

# Cultural Amnesia What Makes Pietism Possible?

An Address to the Center For Cultural Leadership Annual Conference

October, 2011

## Introduction

Greetings! At the outset, let me just express how thrilled I am to participate in this wonderful conference. What an honor to be here. The honor is doubled by the invitation to be the keynote speaker, and even tripled by the opportunity to participate as the new Senior Scholar of Public Theology for CCL. My deepest thanks to Andrew Sandlin and, of course, his lovely wife Sharon, both for the trust they have shown in me and for their personal encouragement to me. Thank you all for being here, and for the opportunity to speak to you this morning.

## On Begging The Question

I'll begin with a question: why should I vaccinate my child for Polio?

Wait a minute... let me make sure I've got the notes for the right lecture! (Pause.) Yes, this is the right lecture. I grant that that is not the question you were expecting. You expected me to ask the question that forms the title of this lecture: what makes Pietism possible? But bear with me a moment. I am, actually, asking that question, but in a roundabout way. So let me ask again:

Why should I vaccinate my child for Polio?

It seems such a needless thing. After all, there isn't anybody around who has Polio!

So forms part of the reasoning of a significant sub-culture in our society today, those who oppose giving children vaccinations. Why would we need to do that? After all, many if not most of the diseases we're inoculating our children from simply don't exist anymore. They don't seem to pose much of a danger, so much so that the dangers of vaccination itself seem to outweigh the dangers of contracting the diseases.

At first glance it seems like sound reasoning, until one points out that the reason nobody has Polio is that... well, we've been *vaccinating our children*. This is a common logical fallacy called "begging the question." The answer seems like a satisfactory answer, until we see that the very thing being rejected (vaccination) itself actually provides basis for rejecting it! A "plausibility structure" is a sociological term that refers to a network of beliefs that make a given idea plausible. In this case, the plausibility structure for the anti-vaccination crusade, (i.e., the widespread lack of disease) is actually provided by the great success of vaccinations themselves.

I could multiply instances of this kind of question-begging, but this morning I intend to highlight just one: what makes *Pietism* possible? What has to be true for Pietism to thrive? What provides the foundation, or plausibility structure, of Pietism? There is no need to keep you in suspense: it is only widespread

Christian cultural transformation that makes the rejection of Christian cultural transformation plausible.

The word "pietism" is one that I do not like. It is too easily confused with the perfectly good word "piety," one's reverence or personal devotion to God. Pietism, on the other hand, is what happens when one comes to believe that the only thing of importance is one's personal devotion to God. Pietism is better expressed by the word "Privatism." Privatism (as I will henceforth call it) is the belief that Christian truth has relevance for some segment of life *smaller* than all of life. It may be relevant, actually, for a lot of things: your private affairs; your personal devotional life; the way or manner in which you conduct yourself; how you relate to your wife and family; how you conduct yourself in the church, and so forth. But nevertheless, there remain realms of life to which the truth claims of Christianity remain alien. Privatism is the belief that the Christian message is restricted in some way, usually restricted from having relevance or influence on public matters, or matters which concern believers and unbelievers alike as they co-exist in the world.

Why is this important for us? Why should we care? One simple reason: just as nature abhors a vacuum, so does culture. If Christians, embracing Privatism, cease to believe they have something unique to offer humanity in its cultural affairs, then cultural norms and customs will inevitably be provided by somebody else. History is replete with examples of what those cultural norms are likely to be, and the prospects are not at all pleasant.

Unfortunately, it so happens that in our day we are experiencing something of a *renaissance* of Privatism. Certain theologians, not from segments of evangelicalism one would expect, are positively urging that Christians see their faith as *not relevant* to the public square or "common" matters involving Christians and non-Christians. This recent version of Privatism is, we should readily admit, an improvement on some older forms. Whereas older Privatists (represented in Anabaptist groups like the Amish or Mennonites) do not participate in the broader life of culture because they believe such things to be positively evil (and so they don't vote, serve on juries, or serve in the military), the newer version wants to affirm that cultural pursuits are, in fact, good. But they are only a lesser good on our hierarchy of priorities. I am referring to the recent revival of a "Two Kingdoms" model for relating Christianity and culture, the foremost representatives of which are Drs. Michael Horton and David VanDrunen of Westminster Seminary California. Today I will argue that the plausibility structure necessary for their arguments to work are provided by the fact that previous generations have, in fact, ignored their arguments. There is an initial persuasiveness or plausibility in the Two Kingdoms model that, on second glance, requires what I call *cultural amnesia*.

