) the Christian faith through the suffering, struggle, and hope of the poor, and the person of Jesus as the liberator of the oppressed.³ In its more extreme expressions, it privileged orthopraxy or practice rooted in a political interpretation of the Gospels over orthodoxy, or proper belief. In this way it became closely aligned with Marxist ideology and even various communist movements in their call to arms against oppressive regimes around the Third World. After reaching a height of influence in the 1970s and 1980s, liberation theology declined in popularity and authority, primarily because the Vatican took a consistently hard line against its more radical spokespeople and their positions. In the United States, the Catholic Left lost ground as well, yet continued to pursue progressive policies through groups like NETWORK—A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby.⁴ Mainline Protestant activism in the United States also weakened in visibility and influence. This was in part because the demographic base of the mainline churches declined so precipitously in these years.
7. What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).
8. there has been a resurgence of the Christian Left in the early years of the twenty-first century. This movement has strong affinities with the broader "spiritual Left" that includes liberal Jews, Buddhists, Unitarians, and various expressions of new age spirituality, but it remains distinctly Christian.⁹ This resurgence is not led by the mainline and liberal bodies but rather by the political activism of progressive Evangelicals.
9. most Democrats have been uncomfortable using the language of faith.
10. the harm they most want to address is the harm done to the weak and disadvantaged of our society and world.
11. Though concern for the poor and disadvantaged dominates their political agenda, their interests extend to the environment, war, HIV, and immigration among other issues.
12. one of the central catalysts of solidarity over the years has been their hostility to the leaders, organizations, ideology, and agenda of the Christian Right.
13. There is deep anger and antipathy among many Christian progressives about this entire state of affairs. "God hates inequality"
14. Jim Wallis, among other politically progressive Christians, has rightly complained that the Christian Right is engaged in promoting "civil religion" rather than biblical Christianity.

Chapter Five - THE NEO-ANABAPTISTS

1. THERE ARE SEVERAL POINTS of commonality between the Christian Left and the neo-Anabaptists. First, they share a common antipathy to the human and environmental consequences of an unrestrained market economy and, for some, this is a hostility to capitalism itself—its logic, its organizational structures, its implicit moral character. Second, they tend to share a cultural style by virtue of being upper middle class—better educated, more urban and urbane, and more ironic than the average American Christian. Perhaps most importantly, their discourse reflects a mutual contempt for the Christian Right.
2. It is not incidental to the emergence and development of Anabaptism that first-century Christianity took form not only in a way that was independent of the state, but in a political environment that was hostile to the faith.
3. John Howard Yoder, The Politics of Jesus 1972
4. To the extent that one can speak of a popular movement composed of a community of these kinds of communities, it is very small.
5. The main point of difference between the Christian Left and the neo-Anabaptist position is found in their respective views of the State. The former is committed to a strong State and is willing to press it to realize its agenda in law and policy, while the latter keeps its distance from the State, maintaining a basic distrust toward its structure, action, and use of power.

