# Essay 1, Chapter 2: "Culture: The Common View"

## Chapter 2: "Culture: The Common View"

The common view summarized "The essence of culture is found in the hearts and minds of individuals – in what are typically called 'values.'" (6) Culture is a reflection of values and life-choices.

More sophisticated version: worldviews, the lens through which we see reality and that directs our beliefs and actions. In this view, culture is shaped by ideas, ideas shaped by worldview. These shape our choices, which in turn shape the culture. Good worldviews in individuals leads to good life choices, and therefore good culture. Bad worldviews in the same way lead to bad (unhealthy, declining) culture.

So Chuck Colson lays out a 4 step plan. Christians must: 1. be good citizens, 2. carry out their civic duty in every walk of life, 3. engage directly in politics, and 4. act as the conscience of society and restrain the misuse of governing authority. Cultural change will be bottom up, grassroots, from evangelism and apologetics with ordinary people. This will transform worldviews, and thus transform habits and values, and thus transform culture.
This idea has a long American pedigree, stretching back to Jefferson. Sum: "Change the values of the common person for the better and a good society will follow in turn." (9)
In this context, Evangelicals have focused on evangelism not just to save souls, but to change individuals' values, and hence change culture. Pray and work for spiritual renewal, and surely cultural renewal will come.

As important a tactic for cultural change is politics. Bad laws come from bad choices made by individuals in authority. Therefore, we need to work to vote in the right people, make sure the right judges are appointed, etc. "[T]he reality is that politics is the tactic of choice form many Christians as they think about changing the world. This has been most conspicuously true for Evangelicals, though it has also been true for Christians in the Mainline Protestant traditions. It is not an exaggeration to say that the dominant public witness of the Christian churches in America since the early 1980s has been a political witness." (12) For the Christian Right, secular humanism in the judiciary and legislature has forced education to become secular, emptying the schools of religiously-based values, as well as liberalized abortion and other sexual-oriented laws. By mobilizing popular indignation to these moves, the Christian right believes it can swing the pendulum back in favor of Christian values, even as quickly as in one generation. Intensified prayer plus increased voter participation can turn things around. And this type of thinking is common also on the Christian left as well – we need a political vision with spiritual values, acc. to Wallis.

In addition to spiritual renewal and politics, a third tactic is social reform movements (pro-fatherhood or marriage movements, teen abstinence, etc.). The idea is to strengthen families, raising healthy drug-free children, preventing out-of-wedlock births, abortions, etc.
None is exclusive, and all share common approach: that real change in culture starts with the hearts and minds of grassroots individuals. This assumes: 1. "that real change must proceed individually," 2. "cultural change can be willed into being," and 3. "change is deocratic – it occurs from the bottom up among ordinary citizens, ordinary people." (all from 16). So Christians look to a Wilberforce, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Mother Theresa to show what one ordinary person can do.

"If you have the courage to 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." (17)

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