

Where in the World is the Church? A Christian View of Culture and Your Role in It by Michael S. Horton, Moody Press, Chicago: 1995 (62 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols.)

1. Vocation

Vocation was a gift of creation. Even non-Christians possessed this divine calling, as God's image-bearers. Believer and unbeliever alike were intended to pursue their work with excellence—the one acknowledging God as the author and goal of such excellence, and the other serving God with one's talents in spite of his or her refusal to acknowledge God as the giver and goal of it all. (Page 10-11)

2. The Reformation

Of course, no movement is perfect—there are too many people like us involved! The Reformation is no exception, with its share of mistakes and the foibles of sinful men and women. Nevertheless, the biblical themes that it recovered brought back to God's people a sense of belonging in this world for the time God has given us—but belonging in, not to, this world. (Page 11)

3. “Christian Music”

The pressure to justify art, science, and entertainment in terms of their spiritual value or evangelistic usefulness ends up damaging both the gift of creation and the gift of the Gospel, devaluing the former and distorting the latter in the process. For instance, "Christian music" is often an excuse for inferior artists to make it in a Christian subculture that mimics the glitz and glamour of secular entertainment, including its own awards ceremonies and superstar ambience. That, of course, may not be the intention on the part of a great many artists who set out to contribute to contemporary Christian music, but the industry nevertheless ends up churning out mostly uncreative, repetitive, shallow imitations of popular music. (Page 11)

4. God Wins, But Not by Our Ambitions

Often, our political causes, like our evangelistic crusades, tend to ignore this fundamental truth, so that we sometimes sound as if this latest, greatest movement (the Christian Right in politics or Promise Keepers, the Signs and Wonders movement, or Vision 2000 in evangelism and missions) of our own frenetic activity and ambitious, entrepreneurial projects will achieve the work credited in Scripture to the Cross of Christ. Or, on the other end, if the wrong person occupies the White House, we give the impression that the universe is out

of control, as if God depended on us and our machinery for the realization of His kingdom. Very often, the most well-meaning believers engage in these ambitious causes with the best of motives, but the temptation is great to forget, when we lose, that Christ is still King, and, when we win, that we are not.

Of course, this is not to say that Christ's triumph at the Cross eliminates our responsibility to evangelize the nations or to teach them righteousness, but it is to say that the only way we bring this victory to the nations is by proclaiming what Christ has already accomplished, not by our feats of grandeur and glory. For, unlike the "super-apostles," as Paul referred to the Gnostics, "We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5).

The sovereignty of God comforts us in crisis and curbs our pride in triumph, reminding us that it is not we who determine the outcome of spiritual battles, but Christ the King who fights for us and has already secured the final victory. (Page 19)

5. Luther and Music

Luther argued that art and music could be useful in worship, so long as they were not allowed primacy over the Word. "Music is an outstanding gift of God," he announced, "and next to theology. I would not give up my slight knowledge of music for any consideration. And youth should be taught this art; for it makes fine, skillful people."² Even schoolmasters must know how to sing, Luther insisted.

While many of the Anabaptists were advocating the overthrow of the arts as "worldly," Luther countered, "I am not at all of the opinion that the arts are to be overthrown and cast aside by the Gospel, as some super-spiritual people protest; but I would gladly see all the arts, especially music, in the service of him who as given and created them." A hymn-writer himself, Luther inspired a whole tradition in evangelical hymnody. (² Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), No. 3815. 3 Ibid., No. 474. Page 24)

6. Soli Deo Gloria

Johann Sebastian Bach's name comes to mind as someone who carried this vision forward. Both his sacred and his secular pieces carried the same signature: "S.D.G." - the Reformation slogan "Soli Deo Gloria" (To God Alone Be Glory), and he had these initials carved into the organ at Leipzig. G. F. Handel declared, "What a wonderful thing it is to be sure of one's faith! How wonderful to be a member of the evangelical church, which preaches the free grace of God through Christ as the hope of sinners! If we were to rely on our works-my God,

what would become of us?" In the nineteenth century, a young Jewish musician was converted to Christ and composed his celebrated "Reformation Symphony" in tribute to God's gracious gift. That young man's name was Felix Mendelssohn. (4 Cited in Plass, *What Luther Says*, 612ff. Page 24-25)

7. Do Something About It!

The Reformers did not merely curse the darkness; they were determined to work positively for the good of their neighbor and the glory of God. They took up the standard and raised the standards for an entire age, beyond simply lamenting conditions and proposing legislation. It was far from perfect, but it was a remarkable experiment in what can be done when God's people are liberated by the Gospel for their neighbor's good and their Redeemer's glory. (Page 30-31)

8. Where is the Christian's Christianity?

In politics, Christian activists and secular liberals are often more alike than either would want to admit. They seem to share a dependence upon the state and the political or judicial sphere for solving the moral and spiritual problems in society. According to recent surveys, evangelical Christians are as likely to divorce and abuse children in the home; they contribute their share of abortions to the national catastrophe; and Christian teenagers are actually likely to watch more hours of MTV than their non-Christian counterparts. Evangelical parents may press with angry resolution for prayer and the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools, but most evangelical Christians cannot name the Ten Commandments themselves and demonstrate an appalling illiteracy with regard to the Bible's most basic themes and facts! (Page 36)