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6. Though there were many types of Anabaptists, the Swiss, Dutch, German, Austrian, and Moravian branches all tended to share a radical congregationalism that rejected apostolic succession and much of the hierarchy of traditional ecclesiology. The succession they sought to perpetuate, rather, was the succession of an authentic Christian congregation whose life, order, and practices were inspired by the witness of Christ and the gospels and the social ethics of the Christian church in the apostolic age—living in simplicity, sharing goods in common, caring for the poor and the widowed, seeking reconciliation, and making peace.
7. **The Constantine Error:** With the conversion of Constantine and then the Edict of Milan in AD 313, came a rapprochement between piety and power that compromised the church’s distinctiveness and thus its inimitable witness to the world.⁵ The Constantian error has been fatal in many ways. Rather than challenging the principalities and powers, the people of God became united with the powers; rather than proclaiming the peace, the church embraced an ethic of coercion, power and, thus, violence; rather than resisting the power of the state, the church provided divine legitimization for the state, which has invariably led to the hubris of empire, conquest, and persecution; rather than modeling a new kind of society, the church imitated the social structures of hierarchy and administration; rather than being a servant to the poor and the oppressed, the church has been complicit in wielding economic and political power over the poor and the oppressed.
8. Augustine called on the Roman government to quash Donatists. Constantianism was reinvented in the Reformation ... laid groundwork for warfare among various Christian nations ... reinvented again in the age of nationalism ... neo-Constantinianism in founding of the American republic where an informal establishment of Christianity became the basis of all the nation’s governing institutions.
9. Civil society is not a free space independent of the State’s coercive and compromising reach State has co-opted any efforts in education, science and technology, human welfare and the professions.
10. We now live at a time when the power of the state has declined relative to the market it deforms and corrupts human desire ... distract us from our chief desire and the longing for which we were made: the desire for God. international capitalism and the technological innovation that drives it have become every bit as oppressive as the state.
11. It’s time for regime change among Christian intellectuals.
12. In the neo-Anabaptist view, the only hope for the church to properly engage the world is to recognize anew the messianic identity and mission of Jesus Christ. His incarnation was the beginning of a new moral, spiritual, and political order that would restructure the social relations among the people of God. It would be a new form of human community leading a new way of life.
13. The way of the “suffering servant,” then, is not only the way into the Kingdom of God, it was the essence of the Kingdom.
14. rejection of coercion and violence.
15. “principalities and powers” bears some further reflection because of its importance to the neo-Anabaptist tradition.²¹ The concept refers to the institutional or systemic patterns of thought, behavior, and relationship that govern our lives and the spiritual realm that animates them. They were originally part of the created order and as such, were good. They were intended to mediate the creative purposes of God in the world, but like us they are now fallen.
16. paradox, for even in their fallen state, the powers function to maintain order in society.
17. When the church is the church, it will suffer the condescension and hostility of the world for its social and political nonconformity.
18. Implied in this is the commitment to nonviolence.
19. Citizenship in the church is true citizenship, one that trumps loyalties in the world. It creates an alternative space in the world and an alternative set of practices against which the world is judged and beckoned. As Hauerwas and Willimon put it, “The church doesn’t have a social strategy, the church is a social strategy.”⁴⁵ The church does not have a social ethic, it is a social ethic.
20. There is a separatist impulse at work here.
21. As with the Christian Right and Christian Left, the neo-Anabaptists make no distinction between the public and the political.
22. Where the identity of the Christian Right is forged largely through their opposition to secularism and secularists, where the identity of the Christian Left derives from their opposition to the Right, the collective identity of the neo-Anabaptists comes through their dissent from the State and the larger political economy and culture of late modernity.
23. The neo-Anabaptists claim their message is prophetic but in its net effect (that is, in what people both inside and outside of the tradition hear), it is overwhelmingly a message of anger, disparagement, and negation.

Chapter Six - ILLUSION, IRONY, AND TRAGEDY

1. Politics is the way in which social life and its problems are imagined and it provides the framework for how Christians envision solutions to those problems ... politics is always and everywhere the framework.

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2. It is not an exaggeration to conclude that the public witness of the church today has become a political witness;
3. The fact is that most of the resources and energies of Christians of all traditions go into things other than politics—education, social service, spiritual development, and the like.
4. In the modern world, democracy and the state are two different entities ... Democracy resides in an elected political class and its relation to citizens. This relationship is bound together by a ritual act of popular will that serves the interest of political legitimacy. The state, by contrast, is where the real power resides.
5. There are two critical implications of this situation. The first is that the state is not subject to electoral will.
6. The second implication is that there are no political solutions to the problems most people care about
7. What the state cannot do is provide fully satisfying solutions to the problem of values in our society. There are no comprehensive political solutions to the deterioration of “family values,” the desire for equity, or the challenge of achieving consensus and solidarity in a cultural context of fragmentation and polarization. There are no real political solutions to the absence of decency or the spread of vulgarity.
8. the state’s role addressing human problems is partial and limited. It is not nearly as influential as the expectations most people have of it. It is true that laws are not neutral. They do reflect values. But laws cannot generate values, or instill values, or settle the conflict over values.
9. Values cannot be achieved politically because politics is invariably about power—not only power, but finally about power. For politics to be about more than power, it depends on a realm that is independent of the political sphere. It depends on moral criteria, institutionalized and practiced in the social order, that are autonomous from the realm of politics.⁸ The problem is that the impulse toward politicization extends to the politicization of values. This means that the autonomy of moral criteria on which a higher practice of politics depends is increasingly lost.
10. the consequence of the whole-hearted and uncritical embrace of politics by Christians has been, in effect, to reduce Christian faith to a political ideology
11. much easier to vote for a politician who champions child welfare than to adopt a baby born in poverty, to vote for a referendum that would expand health care benefits for seniors than to care for an elderly and infirmed parent, and to rally for racial harmony than to get to know someone of a different race than yours. True responsibility invariably costs. Political participation, then, can and often does amount to an avoidance of responsibility.
12. key leaders and factions within American Christianity have cultivated collective identities that are constituted in distinct ways by a sense of injury to the faith and to America itself.
13. both established political parties, as David Brooks observed, depend on the culture war for their internal cohesion ... tell themselves that their enemies are so vicious they have to be vicious too.
14. Vibrant cultures make space for leisure, philosophical reflection, scientific and intellectual mastery, and artistic and literary expression, among other things.¹²
15. rather than being defined by its cultural achievements, its intellectual and artistic vitality, its service to the needs of others, Christianity is defined to the outside world by its rhetoric of resentment and the ambitions of a will in opposition to others.

