

American Christians and the Culture Wars

By Pastor Doug Baker, D.Min.
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Introduction

The term Religious Right arose in the United States during the 1970s as a reaction to several cultural, political, and theological movements and trends, some of which long predated that decade. Essentially, it was a kind of marriage between patriotism and Christianity, a marriage that recently has been given the label of Christian Nationalism. This concept is that the American nation was founded on Judeo-Christian principles, and that these principles ought to be a public part of our entire political and cultural expression. Of course, in order to do this, the idea of the separation of church and state must be minimized and/or reinterpreted to mean only that no official church should be established and/or supported by the government. The more traditional notion was that the government should be neutral in matters of religion, although it is true that this concept was never completely followed.¹

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment of the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shifted the focus in Western civilization from a monarchical state toward democratic principles of representative government. It also simultaneously moved away from the dominant role that the Church played in government and society as a whole. Under its Constitution, the United States took it even further, removing the government from favoring any particular religious persuasion, at least in theory.² The Enlightenment also intensified the shift away from viewing people's rights as primarily something attributed to people as part of a specific socio-economic group and toward rights as *individuals*. Although it resulted in the positive development of accelerating more individual rights for most people, and thus spreading the benefits of democracy to more people, it also lessened social cohesion as people increasingly saw themselves as standing alone and less as part of a community. Finally, the Enlightenment's emphasis on natural law and natural explanations for physical phenomena undercut the traditional Christian emphasis on God's intervention in history and other

¹ The fact that both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate each has a government-paid chaplain who opens legislative sessions with public prayer is one example of a lack of neutrality, although we concede that this practice is harmless. At the state level, government neutrality regarding religion has been more frequently violated, with both prayer and Bible readings in public schools occurring for most of our history.

² Article VI of the U.S. Constitution forbids any religious tests (requirements) for anyone holding any political office under the auspices of the United States. And the First Amendment's "establishment" clause says that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion," mandating government neutrality in matters of religion.

evidence of supernatural elements in human history. In turn, this led to the rise in the nineteenth century of Higher Criticism, a movement within certain sectors of Protestant Christianity which often minimized or denied the supernatural elements in the Bible and doubted the historicity of it.³ The theory of evolution, promoted by the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection* (1859), completed the turn away from traditional Christian understanding of the Bible itself, turning Biblical inspiration into more or less an encounter view of inspiration—similar to what an artist, musician, or poet experiences in his work.⁴

The French Revolution

The political world of Western civilization was turned upside down with the coming of the French Revolution at the close of the eighteenth century (1789-1799). Unlike previous Western revolutions, the French Revolution was an epic struggle involving a massive popular uprising against the most powerful elites in French society, including the nobility, the Church, and the state itself. It represented a turning point in world history, spawning numerous extreme ideologies and violent means to implement them. Anarchism, Marxism, terrorism, and Darwinism emerged from the rubble of the French Revolution.

The U.S. Civil War

The American Civil War (1861-1865) also had a profound effect on our society. Although the pieces of this tragedy were put back together again, it frightened Protestant leaders in America into thinking that God had not blessed the nation because we had not been faithful to Him. Then when increasing numbers of non-Protestant immigrants began arriving in the 1880s and beyond, this strengthened the resolve of the more conservative American Protestants to tighten their grip on the nation, because these immigrants were perceived to threaten that domination. In particular, non-Protestants—Jews, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and atheists—were understood to be heavier drinkers of alcohol than Protestants were. Moreover, they did not come from traditions that viewed Sunday as the Sabbath, but merely as a day to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus—not 24 hours of holy time.⁵ The result was a push toward the abolition of alcoholic beverages and the enforcement of Sunday rest via so-called Sunday blue laws.⁶

³ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, Vol. II: *Reformation to the Present* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), p. 1264. See also Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), pp. 511-512.

⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/neoorthodoxy.html>.

⁵ Of course, today most Protestants no longer observe Sunday as a Christian Sabbath, but at best only as a family day to go to church and then do relaxing things together as a family. A hundred years ago or so, the ancestors of these believers did not do laundry or work in their fields on Sunday because they considered it holy time.

⁶ Doug Baker and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Reconstruction to the Present* (Oregon, WI: Rainmaker Education, 2017), pp. 116-117.

American Christian Fundamentalism

In the meantime, there was also a strong reaction to the liberal trends among many Protestants—those influenced by Higher Criticism—resulting in what became known as Christian Fundamentalism by the early twentieth century.⁷ It affirmed belief in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the concept that God had inspired every word (rather than the prophet himself), and that therefore the autographs⁸ were completely free of errors of any kind. Thus, the reason we find mistakes in the Biblical manuscripts today is that the copyists accidentally made them.⁹ Fundamentalism also rejected any forms of biological evolution, insisting on a Creation week of literal 24-hour days. Furthermore, liberal Protestantism had adopted to a large degree the Social Gospel, that the Christian duty was to reform society according to the principles of the Christian ethic of love and cooperation in contrast to the traditional dog-eat-dog world of American capitalism. At least in partial reaction to that movement was a renewed commitment to American capitalism and political conservatism in general.¹⁰ In fact, the conservative wing of the Christian movement since the twentieth century, in reaction to the Social Gospel, has often used Scripture to resist social reforms and to even be antagonistic toward social justice movements—such as the civil rights movement, the women’s rights movement, and so on.

Ironically, even the Fundamentalist movement has to some degree contributed to the decline in morality in America. Dispensationalism, the notion that God had dealt with people in different ways in different eras of history, influenced newer thinking about the Biblical concept of covenant in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Relegated to only a small influence earlier in Christian history, in the nineteenth century and beyond the general notion that the Old Testament (old covenant) Law was abolished at the cross as a unified code of laws flared up into what is now a highly popular idea. This concept says that under the new covenant, even the Ten Commandments are only valid as individual laws if they were specifically commanded in the New Testament. The great irony here is that while the Fundamentalists clamor for a visual representation of the Ten Commandments to return to public buildings, like public school classrooms, courthouses, and the like, they themselves do not even believe in the Ten Commandments as such. Although it is probably impossible to measure its impact, surely the notion that the Ten Commandments as such were nailed to the cross has, over time, resulted in a decline in its moral principles being implemented in people’s lives.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 251-252.

⁸ An autograph is the original handwritten document that the author composed. No autographs of any Biblical books have been discovered.

⁹ Conveniently, some would say, scholars do not possess any of the autographs, so that belief in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures cannot be tested.

¹⁰ Political conservatism emphasizes support for the existing social order and usually resists social reforms and social justice movements.

The Impact of World War II

It is often correctly stated that World War II had a profound impact on the entire world, especially in the more economically developed nations. It had facilitated the rise of even larger corporations because key industries greatly expanded in order to meet the needs of war production. Then the fact that the Great Depression had dampened consumer demand, followed by wartime shortages of several basic goods, unleashed enormous pent-up consumer demand after the war. In turn, this created roughly a quarter century of generally increasing prosperity and rising standards of living for most people in developed nations. The end of the war also saw the American federal government finance veterans' higher education and business start-ups. The economic optimism was tempered by the Cold War within a year from the end of World War II. After 1949, when the communist Soviet Union developed their own atomic bomb to match America's nuclear arsenal, the fearful specter of global nuclear annihilation hung over the entire world.

The strange mix of economic optimism and nuclear fear seemed to combine to create what became known as postmodernism. Postmodernism is the worldview that there is no actual objective truth.¹¹ Objective standards of truth were replaced by an understanding that each person has his or her own truth. There is your truth and my truth, and no one's truth is any better than anyone else's truth. The good corollary to postmodernism is that there was increased tolerance for those who were different from us. "Live and let live" became the cultural slogan and organizing principle for many people's lifestyles. Americans today often think of the 1950s as a decade of conformism and cookie-cutter suburban houses. While there is some truth to this view, it is largely a distorted memory of what life was really like in American culture. The development of rock 'n roll music slowly aided the drug culture and sexual revolution. It was also the decade of beatniks and other non-conformists. By the early 1960s the cultural lid was completely off, and America experienced the decade of protests and social justice movements—not all of which were bad, of course.

The old paradigm, which had culturally ruled Western civilization for centuries, had been based on the acceptance of God and the Judeo-Christian tradition as the source for absolute truth. Now absolute, objective truth was replaced with relative, subjective truth, which meant that increasing numbers of people "did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25). If truth was now relative, and varied from person to person, then reality was also relative, because what is true is real, and what is real is true.

¹¹ Brian Duignan, "Postmodernism," Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy/Postmodernism-and-relativism>).

Since the 1960s

In the 1960s, the civil rights movement, the women's rights movement, and the environmental movement all rose to more prominence in that decade. Accompanying those movements were significant successful legislative efforts, such as the Clean Air Act of 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as well as the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 that officially made the federal government responsible for oversight of the social welfare system in America and reflecting President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society domestic agenda. Also in 1965, Congress passed the Medical Care Act that created Medicare and Medicaid. Moreover, the American immigration law was liberalized in order to no longer be discriminatory toward certain ethnic and national regions. The effect of the new immigration law in 1965 was a disproportionate increase in the number of Latin American and Asian immigrants to the United States. At the same time, the federal government's role in public education was substantially increased. In the same decade, the U.S. Supreme Court delivered several major decisions favoring liberal positions, including a ban on public, prescribed prayers in public schools, public Bible reading in public schools, permitting sexually explicit material if it had any "literary or scientific or artistic value," and expanding the rights of those accused of criminal behavior. Culturally, the development of the birth control pill and the explosion of rock 'n roll music, with its sexually suggestive and sometimes rebellious messages, helped create a new sexual revolution, which added fuel to the fire for both political and religious conservatives.¹²

The mixture of liberal political and theological movements with Christian Fundamentalism was an explosion waiting to happen. The event that eventually ignited it into a slow burn was the Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. The *Roe* decision declared it to be a woman's right to have an abortion within the first trimester of her pregnancy. After the civil rights movement made major legal gains in the 1960s, and a moderate progressive Southern Baptist—Jimmy Carter—had been elected President in 1976, a group of Christian Republicans were needing an issue to enhance their party's standing. The irony was that there *had* been a general consensus among American Christians, although by no means unanimous, that abortions were generally the prerogative and personal decision of a woman or that at least there should be exceptions for rape, incest, and the health or life of the mother. But political considerations in the 1970s resulted in a decision to make abortion a moral and political issue in order to prevent conservative Protestants from remaining in the Democratic Party.¹³

The firestorm that emerged in the late 1970s was intensified by technological advances in the 1990s and beyond. The Internet became widely available to ordinary citizens in the 1990s, and

¹² Doug Baker and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Reconstruction to the Present*, Chapters 14 and 16 (Oregon, WI: Rainmaker Education, 2017), pp. 378-421, 464-491.

