

*The Christian World View of
Art and Communication*

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Contents

What is the Coalition on Revival?	4
About the 17 World View (Sphere) Documents	4
Preface	5
The Premise	5
Problems	6
Biblical Solutions	6
Statements of Affirmation and Denial	7
A Call to Action in Art and Communication	10
General Actions	10
Specific Actions	11
Conclusion	12

What is the Coalition on Revival?

The Coalition on Revival is a network of evangelical leaders from every major denominational and theological perspective who share a vision for and a commitment to revival, renewal, and reformation in Church and society in America.

People of Anabaptist, Arminian, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Wesleyan denominational backgrounds are all represented among COR's leaders. Pre-, a-, and post-millennialists are cooperating with each other, sharing the exciting task of getting God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven insofar as that is possible between now and whenever Christ comes back to Earth. Charismatics and non-charismatics, covenant and dispensationalist theologians, have joined arm in arm in prayer and hard work to see revival, renewal, and reformation in the Christian Church and the American culture.

COR's vision is to see Christians everywhere doing all they can in the power of the Holy Spirit to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), in every aspect of life. Toward that end, we have developed a series of worldview documents that set forth what we believe are the fundamental and essential points of the total Christian world and life view. The COR worldview documents state what we believe are the biblical principles for all spheres of human life including theology, evangelism, discipleship, law, civil governments, economics, education, family, medicine, psychology and counseling, arts and media, business and professions, and science and technology. We believe that the COR worldview documents state where the entire Church must stand and what action it must take to accomplish its task in the remaining years of the Twentieth Century and on into the next century.

COR steering committee members from all walks of life were joined by many hundreds of other interested Christian scholars, pastors, and laymen in developing the COR documents during many series of workshops and conventions. Each document therefore, reflects input from theologians, philosophers, professionals in their respective fields, pastors, and lay Christians. We have sought to avoid denominational and theological bias in the documents; our aim has been to focus on principles so fundamental that we are convinced no Bible-believing Christian who studied the major questions related to each sphere of life would come to a contradictory conclusion.

COR views itself as a "Bible obedience, holiness movement" that crosses denominational and theological lines. The next step on its agenda, now that its basic documents are complete, is to disseminate them widely and to educate hundreds of thousands of Christians on how to make Christ Lord of absolutely every aspect of life. We plan to do that through publications, and through seminars, and training workshops in the major cities of America and Canada. COR will also work in cooperation with other Christian networking groups to help unify the pastors in major population centers around the vision of mobilizing their people to "Get God's will done in their city as it is in heaven" to whatever degree that is possible before the return of Christ. We believe America can be turned around and once again function as a Christian nation as it did in its earlier years. We believe that wherever the pastors of any city in the world join together in unity to make Christ Lord of every sphere of life, and, with Spirit led strategy, mobilize their people into a unified spiritual army; that city can and will become "a city set upon a hill" and be "a place where righteousness dwells."

About the 17 World View (Sphere) Documents

COR developed the 17 World View Documents, which set forth what we believe are fundamental and essential Biblical principles governing 17 major areas or *spheres* of human life and activity: law, government, economics, business and professions, education, art and media, medicine, science and technology, psychology and counseling, Christian unity, local and world evangelism, discipleship, helping the hurting, educating Christians about social and political moral issues, revitalizing Christian colleges and seminaries, marriage and the family, and pastoral renewal. These documents offer Christian leaders concise and comprehensive Biblical principles of how to apply the Truth of the Bible to all spheres of life and ministry. Each document includes short, creed-like statements of affirmation and denial that we believe state non-negotiable Biblical truths for that sphere of reality.

The 17 World View Documents were developed within 17 different committees made up of leaders with experience and expertise in the 17 different fields over an intensive three-year period of dialogue, critique, editing, and finally, a consensus conviction. Sixty of COR's National Steering Committee members with over 300 other theologians, pastors, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, and Christian workers made up the 17 committees. COR sends forth these documents to the Church at large with the prayer that they may be used by God's Spirit to get God's will done on earth, as it is in heaven—to whatever degree that is possible prior to the Return of Christ.

Preface

The Premise

“In the beginning God created,” and “In the beginning was the Word.” God is the Author of creation and communication. As the supreme Creator and Communicator, He is the Source of art and communication.

God has given all authority in heaven and on earth to His Son, Jesus Christ. Since Jesus Christ is entitled to have lordship over all areas of life, Christians must bring all art and communication under His authority.

Art and communication are part of God’s created order. They cannot be labeled Christian or un-Christian. However, they can be used for good or evil.

Art and communication are neither synonymous nor mutually exclusive functions in God’s economy. Communication is the act of sharing thoughts, ideas, information, and needs. The arts, whether or not they communicate, are expressions of God’s creativity manifested through man.

