

Engaging with our Culture

Renewing our Calling to Share the Gospel

The Shape of Discipleship

- Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. (Matt 16.23-25)
- You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. (Matt 10.22-23)
- The time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. (John 16.2-3)

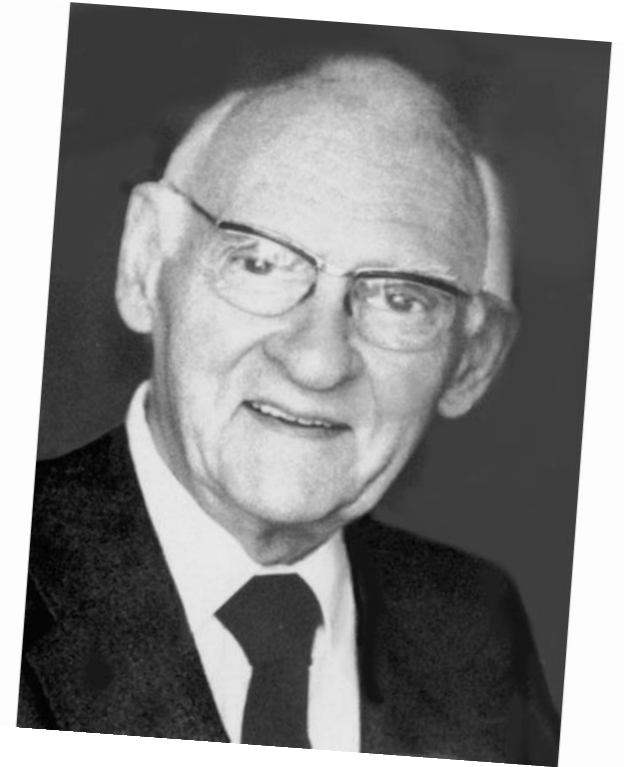
The Shape of Discipleship

- I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death (Phil 3.10)
- Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. (2 Thess 1.4-5)
- Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. (2 Tim 1.8)