Chapter Seven - RETHINKING POWER: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

1. IN 1908 GEORGES SOREL wrote that myths in politics are “a model to which [people] can compare existing society in order to estimate the amount of good and evil it contains.”
2. “people who are living in this world of ‘myths,’ are secure from all refutation.”
3. the three competing myths discussed here, and the political theologies that derive from them, are all held passionately by people of the same faith community. As such they become the basis of some measure of exclusion and division in the church,
4. When we think of faith, we think of “the hope in things unseen.” Faith in God is “other-worldly” in that it looks beyond the practical realm of human affairs to the mysteries of God, his being, and his purposes. By contrast, when we think of power, we think of the harsh, demanding, nitty-gritty forces of human affairs.
5. Other species in the animal kingdom have a highly developed instinctual apparatus ... humans are instinctually deprived and must develop patterns of thinking and acting on their own that will make survival possible and sustainable ... humans are self-determining and in this way they must make a difference in nature
6. power is inherently asymmetrical ... that human relations are inherently power relations.
7. power is far more strongly and efficiently demonstrated when it is exercised symbolically and culturally. This is what political scientists call “soft” power
8. The power to define these things, to name them, and to describe their purpose is power of the first order
9. Three further observations about power
10. The first observation is that power tends to become an end in itself.

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11. The second observation is that because it is inherently relational and asymmetrical, power always generates its own resistances.
12. The third observation is that power always seems to carry with it unintended consequences.
13. the more we are distant from its actual workings and the less able we are to control its effects.
14. The church exercises a power within its own social organization in ways that are both symbolic and practical; ideational and material.
15. Formation education and discipline education and discipline distribution of its collective resources. civil disobedience
16. theologians and pastors who champion powerlessness have disproportionate life-chances (through salary, status, health care, and opportunities) and symbolic capital that provide them disproportionate material and discursive power. By virtue of their vocation and station, they themselves perpetuate asymmetries in power.
17. Any effort to draw a sharp line between the church and the world cannot help but result in failure.
18. creation mandate, then, is a mandate to use that power in the world in ways that reflect God's intentions.
19. Faithful Christian witness is fated to exist in the tension between the historical and the transcendent; between the social realities that press on human existence and the spiritual and ethical requirements of the gospel; between the morality of the society in which Christian believers live and the will of God.
20. The call to be in the world but not of it is a call to abide in the will and purposes of God in the present world disorder with integrity, and the only way to reach for that integrity is to recognize the tensions and to reside within it, knowing that failure is inevitable, forgiveness is ever available, and the work of the Holy Spirit to transform and sanctify our efforts is always inscrutably at work.
21. Two Essential Tasks
22. Christians must operate with as much grace and forgiveness as possible because failure to use power rightly is, as I say, unavoidable.
23. The first task is to disentangle the life and identity of the church from the life and identity of American society.
24. Christianity far too comfortably legitimates the dominant political ideologies and far too uncritically justifies the prevailing macroeconomic structures and practices of our time.
25. Christianity has uncritically assimilated to the dominant ways of life in a manner dubious at the least.
26. lack of critical distance and reflection about politics is an extension of its failure to critically reflect about the rest of the world they inhabit.
27. The second task is for the church and for Christian believers to decouple the “public” from the “political.” Politics is always a crude simplification of public life and the common good is always more than its political expression.
28. politicization has delimited the imaginative horizon through which the church and Christian believers think about engaging the world and the range of possibilities within which they actually act. Politics is just one way to engage the world and, arguably, not the highest, best, most effective, nor most humane way to do so.
29. To decouple the public from the political will open up other options for engaging the world and addressing its problems in ways that do not require the state, the law, or a political party.
30. To decouple the public from the political will not necessarily address the problem of the will to power and the belligerent ways in which it is pursued.
31. review the core teachings of Jesus as they bear on the matter of “social power” or “relational power,” the power one finds in ordinary life. ... it is far more common to people than political power.
32. Christ himself called the evil one “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11).
33. “that the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19.)
34. If this reading is right then the spirit that animates worldly power—whether held by individuals, social groups, communities, institutions, or social structures—naturally tends toward manipulation, domination, and control.
35. First, his power was derived from his complete intimacy with and submission to his Father.
36. A second characteristic of the social power exercised by Christ was his rejection of status and reputation and the privilege that accompanies them.
37. wealth and political will are important sources of power but in social life, these are no more important than status, the good opinion of others. Reputational capital, as argued in Essay I, is a form of symbolic power, and people are every bit as much, if not more acquisitive, protective, and ruthless about it as they are about wealth.
38. the third characteristic of Christ’s power and the most often noted. Compassion defines the power of his kingdom more than anything else. ... “emptying himself”
39. “His power in healing was not to show power over people but to release them for greater effectiveness—as a servant by his actions seeks to enable his master to be better equipped for his daily life.”
40. A fourth characteristic of the social power exercised by Christ was the noncoercive way in which he dealt with those outside of the community of faith.
41. force and coercion are not a part of and cannot bring about the kingdom of God.