¹³ This does not mean that there were not also Christians who *always* viewed abortion as a sin that should be illegal. Nevertheless, it is a fact of history that there was a deliberate political motivation behind many Republicans to go after the abortion issue as a wedge to gain support for the Republican Party.

the early twenty-first century saw an explosion in smartphones and social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and the like. These made the twentieth-century communications revolution seem like the Middle Ages by contrast. Suddenly, anyone with a computer and an Internet connection could publish his ideas and arguments globally. Social media platforms used computer algorithms that automatically learned what each user liked to read or view in terms of content. This reinforced a person's own particular viewpoint. Coupled with the rise of 24-hour cable and satellite news channels, people tended to voluntarily censor the kind of news coverage they wanted to censor and to expose themselves only to those media outlets that reinforced their own viewpoint. Even worse still was the fact that many resourceful persons began to profit financially by feeding people the craziest conspiracy theories and other extreme content in order to gain new viewers. The result was an entire industry of "fake news" and deliberate misinformation and disinformation campaigns. This whole trend has only accelerated the explosion that at its root represents the conflict between liberal political and theological forces and conservative political and theological forces. It also has greatly reduced the percentage of people who are even willing to listen to the other side.

This current firestorm has been a long time in coming. All of the resentments by the political and religious conservatives against the political and religious liberals, who are perceived as an existential threat to "Christian America," constitute what today is called the "culture wars." Into this firestorm, we offer our own Christian perspective of the culture wars. To that overarching Biblical perspective, we now turn.

The Culture Wars Prophesied in Scripture

The Great Controversy Perspective

A Biblically literate Christian ought to have a Biblical perspective that in turn will allow him to realize that there is actually only one significant conspiracy that is worth focusing on—a "real" conspiracy that has eternal consequences. In contrast to the temporary earthly consequences of even real human conspiracies, the cosmic conspiracy dwarfs all others so that they pale in comparison.

The clearest overall description of this cosmic conspiracy is in Revelation 12:1-12. We will not here exegete the entire description, for that is not necessary in order to grasp the big picture. Read those verses and then our explanation of the "big picture" view here. This chapter is a symbolic vision in which a dragon threatens a pregnant woman because his ultimate target is the woman's yet-to-be-born son. But at some point after His birth, the Son escapes and goes to heaven. Then verses 7-12 form a parenthetical statement between the Son's escape to heaven and the dragon's pursuit of the woman and her other offspring in verses 13-17. This parenthetical statement gives us the perspective of what is happening on the Earth. The dragon is said to be the commander of

a group of angels in heaven who chose to follow him. By comparing verse 4 with verses 8-9, we see that about one-third of all the angels in heaven sided with this dragon, who evidently is an angel himself. Whatever the conflict in heaven was about, it resulted in a war there, of all places. And the dragon and his angelic followers lost that war and were cast out of heaven to the Earth.

Verse 9 refers to the dragon as “that serpent of old,” the “Devil,” and “Satan.” The reference to “that serpent of old” obviously refers back to the Garden of Eden, where a talking serpent deceived Eve with innuendos, lies, and a promise of spiritual knowledge and wisdom (Genesis 3:1-5). Instead, what it got her—and by extension, all of her descendants (all of us)—was heartache, expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and the loss of immortality (Genesis 3:6-24). We can see, then, in the light of Revelation 12:13-17, that the war that Satan lost in heaven has been continued on the Earth.

Isaiah 14:12-17 discusses a being who fell from heaven and seems to be the cause of the major problems on Earth. Surely, this must be the dragon of Revelation 12. Isaiah 14:12 calls him “Lucifer.” The original Hebrew word for “Lucifer” literally means “shining one”¹⁴ or “day star”¹⁵ and the actual name “Lucifer” is based on the Latin Vulgate and means “light bearer.”¹⁶ Some scholars think that “Lucifer” is a description rather than a name per se. However, the expression “O Lucifer, son of the morning” makes “Lucifer” sound more like a proper name, as per other scholars.¹⁷ Of course, that is not the same as the name “Satan” in Revelation 12:9. But the meanings of the two names—the word “Satan” means “adversary”¹⁸—informs us that Lucifer was his original name in heaven, and then his rebellion earned him a change of names to “Satan.”

According to Isaiah 14:13-14, the major cause of his rebellion/war in heaven was his selfish desire to be equal to God—not in character, but in authority—which in turn means he wanted the worship that belongs only to God.

For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’

Ezekiel 28 adds more fascinating information to the story of Satan’s rebellion in heaven. Under prophetic guidance by the Lord, the prophet Ezekiel relays heaven’s judgment that will come upon the king of Tyre (vv. 1-2, 11-12). But beginning in verse 12, we note that suddenly the announcement moves beyond the king of Tyre and speaks about an originally perfect being (verse

¹⁴ R. Laird Harris, et. al., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), #499, p. 217.

¹⁵ Isaiah 14:12, Reference note for that verse, New King James’ Version.

¹⁶ Andrews Study Bible, note under “14:12-14” (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ R. Laird Harris, et. al., #499a, p. 217.

¹⁸ W. E. Vine, John R. Kohlenberger III, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), #4567, p. 992.

15) who once lived in heaven¹⁹ and is called a cherub (v. 14). According to Ezekiel 10, the cherubim have wings and are integrally associated with God's throne. Two of them were represented as covering the top of the Ark of the Covenant in Exodus 25:17-22 (cf. Hebrews 9:5). We conclude then that the king of Tyre is a type of the same being known from Revelation 12 and Isaiah 14 as Satan or Lucifer, and that Satan/Lucifer belongs to an order of angels called cherubim. The use of the king of Tyre to represent Lucifer is a literary device known as typology, in which one earlier thing or person represents in some significant way another, later thing or person.²⁰ In this case, the king of Tyre was a type of Lucifer, who is the antitype.

Ezekiel 28 adds at least two vital bits of data regarding Satan. First, it adds that the sin of pride in his own beauty (vv. 12-13) was another cause of his rebellion. Second, note verse 16's reference to "the abundance of your [his] trading...." The Hebrew word for "trading" here can either refer to the act of economic trade, which certainly applied to the literal human king of Tyre. When it concerns words, it means to "slander" someone.²¹ Obviously, in this spiritual and heavenly context, this must mean that Lucifer engaged in "slander" against God Himself. Slander always represents false accusations and insinuations against another being. In the context of slander against God, and Lucifer's desire to be worshiped as God, his slander must have consisted of accusing God of being unjust and/or unloving toward His creatures, especially the angels. This fact has implications for God's Law because His Law is a reflection of His character—the same attributes that describe God also describes His Law in the Scriptures.²² Moreover, because this slander was entered into by other angels in heaven, and Satan has continued the war begun in heaven on Earth (Revelation 12), then by definition this cosmic conflict is a conspiracy—and the largest, most significant conspiracy in the history of the entire universe. It also represents the great controversy between Jesus and Satan—a spiritual battle waged on earth even more intensely after Satan failed to stop Jesus from being resurrected and returning to heaven (Revelation 12:1-6, 13-17).

This cosmic conspiracy will involve a symbolic beast who is also called "the false prophet" (Revelation 16:13-14 with 13:11-14 and 19:20). As a symbolic beast (Revelation 13:11 onward), it is a political kingdom or power (Daniel 7:17, 23; 8:20-22), and as a false prophet, it speaks in religious ways. Ezekiel 22:25-28 speaks about false prophets in Judah and declares that they spoke "lies" (v. 28). Therefore, the end-time "false prophet," one of the human tools of the dragon (Satan), will also use lies to *deceive* the whole world (Revelation 13:14).

¹⁹ The reference to "Eden" in verse 13 is not to the Garden of Eden on Earth, but to heaven itself since the king of Tyre is then called "the anointed cherub who covers" and who was "on the holy mountain of God" (verse 14).

²⁰ "Typology," (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/typology>).

²¹ R. Laird Harris, et. al., Vol. 2, #2165, p. 848.

²² The adjectives "holy," "just," "good," "love," "spiritual," and "unchangeable" are used to describe both God and His Law. See Romans 7:7, 12, 14; 13:8-10; and Matthew 5:18.

This cosmic conspiracy has both religious *and* political implications for the conflict on Earth. Revelation 13 describes two different symbolic beasts (verses 1-10 and verses 11-18) as being used by the dragon (v. 2) to implement a global showdown over worship that will eventually result in the death penalty for those who do not comply by receiving the mark of the beast. According to Daniel 7:3, 17, 23 and 8:20-24, a symbolic beast in prophecy represents a political kingdom unless the context requires the conclusion that it represents an individual king. A significant player in this end-time worship showdown is a symbolic power called Babylon (Revelation 14:8; 17:1-6), which will politically seduce “all nations” on Earth to support her conspiratorial agenda (Revelation 14:8; cf. 16:12-14; 17:15; 18:2-3, 9-10).

At this point, there remain three key questions about the cosmic conspiracy that involves the whole world. First, does the global conspiracy mean that a one-world government will be established? Second, does the global conspiracy mean that a one-world religion will be established that everyone will be required to join? Finally, whatever the nature of the global spiritual issue, will it be led by a power that is overtly hostile to Christianity? These questions we will answer in as brief a way as possible in the following paragraphs.

One-World Government?

For the most part, the politically conservative movement in Western nations has feared any notion of a one-world government. Moreover, the more extreme wing of the conservative movement believes that there is a conspiracy already underway to attempt to create a one-world government. But is this what Christians need to fear? What does the Biblical evidence tell us about this question?