Man, created in the image of God, has the capacity to create and communicate. Therefore, all artistic endeavor and communications involve more than technical skills. Their intended purpose is to glorify God. To accomplish this, all art and communication must be brought into captivity to the mind of Christ.

Christ is the standard of excellence. “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men . . .” (Colossians 3:23). Within the framework of that excellence, art and communication should reflect the highest quality of creative work possible given the resources available. Since all abilities are God-given, we can achieve excellence when we submit them to the lordship of Jesus Christ and the guidance of God. This guidance comes from communication with God through prayer, study of His Word written, and other Biblical disciplines vital to being a Christian.

Art and communication have a great influence on society in shaping man’s view of reality. A career in these fields should be considered a worthy vocation. To achieve such a career, Christians should discern and develop their God-given talents.

It is legitimate for Christians to engage in art and communication without the need to include overt Christian symbolism or content. A Christian may participate in any area of art and communication as long as he submits himself to the lordship of Jesus Christ in accordance with His Word written, and acts in the conviction of faith, for “without faith it is impossible to please [God]” (Hebrews 11:6).

Problems

As a result of his fallen condition, man is predisposed to misuse his artistic and communicative abilities. This misuse has undermined and contradicted man's understanding of God's creation and His Word, thus serving the cause of the Adversary.

Christians have at times rejected art or limited it to mere means of communication, thus failing to appreciate artistic creation and its Divine Source. They have often surrendered the fields of communications to those whose views contradict the Bible. Furthermore, they have at times failed to strive for excellence in their art and communication. Moreover, value in art and communication has been judged too often in purely financial or utilitarian terms.

Some Christians have been predisposed to be unnecessarily combative in their relationships with those in communications. This inhibits not only our ability to function properly in the communications media, but also our ability to witness in love to those in communications.

Biblical Solutions

Everything is to be brought under the headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9,10). Art may be used in a symbolic manner (Numbers 21:8). Art answers men's God-given desire for beauty (Exodus 28:40b). Art may be a vocation from God (Exodus 35:30,33). Art should not be worshiped or served (Romans 1:25).

Art and communication glorifying God should be done with excellence. In the pursuit of that excellence, guided by His Spirit and Word, Christians may employ artists and communicators who do not subscribe to a Biblical world view, in the production of a work produced under the authority of Jesus Christ.

Christians in art and communication are to strive to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). They are to be seekers, presenters, and followers of the One who is Truth. They are to be virtuous, honest, fair, creative, humble, and diligent. They must learn the language and grammar of each medium in order to communicate well. Where appropriate, Christians may use the full range of tools and devices available to each genre and medium, such as: drama, allegory, symbolism, metaphor, comedy, fantasy, myth, color, form, and rhythm.

Christians in art and communication,¹ as elsewhere, are to be "in the world but not of the world." They are to be ambassadors for the Kingdom of God, filled with the Spirit of God, to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13,14).

Christians should acknowledge that non-Christians, having the image of God within them, can produce works that affirm God's creation. Also, Christians should speak out when those in the arts and communication are inaccurate, unfair, or irreverent. The basis of their criticism should be Truth — not whether a work reflects favorably or unfavorably on Christians.

1. We recognize that some people understand "the media" to be both the act and the means of communicating through television, newspapers, etc. In fact, the media are the various means of communication and artistic expression, such as television, books, periodicals, dance, music, etc.

Statements of Affirmation and Denial

1. We affirm that God is the Creator and Author of all creative abilities.

We deny that art and communication originated in Satanic or human powers.

2. We reaffirm that the purpose of art and communication is to glorify God.

We deny that the purpose of art and communication is to glorify man or any other part of Creation above God.

3. We affirm that communication and art are legitimate spheres of life recognized by the Word of God and available to all Christians for edification and enjoyment.

We deny that art and communication are to be considered less or more important than other occupations in the Church.

4. We affirm the primacy of the artist over his art and the personal over the impersonal, since the person is always more important than his art.

We deny any tendency to worship art or make art or communication into an idol.

5. We affirm the responsibility and accountability of the artist and communicator in all creative expression and works of art.

We deny any theory that would undermine or minimize the responsibility of the artist and communicator in his role.

6. We affirm the role of the artist and place of art as basic to the enhancement of life, the edification of the Church, and the proclamation of the Gospel to all men, however educated, no matter what their culture.

We deny that the Church should limit the use of art and communication exclusively to the proclaiming of the Gospel in an effort to save the lost, although this is an important part of communication.

7. We affirm that art needs no other justification than that enunciated by the Word of God and confirmed by His Spirit.

We deny that art must have a utilitarian purpose or a justification to the autonomous reason of man.

8. We affirm that art from a Biblical world view has meaning because God gives meaning to all of life.

9. We affirm the need for excellence and the development of technique in the media and art.

We deny justification for the production of cheap, shoddy art and the avoidance of training and discipline, which are essential to quality art.