Essay III - TOWARD A NEW CITY COMMONS: REFLECTIONS ON A THEOLOGY OF FAITHFUL PRESENCE

Chapter One - THE CHALLENGE OF FAITHFULNESS

1. FOR CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS, the call to faithfulness is a call to live in fellowship and integrity with the person and witness of Jesus Christ.
2. faithfulness works itself out in the context of complex social, political, economic, and cultural forces that prevail at a particular time and place.
3. capitalism remains robust, and its growth over many decades has brought unprecedented freedom, wealth, and mobility to people. But a consumer mentality has moved out of the marketplace to become a dominant cultural logic, transforming inherited frameworks of moral meaning and social obligation. Likewise, American democracy has a rich legacy and the political idealism at its core remains vibrant in the hearts and minds of its citizens. As it has expanded its reach, American democracy has drawn more and more people into the political process, empowering them with tools of self-governance. Yet democratization has also spilled out of the realm of politics
4. consequence of flattening out ethical and artistic distinctions,
5. For progressives, then, the solution is a redistribution of wealth and power with a preference for the poor and needy. Among many neo-Anabaptists, the most significant challenge of our time is the violence and coercion built into the polity of liberal democracy and consumerism of global capitalism. Their solution, then, is the peace-living koinonia of the church-based community.
6. the problem of difference bears on how Christians engage the world outside of their own community, while the problem of dissolution bears on the nature of Christian witness.
7. pluralism has emerged as one of the defining features of the contemporary world order - average people experience it more frequently and more intensely than ever before in human history - pluralism today—at least in America—exists without a dominant culture - social systems seem to require some basic consensus to survive. For the foreseeable future, the likelihood that any one culture could become dominant in the ways that Protestantism and Christianity did in the past is not great.
8. objective reality of dissimilarity—
9. the legal and political debate surrounding the just management of plurality will continue well into the future.
10. the credibility of one's beliefs depends on certain social conditions that reinforce those beliefs.
11. “there is a direct relation between the cohesion of institutions and the subjective cohesiveness of beliefs, values and worldviews.”
12. fragmentation not only occurs among worldviews, but in the social structures that support those worldviews.
13. Over time, pluralism can foster a syncretism in which competing cultures influence, adapt, or assimilate to each other.
14. challenge of dissolution. By dissolution, I refer to the deconstruction of the most basic assumptions about reality.
15. instauration of trust . . . is that between word and world.”
16. our civilization is based on the confidence or presumption that such a correspondence exists; that the world and our being in it are articulable; “that the raw material of existentiality has its analogue in the structure of narrative.”
17. when the objectified and shared meaning of words is undermined, when we no longer have confidence that words signify what we thought they signified, then it is possible to impute any meaning to words one desires.
18. In a culture in which the covenant between signified and signifier, word and world is broken, words are emptied of meaning.
19. The Enlightenment’s own quest for certainty resulted not in the discovery of new certainties but rather in a pervasive and astringent skepticism that questions all, suspects all, distrusts and disbelieves all.
20. it is not only radical skeptics and their students who contend with consequences of dissolution.
21. More and more it is the person on the street who faces the challenge of dissolution. It is not because they are reading the French deconstructionists but rather because the social conditions of the contemporary world reinforce the cultural logic that forms this break in trust. Simply to live under these social conditions is to have one’s consciousness shaped in similar ways. One of those social conditions, as I’ve already argued, is pluralism.
22. electronic media have transformed the nature of consciousness and culture as well. For those who study contemporary media, such problems are well known. Consider four of the most important. First, these media transform time and space by radically “compressing them,”
23. format of the newspaper also compartmentalizes this way with no overarching narrative structure,
24. entertainment becomes the primary format for representing experience.
25. entertainment also contributes to the trivialization of meaningful content.