9. Restoration

The answer is not ultimately to be found in politics, the church, or the home, but in God, as He reforms and rebuilds all three of these distinct institutions, liberating each to pursue its divinely ordained role without confusion with other spheres. A church, then, is set back on track by restoring its confidence in the power of the Word; a family, by restoring its confidence in the importance of both quality leisure time together as well as fellowship in the Scriptures; and a nation, by restoring its *secular* mission-to protect its citizens against foreign or domestic aggression. Only by clearly distinguishing these spheres are we able to have sane and reasonable expectations of the various institutions in which we are commonly involved. (Page 39)

10. Scripture Trumps all Interpretation

...it was not the case that Paul believed that Plato and Aristotle had nothing to say of any truth, relevance, or value, but that whenever they addressed a subject that the Bible addressed, it was always going to be the clear teaching of Scripture, and not philosophical speculation, that would rule the Christian's heart and mind. Philosophers cannot, in other words, speculate their way into God's presence, figuring Him out by their own clever insights. Their sharp logic and brilliant dialectic, vital in the academic enterprise (yes, even in theology), must never take the place of Scripture in telling us about God, ourselves, and the plan of redemption. Scripture must always be the norm, although the most rigorous logical and rational methods may be used in understanding and explaining the text. (Page 58)

11. Beware of Secular Wisdom

Just as Paul appealed to pagan authors on Mars Hill, many of the church fathers found useful wisdom in secular philosophers, and the Reformers and Puritans appreciated their broad learning in pagan as well as biblical literature, so we must recognize that the danger is in *confusing* that which is to always be distinguished. The problem is not with secular literature, but with allowing secular wisdom priority in defining theological beliefs and the spiritual diet of Christian reflection. In fact, secular wisdom is most dangerous not when it comes in a very clearly marked package (i.e., *The Works of Plato*, *The Writings of Nietzsche*, *An Introduction to Modern Existentialism*, etc.), but when we naively baptize secular wisdom that we have received second- or third-hand with Bible verses in an effort to be “relevant.” (Page 59)

12. Humanity's Attempts at Knowing God

*Instead of meeting God where He allows
Himself to be known (in revelation)
through faith, we try to bring Him down
to us (in experience) through speculation.* (Page 60)

13. The Bible is Sufficient, Not Magic

To say that the Bible is not sufficient for curing diabetes (one thinks of the parents who refused to put their child on insulin because the Bible says "the prayer of faith shall save the sick") is not to say that it is *deficient*. The Bible is sufficient for everything necessary for salvation and godliness. It is, in other words, sufficient

for everything pertaining to the scope of its purpose. But the Bible is not a magical catalogue of "how-to" advice or secret formulas for life. (Page 62)

14. Knowledge of the Word Leads to Discernment

We do not have to justify reading secular literature any more than we have to justify reading theology; it is when we confuse the two that we run into problems. If we knew God's Word well enough to recognize, for instance, that the therapeutic answer, "self-esteem," falls far short of the richness of "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," we would be capable of discerning the wheat of truth from the chaff of popular sentiment. (Page 63)

15. Knowing the Bonds of Sin

Those who do not know the strength of that which is part of the unbeliever's slavery will never know how to free him or her. This does not mean that every Christian must suddenly become an expert on all of the branches of wisdom and knowledge in human history, but it does mean that the Christian witness cannot be naive. It cannot simply ridicule unbelief. (Page 66)

16. Do Not Ignore the Secular Mind!

...there are great dangers in ignoring the secular mind-not only because, as Calvin said, we miss God's gifts distributed even to unbelievers in His common grace, but because we are left with no way of knowing the extent to which we ourselves are being shaped, albeit indirectly, by these trends in secular thought. (Page 66)

17. Scripture and Secular Text Are Both Important

Those who do not care to read secular books will be impoverished and will be susceptible to subtle and indirect seduction, while those who do not carefully study Scripture will lose their only plumb line for judging truth from error, belief from unbelief, right from wrong. Those who know Scripture *and* their culture have the ability to recognize truth and to reject falsehood when they hear or read it-in secular literature or from the pulpit. (Page 66-67)

18. Take Human wisdom with a Grain of Salt

With this business of "vain philosophy," then, we must beware of the two dangers: The first danger is to ignore the promises and perils of human wisdom. God gave and gives even unbelievers wisdom, justice, and civil righteousness. Even though these gifts are merely tokens of common rather than saving grace,

they are not to be taken lightly. There is, therefore, no need to trivialize things earthly by feeling the need to "baptize" everything with religion.

But we must also beware of the effects of secular thought on our own thinking and lifestyle at the point where these forces do clash with Scripture. There is nothing more obnoxious than the fellow who proudly despises "worldly wisdom" and avoids the study of secular disciplines, literature, and film while he displays his indebtedness to secular psychology, marketing, politics, and sociology in his own unsophisticated style. I think of the pastor who warned me against reading secular authors, while he himself speculated on the day of Christ's return by appealing to current events in the newspaper, shared "biblical" tips for self-esteem (a major topic in the Bible, if you're looking for it, it would appear), and discovered the "biblical" position on every conceivable political issue. This pastor was shaped by secular wisdom just as surely as anyone else, but because he refused to see that "trickle-down" effect in his own thinking (since he did not receive it directly from reading the secular authors), he was, ironically, more prone to mistaking it for the Word of God. (Page 68-69)

19. Needed: A Proper Relationship between Secular and Christian Learning

For instance, we do not need to write *Christian* philosophy or *Christian* music, *Christian* poetry or *Christian* fiction, although we do need Christian theology, worship, evangelism, and ethics. Daniel and Joseph knew how to excel in secular learning while maintaining their deepest convictions drawn from the inexhaustible well of biblical revelation.