The perceptive reader will recognize that we have already answered that question. Revelation 14:8 and 18:3 speaks of “all nations” following Babylon in the end-time crisis. Revelation 16:12-14, in the end-time context, speaks about “the kings of the earth and of the whole world” being involved. Revelation 18:9 also speaks about the “kings of the earth” as weeping for end-time symbolic Babylon. These passages strongly imply that the many separate nations on Earth will remain in existence through the very end of history as we know it. Therefore, when Revelation 17:12-18 prophecies about ten kings who will give their authority to Babylon at the end-time, those ten kings must represent either a specific representative political group or the number ten as representing the totality of the world’s governments. We must conclude, then, that there will be global cooperation to enforce a specific religious mark (or sign) of the beast (Antichrist) at the end-time. However, individual nations and their governments will continue to exist. Global cooperation, not a one-world government, will be the method Satan will use to accomplish his devious purpose to persuade the world to unwittingly give him the worship or allegiance that only God deserves because God is the Creator (and Satan was just one of His creatures). Furthermore, global cooperation in an attempt to solve major world problems is not by itself an evil venture.

But it becomes evil when such global cooperation will include a religious element that will be enforced on pain of economic boycott and death that such cooperation will cross the line into rebellion against God. It is that element of religious coercion that the Bible is concerned about, not purely political matters. Somehow, the so-called Religious Right has not understood this important distinction and has thus confused their political conservatism with God's agenda. And that is an example of confusing one's own political agenda with God's spiritual agenda. It is convenient, but it can also be dangerous—whether you are conservative or progressive politically.

One-World Religion?

Almost the entire Christian world today believes that the Antichrist and its allies will be a religious-political individual who takes global power, creates a one-world religion, and compels people to join it on pain of economic boycott and death. But again, what does the Biblical evidence say about this question?

According to Revelation 13, the only issue in the end-time global crisis will be the enforced worship of—or allegiance to—a system that ultimately, but unwittingly, means worship of Satan (see verses 3-4, 8, 12-15). No matter how you exactly interpret and thus identify the end-time Antichrist, this will be the real issue, and those who succumb to the global political pressure will receive a “mark” thus identifying them as belonging to the dragon (ultimately) as Satan (Revelation 13:16-17; 14:9). Contrary to popular opinion, this mark will not be a physical entity, whether the written number 666 or a computer chip or other electronic device implanted in a person. The reason we know this is that God will condemn those who receive the mark as eternally lost (Revelation 14:9-11), and the character of God as revealed in the Scriptures would not condemn someone simply because he could not physically prevent the authorities from giving or implanting a mark on or in him. Therefore, although something physical may well be used to *enforce* the mark, the mark *itself* must be a symbolic mark—a spiritual decision that only God can see, a decision that chooses to follow the dragon and his allies.

In order to galvanize and seduce the whole world, except for a relatively few authentic followers of God's truth, the spiritual issue involving worship would need to be one specific spiritual sign that shows one's allegiance to the wrong side. In this way, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists and agnostics, and others can be persuaded to choose the wrong side in the global crisis. Therefore, some spiritual issue must be chosen that will probably represent a fairly common element in global society, whether the common element itself is religious or not.²³ We therefore conclude that, just as global political cooperation will not result in one world government, the global spiritual cooperation will not result in one world religion.

²³ The identity of the Antichrist and his mark is detailed from Scripture by the author of this paper. The reader may obtain an electronic copy of this material by requesting the information via email to dlbaker3@cox.net.

An Openly Anti-Christian Religious Power?

In addition to the popular belief that the end-time religious-political power will create a one-world religion, most Christians also believe that this power will be an overtly anti-Christian power that will wage a campaign of harassment and persecution of Christians. Once more we must ask ourselves whether this fits the Biblical evidence or not.

Although the term “Antichrist” is universally used by Christians to describe the end-time persecuting power, it might surprise the reader to learn that the word itself (singular or plural forms) are found only in I and II John, for a total of five times (twice in I John 2:18; 2:22; 4:3; II John 7). Therefore, its usage in those two Biblical letters should inform our view of the basic nature of the Antichrist. The principal passage is in I John 2:18-22:

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. ²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. ²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

The specific issue in the apostle John’s day was that certain Christians were teaching that Jesus was not really a human being, but that He only *appeared* to be human. This is called the heresy of Docetism, which in turn was based on the pagan Greek idea that matter was inherently inferior and evil.²⁴ Therefore, since Jesus is God, He could not have actually taken on human nature in reality. But the real point here is that these antichrists (plural) were false teachers within the Church—not outsiders who were overtly hostile to Christianity. Instead, they attempted to deceive Christians that they were Christians themselves. So, while they did, in fact, oppose genuine Christianity, they were not openly hostile to it until they decided to leave the Church. This underscores the meaning of the Greek prefix “anti.” This prefix can mean something or someone that/who is openly hostile to something or someone; but it also can mean one who is opposed to something or someone by taking the “place of” someone.²⁵ The context in John’s writings clearly means that these antichrists were taking the place of Christ by taking His name and assuming the authority to speak for or about Him. Note also that John relates the many antichrists to the *one* Antichrist (I John 2:18). Therefore, the nature of the end-time Antichrist (singular) is of a similar nature as the antichrists (plural) in John’s day. In other words, this points to the end-time Antichrist as being a counterfeit Christian power that claims to represent Christ. That is the way in which the Antichrist is opposed to Christ—not openly, but in a deceptive reality.

²⁴ Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. 1, pp. 132-133.

²⁵ W. E. Vine, John R. Kohlenberger III, ed., #500, pp. 53-54.

There are numerous passages of Scripture about the end-time global power that identify the Antichrist as a false Christian entity, albeit in symbolic language of course. We choose just one of them to confirm our previous conclusion.²⁶ Revelation 17:1-6 speaks of the end-time power (see verses 12-18) as the great harlot called Babylon. The first thing to note is that the very name “Babylon,” which first appears as “Babel” in Genesis 11:1-9, means “confusion” in Hebrew and “the gate of/to God/gods” in the Babylonian language.²⁷ Thus, the name signifies Babylon’s claim to be the right way or access to God, but that its way leads to spiritual confusion—just as the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 resulted in the linguistic confusion and scattering of people throughout the Earth.

The second thing to note is that Babylon is referred to as “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT” (v. 5). The Greek word for “mystery” is used in the New Testament to describe a Godly truth that is hidden to most people, but it has now been revealed to Christians.²⁸ If end-time Babylon were literal Babylon (modern-day Iraq, for example), then its meaning would not be hidden to anyone. This points to Babylon here as a symbolic name rather than a literal geographical place or power. This is confirmed by the fact that the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah declared that literal Babylon in Bible times would be destroyed and would never rise again (Isaiah 13:19-22; Jeremiah 50:39-40).

The third thing that is noteworthy about Babylon is that she is called a “harlot” (v. 1). In Scripture a symbolic woman represents the professed people of God. For the most part, a symbolic “harlot” is the word given for God’s professed Old Testament people who apostatized and were thus viewed by God as committing spiritual adultery and going after other lovers.²⁹

A fourth descriptive word for Babylon is that she is guilty of “blasphemy.” The New Testament identifies the sin of blasphemy as specifically claiming the rights that belong to God alone, such as the authority to forgive sins (Matthew 9:2-3; Luke 5:21) or the claim to be God (Matthew 26:63-65; John 10:33, 36). This definition is consistent with the idea seen earlier that the Antichrist claims to speak for Christ on Earth.

Finally, please note that Babylon is “arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls” (v. 4). According to Exodus 28:5-39, these are the colors associated with the Old Testament priests’ garments and especially the high priest. Scholars differ on what the Urim and Thummin on the high priest’s breastplate were made from (Exodus 28:30), but the

²⁶ The reader may request documentation written by this author that specifically identifies the AntiChrist by emailing him at dlbaker3@cox.net.

²⁷ R. Laird Harris, et. al., Vol. 2, #197, p. 198.

²⁸ W. E. Vine, John R. Kohlenberger III, ed., #3466, p. 769.

²⁹ Examples include Isaiah 1:1, 21; Jeremiah 3:6-9; Ezekiel 16:1-3, 15-43; 20:30; 23:4, 30; Hosea 1:2; 2:5; 3:1; 4:15; 5:3; 6:10; and 9:1.

first-century A.D. Jewish historian Josephus thinks they were two sardonyx stones. If this is correct, then perhaps even the harlot's "precious stones" might indirectly reflect that worn by the high priest.³⁰ This just adds to the evidence that Babylon constitutes a counterfeit religious power that claims to represent the God of heaven. Note also that the color blue, which represents God's Law and was to be worn by the Israelites (Numbers 15:37-41), is the only color that is absent from Babylon's appearance. This suggests that Babylon is in actual rebellion against God and His Law and character, despite its claim to officially represent God on Earth.

All of this evidence points unmistakably to the end-time Antichrist as a counterfeit Christian organization and political power that claims falsely to speak for Christ on Earth.³¹ In other words, it is a Church-State power. Therefore, we are compelled by the Biblical data to conclude that far from the end-time Antichrist being openly or overtly hostile to Christianity or establishing or reviving some pagan religion per popular Christian belief today, she is a counterfeit Christian church-state that deceptively presents herself as a genuine Christian entity.

The Global Conspiracy and the Culture Wars

In the Western world today, and particularly in America, our political culture is engaged in the so-called "culture wars." The culture wars have taken on a very significant political nature. As we wrote earlier, cultural and political developments since the end of World War II, and intensifying in the 1960s, have resulted in a cultural and political backlash led principally by conservative, evangelical Protestant Christians. Viewing the various developments over the last 60 years or so as an assault on Judeo-Christian values, this backlash has represented a pushback in order to undo the success of the liberal cultural and political movements.

This pushback aims specifically to bring back public prayers in public schools, to once again post the Ten Commandments on the walls of public schools and other public buildings, and generally to open up society to the influences *in public life* of the traditional Judeo-Christian values. To do this, they oppose the teaching of sex education in public schools, seek to penalize those students who are confused about their gender identity and/or are gay, roll back the legal protections for those who are gay or otherwise perceived as sexually perverse, remove the political influence of Hollywood, promote the abolition of abortion, and generally oppose the separation of church and state.

Before commenting on the morality involved in fighting the culture wars, we will alert the reader to another surprising discovery. And that is the fact that Bible prophecy predicted the culture wars,

³⁰ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. "Urim and Thummim" (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), pp. 1128-1129.

³¹ Remember that Antichrist as a symbolic beast in the rest of Revelation represents a political power and that Babylon itself is a name of a literal entity which had been a political power.

told us who would win them, and what the outcome of that victory will be. To that story, we now turn.