## The Two Kingdoms

It is important to first provide a brief summary of Two Kingdoms teaching. I am not interested in knocking down straw-men, so let me give you a carefully considered and, I believe, accurate picture of the Two Kingdoms model.

The central dogma is that while God rules over and governs the entire world, he does so in two distinct ways. His rule is divided into two distinct realms, each with its own origin, its own norms, and its own destiny. The one realm has its origin in creation (recapitulated in the covenant with Noah) and is governed by God's general providence, its norms are provided by natural law or general revelation, and its destiny is strictly temporal--that is, it is destined to pass away. This realm they call the "common" or "civil" kingdom. It is made up of believers and unbelievers alike, and it encompasses all activities that are legitimately engaged in by everyone. This is the realm, in other words, common to all humanity. It includes things like civil government, marriage and family, the economic marketplace, arts, education, and, no doubt, much more. The other realm, by way of contrast, has its origin in the new creation inaugurated by Christ and is governed by God's special grace in the gospel, its norms are provided by God's special revelation in the Bible, and its destiny is eternal. This realm they call the "special" or "redemptive" kingdom. It is made up strictly of believers, and it is found exclusively in the church of Jesus Christ. So, for example, only Christians take the Lord's Supper, but all sorts of people vote for public officials. Therefore, the Lord's Supper belongs to the "redemptive" kingdom and voting belongs to the "common" kingdom.

The crucial point is that while individual Christians actually inhabit both of these realms (VanDrunen's latest book is entitled, *Living In God's Two Kingdoms*), the realms *themselves* (and all that they entail) do not overlap. This is the preeminent purpose of the Two Kingdoms paradigm, to avoid mixing or blurring these two realms. The origin of the one (creation) is distinct from the origin of the other (re-creation). The norms of the one (common, universal moral principles) are distinct from the norms of the other (special revelation, Scripture). The purpose or end of the one (temporal) is distinct from the purpose or end of the other (eternity). Living in these two kingdoms requires, accordingly, a dual ethic and a particular hierarchy of priorities.

When it comes to dealing with other believers, Christians experience a unity grounded in Christ, are bound to the norms of the gospel as revealed in Scripture, and together share in the hope of eternity. When dealing with unbelievers in the "common" realm, like, say, participating in PTA meetings or working on political campaigns or engaging in business negotiations, believers experience a unity with others grounded in creation (both parties are created in God's image), are bound to the common norms of natural law available to believer and unbeliever alike, and the parties together share in a modest this-worldly hope for a better life. "A two-kingdoms doctrine," writes David VanDrunen, "distinguishes what is uniquely 'Christian' from what is simply 'human' [...] Generally speaking, to be

'human' here and now means living in the common kingdom under the Noahic covenant. Christians share the life and activities of the common kingdom with all human beings. What differentiates them from the rest of humanity is their identification with the redemptive kingdom and all that that entails" (p.167). And so Christians should never confuse the two realms, what is merely "human" and what is uniquely "Christian." Particularly, since culture is a common kingdom phenomenon, it is illegitimate to speak of "redeeming" it. The language of grace, the vocabulary of the gospel, simply does not transfer or relate to the common order of creation. "Redeeming" or "transforming" culture is a category confusion, for it blatantly mixes the realms. Redemption only applies to the church, and cannot, by definition, apply to the common kingdom. The cultural realm is governed by general providence and natural law, and, since God allegedly designed it that way, it gets along quite fine on those terms. Christians have no warrant to appeal to or apply God's special revelation to common cultural tasks, nor to seek to transform or redeem culture by the gospel. So VanDrunen writes: "We would do well, I believe, to discard familiar mantras about 'transformation' and especially 'redemption.' Nowhere does Scripture call us to such grandiose tasks. They are human dreams rather than God-given obligations" (p.171).

Dissecting reality into Two Kingdoms is a huge project, as you might imagine, and there are a myriad of nuances and qualifications, as well as theological and ethical issues that, while I might wish, I simply cannot address here. Having given you that overview, I wish instead to focus on a single, recurring argument found in the works of David VanDrunen and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Michael Horton.