That is not to say that those who attempt to build bridges between Christianity and philosophy, the arts, and science are in error, but it is to say that the realm of "common grace" is just that—common. It is not specifically Christian (i.e., redeemed), even though God rules over it and sees to it that culture prospers. Christians should be engaged in these fields, but not in order to "take them back" or redeem them; but rather, to fulfill their divinely ordained callings in the world. (Page 70-71)

20. Losing the Biblical World?

But part of the problem is that many contemporary Christians—especially those most closely tied to popular culture (i.e., we evangelicals)—do not even have much of an appreciation for the beauty of the biblical world. I was reminded of this not long ago when a pastor of a mega-church refused to sing an eighteenth-century hymn because of its "thees" and "thous," which he thought made the hymn obsolete. Everyone understands that "thee" and "thou" mean "you," so he could not have meant that the hymn was thereby rendered entirely unintelligible. Obsolete meant something else. He added, "Besides, 'Let angels prostrate fall'?"

What's *that* all about?" In other words, he did not know what the word "prostrate" meant. But this is not a difficult or insignificant word. It never occurred to him that learning the definition might have aided him in understanding and expressing a posture of godly reverence. Perhaps "I want to praise you, Lord, much more than I do," repeated several times, would be a suitable translation to many. But it does not approach the meaning of the older phrase. We associate moods, attitudes, and even ideas not only with words, but with styles. Angels lying prostrate before the King of kings, when in the context of surrounding joys of the anthem, simply makes the point that individualistic and superficial ditties cannot approach. (Page 75)

21. Is this Really Worship?

...it is not the period of music that makes these hymns difficult; in most cases, the music is actually easier to sing. Rather, it is (a) arrogance toward the past and (b) the unfamiliarity of the theology contained in these hymns. Many of us who have been raised in the evangelical world of today, awash in a sea of modernity (marketing, psychology, touchy-feely sentimentalism, individualism, etc.), find ourselves in a foreign land when the focus is on the attributes of God and the truths of redemptive history. In a talk-show culture, it is much easier to talk about ourselves, so "praise songs" reflect this autobiographical (man-centered) focus on me and my experiences, my resolve, my obedience, my happiness and joy, and so on.

As Christopher Lasch pointed out, modern America's characteristic narcissism (self-worship) displays itself through a highly expressive personality. We want to "express ourselves" in praise songs, whereas in the classic hymns before the mid-nineteenth century believers wanted to understand God and redemption, responding both thoughtfully and emotionally. Ironically, this view of worship as "self-expression" (even though we might call it something else) is identical to the secular Romantic idea of art as self-expression. Gone is the view of art as that which expresses the good, the true, and the beautiful. But if we abhor the fact that self-expression as the guiding philosophy of art leads to Maplethorpe's blasphemous pornography, why do we follow the same philosophy in church, if to a much less profane conclusion?' (Page 76)

22. Truth is Truth, No Matter the Form

Jesus' parables are just as true as His propositional statements such as, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." There is a danger in some conservative Christian circles to identify the degree of truth with the degree of literal, propositional form, but Jesus was no less telling the truth when He was using figures of speech. (Page 78-79)

23. All Scripture is True, and Shows Itself in Different Forms

All of Scripture is inerrant, for everything in it is equally inspired by God. But the truth is impressed upon us through a variety of styles and genres. (Page 81)

24. The Integrity of the Christian

The church wants to be relevant to the whole world, but it must not lose its own distinctiveness in the process. For thousands of years—ever since the temple worship was inaugurated—God's people have struggled to create their own language, a divinely given frame of reference. It is not only the theological integrity of that language, but the artistic integrity, that Christians have historically considered vital in the service and worship of the Almighty God. Christians should feel free to enjoy and to create popular music, if that is their preference, but is this acceptable in worship? Is the question not at least worth asking when we are talking about the worship of God? After all, worshiping the correct God correctly falls under the judgment of the second commandment. And why must our language in the service descend to the level of the Phil Donahue show? Is the minister's decision to roam casually during a twenty-minute pep talk merely a matter of style, or does it violate God's pattern for the preaching of the Word? The world must not be allowed to tell us how to sing or how to speak in the presence of God. It is God, not the unchurched, who must give us our pattern for worship. (Page 83-84)

25. Confusing Worship with Art

Much of Christian music gives the impression that the lyrics and musical composition are incidental to the religious enthusiasm or moral exhortation. Thus, the level of actual Christian expression is often as shallow and poorly conceived as the music itself. Contrast modern praise songs with classic hymns from before the nineteenth century and this point will be made plain. Or better yet, contrast "Oh, How He Loves You and Me" or "Shine, Jesus, Shine" with the psalmist's hymn "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.... For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me" (Psalm 51:1, 3). It is when we confuse art-poetry, painting, music, fiction, nonfiction—with a means of grace that we, ironically, injure both art and grace. Only the Word and sacraments are God's ordained means of communicating the riches of His favor, so our specifically *Christian* expressions must be framed solely by that rule. This is why the distinction between "secular" and "sacred" ought to be retained. The Reformation did not reject this distinction, but rather the hierarchy attached to it, as if one were more worthwhile or spiritually acceptable to God. (Page 84-85)