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26. technologies empty words of meaning. They are every bit as much, if not more, a solvent than the most mordant skepticism of radical deconstruction. Whatever good they provide—which is substantial—they too lead to a place of absence, a place where we cannot be confident of what is real, good, or true.
27. we are witnesses to and participants in a cultural transformation that radically challenges and deconstructs, if not inverts, the ontological and moral substructure of inherited social institutions, inherited conventions of everyday social life, and the inherited frameworks of understanding and experience.

Chapter Two - OLD CULTURAL WINESKINS

1. Three Paradigms of Engagement: “Defensive Against,” “Relevance To,” and “Purity From”
2. different ways of thinking about and pursuing faithfulness in the world.
3. DEFENSIVE A GAINST – retain the distinctiveness of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy within the larger world. Conservatives angry about their loss of prominence, constructed a complex empire of parallel institutions, main problem of the world is secularization
4. RELEVANCE TO – paradigm for theological liberalism, and the “seeker-church”
5. PURITY FROM – 2 kingdoms view which moves to withdrawal into their own communities, subliminal idea of an anti-institutional view of the church

Chapter Three - THE GROUNDWORK FOR AN ALTERNATIVE WAY

1. that however inadequate or pitiful the church may seem at times (and may, in fact, be), where the scripture is proclaimed, the sacraments administered, and the people of God continue to seek to follow God in word and deed, God is at work; the Holy Spirit is still very much active.
2. The problem is that these initiatives represent just a fraction of the potential within the church to bear witness to the love, grace, mercy, and truth of Christ.
3. What has been missing is a leadership that comprehends the nature of these challenges and offers a vision of formation adequate to the task of discipling the church and its members for a time such as ours.
4. Making disciples or formation, then, requires intentionality and it entails the hard work of teaching, training, and cautioning believers with wisdom in the ways of Christ so that they are fit for any calling
5. In formation, it is the culture and the community that gives shape and expression to it that is the key.
6. When you distill it to its simplest expression, a “vision of formation” referred to above is nothing more and nothing less than “teaching them to observe all things that [he] commanded [them].” (Matt. 28:19–20).
7. “filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:9–10).
8. Formation—the task of making disciples—is oriented toward the cultivation of faithfulness in the totality of life. To this end, St. Paul and St. Timothy “proclaimed [Christ], admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28).
9. The Church as Culture and Community—The Enactments
10. of Shalom To achieve a formation that seeks the renewal of all of life presupposes a culture that in fact expresses and embodies the renewal of all of life.
11. In formation, it is the culture and the community that gives shape and expression to it that is the key.
12. The vision of this community—the hope for which it longs and the ideals to which it strives—is the vision of shalom. It is a vision of order and harmony, fruitfulness and abundance, wholeness, beauty, joy, and well-being.
13. God’s judgement was against those who worked against this reality and is in active defense of its victims and beckons his people to co-labor with him in establishing shalom
14. Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. (Ps. 82:3) Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause. (Isa. 1:16–17)
15. The Christian community is a linguistic community that speaks simultaneously not just through its ideas but also through its institutions—and there the tension is reflected in an unavoidable tangle of words, grammars, assumptions, dispositions, theories, practices, and social organizations.
16. On the one hand, he argues, the dominant metaphor of the church in 1 Peter is that of “alien.” Christians are “aliens and strangers in the world” (1 Pet. 1:1, 2:11),
17. On the other hand, 1 Peter instructs its readers to accommodate to existing social realities. “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution” (1 Pet. 2:13–17).
18. Let me unpack this contradiction by proposing that Christians are called to relate to the world within a dialectic of affirmation and antithesis.

