Worldview Apologetics: Faith Impacting Culture

Lecture 1:
Introduction
Gospel & Culture

Dr. Richard S. Park, D.Phil.

The Overarching Question (OQ)

“How does the Christian Worldview help us to understand and impact culture?”

Gospel & Culture
1. The Isolation View: Gospel and culture are distinct, non-overlapping categories of life and the world, operating in isolation. The gospel guides the Christian as she delicately and deliberately navigates this world’s terrain; and it guards the Christian from traversing on unwelcomed territory. The culture is inherently evil, whereas the gospel is good news. The culture seeks to infiltrate the Church’s camp, and it is the job of the vigilant Christian to ward off culture’s imperiling effects. The eternal truths of the gospel must be safeguarded, generation after generation, from the clutches of culture, for the sake of the Church’s purity and God’s glory.
**Gospel & Culture**

2. The Accommodation View: The gospel is always embedded in culture: they are inseparable and indistinguishable. Accordingly, it is the Christian’s duty to accommodate the gospel to the ethos of culture in order to “become all things to all people.” So, if in a theologically liberal culture, for example, the bodily resurrection of Christ is disbelieved, we creatively cater to the culture and theologize a metaphorical resurrection. Because gospel and culture are inseparable, Christians must be “wise as serpents,” and speak a compelling narrative within their cultural context.

---

**Gospel & Culture**

3. The Transformation View: The gospel transforms culture. Christians recognize that the gospel and culture are inseparable, but not indistinguishable. The gospel is not detached from culture (thus it is like the Accommodation View [AV]); but neither is it defined by it (unlike AV). The gospel consists in eternal truths (thus it is like the Isolation View [IV]); but these truths are apprehended within and applied to various cultural contexts (unlike IV). The call of the Christian is to live faithfully to the Christ of the gospel, seeking to serve through its transformative power a culture-inhabiting world.

---

**Gospel & Culture**

1. The Isolation View:
The gospel guides the Christian as she delicately and deliberates navigates this world’s terrain; … The eternal truths of the gospel must be safeguarded, generation after generation, …

… The gospel – which is the good news of the Kingdom of God – is meant to leaven its environment – culture (Mt. 13.33).
**Gospel & Culture**

2. The Accommodation View: ... gospel is always embedded in culture: “…become all things to all people.” … Christians must be “wise as serpents,” …

   However, the gospel should not be accommodated, i.e., distorted, watered down, etc.; rather, Paul in 1 Co. 9 is talking about how he has become “all things to all people” for the sake of the gospel – *not that the gospel has become all things to all people.*

---

**Gospel & Culture**

*The Beadham Group*

1. Isolation View:
   - If you can’t beat ‘em, leave ‘em.

2. Accommodation View:
   - If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.

3. The Transformation View:
   - Beat ‘em.

---

**Gospel & Culture**

3. The Transformation View:

   *The Biblical warrant:*
   - Romans 1.16 (cf. 8, 15): “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” – and this gospel-wrought salvation is the groundwork of the whole epistle of Romans.
Gospel & Culture

3. The Transformation View:
   The Biblical warrant:
   • Philippians 1.3-5: “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you . . . because of your partnership in the gospel . . .”

Gospel & Culture

3. The Transformation View:
   The Biblical warrant:
   • Rev. 14.6: “Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.”

Gospel & Culture

The Transformation View ...
   (A) Think theologically; and
   (B) Engage in
   Christian theological cultural analysis (the three Is):
Gospel & Culture
The three Is of Christian theological cultural analysis:
(1) The intention of the artist — e.g., Is it to edify and glorify? Or to dehumanize and invert the created order?

(2) The inherent value of the artifact — e.g., Is it true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy (cf. Ph. 4:8)? Or false, dishonorable, unjust, impure, perverted, or otherwise degrading?

(3) The impact of its application — e.g., Does it contribute to human and social flourishing? Or to destructive ways of thinking and being?