### **Argument From Cultural Homogeneity**

I am going to give you four lengthy quotations from Dr. VanDrunen's recent book, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*. This is risky in a lecture format, I realize, but I do it for two reasons. First, to demonstrate that this line of argument is pervasive. It is not an incidental, throw-away argument, as though the Two Kingdoms view could get along just fine without it. In fact, I have come to believe that this argument more than any other provides the plausibility of the Two Kingdoms model. Second, I want you to truly appreciate and feel the argument's tremendous rhetorical power.

VanDrunen writes:

[T]hough education, work, and politics are distinct activities that require their own separate analysis, they all involve the life of the common kingdom under the Noahic covenant and require Christians, to some degree or another, to work alongside unbelievers in pursuing them. Learning, working, and voting are not uniquely Christian tasks, but common tasks. Christians should always be distinguished from unbelievers *subjectively*: they do all things by faith in Christ and for his

glory. But as an *objective* matter, the standards of morality and excellence in the common kingdom are ordinarily the same for believers and unbelievers: they share these standards in common under God's authority in the covenant with Noah. (p.31)

Later in the book, he returns to this theme:

[T]he normative standards for cultural activities are, in general, not *distinctively* Christian. By this I mean that the moral requirements that we expect of Christians in cultural work are ordinarily the same moral requirements that we expect of non-Christians, and the standards of excellence for such work are the same for believers and unbelievers. If you have ever asked someone who promotes 'Christian' cultural activity what that Christian activity should look like, that person has probably said something like the following: Christians should be honest, just, hardworking, environmentally responsible, and respectful to authority. Christians should certainly act in these ways, as many statements in the Bible indicate. But perhaps you have also stopped to consider whether these characteristics are uniquely Christian. If we hire a non-Christian plumber to work in our home or hire a non-Christian employee at our shop, for example, would we expect the same sort of behavior from them? Undoubtedly we would! These characteristics are not unique Christian obligations but are universal human obligations [...] Through the Noahic covenant God holds all people accountable for being honest, just, hardworking, environmentally responsible, and respectful to authority. (p.168)

And again:

[T]he standards of excellence for cultural work are generally the same for believers and unbelievers. What constitutes excellence for the Christian engineer? Whether the bridge he designs holds up traffic. What constitutes excellence for the Christian plumber? Whether the pipes he fixes stop leaking [...] Activities such as building bridges and repairing broken pipes are general human activities, not uniquely Christian ones. Because God has upheld the natural order and sustained all human beings as his image-bearers through the Noahic covenant, these are activities of the common kingdom. (p.169)

And finally, in his concluding chapter:

[A] writer promotes a 'contemporary Christian perspective on business,' which promotes the principles of fair trading practices for workers, healthy local businesses, and Christian-run start-up businesses that 'lovingly serve the needs of fellow citizens.' [These] principles are admirable, but there is nothing distinctively 'new creation' or 'Christian' about [...] them. All of these principles are grounded in the present

created order and the terms of the Noahic covenant. The odds are good, in fact, that if you ask your unbelieving neighbor whether he believes in freedom, satisfaction of basic needs, ecological responsibility, fair trade, and healthy local businesses, he will heartily agree. (p.193-94)

Dr. Michael Horton has likewise been in the habit of making this particular argument. In a number of writings, he derides the notion that there is a "Christian" way of, say, plumbing. But it goes even further: "[D]o we really need Christian pop music for our entertainment or Christian cookbooks? Is there really a Christian method of making stir-fry?" (Horton, *Where in the World*, 196) That is certainly a humorous and very memorable way of making the argument.

And it is a powerful argument, indeed. For the sake of our discussion, I will call it the "Argument From Cultural Homogeneity." "Homogeneity" is just a fancy term meaning "sameness." There is a "sameness" about the norms and expectations for cultural pursuits among Christians and non-Christians. The normative standards and expectations for all sorts of cultural activities are the same *irrespective* of whether one is a Christian or not. On its face, the fact is nearly self-attesting. Look around! Non-Christians do the same cultural tasks as Christians, from engineering to plumbing to voting to running businesses to making stir-fry, and all of it with the same norms and expectations! There is, in fact, a widespread homogenous understanding of cultural norms and expectations among believers and non-believers. So far, one can hardly disagree. From this platform of cultural homogeneity, however, Horton and VanDrunen draw the conclusion that there is nothing distinctively Christian about cultural pursuits and that, therefore, efforts to "transform" culture are not only unbiblical, but superfluous. Why would we need to "transform" something on which everyone already agrees?

