

Author's Note: The following is a letter I received from a former colleague in the Moral Government (MG) movement. I saved it these many years because I thought it was a classic representation of the pietist ideology of Evangelical Christianity. The red print are my responses to his statements.

June 3, 1983

Notice that this was written exactly 40 years ago.

Magic Valley
Evangelical Free Church
Jerome, Idaho 83338

Dear James,

I just received your latest paper. It is always interesting to me to see what kind of an impact those who have studied with Gordon Olson are having on the world. I have to confess that I am greatly disappointed in your endeavors. I would think that those who have a good understanding of God's moral government would not be tempted to jump on the bandwagon of civil religion.

[Evidently, at this point, he would have read *Separatist Papers 1 & 2* and *Separatist Review 1 & 2*. Subjects covered would have been "A Metaphysics for Christian Separatism" (on the philosophical impact of the Trinitarian doctrine on social order), a modified and expanded version of Olson's famous "Kingdom Chart" to include law spheres, such as family, church, and state governments (SP#2), my inaugural article, "The Return of the Pilgrims," and R.J. Thiry's two articles, "The Election Year Blues" and "Christian Reconstruction & County Politics," with update by me on "The Battle for Christian Education in Wyoming." Thiry's disussion on the lesser magistrate and the doctrine of interposition was a hot topic at the time in many Christian circles.]

Your writing is filled with a fighting spirit, rather than Christ's willing spirit to surrender up his life for the salvation of the world. I cannot detect any real desire to reach out and salvage as many of lost mankind as possible. Rather, it appears that you are trying to establish your own little kingdom here on earth. If you are trying to establish your own independent Christian system you have come to the right place, for the West is full of stubborn, independent thinking people.

[Obviously, at this point in his ministry, he was completely removed from the legal and political battles for Christian schools and home education. He had no clue that people were being jailed for the liberty of Christian education. And as you would know, I had been heavily involved in that contest. How can you "reach out" to "lost mankind" when you are denied access to the public square? Such statements represent a total disconnect to what was happening in the real world at the time.]

It is really too bad that some of you young gentlemen did not take my advice in Illiniois and go to school so you would

have something to teach people. Your writing shows that you are espousing a very narrow view of Christian philosophy mixing a pinch of Moral Government, a little Calvinist political theory, the spirit of Bob Jones University and a distrust for any authority.

[He was a graduate from Trinity Theological Seminary. He was very proud of that achievement. But he obviously did not know me very well personally. Otherwise, he would have known that I completed a graduate program of my own that was required for me to be a licensed minister in my denomination. My formal education involved five years of academic study. His reference to Bob Jones University is curious because BJU was in controversy at the time over its prohibition of interracial dating (but see his contradiction below) and I have never been affiliated with that organization.

You have boiled down eschatology into two camps (models) leaving out a great many evangelicals who would fit neither model. You have chosen postmillennialism as the doctrine for your fellowship of separatists. I guess you have chosen the right name for your group as you have separated yourself from myself and Gordon Olson as we are both Premillennialists. Since I am not a separatist I can fellowship with anyone of any eschatology.

[He is right: Olson, Conn and virtually all 20th Century advocates of MG were and are premillennialists. But in contrast, virtually all 19th Century MG theologians (e.g. Finney) were postmillennialists. That was my point of contention: Olson did not complete his archeological recovery of Moral Government theology because he did not embrace postmillennialism. As of the date on Davis' letter, he would have known of my postmillennial views, either from reading my paper, "Hope for Tomorrow" or from personal conversations with my former colleagues in Rockford, not from any Separatist Papers on the topic, which came later.]

Your discussion on the cultural mandate sounds like something out of the World Council of Church's or the NCC's program to combat Racism. Your definition of separatism is certainly not Biblical, nor does it fit my understanding of Moral Government. But I realize that I have only studied Moral Government for 10 years.

[Do you see the contradiction here? Above I'm a racist because I sound like I'm from Bob Jones University, but here I am a liberal and combating racism because I sound like the World Council of Churches.]

I say these things not just because I am concerned with you and your ministry, but I am more concerned with the public viewing your Paper as a representative of Moral Government which it does not and of equating your philosophy with G. O. [Gordon Olson] which they are far apart.

[He thinks that I am a public embarrassment.]

Lastly I am concerned that any doctrine of civil religion equates the kingdom of God with something far less in comparison and distracts people away from true involvement in the real kingdom.

[For Evangelical pietists, which he surely is, "the kingdom" is an internal projection. Various acts of charity, prayers, and "soul-winning" constitute the work of the kingdom. Being a kind and gentle person would be the summation of their

ethical system. The notion that society should receive any authoritative guidance from the Mosaic Law is anathema to such people.]

Please feel free to write to me about any of these things. I want to be of service to you also as I am to Jesus.

[I never responded to this letter and never sent him any more of my publications. I was too busy to be drawn into a lengthy and fruitless debate, as many seminary-trained ministers are fond of. As a movement, the reader should know that Evangelicalism is as much waste of time as any other version of Churchianity: Catholicism, Mormonism, and so on.]

Yours in Christ

Randall Davis

[If you look up Rev. Davis on the internet, it will tell you that he has had a long career in the Boise area, has formed a day school - the benefits of the "battle" for religious freedom which he so despised - and a theological institute. In short, he has followed the "Christian Worldview" institutional model which has been copied throughout the country: providing specialists to home schoolers, especially libraries, night classes for "worldview" training of adults, and collegiate level institutes for home schoolers who do not want to go to expensive colleges. It will be interesting to see if he ever writes to me again.]