10. We affirm that there should be no compromise, no retreat, and no excuses with respect to our communication as Christians.

11. We affirm that those in art and communication are entitled to compensation commensurate with their professional skills and levels of responsibility (Luke 10:7). We also affirm the right of Christians in art and communication, as elsewhere, to prosper as God grants.

We deny that the Church should expect artists and communicators to serve *gratis pro deo*.

12. We affirm the manifold variety of artistic forms referred to in Scripture that are available for serious endeavor in expressing a Biblical world view.

We deny that certain art forms by nature are unbiblical unless clear evidence for censure can be found in the whole counsel of Scripture.

13. We affirm the responsibility of artists and communicators to impart their craft to the next generation, nurturing them in artistic excellence and integrity, in accordance with Scripture (Exodus 35:30-34).

14. We affirm that the integrity and motives of the artist are as important as the work of the artist, whether or not they are clearly displayed therein.

15. We affirm the restorative calling of the Church to recognize and encourage those who seem to have a mandate or calling in art and communication.

16. We affirm that the Church has a special responsibility to show mercy and compassion to the traveling artist and communicator.

We deny any attempt to refuse fellowship to a Christian on the basis of his mandate or calling in art or communication.

17. We affirm that the primary concern of the local church in the life of the artist or communicator is to nurture and disciple him.

We deny that the primary concern of the local church body and leadership in the life of the artist and communicator should be his work.

18. We affirm that the fields of art and communication, including education in those fields, are authentic mission fields of the Body of Christ.

19. We affirm the importance of the skilled artist and communicator in the daily life of the Body of Christ.

We further affirm that the Church should actively seek to develop the creative skills that lie within people.

20. We affirm that the local church body should exercise wisdom and discernment in supporting artists and communicators.

We deny that the Church should be subject to fads, fashions, or trends in art and communication, especially those that seek to entice Christian support solely on the basis of “code words” and themes.

21. We affirm that it is crucial for Christians to express Biblical values through the media of communication.

We deny that absence of Biblical thought is neutrality, especially with respect to the media of communication.

22. We further affirm that a free press is necessary as a bastion against corruption in a free society to honestly inform and record both good and bad.

We deny, however, that the media of communication are above scrutiny.

23. We affirm that Christians in communications must resist the temptation to suppress information that ought to be made public, and that Christians should also exercise integrity in deciding whether and when to release information.

We deny that there are Biblical justifications for censorship of the truth; although evil, blasphemy, profanity, and pornography are neither truth nor legitimate speech and must be rebuked and censored.

24. We affirm that reporters should strive for objectivity, accuracy, and completeness in reporting since there is a distinction between reporting and editorializing; that reporting emphasizes the objective presentation of facts and minimizes opinion and persuasion; that editorializing emphasizes perspective, opinion, and persuasion; and that the news media must maintain this distinction and tell their audiences which form of communication they are using.

We deny that reporters should twist facts, convey falsehoods, or manipulate facts to engineer conclusions.

25. We affirm that Christians must use discernment when reading, listening to, or viewing the news media, and that they must beware inherent biases in reporters, all of whom necessarily are limited in their world views.

We deny that Christians ought to accept any news report at face value without exercising discernment and wisdom.

26. We affirm that the Church and individual Christians must censor and rebuke all forms of blasphemy and pornography as idolatrous, ungodly, anti-human, anti-Biblical evils.

We deny that any pornography and other blasphemy are permissible as art or “free speech.”

27. We affirm that restoration of art and communication to Christianity is a Biblical mandate (1 Corinthians 10:31).

We deny that art and communication can continue to be ignored or discounted by Christians without detriment to the Body of Christ and its influence in the world.

A Call to Action in Art and Communication

General Actions

Because of the preceding convictions, we call upon all men and women who name Christ as their personal Savior and Lord to join us in:

1. examining earnestly these affirmations and denials in the light of God's Word to see if they are true, and informing us directly of those points in which they believe we have departed from Scripture or logic;
2. re-examining our own theories and practices in art and communication and asking God to show us where we are falling short;
3. repenting of all known sins, confessing and forsaking them, asking forgiveness both of God Himself and of all those who have been offended, and then making all possible restitution;
4. praying for God to fill all of His people with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit in order that we may bring our personal lives and our theories and practice in arts and communication into closer conformity to His revealed will on a permanent and consistent basis;
5. seeking guidance from our brethren and local church authorities as to how we can mutually support and influence one another to make our arts and communication practices glorifying to God.