The call to martyrdom

"Persecution constitutes the normal condition of the church in her relation to the world, and martyrdom is the normal condition of the professed Christian."

Hans Urs von Balthasar – The Moment of Christian Witness



Why were the Martyrs valued?

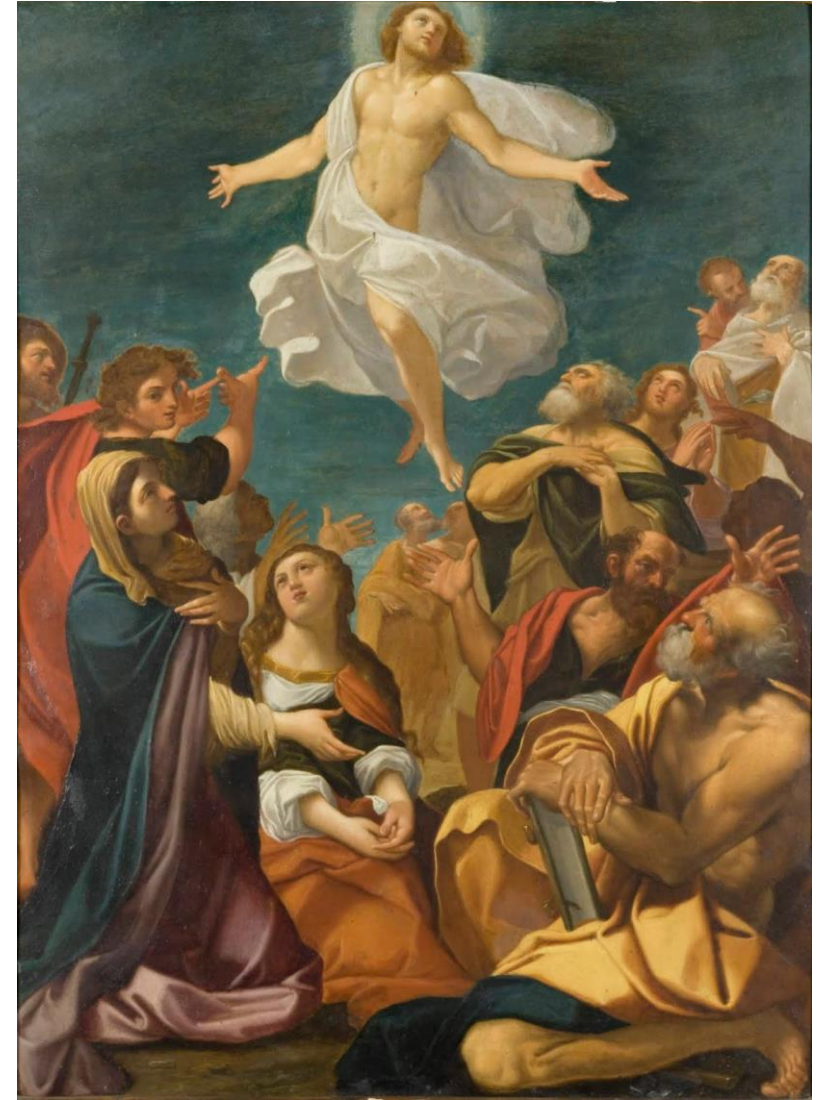
*For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has
been thrown down,
who accuses them day and night before our God.
But they have conquered him by the blood of the
Lamb
and by the word of their testimony (marturion)
**for they did not cling to life even in the face of
death.***