The Prophecy of the Culture Wars and the Aftermath

Daniel 11:40-12:3 consists of a prophecy about the culture wars and the aftermath. It sets this prophecy in the context of what Daniel calls “the time of the end” (11:40) and describes it as a period of time in which several events take place, culminating in a resurrection (12:2). That means that this “time of the end” does not refer to the end of a particular nation or ruler, but the end of human history as we know it.

During this “time of the end,” a battle is described as being a fight between the “king of the south” and the “king of the north” (v. 40). Without interpreting the details of the entire prophecy—which is beyond the scope of this paper—Daniel 11:8-9 starts with Egypt as the power in the south. This provides us with a frame of reference in which to interpret the basic outline of the prophecy. Egypt was the power in the south in Biblical times because it came from the south in order to attack Israel. More than one enemy of Israel attacked from the north because the Arabian Desert lay straight east of Israel, but we have already shown that the book of Revelation identifies spiritual (symbolic) Babylon as the enemy of God’s end-time people. See our comments under “An Openly Anti-Christian Religious Power?” above. Therefore, the king of the north in Daniel at “the time of the end” is spiritual Babylon, a counterfeit Christian church-state entity.

If the king of the north is spiritual Babylon in the “time of the end,” then the king of the south must be spiritual Egypt. Spiritually speaking, ancient Egypt is best known for its Pharaoh’s contempt for the God of heaven: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice...?” [Exodus 5:2, NKJV]. This means that the king of the south in the “time of the end” represents the forces of secularism, humanism, and atheism in the world.³² Thus, we learn that the war described in Daniel 11:40 onward is largely a spiritual struggle between forces allied with counterfeit religion (led by a counterfeit Christian church-state) and the forces of secularism, humanism, and atheism. We believe that this prophecy has certain political implications, but whatever their precise nature, we know by the meaning of the two sides that its motivations are spiritual in nature. In other words, this prophecy represents what today is being called the “culture wars.”

According to this prophecy, the king of the north will eventually defeat the king of the south (Daniel 11:42-43). This does not mean that all secular humanists or even all atheists will be converted to a religious worldview, either genuine or counterfeit. But it does strongly imply that

³² Even though ancient Egypt was religious and believed in many gods, it was openly hostile to the God of heaven. Open hostility toward the God of heaven in our postmodern world comes from secularist, humanist, and atheist forces in contrast to religious elements of all kinds.

the now-dominant Western secular worldview will be replaced by a dominant false religious worldview shortly before the return of Jesus.

Could it Really Happen in this Postmodern Secular World?

To those who believe that this would be impossible in this postmodern secular world, we offer two lines of evidence from American history.³³ First, American history records periods when political or religious minorities were persecuted because of great fear among important elements of our society.

- In the late 1790s, the fear was that certain foreign visitors and immigrants might bring the radical thinking of the French Revolution to America. This fear led to Congress passing the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798, which made it extremely difficult for immigrants to become U.S. citizens and also prohibited “speaking, writing, or publishing any false, scandalous, or malicious statement, with the intent to defame or bring into contempt or disrepute the President, the Congress, or the Government.”³⁴
- Shortly before the Civil War began, President Abraham Lincoln suspended the Constitutional *writ of habeas corpus* in order to jail indefinitely without formal charges Northern opponents of the impending war. Although Congress asserted its own authority by affirming Lincoln’s actions (with some limitations) in 1863, the U.S. Constitutional provision for suspending this writ is located in Article I, which concerns the authority of Congress, not the President.³⁵
- In the post-Civil War period, several state legislatures passed so-called Sunday blue laws, restricting sales of certain consumer items, closing many places of business and entertainment, and forbidding certain kinds of labor on the first day of the week. This resulted in some Americans becoming convicts simply because they worked in their home gardens on the wrong day of the week.³⁶ Although advocates of Sunday legislation defend such laws on the social grounds of providing necessary time off from work for the working classes, the historical context in late nineteenth-century America clearly points to a religious fear that God might not bless the nation if her population were not faithful to Him. Plainly, the religious motivation was the primary one.

³³ If we can show that it could happen in the United States, the freest nation on earth, then it logically follows that it could also occur on a global scale.

³⁴ Doug Baker and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Pre-Columbus to 1877* (Oregon, WI: Rainmaker Education, 2017), pp. 160-161.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

³⁶ Doug Baker and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Reconstruction to the Present*, pp. 116-117.

- In 1918, during World War I, Congress passed the Sedition Act, which made it a federal crime to make “false statements or used [use] profane language against the government, the Constitution, the flag, or the uniform of the soldiers, or interfered [interfere] with the production of war goods.”³⁷ The law was overwhelmingly used to convict more than 1,000 citizens simply because of their verbal opposition to the war.
- One result of World War I was a public hysteria concerning a potential communist takeover of the United States. After all, communists had seized power in Russia during the war and were in the process of creating the Soviet Union. There was also a record number of labor strikes in the nation after the war. Moreover, a small number of political radicals were stirring up isolated acts of violence in selected cities. The resulting Red Scare of 1919-1920 was intensified by U.S. Attorney-General A. Mitchell Palmer, who launched a series of so-called Palmer Raids in order to advance his presidential ambitions. More than 5,000 Americans were arrested in these raids—communists, labor leaders, and others whose political leanings were left-of-center—but no one was criminally convicted.³⁸
- In 1942, the sheer panic that ensued following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor the previous December resulted in an executive order by President Franklin D. Roosevelt which led to more than 112,000 Japanese-Americans, most of them U.S. citizens, being locked up in internment camps in the nation.³⁹ Moreover, the hysteria resulted in these persons losing their homes and most of their belongings. Despite the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court actually upheld this internment policy in 1944, this was a clear violation of basic human rights that are normally protected by the Constitution.
- From 1950 to 1954, the emerging Cold War resulted in another wave of anti-communist hysteria, this one fanned by Senator Joseph McCarthy,⁴⁰ whose intimidation tactics and wild public accusations about alleged communists in government and Hollywood cost numerous public figures their careers. Leading politicians from both parties were afraid of voters during this period in our history, so that it took a few years before anyone of significance stood up to oppose McCarthy. Despite his allegations, very few actual communists were discovered, and the era of McCarthyism ended when the Senate officially voted to censure the senator for his conduct.⁴¹

The second line of evidence we offer in defense of the proposition that religious persecution can happen globally is the obvious fact that the communications revolution has considerably “shrunk”

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 221-222.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 237-238.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 327-328. Not one Japanese-American was convicted of collaborating with the government or military of Japan.

⁴⁰ McCarthy was a Republican senator from the state of Wisconsin.

⁴¹ Doug Baker, and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Reconstruction to the Present*, pp. 437-438.

the world. The Internet, social media platforms, smartphones, and other rapid means of communication today now make it possible for a crisis on the other side of the planet to become known almost instantaneously all over the globe. Moreover, a global crisis—whether natural or man-made—can now arrest the attention of virtually every person on the earth in a matter of minutes. With human history and the virtually instantaneous global communications, it is not really difficult to imagine that one huge crisis or perhaps a series of global natural disasters could cause a panic that would result in the trampling of some religious minority's rights, particularly if they are viewed as an existential threat to the planet itself or to the global social order. Then, in such an atmosphere of disaster, supernatural and spectacular events might in short order persuade the world to go along, if for no other reason than to get along. Such spectacular, supernatural events have been prophesied in Scripture as greatly aiding the final global worship showdown. Therefore, we conclude that the current domination of Western culture by postmodern secular forces could fast wither away under these circumstances.

The New Testament provides abundant evidence of demonic supernatural activity that will accompany and galvanize the entire world in support of the Antichrist during the end-time global crisis. The most significant of those passages are quoted below:

²³Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. ²⁴For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24:23-24, NKJV)

⁹The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (II Thessalonians 2:9-10, NKJV)

¹¹Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. ¹²And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. ¹³He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. ¹⁴And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. ¹⁵He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. (Revelation 13:11-15, NKJV)

¹²Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. ¹³And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty....¹⁶And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon. (Revelation 16:12-16, NKJV)

Church-State Relations

The common-sense principle that no one should be compelled to provide support of any kind to a religious organization or creed plainly prohibits the official sanctioning of and/or financial aid to any religious organization. Not only should this preclude a government-sponsored church (or other religious organization), but it should also mean that no public funds should be given to such an organization. The whole point here is that government should be neutral in matters of religion and interfere only when necessary in order to protect public health or safety.

Three specific areas in church-state relations have affected American society in the past and/or the present: (1) Prayer in public schools and other government spaces; (2) public Bible readings in public schools and other government spaces; and (3) displaying of religious symbols in public schools and other government spaces, such as the Ten Commandments, crosses, and nativity scenes.⁴² Congressional chaplains paid by the government, who also open sessions of each chamber with prayer, we have already mentioned as technically being not neutral, but harmless in practical terms. So is the presence of “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance and “In God we Trust” on American money an example of non-neutrality which is harmless in practical terms, although the purist in us says we technically should not have those things.⁴³

Public prayers in public schools was the norm for most of American history. But in 1962, in the *Engel v. Vitale* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court prohibited official public prayers in public schools on the grounds that such practices violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment.⁴⁴ Millions of conservative Christians have vilified that decision and falsely taught that this was an attempt to take God out of our public schools. However, no legislation or case law forbids someone in a public school from praying silently before eating a lunch or taking an exam. The decision was an attempt to move the needle toward more government neutrality in religion and was correctly decided in our view. Not every student is a Christian, which creates peer pressure on those non-Christians in the classroom. Besides, there are even differences among certain Christian denominations in what to say or how to say it in prayer. These are sufficient reasons to leave public prayer for churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and homes (or religious schools).

Public Bible readings at the outset of the school day were also commonplace in most of American history as well. In 1963, the Supreme Court ruled in *Abington v. Schempp* that this also violated

⁴² Christmas trees have become almost universal displays of what has become a secular holiday around the globe. Although a purist might disagree, we view the display of Christmas trees on government property as harmless rather than constituting visual endorsement of the Christian religion.

⁴³ We do not, however, urge support for the removal of these things because the backlash they would likely create would have a tendency to take this non-neutrality even farther. Therefore, “let sleeping dogs lie” is our motto.