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19. Affirmation is based on the recognition that culture and culture-making have their own validity before God that is not nullified by the fall.
20. Even in the context of late modernity ... one can still find much good ... people of every creed have talents and abilities, possess knowledge, wisdom and inventiveness, and hold standards of goodness, truth, justice, morality and beauty that are, in relative degree, in harmony with God's will and purposes ... there is a natural life originating in creation and a natural order in things that can be understood, developed and enjoyed ... the goodness of creation is marred by sin but not negated by sin ... the task of world-making has a validity because it is work that God ordained to humankind.
21. While the activity of culture making has validity before God, this work is not, strictly speaking, redemptive or salvific in character. ... we are not "building the kingdom of God" ... to consider the work of culture as kingdom -building leads to one version or another of the Constantinian project in which the culture either declares Jesus as Lord or not, Christians are either winning the culture or losing it
22. Insofar as Christians acknowledge the rule of God in all aspects of their lives, their engagement with the world proclaims the shalom to come
23. Perhaps it will be that God will transform works of faith in this world into something incorruptible but here again, it is God's doing and not ours.
24. Such work may not bring about the kingdom, but it is an embodiment of the values of the coming kingdom
25. If there are benevolent consequences of our engagement with the world, in other words, it is precisely because it is not rooted in a desire to change the world for the better but rather because it is an expression of a desire to honor the creator of all goodness, beauty, and truth, a manifestation of our loving obedience to God, and a fulfillment of God's command to love our neighbor
26. Antithesis – is rooted in a recognition of the totality of the fall ... all human effort falls short of its intended potential
27. The church must be present in the world to work toward the constructive subversion of all the frameworks of life that do harm to shalom ... church and its people must stand in a position of critical resistance to late modernity ... not nihilistic but creative and constructive ... objective is to retrieve the good to which modern institutions and ideas implicitly or explicitly aspire
28. Critical resistance more urgent in the church itself ... "judgement begins with the household of God (1 Pet 4:17)
29. Redemption through Christ represents a reaffirmation of the creation mandate ... people are saved ... in order to resume the tasks mandated at creation
30. Beyond the worship of God and the proclamation of his word, the central ministry of the church is one of formation; of making disciples ... about learning to live the alternative reality of the kingdom of God within the present world order faithfully

Chapter Four – TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF FAITHFUL PRESENCE

1. Physical presence and place continue to matter to us, but neither matters as much as they once did.
2. The physical places we inhabit look alike, ... what was distinctive about a place etiolates into space. ... a geography of nowhere where every place looks like no place in particular
3. The weakening significance of presence and place brought about by the broken trust between word and world cuts to the very core of what it means to believe – the reality of what we believe
4. The incarnation is not only a manifestation of the reality of God and the trust they can put in his word, but also the most breathtaking demonstration in history of the reality of God's love for his creation and his intention to make all things new.
5. Word and world come together through the word's enactments – both the fact that God's word is always enacted but also in the way his word is enacted
6. Faithful presence – 2 essential lessons: 1) incarnation is the only adequate reply to the challenges of dissolution; the erosion of trust between word and world 2) I is the way the word became incarnate in Jesus Christ and the purposes to which the incarnation was directed that there are the only adequate reply
7. God's faithful presence implies that he pursues us (Deut 7:6; Jer 31:3; Is 43:1; Jn 3:16; Matt 11:28; Lk 14:16-24) that his identification is with us (Ps 103:14; Phil 2:7; Matt 15:32; 20:29-34), his presence is in the life he offers (Gen 17:3; Jer 29:11; Ps 36:9; Jn 1:4; 10:10; 6:35; Rom 8:21-22), the life he offers is only made possible by his sacrificial love (Zeph 1:7; Rom 3:25; 1 Jn 2:1; Heb 10:10; 1 Jn 4:10)
8. The Eucharist remembers what God accomplished and celebrate the in-breaking of the new creation
 - a. Though we are different from him, he does not regard us as dangerous
 - b. Though he is all-powerful, he pursues us not because he needs to but only because he loves us
9. Incarnation is the only adequate reply to the challenges of dissolution; the erosion of trust between word and world and the problems that attend it
10. It is the way the Word became incarnate in Jesus Christ and the purposes to which the incarnation was directed that are the only adequate reply to challenge of difference

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11. God's faithful presence is an expression of commitment with 4 attributes 1) he pursues us 2) he identifies with us 3) the life he offers us 4) sacrificial love
12. We are present to God as a worshiping community, fully present through participation in the sacraments, collective adoration, repentance, contemplation, intercession, devotion and service
13. We are to be:
 14. present to each other – direct our lives toward the flourishing of each other through sacrificial love
 15. committed to our tasks – work with all our hearts as to the Lord
 16. within our spheres of influence – to do what we can to help the flourishing of all
 17. If, indeed, there is a hope or an imaginable prospect for human flourishing in the contemporary world, it begins when the Word of shalom becomes flesh in us and is enacted through us toward those with whom we live, in the tasks we are given, and in the spheres of influence in which we operate. When the Word of all flourishing—defined by the love of Christ—becomes flesh in us, in our relations with others, within the tasks we are given, and within our sphere of influence—
 18. absence gives way to presence, and the word we speak to each other and to the world becomes authentic and trustworthy. This is the heart of a theology of faithful presence.
 19. faithful presence calls believers to yield their will to God and to nurture and cultivate the world where God has placed them. (Lev 19:33-34; Deut 10:18-19; Matt 25:34-40; Heb 13:1-3; Rom 15:1-3)
 20. faithful presence first calls Christians to attend to the people and places that they experience directly.
 21. Faithful presence requires that Christians be fully present and committed to their tasks (Gen 3:17-19; Col 3:22-24)
 22. Faithful presence means that Christians are fully present and committed in their spheres of social influence whatever they may be.
 23. It is here where we learn forgiveness and humility, practice kindness, hospitality, and charity, grow in patience and wisdom, and become clothed in compassion, gentleness, and joy.
 24. Policy pursued, and law practiced in light of the justice of God is a witness to the right ordering of human affairs. Inquiry, scholarship, and learning with an awareness of the goodness of God's created order is a discovery of what is truly higher in higher education. And, not least, reflecting the beauty of God's creation in art or music is nothing less than an act of worship.