The argument can be broken down quite simply: (A) There is nothing distinctively "Christian" about cultural tasks because (B) there is widespread cultural homogeneity. And, finally: (C) This homogeneity is explained by, grounded in, or upheld by God's covenant with Noah.

It is this last item that I wish to address first. You may have noticed that in each and every quote from VanDrunen he included (C), a reference to God's covenant with Noah. Why? *Because without it the argument is no longer an argument.* Look at it again: (A) "There is nothing distinctively 'Christian' about cultural pursuits because (B) there is widespread cultural homogeneity." But what if I argue the other way around: (B) there is widespread homogeneity precisely because (A) Christians have historically been effective in transforming cultural norms and expectations? This is precisely the conclusion VanDrunen does not want readers to draw. So it is not enough for him to simply point to the fact of cultural homogeneity. He has to *account* for it. What *explains* the fact that believers and unbelievers seem to have the same norms and expectations for cultural activities? In order to conclude that there are no distinctively "Christian" cultural norms, then cultural homogeneity must be grounded in something *other*

*than Christian cultural norms.* Something else has to justify, explain, or "underwrite" the widespread agreement in cultural norms and expectations. In Two Kingdoms literature universally, without exception, that "something else" is God's covenant with Noah.

And a lot of effort is expended in making the Noahic covenant the ground for cultural homogeneity. Indeed, an entire biblical theology is woven to support this claim. The problem is, to put it bluntly, that God's covenant with Noah cannot possibly be the ground for the cultural homogeneity we see around us. In fact, the suggestion is nonsensical.

Think about it for a moment. What is the covenant with Noah all about? At its core, it is about stability and regularity. Never again will God destroy all living creatures with a flood. God promises that "as long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease" (Gen. 8:22). The refrain, "never again" is repeated three times (8:21; 9:11, 15). The sign of the rainbow will be an enduring sign of an "everlasting covenant" between God and all living creatures. In other words, the commitments God makes in this covenant are inalterable. God's promises simply cannot fail. God commits to never destroy the earth by a flood? Sure enough, he has made good on this promise. God commits to uphold the regularity and uniformity of nature? Sure enough, God has made good on this promise. The sun still rises and winter still follows autumn. Now let us ask: what if God promised that there will be widespread homogeneity of cultural norms and expectations among the human race? Given God's nature and the nature of the Noahic covenant, then there has been, in fact, widespread cultural homogeneity *since the time of Noah!*

Few suggestions can be more historically ignorant and empirically false. To state the blindingly obvious: the history of the human race is not a history of cultural homogeneity. It is nothing but the record of cultures in conflict, most often resulting in warfare, bloodshed, persecution, and slavery. Very simply, if God's promises cannot fail and yet human history displays to us cultural conflict instead of homogeneity, we should entertain the notion that God never promised cultural homogeneity. And, in fact, he never did. There is nothing whatsoever in the Noahic covenant that promises such a thing.

And here we find a clever (and perhaps unintentional) sleight-of-hand in the argument. VanDrunen rightly points to the fact that God establishes a normative moral law against murder in this covenant. Objectively speaking, God promises three times that he will "demand an accounting" for the taking of human life. This does, obviously, establish an objective moral standard that continues in perpetuity. But if you look closely, VanDrunen does not appeal to the Noahic covenant primarily to validate an *objective* standard that God will maintain (who would dispute that?), but rather to explain why different peoples *subjectively* share the same norms and expectations! He appeals to Genesis 9, in other words, to explain why your *neighbor* shares your cultural standards. But Genesis 9 says nothing whatsoever about whether your neighbor will understand God's moral

law. It only establishes that *God* will stand by his moral law. VanDrunen uses a morally *prescriptive* text to prove, he imagines, a morally *descriptive* point. But the prescriptive text of Genesis 9 does not explain (much less describe) cross-cultural moral homogeneity.