⁴⁴ Doug Baker and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Reconstruction to the Present*, p. 485.

the First Amendment's establishment clause.⁴⁵ For the same reasons we gave for opposing public prayers in public schools, we also believe the Supreme Court got this decision right as well. Moreover, what version of the Bible should be used⁴⁶—even assuming for the moment that public Bible readings in public schools was the right thing to do? In 1844, after a few years of feuding between Protestants and Catholics over the decision to use the King James' Version of the Bible in the public schools of Philadelphia, several days of Protestant rioting there destroyed a few dozen buildings and killed more than 30 people and injured more than 125 additional persons.⁴⁷ Need more be said?

The displaying of religious symbols on government property may or may not violate government neutrality with respect to religion. The most important of these symbols is the Ten Commandments. If they are displayed as part of a larger presentation of different symbols representing contributions to law, then logically that is not showing a preference for Judeo-Christianity, unless the Ten Commandments are front-and-center, larger, or in some other way shows preference. However, displayed by themselves or so as to focus the attention on the Ten Commandments specifically, certainly does show a preference for them. This is plainly not government neutrality. Many conservative Christians bemoan the alleged fact that God was being removed from our public life and that, as a result, American is in decline. But honestly, is American culture declining from a Christian perspective because the Ten Commandments and other displays of Christian symbols have largely been removed from government spaces? Would public school students suddenly start behaving themselves better if the Ten Commandments were placed back on the walls of public-school buildings? Honestly, that is not logical thinking. The important thing is for the Christian to have those Ten Commandments written on the heart rather than on external materials.⁴⁸

Finally, the irony of all this is that most of these same conservative Christians have adopted theories that view the Ten Commandments as having been abolished as a specific code of laws at the cross—and that the individual commandments are only valid if they are repeated in the New Testament. While not diving deeply into the theology, we call your attention to James 2:8-11 (NKJV):

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ The Roman Catholic Bible contains additional books (Apocrypha) in its Old Testament, books that are rejected by Protestant Christians.

⁴⁷ *Young American Republic*

(<http://projects.leadr.msu.edu/youngamerica/exhibits/show/irishimmigration/philadelphiariots>), and "Riots in the City of Brotherly Love," The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (https://hsp.org/sites/default/files/legacy_files/migrated/studentreadingriotsinthecityofbrotherlylove.pdf).

⁴⁸ That is the clear meaning of II Corinthians 3. This chapter does not denigrate the Ten Commandments at all, but rather teaches that the important thing is that they should be written on the heart and not merely on external materials. The Israelites did not allow the Sinai experience (vv. 12-15) to lead them to the Savior (v. 16). So the same Ten Commandments are still valid. But the point is that they should be written on the heart, which in turn will lead people to their Savior and thus be saved.

⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scriptures, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; ⁹but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. ¹¹For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’

Note that the law in view here includes the Ten Commandments because two of them are quoted in verse 11. Note also that violating “one point” of the Ten Commandments means that one has broken “all” of them (v. 10). Moreover, this Scripture was written well after the cross of Jesus. Therefore, it is evident that the Ten Commandments, even after the cross, is still viewed as a unified single code of laws still applicable to the Christian.

Evolution in Public Schools

For well more than 100 years, the theory of evolution has been taught in American public schools. From time to time, legal and legislative attempts have been made in certain states to either replace evolution or to additionally give students the alternative view of creationism. Is this an appropriate effort in which Christians should engage? First, let us be very clear. We agree with our fellow conservative Christians that the theory of evolution is not actual science for the simple reason that there are no historical records and no time machine to go back in time and observe evolution occurring. But we also agree that, within certain parameters of thinking, reasonable people can believe in evolution. It is just that the Biblical worldview includes an omnipotent God who loves and therefore cares for the material universe; atheistic evolutionists exclude God from the possible picture.

Objections to Theistic Evolution

There are many Christians who are theistic evolutionists, meaning that they believe God chose to “create” the universe through the process of evolution. But such a view has most of the same problems that atheistic evolution has and in addition has numerous beliefs contradictory of the Scriptures. At the risk of overkill, we outline our objections to theistic evolution in the next several paragraphs.

First, it is said by theistic evolutionists that each day of Creation Week represented millions of years. But whenever the Hebrew language uses the word for days (“yom”) accompanied by a numeral, a 24-hour day is always meant⁴⁹—unless the context requires that those days are symbolic. In Genesis 1 each day is spoken of as “the evening and the morning” (vv. 2, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), which clearly specifies a 24-hour day. A comparison of the seventh day of Creation Week in Genesis 2:1-3 with the language of the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:8-11 reveals that the commandment was based on the former. Obviously, the Sabbath commandment is a reference

⁴⁹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, New King James’ Version (Nashville, TN: Word Bibles, 1997), Note on Genesis 1:5, p. 16.

to a 24-hour day; thus, it would make no sense if the other six days of Creation Week were not also 24-hour days. Finally, the Creation account in Genesis 1 tells us that vegetation was created on the third day and land animals and mankind on the sixth day. It is a scientific fact that vegetation requires carbon dioxide and gives off oxygen. But if each day of Creation Week represented millions of years, there would have been no animals or people to produce the carbon dioxide to keep the vegetation alive. Therefore, all vegetation would have died out long before animals and people appeared on the earth. Furthermore, vegetation requires light for photosynthesis to occur. But if the night portion were only a million years long, all the vegetation would have died before the fourth “day” had dawned. For all these reasons, each day of Creation Week must be understood to be a 24-hour day.

Second, if evolution were true, then the early part of Genesis could not be descriptive of literal history. But other Bible writers and Jesus Himself accepted the literal historicity of Genesis, including its first 11 chapters. For example, Jesus gave evidence that He accepted the Genesis account of creation and the global Flood in Matthew 19:4-6; 24:37-39; Mark 10:6-8; and Luke 17:26-27. Luke’s gospel gives the genealogy of Jesus through his “father” Joseph all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38) in such specific detail that testifies of Luke’s confidence in the historicity of Genesis. The apostle Paul showed his faith in the historicity of the Genesis creation account in II Corinthians 4:6 and I Timothy 2:13. James accepted the Genesis creation account of man in James 3:9. And the apostle Peter endorsed both Creation and the global Flood in I Peter 3:20 and II Peter 2:5 and 3:5-6.

Third, if a Christian believes in evolution, then he must agree that the evolutionary processes are continually operating in the universe. However, the Bible teaches that Creation was finished in the past: (1) “Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done” (Genesis 2:1-2); (2) The Psalmist declared, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made... For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6, 9); (3) The apostle Paul says that “by Him all things were created” (Colossians 1:16); and (4) The writer of Hebrews says “that the works [of creation] were finished from the foundation of the world” (Hebrews 4:3).

Fourth, if Theistic Evolution were true, then several millions of years have been involved to date in an almost endless series of trial-and-error attempts via random mutations to get the life forms where they are today. What a colossal waste of time that has been for God, who knows all things past, present, and future! Not only has this been a waste of time, but it implies that God chose a terribly inefficient method for “creating” the universe. But the Bible describes God as “not the author of confusion” but of order (I Corinthians 14:33, 40).

Fifth, if Theistic Evolution were true, then God would be indirectly responsible for all those millions of years of suffering, misery, and death that different life forms experienced on the upward

path toward improvement. However, the Scriptures tell of a very different God, One who is love and mercy personified. Specifically, it describes a God who cares about His Creation, so much so that He values even the little sparrows and notices when they fall to the ground in death (Matthew 10:29-31). Surely, such a God would not have chosen evolutionary processes which result in such misery to “create” the world.

Sixth, Theistic Evolution flatly contradicts the Bible’s teaching that death came as a result of sin (Romans 5:12-17; Romans 6:23; I Corinthians 15:21). But evolution states that death was part of the very means that allowed life to evolve to higher forms and that it existed millions of years before mankind ever evolved into existence. That is as contradictory of Scripture as one can get!

Seventh, the primary assumption in any evolutionary theory is that living organisms evolve upward from the simple to the more complex. At the same time, the theory states that mankind is allegedly getting better and better with age because he is a creature who is continually developing toward perfection. But the Bible teaches just the opposite—that mankind was created perfect and then fell into sin. Thus, he needs a Savior to redeem and restore him to a right relationship with his Creator. Theistic Evolution undermines this central tenant of the Christian Scriptures when the Creation account in Genesis is interpreted as myth or allegory. It then actually removes sin and the need for salvation. Under that scenario Jesus died for nothing!

Eighth, all theories of evolution teach that life evolves out of life-and-death struggle in which only the fittest survive. Thus, evolution teaches that “might makes right” because whatever survives guarantees the future upward progress of life forms. But this teaching is completely incompatible with the Christian message of the Golden Rule—that “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them” (Matthew 7:12, NKJV; cf. Luke 6:31).

Ninth, if evolution were true, then all life forms evolved from a common ancestor. But the Bible record of Creation is quite clear and emphatic that God created both plants and animals “after their [its] kind” (Genesis 1:12, 21, 24-25). This means that the Bible denies there is any crossover from one *kind*⁵⁰ As for human beings, Genesis 1:26-27 says God created them in His own image and that He took personal attention and care in their creation (Genesis 2:7, 21-23).

Finally, Theistic Evolution portrays God like Deism does. Deism is the “watchmaker” concept in which God created the universe and the natural laws to govern it and then became an absentee landlord to attend to other matters while the watch winds down. Under Theistic Evolution God is portrayed as not caring much about His creation. He might come back periodically to make a correction in the evolutionary process, but He is not intimately involved with the world in a personal or ongoing basis. The Bible, on the other hand, portray God as very much involved with His creation in an intimate way. In fact, the Bible purports to be a record of God’s intervention in

⁵⁰ The Biblical “kind” probably refers to “family” in the scientific meaning of that word.

human history. Specifically, it teaches that God sustains His Creation, not that He merely created it in the past and allows His natural law to govern it. For example, Nehemiah 9:6 says: “You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth and all things on it, the seas and all that is in them, and you *preserve* them all” (NKJV, emphasis is ours). The apostle Paul declared that “For by Him all things were created...And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17, NKJV). Also, the writer of Hebrews states that “God...[is] upholding all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:1-3, NKJV).

The Bible is too clear: It is completely and irrevocably incompatible with any theory of evolution. Christians who attempt to reconcile the two have been extremely superficial in their reading of the Bible.