26. The Purpose of the Church

The purpose of the church is to worship God as He has ordained and to bring the Gospel to the nations. Although the world can be seen by the believer as "a theater of God's glory," as Calvin put it, the world can never be made into a means of redemption. Culture cannot redeem. Art cannot redeem. Science, education, literature, and politics cannot redeem. (Page 86)

27. The Purpose of Worship

This is the knowledge that liberated the great Reformation artists to create works that served both the kingdom of God and the advance of culture in ways that were appropriate to each task, without confusing the two. The church is much richer for the hymns of Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, Augustus Toplady, and John Newton. They created hymns—a distinct style of music that was neither "highbrow" (the tunes were and still are very easy to master) nor trivial. Far from suggesting that we should have fewer church artists and musicians, I am longing for the recovery of this grand tradition for our own age. But that is not the same as "reaching the unchurched." We do not worship in order to reach the unchurched, but in order to receive God's blessing and to respond in grateful praise. (By evacuating much of the redemptive content from "praise and worship" today, we actually have less that is specifically Christian with which to evangelize the unchurched.) But this does not mean that if one wishes to write books or music for non-Christians that this is unspiritual. It simply means that this is not the purpose for music that is specifically created for divine worship. (Page 86)

28. The Decline of the Sacred and the Increase of the Profane

The Word and sacraments have been pushed into the background, while music, drama, and entertaining productions take center stage. (Page 88-89)

29. The State of Theology in Fiction

In the case of much spiritual warfare fiction, the theology is clearly sub-biblical, since its cosmology (view of the universe) has more in common with the Neoplatonic (gnostic) dualism we have mentioned earlier than with the sovereign God of history who, instead of leaving the outcome of history to sinful creatures (including Christians), "does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth" (Daniel 4:35). (Page 90)

30. Enough With the Imitation, Get Integrity!

If we are going to write "Christian" literature and create distinctively "Christian"

works of art and music, it should be so fully persuasive intellectually and artistically that non-Christians will be impressed with its integrity-even if they disagree. Not long ago, I asked a well-trained musician-a non-Christian-to judge a piece of "praise music." Not knowing my own position, he attempted to express his distaste as tactfully as possible. This stuff is supposed to attract unbelievers, but even in its style (which we consider "relevant") it is shallow and superficial in its imitation of popular music. Another non-Christian friend compares this style to foreign bands that attempt to "make it big" by imitating the American style of pop music. It almost always sounds tacky. (Page 92)

31. Worship Requires Intense Scrutiny

There is nothing wrong with art appealing primarily to the feelings and imagination, but there is a great deal wrong with *worship* that is motivated by feelings and imagination. Therefore, church music should be judged by criteria that are very different from those by which we judge common art. There is nothing unspiritual about enjoying a secular concert simply to be entertained. While we should not be naive about the worldviews that shape secular music or ignore the lyrics because we like the music, we do not have to be rigorously analytical about the music. But we must be rigorously analytical about sacred music. Why? Because it is used not in our own entertainment but in the worship of God! Unfortunately, most of us are more worried about profanity in a Rolling Stones concert than about irreverence in a worship service, but the latter ranks number two in the Ten Commandments. We cannot worship God with our own opinions or emotions; our worship (including the music) must be rigorously checked for its theological integrity. It is not entertainment. That is why I care more about the influence of Carman than the influence of Clapton.

Contemporary Christian music is a new third category. The hymn-writers were church musicians. Some, like Bach and Handel, wrote secular and sacred pieces, but only now do we see an entire style of music that is neither sacred nor secular, but a fusion of both (and again, often a fusion of the worst forms of both). We end up with music that is too religious and otherworldly to get serious airplay on secular stations, but too lacking in transcendence and theological depth to be appropriate for worship. In short, "I Keep Falling in Love with Him Over and Over and Over and Over Again," is, once again, bad theology and bad art. If Christians felt free to write secular love songs (focusing on the horizontal) for secular airplay, and to also write sacred church music of great musical and lyrical depth (focusing on the vertical), perhaps we could see the dawn of a new era of great music in both spheres produced by Christians. (Page 94-95)

32. A Lack of Understanding Does Not Remove Enjoyment

Both Roman Catholic and Protestant art was meant to adorn the space of common people. Regardless of the different views of art's mission and service, both traditions and the artists who represented them believed that their work had to somehow make contact with the public. They did not believe in the self-existent character of their work, as if public tastes were to be entirely disregarded as too crude and base for their self-expression. Art had to be enjoyed, and it was meant to bring delight, wonder, criticism, and even discomfort to the viewer. Just as the Reformation insisted that the common man or woman was to be raised from illiteracy to feast on a common body of literature, so the artist conspired with the writer and musician to create works that could be enjoyed by the masses. Instead of baffling them, it was to elevate them. This was true generally until the Romantic period. Mozart's operas were originally performed for the equivalent of modern moviegoers.

