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Mind Games Survival Course Manual



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Christianity and Culture

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IV. Guidelines

There are certain guidelines that should be considered as you attempt to be a transformer of culture.

A. *Fill your mind with biblical precepts.*

These precepts will challenge you to exercise your will in discerning the culture around you. We are foolish if we believe we can transform culture without understanding God's will for it.

2. *Practice discernment.*

There should be no fear in interacting with the culture surrounding you if you are practicing discernment. But be cautious and subsequently accountable in regard to the ways in which you can become enmeshed in that culture.

3. *Do not assume the superiority of your culture.*

In particular, American culture is not to be seen as the standard by which all cultures are to be judged. Indeed, American culture may presently be the most desperately in need of redemption.

4. *Think and live distinctively.*

Christian thought and life should say things to the culture that exhibit a distinct vision. A multiculturalism that rejects absolutes and the unique claims of Christ cannot be a part of the Christian's world view.

5. *Be a good steward.* Your life and work within culture and your influence on it are part of the works that God will judge.

6. *Do all that you do to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).*

Notes

1. E. Adamson Hoebel, *Anthropology: The Study of Man*, 3d. ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 5.
2. T. S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949), 100.
3. Donald G. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 54.
4. Emil Brunner, *Christianity and Civilization* (London: Nisbet, 1948), 142.
5. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).
6. Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, with a foreword by Bernard Ramm (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), 105-6.
7. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience*, 226.
8. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 103.
9. Harry Blamires, *Recovering the Christian Mind* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1988), 116.
10. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience*, 227.
11. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 145.
12. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience*, 227.
13. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 156.
14. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience*, 227.
15. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 324.

For Further Reading

Eliot, T. S. *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949.

This volume contains two essays. The first is on the direction of religious thought toward criticism of political and economic systems. The second deals with culture, its meaning, and the dangers threatening the legacy of the Western world.

Ellul, Jacques. *False Presence of the Kingdom*. Translated by C. Edward Hopkin. New York: Seabury, 1972.

Ellul, a staunch advocate of the "Christ Against Culture" view, examines how Christians can misunderstand the distinctive basis of the kingdom and end up by conforming the church and themselves to the world.

Kraft, Charles H. *Christianity in Culture*. With a foreword by Bernard Ramm. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1979.

Kraft is a former missionary and anthropologist. He works within a modified "Christ Above Culture" system. His insights are particularly helpful because of his unique missionary experience.

Kuyper, Abraham. *Lectures on Calvinism*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1931.

Kuyper relates a classic "transformational" perspective. He introduces Calvinism as a life-system, discusses its relationship to religion, politics, science, and art, and inquires into its prospects for the future.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1951.

This is the magnum opus on the subject. Virtually any writer that addresses the subject will refer to it.

Rookmaaker, H. R. *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1970.

Rookmaaker outlines the steps that have led to what he believed was a dying culture. He demonstrates this by analyzing modern art and its accompanying world views. As a "transformer" he also offers answers to the problem.

Schlossberg, Herbert. *Idols for Destruction*. Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1983.

Contemporary American culture is the subject of Schlossberg's penetrating analyses of the idols of history, humanity, economics, nature, the state, and religion. He espouses a "Christ the Transformer of Culture" view.

Tillich, Paul. *Theology of Culture*. Edited by Robert C. Kimball. New York: Oxford, 1959.

Tillich's volume, which is often referenced, is a compilation of essays written over a number of years. Technically, it is not a theology at all. Rather, it contains his philosophy as it pertains to a diversity of contemporary attitudes and problems. He generally is within the "Christ Above Culture" position.

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