Teaching Evolution or Creationism in Public Schools

Regarding the issue of whether evolution and/or creation should be taught in public schools, we acknowledge that public education of the sciences is the domain of the science establishment. The establishment for any discipline or profession is the collection of educated professionals who control the think tanks or research facilities, the grant moneys for research, and the professional peer-review journals in the field. Private schools should be free to teach whatever they want to teach. But public education in a pluralistic society ought to reflect the broad approach of the establishments for each field. For the sciences, that establishment represents the evolutionary paradigm. For Christian parents, or any others, who want their children educated from the Biblical creationist paradigm, they should be free to send them to private Christian schools. In this way, the public-school systems should be exempt from the inevitable clashes that result from different perspectives on the origin of life.⁵¹

Sunday Laws

Long before the independence of the United States, most of the English North American colonies had created Sunday laws in order to restrict the kinds of labor and entertainment that could be engaged in on the first day of the week. At that time, the vast majority of Americans were Protestant Christians whose traditions viewed Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. Thus, these laws were usually called Sabbath laws.⁵² Historians have no doubt but that these laws were motivated almost exclusively by religious thoughts.

Then during the Civil War, a group of prominent Protestant ministers created the National Reform Association in 1863, which advocated the idea that God was angry at the United States because

⁵¹ To open up the teaching of Creationism in public schools would inevitably lead to conflicts over what specific version of Creationism should be taught, for there are various different views even among Creationists.

⁵² Doug Baker and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Pre-Columbus to 1877*, pp. 34-39.

the nation had not officially acknowledged the lordship of Jesus by enforcing His moral law. By 1879, this organization was calling for a federal Sunday law. Organizations like the American Sabbath Union and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) also participated in the crusade for stricter Sunday observance. The anti-alcohol WCTU perceived Sunday laws as a means to close bars and taverns on Sunday in order to promote husbands and others into going to church with their wives.

The post-Civil War Sunday law movement also received impetus by the fact that increasing numbers of non-Protestant immigrants were flooding into the country by the 1880s—Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Jews, and atheists from Eastern and Southern Europe. These immigrants either did not regard Sunday with any religious significance or treated Sunday simply as a day for worship but not as a Christian *Sabbath*. Feeling that their grip on American culture was being threatened by this immigration, many Protestant leaders pressed for Sunday legislation at both the state and federal level. They were far more successful at the state level in many states, but federal efforts came closest to success before being thwarted in 1888.

The leaders of this movement adopted the “Christian nation” argument to buttress their cause, claiming that the Founding Fathers had established a nation based on Judeo-Christian values and principles.⁵³ Despite claims in the post-World War II era that Sunday laws were not religiously based, but were designed simply to provide working people with a weekly rest from their labors, the entire history of Sunday laws in this country reveal that they have been mostly based on religious grounds. As such, we reject these laws on the grounds that this nation is a non-theocratic, pluralistic society, which ought to be religiously neutral insofar as possible, as the best way to protect everyone's right to worship, or not to worship, whom and how their consciences dictate to them.

Personal Morality and Public Morality

Personal morality concerns individual behavior and lifestyles which do not directly harm others or take away their freedom to choose their own personal behavior. By contrast, public morality concerns behavior that demonstrably affects other people, either positively or negatively. There may be times when the effect of individual behavior is not clear in its effects on other people. But by and large, there is a fairly clear distinction that can be made.

Unfortunately, some conservative-minded Christians, who admirably maintain Biblical values in their personal lives, believe that others should be compelled to do the same, at least in some areas. These interpret support for each person's right to choose their own lifestyle as support for anti-Christian lifestyles. In the context of the culture wars, this is increasingly becoming an issue that Christians need to think about carefully.

⁵³ Doug Baker and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Reconstruction to the Present*, pp. 116-117.

What does it mean to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18; James 2:8) and to abide by the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)? The Septuagint⁵⁴ in Leviticus 19:18 and the Greek of James 2:8 both use the word “agape” for “love,” which refers to a selfless love in which the principle of love lies within the one doing the loving rather than the one being loved.⁵⁵ This is a principle that nearly all Christians say they support. But the really hard thing to do sometimes is to actually apply them to people who choose very different and very anti-Christian lifestyles. For example, how should a Christian treat or view a person who is living the homosexual lifestyle? We have no doubt whatsoever that such a lifestyle is a sinful one, according to Scripture. We know that some Christians argue that point, but space does not permit us to exegete the numerous Biblical passages on this issue now. The point is how should the Christian view that person? Some adopt the position that since you should shout at someone who is about to fall off a cliff, one should go out of his way to warn the person that he is about to be eternally lost if he continues in his sinful lifestyle. And that is correct, as long as the Christian does so in a Christian manner. But to adopt an “in-your-face” posture toward such a person is not the Christlike way to approach such a person. Neither is doing so by publicly marching with signs condemning homosexuality; that is still an “in-your-face” posture, which is showing hostility toward the person.

The Christian should approach this issue the same way he should approach any Biblical truth-issue. (1) Proclaim the truth in love to a general audience; and (2) look for reasonable *openings* in which to engage individuals about the Bible truth. At the same time, recognize that the Royal Law (“love your neighbor as yourself”) and the Golden Rule absolutely requires that you respect the free will of each person to choose his own way in life—even when you know that choice is contrary to God’s will. In practical terms, this must mean that the Christian should support measures in society designed to protect homosexuals (or any other anti-Christian lifestyle adopters) from being discriminated against. If the Royal Law and the Golden Rule mean anything, it means that while we hate the sin, we ought to love the sinner.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, with too many Christians, hatred for certain sins (although not all) has been allowed to become hatred for the sinner also. Therefore, do not allow someone to accuse you of favoring anti-Christian behavior simply because you support their right to choose that behavior—unless, of course, it demonstrably harms others or takes away other people’s freedoms. Opposing people’s right to choose wrong spiritual pathways is actually the spirit of anti-Christ, because it purports to take the place of Christ in condemning the person for his sinful choice. God will deal with willful sinners in the end-time judgment; that is not part of the Christian’s job description. Our part is to love the sinner while hating the sin. That is easy to say, but hard to do. Yet by God’s grace, it can and must be done.

⁵⁴ This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, completed in the second century B.C.

⁵⁵ W. E. Vine, John R. Kohlenberger III, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), #25, pp. 692-693.

⁵⁶ Note that this kind of love (“agape”) is a principle, not an emotion. It does not mean that you must like what the person does, or even that you must like the person, but that you respect his right to do it, while simultaneously hating his sinful ways.

Social Justice Movements

Objections to Social Justice Movements

Most theologically white conservative Protestant Christians object to most social reform movements substantially because of their theological perspective. We outline and counter each of these major objections in this sub-section.

1. You can only change people's behavior by changing their hearts first. Since heart change is a spiritual matter, it is a waste of time and effort to change people's behavior through political action in supporting so-called social justice movements.⁵⁷ The gospel is the only answer to the world's social injustice.
2. The world is going to hell in a handbasket, so we need to wait until the Second Coming of Jesus to establish His perfect kingdom. To do otherwise, is to support the heresy of the Social Gospel.
3. The Bible instructs God's people in a variety of ways to uphold the social order that they find themselves living in because this was ordained by God. For example, even if slavery was not God's ideal, His instructions to ancient Israel provided for that institution, and the apostle Paul counseled a runaway slave to return to his master in the book of Philemon. Moreover, Jesus never advocated any social reforms in His day despite the corruptions within the Roman Empire. He only instructed people on how to improve their own individual behavior. Instead of working for social reform causes, the Scriptures counsel believers to patiently wait for "the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7-8).⁵⁸ The believer is also counseled to be "content" in whatever situation he finds himself in.⁵⁹
4. There are extremist elements in most social reform movements. All of these extremist elements represent views and/or methods that are opposed to Biblical principles, such as violence as a means to achieving goals, Marxist ideology, and so on. In order to avoid those unbiblical extreme views, the Christian ought not to align himself with support for social reform movements.
5. The Biblical perspective is that God deals with individuals rather than with groups of people. Therefore, individual freedom should not be compelled by the government or private organizations to yield to the "common good" because that infringes on individual rights and makes group rights more important than individual rights.

⁵⁷ At the same time, many conservative Christians support the use of political authority to support a kind of public Christian cultural view, which seems to us to be a contradiction.

⁵⁸ This passage is all the more significant to these conservative believers because the context of verses 1-6 concerns economic injustice in particular.

⁵⁹ Luke 3:14; Philippians 4:11; I Timothy 6:8; Hebrews 13:5.

Our Response to the Conservative/Libertarian Objections

1. *Change only comes from changing hearts, not public policies.*

Actually, people's public behavior can be altered by public policies, and sometimes this also results in changed hearts in the long run. The effect of racial integration policies is a notable example of public policy helping to change individual hearts. Where it has actually been implemented,⁶⁰ over time many young students have discovered that their peers of a different race are usually not their enemies, but that they can actually become friends. This demonstrates that racial hatred, like most hatred, is a learned emotion. And that which is learned behavior can become unlearned.

Moreover, even if individual hearts are not changed, does any Christian really believe that people should have the individual freedom to deny other people basic human rights? Were Christians in the nineteenth century who supported the abolitionist cause against slavery therefore wrong to do so? This conservative or libertarian view of freedom implies that only *individuals* have the responsibility to behave well, but that *society* as a whole has no such responsibility. But, first, God implemented in the nation of Israel certain reforms (from the perspective of a contrast with how slavery was practiced in pagan nations) with specific obligations which He obviously expected to be enforced by those in charge of dispensing justice externally (that is, outside of self-enforcement). Second, God also required the practice of gleaning by stating that farmers should intentionally leave some of their crops on the vine, trees, or fields and allow the poor to glean such fresh food for their families (Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22). Today politically conservative and libertarian Christians would decry such an *enforced* policy as socialism. In other words, God built a degree of social justice into their very legal system, a fact which belies the conservative/libertarian claim that God is only concerned with individual behavior and that the freedom of the individual should be used to deny social responsibility.

We agree that the Bible teaches individual responsibility—such as the principle of not eating if one refuses to work (II Thessalonians 3:10). But ancient Israel's legal system demonstrates that individual responsibility does not exclude social responsibility. They are not mutually exclusive principles. Therefore, when the Old Testament prophets continually called God's people to practice social justice,⁶¹ He was not proclaiming that this was only to be the result of voluntary individual behavior. Finally, Ezekiel 16:49 declares that one of the reasons God destroyed Sodom

⁶⁰ Housing patterns have blunted federal government efforts to racially integrate public schools in the United States.