Chapter Five - THE BURDEN OF LEADERSHIP: A THEOLOGY OF FAITHFUL PRESENCE IN PRACTICE

1. Leadership is, in part, a set of practices surrounding the legitimate use of gifts, resources, position, and therefore influence (or relational power).
2. It is our influence within the range of spheres of activity and relationship that defines the leadership we exercise. In short, everyone exercises leadership to varying degrees, for we all exercise relative influence in the wide variety of contexts in which we live. By the same logic, we are all also followers in a sense, for even where we exercise leadership, we are held to account—we follow the dictates, needs, and standards of others.
3. The church is to go into all realms of social life:
4. leadership is sacrificial and selfless is because its practice is an expression of “power under submission.”
5. Faith, of course, speaks to the fundamental need for meaning.
6. Hope speaks to the fundamental need for purpose.
7. Love is certainly about the elemental need for intimacy, affection, and the bonds of belonging without which one is left alienated and estranged from others and one's environment. But love is also about grace, mercy, and justice, without which we are left with malice and humiliation, cruelty and coercion, and injury and injustice. The practice of faithful presence, then, generates relationships and institutions that are fundamentally covenantal in character, the ends of which are the fostering of meaning, purpose, truth, beauty, belonging, and fairness—not just for Christians but for everyone.
8. Christians cannot demand for themselves what they would deny others.
9. the very plausibility and persuasiveness of the Christian faith depend on a cultural context in which meaning, purpose, beauty, and belonging are possible.
10. the practice of faithful presence generates relationships and institutions that are covenantal. These create space that fosters meaning, purpose, and belonging
11. To use gifts, resources, and influence in ways that do not translate immediately or perhaps ever into utility may seem extravagant.
12. good in its own right and it is part and parcel of the covenant that believers have with the people that God has placed in their lives and the social and physical world in which God has placed them.

Chapter Six - TOWARD A NEW CITY COMMONS

1. faithful presence,

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2. 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; plant 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. (Jer. 29:4–7)
3. As they pursued the shalom of Babylon, God would provide shalom for his people.
4. He was calling them to maintain their distinctiveness as a community but in ways that served the common good.
5. it may be that the healthiest course of action for Christians, on this count, is to be silent for a season and learn how to enact their faith in public through acts of shalom rather than to try again to represent it publicly through law, policy, and political mobilization.
6. that a vision of the new city commons rooted in a theology of faithful presence would lead believers to hold many of these differences lightly.
7. the church must live within a dialectic of affirmation and antithesis.
8. Christians must cultivate tension with the world by affirming the centrality of the church itself and the parish or local congregation in particular.
9. Only within strong communities can one find the relational means to sustain the difficulties endemic to life in the modern world.
10. Nowhere is this more important than in the task of formation.
11. Formation into a vision of human flourishing requires an environment that embodies continuity, historical memory, rituals marking seasons of life, intergenerational interdependence, and most important of all, common worship.
12. formation into a vision of human flourishing requires intentionality and the social, economic, intellectual, and cultural resources of a healthy, mutually dependent, and worshipping community provided for Christians by the church.
13. accommodation must always be critical and resistance must always be humble.
14. Christianity is not, first and foremost, about establishing righteousness or creating good values or securing justice or making peace in the world.

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OVERVIEW

Hunter criticizes some of the most common ways in which the church has viewed the world culture and the feasibility of changing it and why those approaches fail, then offers an approach that addresses the problems of changing culture.

The creation mandate given to us before sin entered the world is to abad (work, nurture, sustain, husband) the world and to shamar (safeguard, preserve, care for, protect) the world. (gen 2:15) To be Christian is to be obliged to engage the world, pursuing God's restorative purposes over all of life, individual and corporate, public and private. This is the mandate of creation

The common view of culture, was to transform culture by transforming individuals through the gospel, therefore changing their values, their worldviews. It is thought that culture will change from the bottom up: the gospel transforming individuals, those individuals will then change their families and social organizations and then by voting in people with the right values that politics will change. This argument for this view falls short when considering how some small groups of people (e.g. homosexuals, Jews) have had a relatively large impact on the culture while larger groups (e.g. evangelicals) are losing their impact on the culture.

