

The Danger of the Seven Mountains Mandate & Dominionism

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It is vital that the church remembers its mission in the world. In Ephesians where all the 'weapons of our warfare' are listed, our mission is described as 'shoes for our feet'. It says, "... *as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.*" (Ephesians 6:15, ESV). Our feet carry us where we are going, which represents purpose. When we forget where we are going, we become vulnerable to the schemes of Satan who is always trying to make the church ineffective. Unfortunately, many Christians lose their sense of purpose and begin to busy themselves with futile aims. I would like to highlight just one of those dead ends which has become very popular in many Christian circles. It has come to be known as 'dominionism'.

What is Dominionism?

Dominionism aims to 'Christianise' the world through two main strategies. Firstly, it aims to take on the spiritual strongholds which are held by powerful demons through spiritual warfare. Secondly, it aims to spread Christian values throughout society by seizing key societal 'mountains'. This goal of influencing society through these key 'mountains' or 'spheres' is sometimes referred to as the 'Seven Mountains Mandate'. The seven mountains are: Education, Religion, Family, Business, Government, Arts, and the Media. The theory goes that as Christians enter these spheres, they 'take dominion' as 'kings' (Revelation 1:6) in the marketplace. Through God's favour, they can then begin to gain influence and collectively win back that 'mountain' for God. As Christians gain dominance in these key areas in society, they can then go on to influence the whole of society for good and re-introduce Judeo-Christian values.

Why is Dominionism a Vain Pursuit?

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It is a very noble and biblical desire to want to save people in every sector of society, this is after all the Great Commission, but for what purpose? If our purpose in converting key influencers is to try and 'Christianise' society without spreading the gospel, we are putting the cart before the horse. Christian values cannot come before people are 'born again'. This has been tried before in the 'Christian' Roman empire as well as the 'Christian' British empire and the result looked nothing like the true Kingdom of God! The goal of the church is not to 'Christianise' the world, but to preach the gospel, which has the power to bring about true change through rebirth. There are no shortcuts! The kingdom doesn't come through external influence but through internal transformation by the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is also naïve to believe that Christians can influence society for good because it neglects the nature of the clashing kingdoms. Those in the kingdom of darkness are controlled by Satan; they are slaves to sin. They need a Saviour. Those in the kingdom of light are controlled by Christ and are empowered by grace to live a life of righteousness. To use an analogy of Jesus', a good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree can do no other than produce bad fruit. Good trees cannot 'influence' bad trees to produce good fruit.

What are the Dangers of Dominionism?

God's intention was that Christian communities would model something different to the world. In the same way that the nation of Israel was supposed to model to other nations what it looks like to enjoy God's rulership and blessing, the church should stir the world to envy when they witness the 'righteousness, peace and joy' found in the kingdom. In order to achieve this, we need to have healthy, pure churches that reflect the glory of God. However, if the church loses its purpose and invests all its efforts and resources into influencing society, the church will become weak and ineffective in its true purpose.

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What is the Biblical Precedent?

There are many Scriptures which are appropriated to support Dominionism, such as the exhortation to be 'salt and light', but we need to interpret those instructions in the light of how the early church lived them out. If Jesus' intention was to take dominion of the seven mountains, then why did He choose tax collectors, prostitutes and fishermen as His early witnesses? Surely He should have chosen the influencers in that society to achieve maximum impact? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 (ESV) "*For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are ...*"

In fact, as we read through the New Testament, there is no indication whatsoever that we should prioritise taking dominion of key spheres of influence. Neither is there any exhortation to transform society using positions of influence. In fact, the notion of trying to 'Christianise' a society without first making them Christians is actually quite foreign.

What Should We Be Doing?

It is true that in the marketplace we should be living such righteous lives that people would see our good deeds and 'glorify our Father in heaven'. We should also be sharing the gospel with our colleagues with every opportunity we get. This is what it means to be salt and light. We also have a responsibility to be a 'city on a hill', which means that our church communities should reflect God's kingdom. This requires our full devotion today, as it did in the early church (Acts 2:42-47), because relationships take work and love must be perfected in us. It is not enough to 'shine' as individuals. God's kingdom is a community; we are required to reflect Him to the world corporately as much as we do individually.

Many people accuse the church of focusing too much on itself to the neglect of the world. This accusation is sometimes warranted, but we cannot neglect the fact that the church is the vehicle which God has chosen to administer the medicine of the gospel to a very sick world. If the church is sick and neglected, the medicine will never get to those who need it.

For another excellent article along similar lines, read Richard van de Ruit's article [**The War on Culture**](#).