

LETTER 89
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THE CULTURAL MANDATE

I have always felt grateful to God that He laid it upon your heart to come over to this country and to help us here in inculcating Christian ideas and Christian attitudes in the minds of our students. How we need Christian warriors today who will stand foursquare for the Gospel, and put their full emphasis upon the Word of God, putting all their emphasis where the Scripture puts it, and standing for the whole counsel of God, rather than for human ideas or conclusions derived from isolated verses.

So far as Genesis 1:28 is concerned, if there were any reason to think that it is a command resting upon all Christians, surely Calvin would have seen it. Yet he has not the slightest suggestion of any such thing in his Commentary, nor can I find any evidence that the Westminster divines had any such idea about its interpretation. I have looked at all the chapters of the Westminster Confession, and all the questions in the Larger Catechism that you mentioned, and find much in them about Adam's responsibility to fulfill the moral law, but nothing at all about any cultural mandate.

We are all fallible human beings, I perhaps more than most. I am thrilled at the presentation in your paper of the great privilege the Christian has in enjoying all the good things that God has put into His world. If there was in it an implication that advancing human culture was in some way to be put on a level with advancing the knowledge of Christ and repulsing the forces of apostasy I overlooked it. I see from your letter that there are a few phrases that could have been taken in this sense. It impresses upon me all the more that we must not look to human beings or human wisdom for our ideas, but to the Word of God alone. The more I look at Genesis 1:28 the more I am convinced that it is not in any sense a cultural command or a cultural mandate, but rather a declaration of the privilege that God gave to unfallen man of having dominion over birds, fish and snakes, and that a similar privilege will be ours in the New Jerusalem. May God hasten that day!