The Noahic covenant not only *does not* explain cultural homogeneity, it *cannot* explain cultural homogeneity. This is because the Noahic covenant promises above all else uniformity, and cultural homogeneity is simply not, to put it mildly, historically uniform. Once the Noahic covenant fails as a rationale for current cultural homogeneity, i.e., the purpose for which it is invoked in the first place, all that is left is begging the question. There is no need for "Christian" cultural distinctives; look around! Everybody shares the same norms and expectations! There is no need for the Polio vaccine; look around! *Nobody has Polio!*

### **The Christian Roots of (Current) Cultural Homogeneity**

Thus, the Two Kingdoms model for Christianity and culture begs the entire question. The fact that currently, in our present cultural location, there is widespread acknowledgment of norms and expectations regarding a wide array of cultural questions, (i.e., the reason why the "odds are good your neighbor will agree") needs a better explanation than terse, hand-waving references to the Noahic covenant. How did our cultural expectations get to be what they are? How and why is it that believers and non-believers alike, in our current place and time, to a large degree have come to share the values of personal integrity, responsibility, commitment to the rule of law, general respect for human life, and so forth? Our cultural homogeneity is notable not because it reveals a general principle traceable to the time of Noah, but because it is so patently the *exception*, not the rule, in human history. As I've indicated, Two Kingdoms advocates have no answer to this question beyond vague and fallacious appeals to Genesis 9. But the answer to the question is found precisely where Horton and VanDrunen dare not look: whatever measure of cultural homogeneity we see is the fruit of Christians promoting distinctively Christian cultural norms and expectations. I believe this is true with respect to any of the metrics used by Horton and VanDrunen, whether it be engineering, plumbing, economic and business standards, moral and judicial principles, and, yes, as we will see, even the standards governing stir-fry.

#### *Economics*

Take the economic marketplace: One would think, given the rhetoric of the Two Kingdoms model, that unbelievers with no knowledge of or reference to God's special revelation or Christian distinctives naturally understand and accept the need for honesty, trustworthiness, justice, fair trade, good-faith dealing, just weights and measures, and the respect of private property. Yet the world is filled with places where corruption, deceit, bribery, theft, and economic stagnation are the norm, not the exception. It behooves us to ask: what places?

Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto tells us what places, and helpfully tells us in the subtitle of his book: *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*. De Soto documents very carefully those regions of the world where economic productivity is stifled. Stifled, mind you, not by bad luck, lack of will power, or lack of resources. Stifled, rather, by government bureaucracies rife with corruption, graft, greed, an unwillingness to recognize and facilitate formal private property, and, of course, the host cultures that enable this dysfunction. He and his researchers undertook a massive experiment to buy property or open businesses in the world's most economically challenged areas and found them to not share (or at least not to have implemented) certain western economic values. The findings were uniformly poor in Third World and former communist countries. Places which have what, exactly, in common? It is not De Soto's purpose to notice, but that need not deter us: these are places where Christianity has had the least cultural influence globally. According to De Soto, capitalism's potential to bring economic prosperity only works in places where there is in place what he calls the "western legal property system." What an interesting phrase that is. There is a system of private property rights that brings incredible economic prosperity because of its basic principles of honesty, transparency, reliability, and accountability, but that system is strangely unique to that part of the world historically dominated by Christianity? That amazing fact is a doubtful coincidence.

Compare to VanDrunen's once-persuasive rhetorical appeal: "The odds are good, in fact, that if you ask your unbelieving neighbor whether he believes in freedom, satisfaction of basic needs, ecological responsibility, fair trade, and healthy local businesses, he will heartily agree" (p.194). No. Actually, outside of the Western world, the odds are not nearly so good.

### *Morality*

But surely everyone agrees that murder is wrong, right? That human life has intrinsic value, right? In individual liberty, right? One need not be influenced by Christian distinctives to believe those things, surely? Believing there is cultural homogeneity on these issues is willful blindness. Just in the last hundred years we have been witness to gigantic cultural movements where the exact opposite is championed. We ought to remember that Mao Tse-Tung termed his deadly societal cleansing the "*Cultural Revolution*." Germans called their various 20th century quests for global hegemony a *Kulturkampf*, or "Culture struggle." These movements were driven, in other words, by *cultural* norms and expectations antithetical to anything Christians could affirm. Where were these shared, "common," homogenous values then? Where were they in the Rwanda of the 1990s or the Sudan of the 2000s? "The odds are good," are they, that my neighbor will agree with me about the value of human life? My neighbor *where* and *when*? It behooves us to ask. The answer is: your neighbor in the quiet, leafy suburbs of the Western world today.