Hunter then posits the following propositions about the real parameters of how culture works:

1. CULTURE IS A SYSTEM OF TRUTH CLAIMS AND MORAL OBLIGATIONS
2. CULTURE IS A PRODUCT OF HISTORY
3. CULTURE IS INTRINSICALLY DIALECTICAL
4. CULTURE IS A RESOURCE AND, AS SUCH, A FORM OF POWER
5. CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL ARE STRATIFIED IN A FAIRLY RIGID STRUCTURE OF "CENTER" AND "PERIPHERY"
6. CULTURE IS GENERATED WITHIN NETWORKS
7. CULTURE IS NEITHER AUTONOMOUS NOR FULLY COHERENT
8. CULTURES CHANGE FROM THE TOP DOWN, RARELY IF EVER FROM THE BOTTOM UP
9. CHANGE IS TYPICALLY INITIATED BY ELITES WHO ARE OUTSIDE OF THE CENTERMOST POSITIONS OF PRESTIGE
10. WORLD-CHANGING IS MOST CONCENTRATED WHEN THE NETWORKS OF ELITES AND THE INSTITUTIONS THEY LEAD OVERLAP
11. CULTURES CHANGE, BUT RARELY IF EVER WITHOUT A FIGHT

Culture consists of a system of values, partly formed by history, and embedded in stories about how things work and expressed not only in cultural symbols but also with institutional structures. The power flow within a culture is contained in the network of people and institutions who are at the center of influence. Cultural changes meet with opposition but occur top-down and are initiated by cultural elites outside the center of power but usually connected to networks influential people and institutions.

The evangelical cultural footprint has the following characteristics which signal an absence from the arenas in which the greatest influence in the culture is exerted:

- There is a significant representation of Christians in the political sphere
- In the economic sphere, the Christian presence is weighted towards small and mid-sized firms
- Faith-based philanthropy is impressive but is much smaller compared to total philanthropic output
- While Christian colleges and universities are viable, they are marginalized from the larger intellectual culture because of Christian focus and faculty with large teaching workloads
- Christian media is large but is focused inwardly at the Christian market and is largely ignored by mainstream media
- Christian leadership is sometimes anti-intellectual
- Since the 1960s, Christians have not been prominent in contributing to or supporting structures in the arts and the humanities (also see chart below)

Because of a decreasing social consensus in the public sphere, there is an increasing politicization of power, which means that the coercive power of the state is increasingly used as the vehicle to "resolve" differences. The Christian right strives to resolve things through domination while claiming injury or injustice. The Christian left, stressing humanism, focuses on individual liberty and equality but have been uncomfortable with the language of faith. The neo-Anabaptists offer an alternative way of living but isolate themselves from the larger public sphere. The net result has

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been that Christianity has a decreasing cultural role, forcing it to a more political and defensive role. Since the political role is primarily about power, not grace or forgiveness, it cannot be faithfully used to affect culture.

The Culture Matrix

The bolded areas signify the institutional space in which the cultural economy of Christianity is strongest

The True (knowledge – what is)	The Good (Morality – what should be)	The Beautiful (Aesthetics – what can be imagined)
theoretical <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Academic think tanks- Elite research universities (in the social sciences and humanities)- Elite opinion magazines and journals- Elite NYC and 1st tier book university publishers	abstract <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Academic philosophy & moral psychology- Law schools and schools of public policy	High brow <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Visual arts- Literature and poetry- Classical & orchestral music- Theater and dance- Museums
High-end educational <ul style="list-style-type: none">- First and second tier colleges- High-end journalism- Seminaries and divinity schools- Elite private schools	Activist <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Public policy think tanks- Special interest groups- Innovative churches, synagogues & faith-based ministries of mercy- Moral education activism	Upper middle brow <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Public television- Public museums- Film- Jazz and specialty music- High-end advertising agencies
Personal everyday <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Journalism (print & electronic)- Internet- Mass-market book publishing- Churches, synagogues & teaching ministries- Public education- Christian schools	Grass roots <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Local activist organizations- School boards- How-to publishing- Youth organizations & ministries, faith-based ministries of mercy- Moral education	Low brow <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prime-time television- Mass market movies- Popular music- Mass advertising agencies- Cable television- Mass circulation magazines