

Carson's Alternative to Niebuhr's Typology

Why Carson Wrote

His Reasons...

- First, since Pentecost Christians have had to think through the nature of their relationship with others...
- ...instantaneous communications mean that with only minimum effort Christians become aware of the extraordinarily diverse culture settings in which other Christians find themselves...
- Also, was in a group discussion at his seminary at TEDS and they worked on this
- Also, gave part of his book as some lectures in France

Carson's Views

- He sidesteps typologies and instead focuses on several tensions of Christ and culture in light of biblical exegesis
- How does one do biblical exegesis (reading out) instead of isogesis (reading in)? Non-negotiable? A loaded question...
 - Creation, fall, incarnation, Jesus' death & resurrection, the coming of the Spirit, final judgement, and consummation
 - or more simply **Creation, Fall, Redemption and Consummation**

Carson's Views

- Dismissal of these great turning points in redemptive history puts one outside the Christian camp
- No matter how loyal to Jesus, “...it is difficult to see how such loyalty is a mark of *Christian* thought if the Jesus so invoked is so domesticated and selectively constructed that he bears little relation to the Bible...

Carson's Views

- How *should* we think about the relations between Christ and culture; rather than, what *has been* the relationship between Christ and culture in church history?
 - “Biblical Theology” has become a very disputed expression!
 - Some mean it to be theology of individual books or corpora
 - Diachronic or systematic (typically synchronically)
 - Subsets of systematic
 - various themes can be traced right through the Bible or large parts of it
 - or phenomenologically (want “lush diversity” of the texts to speak)

Carson's View

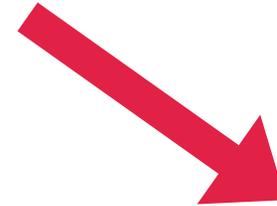
- Carson thinks something is “...gained by talking about all these pieces at the same time and hinting, as I go along, at their bearing on any Christian discussion of culture...”
- So that's what he does...

Carson's View

• Creation and Fall

- Made in the image and likeness of God, common parentage, mutual degradation...
- It grounds all human accountability to God our Maker—we owe Him
- He made us embodied beings (anticipates the culmination of everything)
- Responsibilities to the rest of the created order (governance & care)
- The problem of idolatry—dethroning God

Carson's Views



- Consequences—universal and devastating.
 - Unfolds the consequences in Scripture — **God gives us over to our own desires**
 - **Sin has social and personal consequences**—subtly changes me
- The fall does not have the last word
 - Signs of hope in Genesis 3
 - Rains on the just and unjust
 - People are not *completely* corrupted—but every important “part” of persons are corrupted: will, intellect, emotions and behavior. (= total depravity)

Carson's Views

- **Israel and the Law**
 - In the larger context of the calling of Abraham (redemptive & gracious)
 - The exodus and giving of the law—God graciously chooses his own people and saves them (still mercy outside his own people)
 - The Law touches all of life with **promises and threats**
 - Is the moral law at the heart of the Law?
 - Lots of space devoted to the tabernacle, the priesthood, the sacrificial system and matters of individual and corporate ritual and praise

Carson's Views

- **Israel is constituted a *theocracy***
 - *King's* and *Priests* were charged with maintaining covenantal fidelity in a way we do not find in the NT
 - God is behind (or above) Caesar, but Caesar not tasked with nurturing His people as in the OT
 - OT we see cycles of judgement on Israel, but we cannot forget this covenantal story is embedded in the larger story of Abraham and his seed and that story is embedded in the larger story of Creation and the fall of the human race.

Carson's Views

- **Christ and the New Covenant**

- The incarnation of the eternal Word
- Jesus announces and *inaugurates* the kingdom of God—the kingdom has already dawned, yet the kingdom is still to come, awaiting the return of the King
 - Realized eschatology in tension with future coming of the Kingdom
- The death of Jesus establishes the **new covenant** in Jesus' blood—beyond the “old” covenant
- Jesus's death and resurrection became the basis for the Holy Spirit to come
- **From these perspectives** we reflect on “..give back to Caesar what is Caesar's...”

Carson's Views

- **Heaven to be Gained and a Hell to Be Feared**
 - The here and now important, but after death is important too and shifts focus
 - Inaugurated-but-not-yet-consummated kingdom implies **no utopias**
- **Carson's final reflections:**
 - The biblical-theological points he makes must control our thinking *simultaneously* and *all the time*.
 - Niebuhr doesn't always follow this path; **leaves out consummation**

Sidebar on James Davidson Hunter's View

- James Davidson Hunter's typology
 - Religious Right - Opposition to Secularism
 - Religious Left (Progressive) - Opposition to Structural Inequalities
 - Neo-Anabaptist - Opposition to Violence