⁶¹ Numerous Old Testament passages cry out for God's people to act in socially just ways, particularly toward the poor, orphans, and widows. See the following representative examples: Isaiah 3:14-15; 10:1-2; Jeremiah 2:34; Amos 2:6; 4:1; 5:11.

was its failure to “strengthen the hand of the poor and needy”⁶² (NKJV). This statement is even more significant because Sodom was a pagan city, not part of God’s theocracy that He directly ruled (at least in theory, when Israel paid attention to Him).

2. The only hope for the world is the soon Second Coming of Jesus. Support for social justice movements therefore represent the false gospel known as the Social Gospel.

The Social Gospel as a term came into vogue in the late nineteenth century in America in order to counter Social Darwinism, the thinking that applied the principle of “survival of the fittest” to human societies. It was introduced by certain Christians who advocated many social reforms of society, but which eclipsed the spiritual gospel of Jesus.⁶³ It was the fact that the Social Gospel became a replacement for the spiritual gospel of salvation in Jesus that made it a false gospel.

Actually, what makes the Christian a believer in the Social Gospel really depends upon his motivation. If it is a replacement for the gospel, rather than a subordinate complement to it, then support for social justice movements represents the Social Gospel. On the other hand, if the gospel of salvation in Jesus is paramount and support for social justice movements is subordinate to the true gospel, then it is not the Social Gospel.

We recognize that several social justice movements have made positive changes in societies despite the fact that the ultimate and perfect justice will belong only to God’s everlasting kingdom. Yes, there will always be problems and injustice in the world until Jesus returns in glory. However, several old forms of injustice have been largely remedied by human social action. The institution of slavery was abolished in large part to the efforts of Christians who saw it as incompatible with the truest principles of Scripture. The horrendous treatment of women that prevailed virtually everywhere until quite recent times (in most places) has been alleviated at least in part. Horrible and dangerous working conditions have been significantly improved in democratic nations, as has been education and economic opportunities for more citizens, along with greater religious, economic, and political freedom in general.

Furthermore, support for social justice movements in democratic nations is one way that a believer can show his support for Jesus in the great controversy between Jesus and Satan.⁶⁴ In one very real sense, support for social justice movements represents the application of the Golden Rule and the Royal Law to human society as a whole.⁶⁵

⁶² Note that this is not merely *neglect* of the poor, but it was a failure to do things to *assist* the poor. If we pay careful attention to the wording, we see that politically conservative and libertarian Christians would consider this a radical idea.

⁶³ Doug Baker and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Reconstruction to the Present*, pp. 112-113.

⁶⁴ Review the section in this paper entitled “The Culture Wars Prophesied in Scripture,” pp. 6-14.

⁶⁵ The Golden Rule is to treat others the way we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). The Royal Law is the great summary of the Ten Commandments that apply to our relationships with other people, which is to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18; James 2:8-11).

3. Uphold the Existing Social Order and Be Patient

First, it is true that God is particularly interested in our individual salvation from sin. This is one reason that after His political nation “divorced” Him, and the Church became the Lord’s spiritual “nation,” He outlined no political agenda, whether for social justice reforms or otherwise. Second, we must not overlook the political context that the Church was in during most of its history until the last two or so centuries in the Western nations. Governments operated as virtual dictatorships, which had been the norm for almost all of human history. Given this context, any support for social justice movements would have completely disrupted the social order and significantly hindered the work of proclaiming the gospel. It would also have almost certainly led to the use of great violence, both by those movements and by governments attempting to suppress them. Therefore, under these circumstances, and where the same ones exist in the world today, Christians ought to be quiet about any political reform movements.

But with the rise of democratic societies, citizen involvement is actually required if freedom and opportunity for all citizens are going to be maintained and enhanced. And surely every Christian believes that freedom and opportunity for all are Christian values, based on the “image of God” in mankind and the principle of genuine love. Even in this new environment for much of the world’s nations, the social order reflects the human culture, which is filled with sinful elements. But the Christian ought to ask himself a key question: Why is sinful culture something that must be opposed regarding matters of *personal* morality, but supported when it comes to *public* morality? To assert this dichotomy is simply hypocrisy.

We must conclude, therefore, that in the democratic context, there is no good reason that Christians should not participate in the political process, directly or indirectly. We also believe that the Biblical ideal is equality for all ethnic and racial groups, economic groups, and both genders. This is based partly on the principle that we are all made in the “image of God” (Genesis 1:26-27) and partly on the Royal Law that we should “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18; James 2:8). Galatians 3:28 applies those two principles to ethnic, economic, and gender groups of people, by stating that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NKJV). Please note that this inspired statement does *not merely* say that all are equally saved in Jesus, as politically conservative and libertarian Christians usually teach. First, the vertical relationship (human to God) always has an effect on the horizontal relationships (human to human). Second, the text does not say that all are one *with* Christ Jesus, but that they are “one *in* Christ Jesus.” In other words, we are all *one with each other* in Christ Jesus. This statement by the apostle Paul is particularly significant by the fact that a common prayer among Jewish males at that time was to thank God that they had not been made a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. Thus, Paul was specifically refuting that cultural thinking that viewed people as inherently *unequal*. We acknowledge that specific political positions and strategies may vary—that there is no single correct political action or strategy that is *the* Christian

one. In other words, Christians may differ from each other in their political judgments about specific political measures. At the same time, the general political *attitude* supportive of the principle of God's ideal of equality for all ethnic and racial groups, economic groups, and both genders represents the Biblical ideal.

Because there is no one right political way to improve society means that the Church as an institution (organization) should avoid becoming involved in purely political methods except to protect genuine religious freedom. Practically speaking, this means that its fulltime pastors, evangelists, and church administrators should stay away from specific political methods and solutions so as not to divide the church. Even other members of the same church should avoid discussing politics or displaying political symbols or words in the environment of association with each other.⁶⁶

4. *Association with Social Justice Movements means Association with Extremists.*

Every single social justice movement attracts extremists to its cause. For example, the abolitionist movement against American slavery in the nineteenth century attracted a few adherents who advocated violence to end slavery.⁶⁷ While the Christian cannot support violence or other examples of extremist ideology, he can support the basic goal of most social justice movements, as long as their roots are not actually based in extremist ideologies (like Marxism) and violence and/or corruption does not *characterize* the movement. Therefore, reference to a relatively few extremists to justify a lack of support for a social justice movement is an excuse to hide a political conservative or libertarian bias—a bias we consider incompatible with Biblical principles.

5. *The Conservative/Libertarian Definition of Freedom Precludes Christian Support for Social Justice Movements.*

The idea behind this objection is the belief that the Biblical perspective says that God deals with individuals rather than with groups of people. Therefore, individual freedom should not be compelled by the government or private organizations to yield to the “common good” because that infringes on individual rights and makes group rights more important than individual rights.

We certainly agree that God has given each human being free will and that he must stand as an individual before God. But we take major exception to this conservative—or more accurately this libertarian—definition of freedom. Christian freedom clearly means freedom for everyone. And if the believer is called upon to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), then it logically follows that we ought to give consideration to the needs or rights of others unless doing so would

⁶⁶ This is the very reason we have avoided writing about specific political issues except those that directly impact the Biblical notions of free will and general Biblical statements of equality as the ideal.

⁶⁷ John Brown is the most infamous example of this phenomenon.

compromise fundamental Christian principles. This is the plain teaching of Scriptures such as I Corinthians 6:12, 10:23-24, and Romans 14:14-23, which tell us that we should think of others and not insist upon having our own way if it will offend someone else in matters of unessential behavior. In other words, we need to think of others more highly than we think about ourselves.

Of course, we concede that such counsel concerns the believer *voluntarily* thinking of others rather than being required to do so by some external authority. However, the very concept of government is that it uses compulsion to require individuals to sometimes sacrifice their own selfish will in order to promote the “common good.” In fact, that is a necessary component of any organized society, even apart from government itself. To assert that this is the thinking of socialism, apart from normal, civilized society, is simply factually wrong.⁶⁸ It is significant that even in the context of a corrupt and evil Roman Empire, the apostle Paul strongly endorsed Christian submission to governmental authority in Romans 13:1-7, including the paying of taxes to such a government (cf. Matthew 22:17-21; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:22-25). No one could argue with the fact that governments frequently use our tax moneys for purposes to which we object and sometimes to things that are not consistent with Biblical principles.

We conclude, therefore, that the libertarian definition of freedom championed by some conservative Christians is not really a Biblical definition. Therefore, the real problem is the *nature* of what an external authority is compelling an individual to do. If he is being compelled to act contrary to Biblical laws, then the believer is under spiritual-moral obligation to ignore or defy such an action. But to argue that being told to sacrifice your own desires for the “common good” is always evil and a violation of individual freedom does not stand the test of Biblical scrutiny. Instead, such thinking represents the conflation of freedom with license and the conflation of *political* libertarianism with *theological* conservatism. In turn, it also represents the triumph of one’s political philosophy over Biblical truth.

Conclusion Regarding Moral-Political Issues

We conclude that the bottom line is that essentially, matters of personal morality that do not directly harm others are spiritual issues, and spiritual issues require spiritual solutions, not political ones. On the other hand, matters of public morality—things which directly impact other people negatively—may legitimately be corrected socially or politically, even though they too are spiritual issues and will only be *completely* resolved by the coming King Jesus’ kingdom. It seems to us that politically conservative, although not libertarian, Christians have it just backwards. They tend to want to legislate or at least legally recognize moral principles regarding *personal* morality that

⁶⁸ It is true that socialist theory emphasizes the “common good,” but it is not unique to socialism. To say that it is simply demonstrates a certain believer’s political biases rather than genuine Biblical principles.

do not directly subtract from anyone else's freedom,⁶⁹ but avoid socially or politically addressing the injustices that affect other people in society.

Is America Really a Christian Nation?

Conservative-minded American Christians tend to view the United States as having been founded upon Judeo-Christian values, including the Ten Commandments. This is the ultimate reason they support the so-called culture wars against the forces of secularism and humanism. They believe these forces constitute an existential threat to not only America's founding principles, but also to its God-given destiny to be the shining light of righteousness to the world. Therefore, it behooves us to examine the historical evidence to see if their claim of America being a Christian nation is accurate or not.