You need not be worried that because you cannot understand much of modern abstract art that you are ill-equipped for the task of enjoying art and literature. (Furthermore, not all of contemporary art is abstract by any means.) Rest assured that if you are reading an author or viewing a painting or hearing a piece of music that was produced prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, the author designed it for your pleasure, not for his or her own esoteric, gnostic self-appreciation. Don't determine your reading list based only on what somebody says you "ought to" like. If you dislike fantasy, Tolkien's lengthy *Lord of the Rings* books will drive you batty. Do you enjoy history, nature stories, mysteries? Start your reading there. Just because there are movies that do not seem to connect with the viewer does not lead to the conclusion that one should abandon all movie-going, and the same is true of art in general. Note Lewis's remark on this point: "I'm sick of our Abracadabrist poets. What gives the show away is that their professed admirers give quite contradictory interpretations of the same poem-I'm prepared to believe that an unintelligible picture is really a very good horse if all its admirers tell me so; but when one says it's a horse, and the next that it's a ship, and the third that it's an orange, and the fourth that it's Mt. Everest, I give it up." 3. C. S. Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays* (Cambridge Univ.: 19J9), 276-77. (Page 103-104)

33. Reading Fiction -- *Why should we waste our time reading fiction?*

One can always pick a fiction-despiser out in a group. Very often those who do not take the time to read fiction view their world through their own limited perspectives, knowing only their own feelings and thoughts in their own time and place. Just watch one talk show on television for an hour and you will notice that nobody listens; everybody talks. Everyone is preparing the next sentence while

the other person (or people, since they are often all speaking at once) addresses the nation. They talk about themselves-their own experiences, habits, opinions, and preferences. In our age of psychobabble, we are turned in on ourselves and our own internal worlds.

To read fiction is to travel to the land of Merlin or the enchanted German forests or to more modern venues, such as Michener's Hawaii, Texas, or South Africa. It is to climb into the rambunctious world of Tolkien's Middle Earth and to read between the lines of Melville's whale and Hawthorne's Salem village. Christians living at the end of the twentieth century are a part of a culture with little historical knowledge or imagination. While we know our own thoughts, imaginations, dreams, and stories, we usually turn to television to "escape" into other worlds, instead of turning to fiction to don the dragon-slayer's coat of armor.

Reading fiction, therefore, not only entertains us (which is reason enough for it); it helps us to step into another time and place and understand a different world and not to simply take our own opinions and experiences as the given truth. (Page 104-105)

34. Fiction over MTV

It is rather remarkable, in fact, that, according to George Barna's surveys, Christian teens watch more MTV than non-Christians. Not only is this dangerous because of the immorally explicit content, but because it undermines one's ability to entertain a single, continuous thought. With its pulsating images, flashing violently and in a disconnected fashion, it trains people to turn their minds off and simply receive. Whereas a piece of fiction requires the reader's involvement at a variety of levels, television in general and MTV in particular reduce the viewer to a passive spectator. (Page 106)

35. The Greatest Good: Aristotle or Scripture?

*Aristotle said the greatest good
was happiness, whereas Scripture
declares that it is the glory of God. (Page 107)*

36. Good (and evil) is Multi-faceted

Often, Christians will boycott authors, movies, or other forms of artistic expression because of the character or religious commitments of the artist, but it is possible to enjoy art without approving of the artist. It is also possible for a particular work to be good in an aesthetic (i.e. artistic) sense, but morally evil,

and vice versa. Even in these circumstances, it is not necessarily out of bounds to the Christian (although works that entertain by glorifying depravity can be subtly dangerous). If it were, the description of David's adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah would be unfit for Christian ears, but God is not the prude that we often make Him out to be. In Scripture, we find things that are true but not necessarily good or beautiful. (Page 109-110)

37. "The True, the Good, and the Beautiful"

One final point deserves to be made. We have been arguing that it is not unacceptable for a Christian to read, watch, or listen to someone or something with which he or she disagrees. Furthermore, even the Bible itself contains good and evil, truth and error (though it does not present evil as good or error as truth); and it does not attempt to cover over the darkness of the human condition, even the condition of believers. But there is a difference between a film such as *Fatal Attraction*, which leaves one appalled at the evil of adultery and a film like *Superman* or *Batman*, in which the hero is seduced and the unwritten assumption is that even superheroes are unfaithful. However, many Christians who would not have allowed their children to see the former had little difficulty sending them off to the latter. *Tombstone* may have had its share of western-style violence, but it was a great story about character, friendship, and loyalty. Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden* is full of moral evil, but the evil is repulsive. But in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the main character finds meaning in illicit sex.

From these examples, and many others, we can see that discerning "the true, the good, and the beautiful" can be a complex undertaking. But it is worthwhile, and, more importantly, it is commanded by Scripture (Philippians 4:8). (Page 113)

38. Protestantism and Modern Science

Abraham Kuyper, Dutch prime minister for the first five years of this century, was also a leader in the arts and sciences. "There is found hidden in Calvinism," he declared in his famous Princeton College addresses, "an impulse, an inclination, an incentive, to scientific investigation. It is a fact that science has been fostered by it, and its principle demands the scientific spirit." And Kuyper supplies ample illustrations of this fact in his own nation's history. The question, "Why was science fostered in Protestant rather than in Roman Catholic lands?" has long occupied the attention of historians. Whatever the many other factors of an economic, social, philosophical, and mechanical nature that doubtless influenced the flowering of modern science, there can be no question that Reformation—that is to say, evangelical Protestant-theology played a decisive role.