Revelation 12:10-11




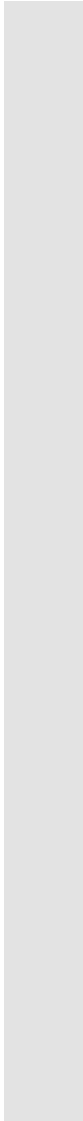
The Last Words of Jesus?

- “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1.8)



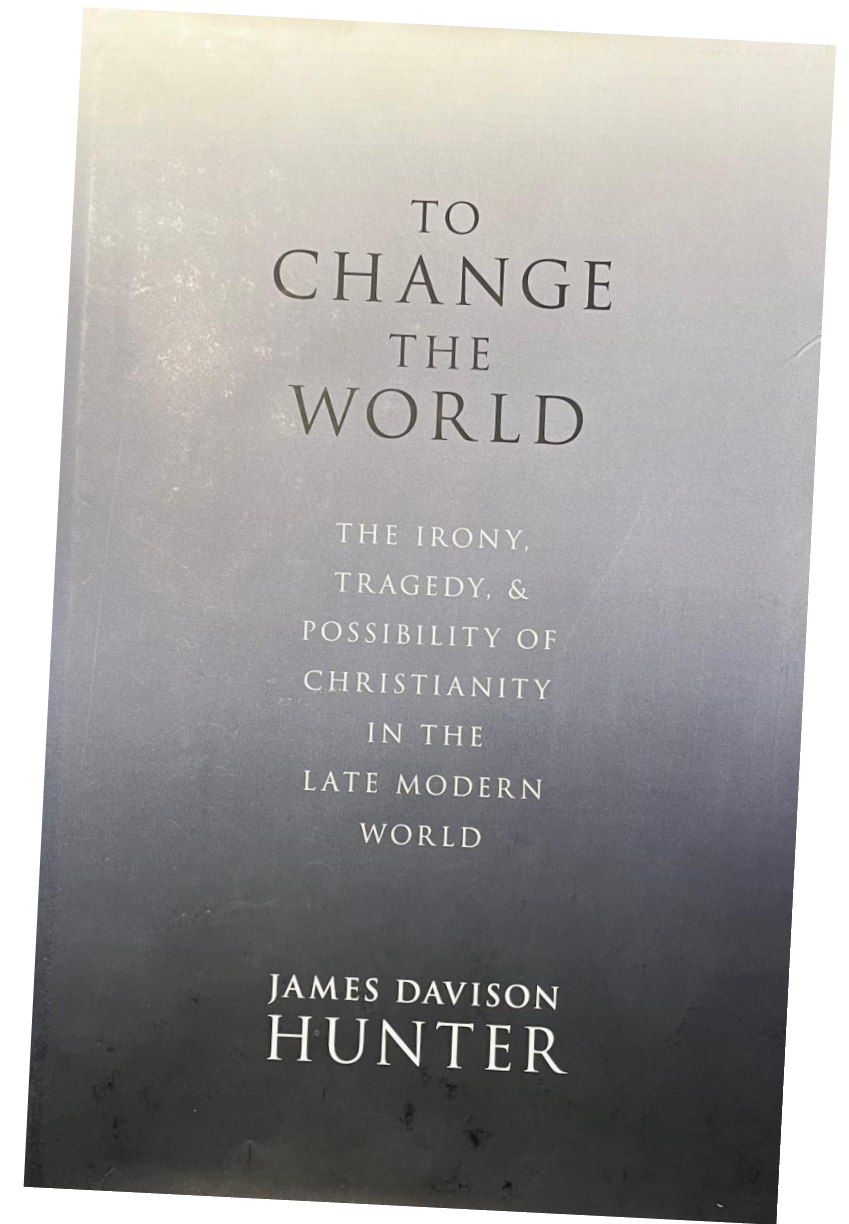
THE PRIMARY
POSTURE OF THE
CHURCH TOWARDS
THE WORLD IS
THAT OF
WITNESS




- 
- 
- Scepticism about Truth
 - A Re-Positioned Church



It is essential to abandon altogether talk of 'redeeming the culture', 'advancing the kingdom', 'transforming the world'... Christians need to leave such language behind them because it carries too much weight. It implies conquest, takeover, or dominion which in my view is precisely what God does not call us to pursue at least not in any conventional 20th or 21st century way of understanding these terms."
James Davison Hunter: *To Change the World*



- 
- 
- Scepticism about Truth
 - A Re-Positioned Church
 - The Power of Story

2 Corinthians 4

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

2 Corinthians 4

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

1. Witness is CHRIST-FOCUSED

“We do not proclaim ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord...”

We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”



Helmut Thielicke

“I can be a credible letter from God only when I do not hide my deficiencies and reluctance, my weaknesses as an earthen vessel, my own smallness of faith. By my admission of all this I truly praised the goodness of the God who does not let me go.”





TELL THE STORY OF
CHRIST IN YOU

2. Witness is CRITICAL

- *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

3. Witness is
CRITICAL



James KA
Smith

- *“We should be asking what vision of human flourishing is implicit in this or that practise? What does the good life look like as embedded in cultural rituals? What sort of person will I become after being immersed in this or that cultural liturgy?”*