"Many who settled even in the colonial period had originally fled England and other European nations, where the union of church and state had led to religious persecution, in order to seek religious freedom. It was true that some in America sought to use their newly found religious majority status to persecute others, notably the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay Colony before 1691. It was also true that most of the American colonies had official colonial churches, whose ministers' salaries and/or church buildings were at least partly financed by tax money.

"But the Founding Fathers, under the later Constitution, were responsible for another kind of revolution, one in which church and state were kept relatively separate. Thomas Aquinas, the renowned Catholic theologian and philosopher of the thirteenth century, had established the basic philosophical defense for uniting church and state. He declared that natural law was God's eternal moral law that can be derived from reason. However, because natural law was God's law, the church was in the best position to interpret and apply it. This provided a major part of the rationale for the church exercising moral authority over political governments. The Enlightenment, whose height of influence came in the eighteenth century, took a different approach. Because natural law can be deduced by human reason based on observation and study, every free person was capable of understanding it. Therefore, natural law could be deduced by individual reason alone, without mediation and control by the church or any other institution known to man. Influenced by Enlightenment thinking, America's Founding Fathers sought a system of government in which church and state were separate, and where religious freedom could flourish. This was a revolutionary concept that had never before been implemented anywhere in the world, which made America's pioneering of it just as radical as its implementation of democratic republicanism in the political sphere.

⁶⁹ They tend to support at least a generic version of basic Christian moral principles such as having them displayed in government spaces, to legally permit people to discriminate against people they disagree with in the name of individual freedom, and to oppose the freedom of individuals to choose sinful personal lifestyles that do not directly harm others.

“Some argue today that America was founded on Judeo-Christian values, especially including the Ten Commandments. However, it is one thing to state that America was established as a nation of mostly Christian citizens, and quite another to declare that it was created as a Christian nation. Many, though by no means all, of our Founding Fathers were Deists or Unitarians, and while both religious schools of thought believed in a monotheistic God, neither could be classified as Christian in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. Examples of these religious professions include famous Americans like Thomas Paine, George Washington, Ethan Allen, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Quincy Adams.

“While examples of inconsistencies regarding the relationship of church and state can be found among the Founding Fathers, there is more than sufficient evidence to conclude that they never thought they had created a Christian nation. First, the references to God in the Declaration of Independence were made in the context of Enlightenment language, suggesting the Deistic concept of God rather than the Judeo-Christian God. Second, the evidence concerning the Constitution also points away from the creation of a Christian nation. For example, the Founding Fathers soundly rejected an attempt at the Constitutional Convention to rewrite the preamble to the Constitution to read that the United States was dependent upon God. Indeed, there are absolutely no references to God or Jesus in that official document. Moreover, the only reference to religion in that document’s original form is to prohibit religious tests for holding public office (Article VI, Section 3). And the First Amendment includes the “establishment clause,” that prohibits Congress from enacting any laws “respecting an establishment of religion.” According to Thomas Jefferson’s understanding, that amendment erected “a wall of separation between Church and State.” Finally, John Adams was even more blunt in denying that they had created a Christian nation. In his “A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America” (1787-1788), Adams wrote that “It will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service [of the U.S. government] had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the influence of Heaven, more than those at work upon ships or houses, or laboring in merchandise or agriculture; it will forever be acknowledged that these governments were contrived merely by the use of reason and the senses.” Then the Treaty of Tripoli, ratified by the Senate and signed by President John Adams in 1797, emphatically stated, ‘the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion....’

“Perhaps the famous early nineteenth century Christian evangelist Timothy Dwight provides the most persuasive testimony. Dwight bemoaned the fact that “We formed our Constitution without any acknowledgment of God. The Convention, by which it was formed, never asked, even once, his direction, or his blessing upon their labors. Thus we commenced our national existence under the present system, without God.” Indeed, when it was proposed at the Philadelphia convention to pray for God’s blessing during the debate, it was voted down, with Alexander Hamilton declaring that they did not need ‘foreign aid.’”⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Doug Baker and Susan Hutchins, *The American Journey: Pre-Columbus to 1877*, pp. 131-132.

The historical evidence is abundantly clear in telling us that America was not officially founded as a Christian nation. It is true that most of our people were Bible-believing Christians who considered the Ten Commandments and other Judeo-Christian values to be of paramount importance in their lives—even when they did not always abide by those values. In that unofficial sense—in the sense of the character of many citizens’ lives—this nation was founded on Judeo-Christian values. However, that is very different from the kind of nation that the generation of our Founding Fathers created under the Constitution. There is, therefore, no political foundation for our government to favor Christianity, or any other religion, in its laws, court decisions, or public institutions. As we have already learned, attitudes to legally create Christianity as a favored religious tradition in how the nation treats its citizens will eventually be the undoing not only of this nation, but also of the entire world. How ironic that the pursuit of the culture wars by certain Christians in defense of Christian moral principles has missed the entire point of the royal law: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18, NKJV)!

Conclusion

Very shortly before the Second Coming of Jesus, spiritual Babylon (king of the north) “shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many” (Daniel 11:44, NKJV). In this context, the Hebrew word for “annihilate” means to devote as a religious sacrifice for purposes of destruction.⁷¹ For this purpose, he will “plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain” (v. 45, NKJV), which is symbolic of setting up military forces near spiritual Zion, God’s faithful, authentic Christians (Hebrews 12:22-23). Then it is that a heavenly being stands up and brings a great time of trouble to the wicked in order to deliver His people (Daniel 12:1), for 11:45 ends with the statement that “he [king of the north] shall come to his end, and no one will help him” (NKJV). This time of trouble cannot be anything but the Seven Last Plagues, which are directed at end-time Babylon, according to Revelation 15:1-18:24.

So here we have a prophecy about the culture wars that are now being fought in our day. We cannot know whether the forces of counterfeit religion will have a temporary setback before their ultimate victory. But we know that eventually those forces will win the culture wars. The result will then be for spiritual Babylon to turn her wrath against the *loyal* people of God, who stand against Satan’s cosmic conspiracy on behalf of God’s character and Law. Eventually, a death penalty will be enacted against those people, according to Revelation 13:15 and Daniel 11:44. But before it can be implemented, spiritual Babylon, along with her political allies all around the globe, will be interrupted by the Seven Last Plagues, and Jesus will come to rescue His people. How amazing it is to live in these awesome times!

⁷¹ R. Laird Harris, et. al., Vol. 1, #744, pp. 324-325.

The authentic believers in Jesus are and will be caught between the forces of counterfeit Christianity and secularism. On the individual moral principles, we stand with the religious forces in upholding God's moral principles. That is to say, as individuals, we order our lives so that we respect and engage in much prayer. We honor and obey God's Law, more completely than the counterfeit religious culture wars, whose spiritual head (Babylon) actually dishonors God's Law, at least in part, by its figurative absence of the color blue, which represents that Law. We cannot accept abortion as morally right, at least not in normal circumstances. We call sin by its right name, so that we do not view the gay lifestyle as anything but sinful. We attempt to keep God front and center in our daily lives.

But—and this is a most significant *but*—most of the serious problems of the United States and the rest of the world are spiritual problems at their root. And spiritual problems require *spiritual* solutions; *political* solutions will not work, nor do they represent God's character in nations that are not theocracies—that is, are not explicitly ruled directly by God as was ancient Israel, at least theoretically. The political enforcement of individual moral standards where other people are not directly harmed is asking the government to take the place of God in judging those who behave outside the Biblical Law. The Religious Right, which is almost entirely right on the issues of individual morality, are wrong in their advocacy of political action against immoral persons who do not directly harm others. In other words, this movement fighting against secularism and humanism is actually representing the spirit of Antichrist. This movement is mostly right about the moral issues but wrong in their politicization of them. We submit that these are the serious points that every Christian ought to carefully consider as he determines his political views and voting habits.

Unless the reader should misunderstand us, we would be quick to explain that a majority of both political conservatives *and* political progressives will almost certainly be on the wrong side when the cosmic conspiracy plays itself out on a global political scale on this Earth. We have already discussed the tendency of the political conservatives to politicize individual moral issues. But political progressives have no immunity against eventually joining the counterfeit religious side. Granted, it is a more natural fit for social conservatives. However, in order to galvanize the whole world to follow the Satanic effort to turn unwittingly against God, it is highly likely that a series of catastrophes, some natural and perhaps some man-made, will occur in order for a religious response to them to force public pressure to yield to the forces of counterfeit religion. Perhaps under the guise of saving the planet from the effects of climate change or from a large asteroid that may appear to threaten it, it is not that difficult to understand that such an emergency (or *perceived* emergency) would be sufficient to rouse popular demand to get behind global leadership. And with popular demand in support of it, it is relatively easy to see that even political progressives, who would normally resist a church-state union, would cave under the political threat to their positions and careers, especially if it were *perceived* as necessary to save the entire planet from destruction. Therefore, there is no safety in any political philosophy, party, or leaders. In God

alone should we place our trust. That trust translates in practical terms to studying the Bible for ourselves, and then following God's Law and other instructions no matter how unpopular they are.

This Biblical information ought to place things in perspective for the Christian in particular. After all, ultimately the issues involved today and in the future global crisis are and will be spiritual in nature. As the apostle Paul declares in Ephesians 6:12, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (NKJV). Moreover, all of the strictly human conspiracy theories—even the ones that have been true—pale into insignificance in contrast to the cosmic conspiracy theory that has been led by a fallen angel since before the creation of mankind. In other words, all other conspiracy theories actually are Satan's *distractions* to get people's attention off the REAL conspiracy. And God's faithful people cannot afford distractions, especially in the times in which we live. No wonder that the apostle Paul counseled his fellow Christians not to "give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith" (I Timothy 1:4, NKJV). The popular conspiracy theories of today, whether true or not, focus on earthly, temporal issues. As such, they "cause disputes [even in the Church] rather than godly edification...." Therefore, we ought to take our focus off of them, place them on the back burner of our lives if they have a rightful place at all, and center our attention on Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2, NKJV), so that we will not only understand the playing out of the cosmic conspiracy in the context of the great controversy between Jesus and Satan, but we will have the spiritual strength to defy it even if it perils our very lives! Toward that end, we say Amen...and amen!