¹Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 110. (Page 115)

39. Humility Integral to Science

Without humility, science could never have been born. That is why only those believing scientists, rather than many of the contemporary scientific religionists, could have successfully launched the enterprise. One must constantly revise theories and hypotheses in the light of the facts. Christian humility led many of these earlier scientists to believe not only that they did not know everything, but that it was quite possible, due to both their finitude and the fallenness of the human mind and its powers, to get wrong what they already believed to be true. But secularism has proven just as rigid and dogmatic in its religious presuppositions as the church that refused to hear Galileo because his investigations clashed with their cherished philosophical presuppositions. Not only can science never discover the ultimate meaning of life and things heavenly; it can be wrong about the details of its particular findings and things earthly. Without humility, there can be no genuine scientific advance. (Page 118)

40. Science Built upon Theology

Christopher Kaiser is an American theologian who has attempted to interact with this question. There are essentially four theological foundations upon which science flowered, Kaiser maintains: the comprehensibility of the world, the unity of heaven and earth, the relative autonomy of nature, and the ministry of healing and restoration. Kaiser attributes the foundation of science to the effects of the Lutheran and the Calvinistic tradition. In fact, fifty years ago, Robert K. Merton's *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* argued that Puritanism was the most significant single factor in the rise of modern science. Since then, the leading historians of science have agreed. (Page 119)

41. Modern Science Not Built upon Buddhism or Hinduism

As Polkinghorne, Jaki, and others argue, modern science could not have been born in a Hindu or Buddhist country, because those religions lack the belief in the comprehensibility of the world. A world of pure enchantment and polytheistic plurality cannot provide a cradle for concepts such as laws of nature, logic, and reason. (Page 120)

42. Spitz, Protestantism, and Epistemology

Lewis Spitz, Stanford University historian of the Renaissance and Reformation, argued that Protestantism (and Calvinism in particular) was uniquely suited to produce the empirical epistemology (view of how we know what we know) that gave rise to science."

⁵Lewis Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971), 580-90. Cf. Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992). (Page 121)

43. More Method than Madness

John Calvin's emphasis on divine providence added another element to this mix. Since God not only created the world, but rules it, there is a certain order in the universe. It is not unwise, therefore, to seek to recognize patterns or laws. To be sure, God was not bound to operate in a particular manner, and He could interrupt these laws or patterns at will (this is where miracles fit), but Calvin observed that in Scripture miracles are always the exception rather than the rule. Science, therefore, could reasonably expect to be able to chronicle a great deal in the way of natural laws and cause and effect without being faced at every turn with the element of chance or unpredictability. Not only was God in charge of salvation and the advance of Christ's kingdom, but He also saw to it that the planets rotated. (Page 122)

44. When Science and Scripture "Clash"

This raises an important point about the question of what happens when science and Scripture appear to contradict each other. Remembering that God is the author of both, and that imperfect humans can "misread" either, we need humility in determining whether a current scientific model is flawed or whether we are reading into Scripture something that it never intended to say. Bacon imported the "two-kingdoms" approach that had been so influential in the Reformation's view of church and state and applied it to the scientific enterprise. Christ rules in His kingdom through the miracle of grace, but He rules the world through the providence of natural laws. As Kaiser expressed the Baconian ideal, "Nature and grace were two separate kingdoms or departments of the *potentia Dei ordinata* [God's actual reign over the world]: the kingdom of nature was accessible through the arts and sciences based on human reason and observation; the kingdom of God was accessible through the forgiveness of sins based on the teachings of Scripture. Ultimately the two were united in God: one was based on his works; the other on his word." This did not mean that science was not dependent on God's common grace—he emphasized that it was—but it did

mean that common grace was not saving grace, and general revelation neither required nor contradicted the facts of special revelation .. ~ 7. Christopher Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 127. (Page 124-125)

45. Common Sense

The most basic method of reasoning is common sense—even in science. (Page 125)

46. The Superiority of Scripture

By contesting Scripture some of its greatest critics have become convinced of its veracity. (Page 132)

47. Drawing Conclusions versus Truth

There is a place for natural theology and natural revelation, but once we have been led to embrace the Word of God as the Word of God, we must beware of attempting to find by reason and experience what can be found only in Scripture. We may be able to conclude the Bible's trustworthiness by common sense, rational, evidential inquiry, but we cannot learn the truth about the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, the nature of redemption or things to come by observing nature, by rational reflection, or by human experience. (Page 134)

48. The Erosion of Society

During America's early Puritan phase, there was a social consciousness that tied individuals together, keeping the self from either the meaninglessness of individualism or the meaninglessness of collectivism. But eventually, this foundation eroded and "Each newly sovereign individual could be the source of his own achievement and fulfillment. One worked for oneself, not for society." We see this even in the average Christian bookstore, where most of the popular books fall into the category of "self-help." Instead of resisting these trends in modernity, Christians have all too often merely lent spiritual respectability to these hedonistic ideas. In this worldview, work loses its significance because man loses his significance before the face of God, and with that loss he also loses his divinely ordained relatedness to others. 6. Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America* (New York: Bantam, 1971), 21. (Page 139)

49. Witnessing

The individual Christian is in a better place to witness of his of her faith when that is not the person's ulterior motive for work. (Page 142)