Having dealt with our own personal sins and failures, and placing ourselves accountable to the Bible and to the brethren, we now commit ourselves to:

1. praying and studying God's written Word;
2. influencing any known Christians or Christian associations with whom we work to consider seriously our affirmations and denials with the goal of enlisting their responses;
3. influencing those in the fields of art and communication who agree with our affirmations and denials to implement these proposals in their work;
4. mobilizing and networking our Christian resources and working in concert with the other professional spheres both inside and outside COR, to see the behavior of the Body of Christ and our nation changed to approximate more closely the view of reality and morality presented to us in the Holy Scriptures;
5. taking responsibility for our actions of word and deed, so that we will conduct ourselves in a manner pleasing to God, acting as ambassadors of His good will and bearers of His Good News.

Specific Actions

To these ends we commit ourselves to the following specific actions:

1. With respect to art, Christians must create art and artifacts under the headship of Christ to His honor and glory. This call to create does not mean that we should treat the arts as another medium of communication. Rather, we are to create art and artifacts in the joyful knowledge that we have been created in God's image, redeemed by His blood, and made a part of His Body and co-heirs of His Kingdom.

In the tabernacle in the wilderness, Moses was instructed concerning the priests' clothing to make them "for glory and for beauty" (Exodus 28:40b).

2. With respect to communications, Christians should proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to mankind through all the media of communication, when appropriate. We must be careful and diligent to apply ourselves to each medium of communication in order to determine how best to proclaim Jesus and His salvation. We must place His message in context so that we will be heard, and we must never compromise that message.
3. Imitation of the world's media of communication and art forms is not enough; Christian artists and communicators must reclaim the impetus and develop new forms based on our Biblical world view.
4. Christians must avoid these unbiblical traps:
 - 4.1. all forms of art and communication that lift up human vessels at the expense of lifting up Jesus Christ;
 - 4.2. "make-believe mission" that makes claims of effects and achievements that are not accurate;
 - 4.3. idolatry, which puts faith in things, including the media of communication, rather than in the omnipotent, sovereign God;
 - 4.4. presenting to the viewing public unrighteous models for ethical and moral behavior (This applies to the private and public lives of Christians who are artists and media personalities. Christian personalities who fall into sin must be confronted lovingly according to Matthew 18:15-18 and, if unrepentant, disciplined by the Church.);
 - 4.5. taking credit for God's work in drawing men and women to Jesus Christ.
5. Christians who labor in art and communication must follow the example of Jesus Christ in their prophetic service, maintaining humility and repentance as standards of their service.
6. When led by the Holy Spirit, all Christians should strive to influence communication and the media of communication in their communities, including dealing directly with the communicators.
7. Christians should *boycott* advertisers who sponsor immoral art and communication, especially blasphemy, profanity, and pornography, informing those advertisers of that action.

8. Christians should remove ungodly influences in art and communication whenever possible, especially blasphemy, profanity, and pornography.
9. The Church should exercise godly stewardship in its support of arts and communication projects by evaluating proposals in the light of Biblical principles such as those in this document, and consulting with experts in the fields when necessary and appropriate.
10. Local church bodies should recognize Christians called by God into art and communication and encourage them to seek education appropriate to their calling.
11. A representative group of Biblically informed Christians in the arts and communication should prepare a list of colleges and graduate schools whose departments of arts, communication, English, journalism, etc., present their disciplines from the basis of philosophical submission to the inerrant Bible and that are committed to the affirmations and denials in this document. This list should then be made available and promoted among those talented young people seeking training in their areas of creativity.
12. The Church must see its duty under God to nurture and disciple the artist and communicator. The same biblical standards of Christian maturity apply to those of artistic temperaments and blessed with talents as are expected of all Christians. An over-sensitive “prima donna” must not be allowed to stay in that immature state.
13. Christian musicians, artists, stars, media personalities, and communicators with large influence on the public must be expected to live up to the same leadership standards revealed in 1 Timothy 3 as pastors. Those Christian musicians, artists, stars, television personalities, and others whose lives are not exemplary (adultery, unscriptural divorce, fraud, etc.) should be boycotted and should receive church discipline from those other Christians who are responsible for pastoring them. Every public Christian figure must have accountability to some church, pastor, or group of Christian leaders who can call him up short when there is sin or irresponsibility in his life. This is particularly true of those who travel frequently. Where this kind of action may result in lawsuits, loss of money, or damaged reputation, Christian conciliation services may be called in as a third party.
14. In the media of communication, such as radio, television, and print, communicators should emphasize creating programs that teach Biblical values, morality, and family loyalty, to all listeners, especially Biblical standards of right and wrong as part of a Biblical world view.
15. Christians should make a consistent and systematic effort to evangelize all artists and communicators, especially those who are leaders in those fields.

Conclusion

God has given each individual gifts. We must recognize our individual strengths and weaknesses within the Body of Christ in regard to the arts and communication. We recognize the need to secure the services of those who are gifted in these areas in order to uphold a standard of excellence.

Christians must obey Christ’s command that our yes be yes, and our no, no.