Similarly with other moral issues: Why is there widespread denunciation of slavery in the world today? Because cultures uninfluenced by Christianity, with no contact with God's special revelation, reflecting merely on the created order decided to reverse millennia of slave-trading practice? Hardly. It took a persevering Christian culture-warrior named William Wilberforce to infuse Western culture with its abhorrence of slavery.

### *Science & Engineering*

But those are moral issues. What about the more objective disciplines such as science or engineering? Surely there is nothing distinctively Christian about looking under microscopes or building bridges, is there?

Many good, scholarly arguments have been made (and I will not rehearse them here) that the only good explanation for the explosion of science and technology in the western world is Christianity's doctrine of Divine Providence and linear view of history. There is a reason science never flourished in the far East, in Asia, or in the Middle East. Science flourished where Christianity had the most influence. Again, a doubtful coincidence.

But what about those bridges and buildings? Surely there is widespread homogeneity about the normative standards governing engineering, right? Ask yourself: why is it that when massive earthquakes hit the United States of America, we speak of casualties (when and if there are any) in the single digits? Yet, in 1999, Turkey suffered an estimated 45,000 dead from a single earthquake. This happened in a highly industrialized part of the country where one would think good engineering would be a priority. An official Turkish investigation showed the death toll to be due primarily to poor engineering and construction. How can this be, if everyone agrees to the norms, standards, and ethics of engineering and construction? Or how about the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, which leveled the entire country and left a staggering 300,000 people dead? Where were the homogenous, generally-understood principles of engineering then? Somehow (again, perhaps just coincidentally) the quality of the standards of engineering seem to greatly improve the closer you get to the leafy suburbs of the modern Western world. "The odds are good," are they, that my unbelieving neighbor shares my concerns when it comes to building safety? Again, it behooves us to ask: my neighbor where and when?

### *Food*

But surely Dr. Horton has me on making stir-fry! There cannot possibly be a distinctively "Christian" way of preparing food, is there? I admit that it might sound silly. But it only sounds silly because Christian norms about food have so *permeated the western world that we simply no longer notice*. Think of it: can I prepare stir-fry for my Muslim neighbors with pork as the main protein? How about my Jewish neighbors? That would be what we would call a serious cultural *faux faux*. Maybe there is not so much cultural homogeneity about stir-fry, after all. What about my Hindu neighbors? Can I make beef stir-fry? Can I *flambé*

the stir-fry with cooking sherry or brandy if I'm having my Buddhist neighbors over for dinner? The answers are "no" and "probably too risky."

Dr. Horton's invocation of the sheer *freedom* involved in cooking, a fact so obvious it needs no explanation, actually betrays him. For there is essentially only one religious culture in the world that has no food regulations: Christianity. We rarely think of how profound that is. We take for granted that there is no "right way" to prepare food precisely because Jesus Christ declared all foods clean and his followers over the subsequent centuries culturally acted like it! The omnivores and foodies who both produce and watch the TV Food Network may not realize it, but their cultured taste is only celebrated because, by the influence of Christianity, in the western world *all foods are clean*. Food is not something about which there is widespread cultural homogeneity. So I beg to differ with Dr. Horton. In cultures uninfluenced by true *Christian* liberty, how you prepare your food can (quite literally) get you killed.

### **What Makes Privatism Possible? Cultural Amnesia**

What we have found, then, is that arguably the most powerful rhetorical argument for the Privatism of the Two Kingdoms model fails completely. Making breezy and confident appeals to the Noahic covenant to explain why the "odds are good" that my neighbor might share my cultural norms and expectations simply will not do. The Argument From Cultural Homogeneity is an exercise in begging the question. It is no more compelling than being against the Polio vaccine because, after all, nobody has Polio.

What makes anti-vaccination movements possible? Forgetfulness. Amnesia. The blessing of a vaccine can be its curse. It enables its beneficiaries to take their health so for granted that we find them arguing against the very thing that preserves their health.

The blessing of Christian cultural influence can also be a curse. For it enables its beneficiaries to take its resulting cultural homogeneity so for granted that we find them arguing against the very thing that provides it. The only thing that makes this sort of Privatism possible, or even plausible, is cultural amnesia. People with amnesia forget how they got to where they are.

It is time for Christians in the West to sober up and remember.