50. Spiritual Health

Therefore, we often judge our spiritual health in terms of how many people are involved with small groups, Bible studies, prayer circles, and accountability groups; and we are led by the statistics to conclude that we are actually quite vigorous. But Reformation Christianity (I.e., biblical Christianity) should lead us to different standards for judging health: Is the church truly being the church? That is to ask, Is the Word rightly preached? Are the sacraments rightly administered? And is there a healthy concern for and practice of church discipline and good order? If those questions cannot be answered with any degree of confidence, there is no health, regardless of the bustling activity in the ghetto. While the medieval and, to a large extent, pietistic tendency is to call the believer out of the world and into church-related activities, the Reformation approach is to view all church-related activities as "refueling" stations for their real service in the world. We should not put people who work diligently at their calling on a guilt trip for failing to attend every church-related activity or volunteering for church-related tasks. It is the church that serves the Christian so that the Christian can serve God in the world. That is not to say that going to church and participating in a Bible study are merely means to the end of a worldly vocation, since the Word is an end in itself, and we receive God's promises as well as His commands regardless of how useful and practical this may be considered for daily life. But even if a church is feeding the sheep with God's promises, a further question must be asked: If the church itself is healthy internally, are individual Christians fulfilling their calling in the world with excellence? That is not the same question as, Are they winning souls? Rather, Do individual believers sense that it is their *Christian* duty to transcend mediocrity in their daily routines and link their service in the world to their service of an all-knowing God of glory? A Christian does not go to work on Monday morning in order to convert people to Christ, but to pursue his or her calling, for which he or she was designed by divine creation.

This has to be said, not because evangelism is unimportant, but because it is too often assumed by Christians today that work is unimportant, as if its tedious meaninglessness is somehow justified by the opportunities to witness. Some even conclude from this logic that it would be better to abandon the world altogether for the safety of the evangelical ghetto, where one can be assured that his or her work will have a direct evangelistic or church-related objective. (Page 142-143)

51. Having Joy in One's Calling

Just as sin can smother the joy of our salvation, it can smother the joy of our calling. And it does not even have to be our sin that causes such disappointment. Perhaps it is a harsh employer or distracted employees, or perhaps the "bottom line" keeps one awake into the night. Nevertheless, it does provide some sense of relief and purpose over the long haul to know that it is not my own whimsical and fickle dreams, but ultimately a divine calling, that keeps me at my post in the worst as well as the best of times.

Calvin used this kind of reasoning in defending one's calling:

Each will bear and swallow the discomforts, vexations, weariness and anxieties in his way of life when he has been persuaded that the burden was laid upon him by God. From this will arise also an impressive consolation: that no task will be so sordid and base, provided you obey your calling in it, that it will not shine and be reckoned very precious in God's sight.

For that reason, "The Lord bids each one of us in all life's actions to look to his calling."

⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.6. (Page 144-145)

52. God's Common Grace

...common grace is God's *temporal* restraint of both human wickedness and His own wrath that must eventually set things straight. In this present evil age, "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous," and requires us to have the same mind (Matthew 5:45). This means that if God, being righteous, can endure the evil of our own hearts as His children, much less the rebellion of unbelievers, then surely we, being unrighteous, must bear the unbelief and wickedness of our neighbors and co-workers. This does not mean that we never raise our voices against unbelief and vice, but it does mean that God's common grace is sufficient for building a common civilization and working together side by side with those who do not share our beliefs, convictions, attitudes, or worldview. (Page 147)

53. The Purpose of Work

Work is a divine institution of *Creation*, given to man as a sign of his dignity, not a curse of the Fall. It is now given to the believer to recover the transcendent dimension and connect his or her daily life in this world to the life in heaven, where we are seated with Christ in heavenly places, and to the life to come,

where we will reign with Christ in Paradise Restored. (Page 148)

54. Kingdom Relationships

Scripture does not teach us to level all relationships and democratize all offices and stations in this world; rather, it calls us to regard our superiors and inferiors with dignity and respect, bringing all of life under the sovereign rule of our Redeemer-King. (Page 159)

55. Seeing the Big Picture

One day, a gentleman on a walk passed a construction site and inquired of the workers, "What are you doing?" "I'm breaking rock out of the quarry," said one. Another replied, "I'm in charge of making the mortar that will cement the stones." A third man, caked in mud, was pushing a wheelbarrow, and he stopped just long enough to say, with a sense of proud delight, "I'm building a cathedral." What are we doing with our lives? Working for the weekend or building a cathedral? All three men were engaged in the same task, but only one had the "big picture" in view. Apart from the transcendent (divine, vertical, theological) perspective, we can only see the details of daily routines: I record accounting information, I clean the house, I try cases in court, I type correspondence and make phone calls for other people. And so on. But when we begin to sign the compositions of our daily scores with "Soli Deo Gloria"-"To God Alone Be Glory"-as did Bach, that can make even drudgery divine. (Page 159-160)

56. The Long, Dark Night of the 20th Century

In spite of the dangers of exaggerated lamentations, there can be little question that the twentieth century has seen some of the most savage brutality and rank evil in all human history. Two World Wars, international terrorism in the form of totalitarianism and fascism, selfish individualism, nationalism, and "the will to power"-one need not rehearse the outline of the century in order to reach a consensus between liberal and conservative alike that it has not been a winning century. Not to be lightly dismissed is the coincidence of these trends in world history and a naked rejection of God. (Page 161)