CULTURAL LITURGIES
VOLUME 3

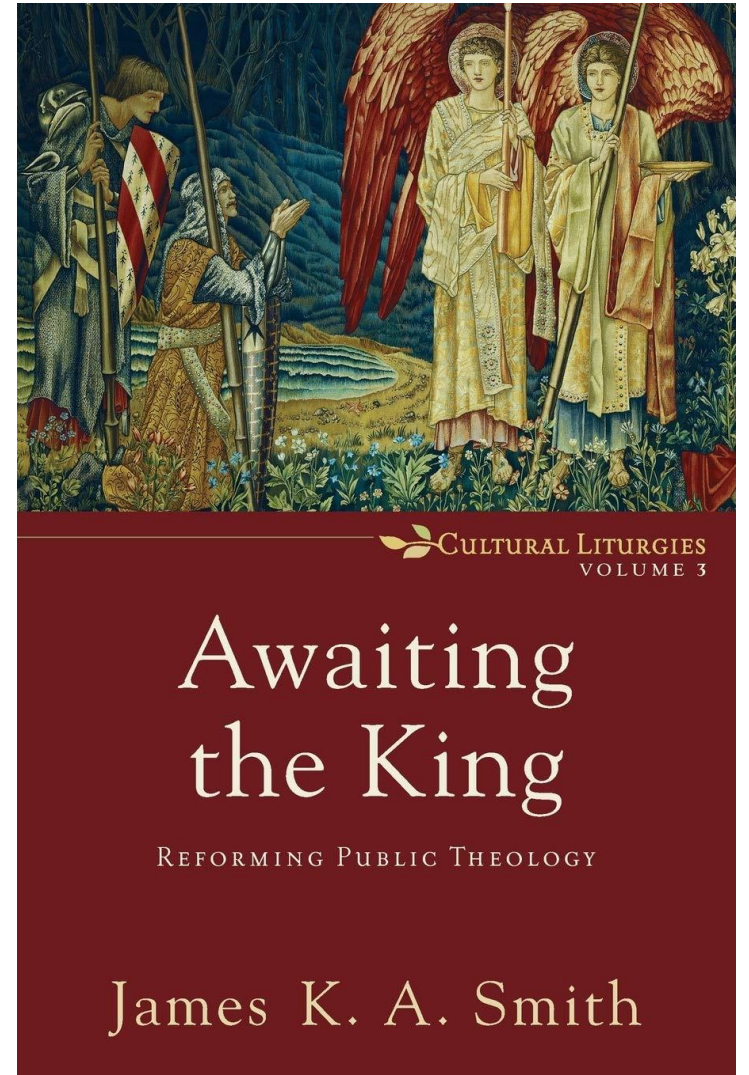
Awaiting the King

REFORMING PUBLIC THEOLOGY

James K. A. Smith

James KA
Smith

- “It is precisely when your ultimate conviction is that there is no eternal that you're most prone to absolutize the temporal.”



The early church and idolatry

"The duty of keeping oneself free from all contamination with polytheism ranked as the supreme duty of the Christian... exclusiveness was the condition of her existence as a church. If she made terms with polytheism at a single point, it was all over with her distinctive character."

Adolf von Harnack.



READ THE STORY YOUR
CULTURE TELLS

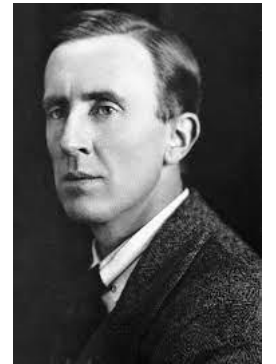
UNDERSTAND
THE STORY
YOUR CULTURE
TELLS

1. What does it want me to become?
2. What are the objects of ultimate value?
3. What is its vision of a successful human life?
4. How is it shaping me and others?

3. Witness is CREATIVE

“We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

2. Britain in the 1940s







LOOK AT THE SEEN IN THE
LIGHT OF THE UNSEEN

CENTRE FOR CULTURAL WITNESS

Christian perspectives on just about everything.

Subscribe now

SEEN & UNSEEN

Search



Self-belief: what Ted and Taylor get wrong Roger Bretherton

Psychologist Roger Bretherton questions whether believing in

www.seenandunseen.com/...what culture icons might



A peacemaker's guide to keeping hope alive Todd Deatherage

Amid continuing despair around the Israel-Hamas war, former diplomat Todd Deatherage

11 December 2023

6 min read

Article

Creed



The moral machine: algorithms that give a window into the soul



The image features a white background with two large, solid orange shapes. On the left, there is a trapezoidal shape that tapers towards the top. On the right, there is a larger trapezoidal shape that tapers towards the bottom. Centered between these two shapes is the text "OFFER SOMETHING INEXPLICABLE" in a dark gray, sans-serif font, arranged in two lines.

OFFER SOMETHING
INEXPLICABLE

4. Witness is COSTLY

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

SO...

Learning to:

1. Tell the story of Christ in you
2. Read the story your culture tells
3. Open your eyes to the Unseen
4. Offer something Inexplicable