57. Forms of Communication Very Important and Distinct

The telecommunications revolution has also radically altered the relational landscape. Until rather recently, some European countries refused to conduct official government business by phone, since the slower, more formal, and less direct method of letters has the tendency to limit misunderstandings and the

immediacy of hot tempers flaring. I even notice a difference in communication between friends in England and in America. Like most Americans, I tend to rush through my communication with friends, family members, and colleagues, selecting the most rapid form of communication and taking the least amount of time to cover the necessary ground. By contrast, almost all of my English friends correspond with me in longhand, written letters. The penmanship is remarkable, especially compared to mine; I joked to a friend about this, only to learn that he took penmanship more seriously than I took it. It was no joke. Beyond the appearance, the content is more meaningful, both in terms of its depth and style of writing. It is not simply the cost of a phone call that accounts for this, as it is a common form of communication even between people living in the same community. Is it not at least possible that these two different patterns in communication tend to create two distinct approaches to relationships? (Page 170)

58. Communication: Discernment Required

Note what I am not saying at this point. I am not suggesting for one moment that we should eschew apartment buildings, snobbishly frown on tract homes (I live in one of the ugliest), make a pact to live in one place for the rest of our lives, boycott hamburger joints, and resolve to communicate with our friends and colleagues by letter rather than by phone or fax. I do not think it is sinful to own a TV set or to go to movies. (After all, I have included some illustrations from films in this book!) Like everything else, we simply have to be discerning and thoughtful. We cannot go back, and we should not wish to become cultural dinosaurs. Nevertheless, we must realize the enormous ramifications of modernity (both good and bad) in our own lives if we are to seek to compensate for its negative effects. (Page 171-172)

59. Have Hope, For God Has the Final Word

In spite of the complex factors that continue to disturb our world and disintegrate our relationships, we know that history will meet its appointed end, that God "has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). God is still sovereign, ruling in the affairs of all people, the high and the low, the powerful and the weak. Regardless of who occupies the White House, Congress, or the Supreme Court, "His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'" (Daniel 4:34-35). Even after all the great empires have come and gone, God will still be carrying out His plans, made before the creation of the world, to glorify Himself in the salvation of the elect and in the judgment of the damned.

It is this realization that produces hope. But it is not a sentimentalized hope based on a romantic view of God and a platitudinous belief that "everything will work out"; it is a hope that realizes that salvation and "utopia" will be finally realized not by human striving, but by the intervention of justice at the end of the age. Then the new heavens and the new earth will be bound together into one splendid Eden, with no serpent to spoil the arrangement. In one instant, we will be glorified, and our only delight will be to serve God and our neighbor. Of the heavenly city, we read, "On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are . written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:25-27). Even as we work for real change and actively pursue our calling in this world, we cry out in our deep distress, "Even so, Lord, come quickly". (Page 173-174)

60. God Reigns Supreme

The Gospel writers underscored Christ's humanity by appealing to His human genealogy. His ancestors were real human beings-some people of outstanding character, others diabolical, and most reflecting both tendencies in their lives according to the biblical record. In other words, redemption, according to the Bible, is "earthed" in real time and space history, unlike other religions which seem to share a common dualism between that which is "spiritual" (i.e., heavenly) and that which is "evil" (i.e., earthly). Even non-Christians, according to Scripture, possess the image of God (James 3:9) and are, therefore, just as capable as Christians of excellence, wisdom and knowledge in things of this world, creativity, pleasure, and civil virtue.

Against all who would say that the earth belongs to Satan or evil forces, God Himself announces, "The world is mine, and all that is in it" (Psalm 50:12). He created it and upholds it by His power. Even in its present state of rebellion, His common grace brings good out of evil and restrains human wickedness. "He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous," and that is meant to lead us to imitate God's generosity toward unbelievers (Matthew 5:45). (Page 177)

61. The True Meaning of Worldliness

Worldliness is the disease of the soul that infects us when we begin to pattern our ideas, beliefs, methods, and lifestyles according to the world. Many of us grew up in churches where this "worldliness" was associated with secular callings, financial success, and dancing, drinking, smoking, or hanging around people and places where these activities took place. This is not-emphatically, not-the worldliness described by Scripture. We become worldly when "Phil Donahue" pep

talks replace sermons, worship is transformed for market-driven consumerism, and therapeutic or political categories begin to replace the solid biblical emphasis in our churches. We become worldly when obsessions with "practical" issues replace well-informed discipleship and when we begin to think that visible popularity and numerical success are the measures of ministry. (Page 179)

62. Free At Last!

At the price of Christ's own blood, we were purchased by God. The imagery here in 1 Peter 1:3-4 belongs to the world of commerce and specifically to the world of slavery. In the Greco-Roman world, slavery was usually economic: A debtor would fulfill his obligations by serving his creditor. Other slaves were foreigners carried off as booty in wartime victories. Similarly, we were the slaves of unrighteousness. The world, the flesh, and the devil controlled our worldview, our attitudes, and our motivations. Although they might promise perks in the short run, slavery to sin leads to death. Peter describes Jesus as a man at an auction, bidding on the slaves in the city square. Sin, death, hell, and the world all placed high bids on us, but no one and nothing could outbid Christ's price: His own blood.

But we were freed not to belong to ourselves; we are now under new ownership.

This was the point our Lord made in His High Priestly Prayer:

Believers "are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified" (John 17:14-19).

Notice the important point Jesus makes here. First, the indicative: We are sanctified (holy, set apart) not because we have progressively separated ourselves from the world, but because Christ separated Himself from the world and we are in Christ. But because that is true of us all, we must *recognize* and *respond* to this fact by progressively extricating ourselves from the worldly perspective and the character it produces. We never do accomplish this fully in our earthly lives, but it is the goal toward which we zealously strive. (Page 182-183)