

The Public Square: Union of Church and State: What We Can Learn from History and Scripture

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Arguments over the “union of church and state” include a connection between the two or a separation of the two, both for mutual benefit. With respect to a connection, the Judeo-Christian heritage offers an advantage to the state, compared to atheism, in upholding biblical values.¹ At the same time, the church is advantaged by tax exemption, protection of property, recognition of ministers and marriages, and freedom to preach religious liberty.² With respect to separation, both state and church are free from the potential temptation to repress the other, with the state as neutral (not favoring one religion over another).³ The state is free to legislate in civil matters, and church members are free to follow the dictates of their conscience.

¹ For example, supporting (1) separation from Britain on the grounds of civil and religious liberties (propounded by Puritan, Baptist, and non-Anglican clergy; Glen E. Throw, “The Christian and Rebellion against Authority,” in *On Faith and Free Government*, ed. Daniel C. Palm (Langham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 50 [after as *On Faith*], and (2) the sanctity of life against unnecessary abortions.

² Congress approved a land grant to build the Baptist College (1832, now George Washington University), and a similar land grant to the Catholic Georgetown University (1833); see *On Faith*, 18.

³ Compare early history: when the American Revolution began, nine of the thirteen colonies had state churches, and all but one of the thirteen colonies used tax dollars to support preachers and church building. Tax-supported provisions were not repealed in Virginia until 1798 and lasted in Massachusetts until 1853. See *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schafer: A Christian Worldview* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1982), 5:433.

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Here are two major views on the relationship of church and state in America: (1) when religion is not allowed to contribute to public debates, this is tantamount to a secular worldview defeating a religious worldview;⁴ (2) religion cannot save a country through politics, only through the gospel, and thus alignment with the kingdom is infinitely more powerful than politics, so that changed lives can impact government.⁵

In 1947, for the first time, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is unconstitutional for government “to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion.”⁶ Law professor Philip Hamburger (University of Chicago) argues: “there are myriad connections between religion and government that do not amount to an establishment, let alone a full union of church and state.”⁷ He argues that there are various degrees of union (from non-establishment to establishment).

Why It Is Important

Christians in America are rightly concerned about the lack of Judeo-Christian values in contemporary society, such as the absence of God, Scripture, and prayer in the upbringing of so many youth (in homes and public schools) and the bombardment of anti-Christian values that daily confront them. They argue that if Christian legislation can prevail, things will get better. Many Christians associate the union of church and state

⁴ See Brenden Sweetman, *Why Politics Needs Religion: The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public Square* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006). J. Budziszewski points out that “people who hold incompatible worldviews disagree not only about what is true but also about how to determine what is true,” *Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices on Political Thought and Action* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 19. This book examines the contributions of Carl F. H. Henry, Abraham Kuyper, Francis Schaeffer, and John Howard Yoder. I would suggest that a complete separation of church from state (or theology from policy) means that no religious conviction can guide members of Congress. Personal convictions of Senators and Congressmen, true to Scripture, should have a place in policy formation if they are not for sectarian benefit but for societal benefit.

⁵ Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded By Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999). Turning from a political way to bring change (through the Moral Majority), the authors seek change through the gospel alone, without any political entanglements. The Jewish leaders at the time of Christ looked for a Messiah who would give them a political solution to their status under Rome, but God sent Jesus as their Savior for the coming kingdom.

⁶ *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947), see *On Faith*, 4.

⁷ Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2002), 486.

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with “taking America back for God.” Some argue that America was birthed by white Christian pilgrims, where church and state were united (as in Massachusetts and Connecticut and later in other colonies), and yet others argue that these pilgrims and their successors robbed native Indians of their lands, broke covenants made with them, and massacred millions of them.

Some Christians argue that America became a Christian nation in 1776, when it gained its independence from Britain and was founded on freedom and inalienable rights. They look to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as grounds for claiming America as a Christian nation.⁸ Others ask whether America was a Christian nation when later “white Christians loaded five to six million Africans on cargo ships,” enslaving some “three million” who survived the awful journeys.⁹

The topic is too broad, requiring a book to do it justice, so this article is confined to instances where a union of church and state have not benefited the church.¹⁰ Four examples are considered: (1) the Constantinian experiment (4th century), (b) the Geneva experiment (16th century), (c) Zurich and Infant Baptism (16th century), and (d) the New England experiment (17th century) and beyond. Only a brief examination is possible. Then we will consider arguments found in contemporary literature on the subject, though representative rather than exhaustive. The final section examines God’s intent for His church with respect to the state, as far as insights from Christ and the NT are concerned. We turn first to the examples from history.

⁸ The Scot Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) wrote the book *Lex Rex* (1644), the “clearest example of the Reformation principle of a people’s political control of its sovereign,” which had a great influence on the writing of the U.S. Constitution through John Witherspoon (1723-1794), educated at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, a Presbyterian who followed Rutherford’s *Lex Rex*, was a member of the Continental Congress (1776-1779; 1780-1782), and was the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence (Shaefer, 5:137, 138).

⁹ See Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), for the way Indians and Africans were treated (98).

¹⁰ We will not discuss the medieval church-state (Catholic experience), and the English state church (Anglican experience), although they are important examples of this topic.

Constantinian Experiment

Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (ca. 275-337) elevated Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire in A.D. 313. His motive was political: to unite his empire of multiple religions. He must have been impressed with the growing influence of Christianity.

Evidence calls into question Constantine's conversion to Christianity.¹¹ He remained a heathen while outwardly an alleged Christian. While blind to the significance of theological disputes, he worked hard to settle them in calling church councils. "He first introduced the practice of subscription to the articles of a written creed and of the infliction of civil punishments for non-conformity."¹²

For the first three centuries after Christ, the Christian church was persecuted and grew. When Constantine "converted" to Christianity, the persecuted church became powerful. Clergy recognized in this new order "a reproduction of the theocratic constitution of the people of God under the ancient covenant," except dissenting sects received no benefit and were "subject to persecution from the state and from the established Catholicism."¹³ In other words, the Catholic church fared well in the union with the state, while other churches (dubbed sects) were persecuted by church and state. But the Catholic church still suffered:

The Roman state, with its laws, institutions, and usages, was still deeply rooted in heathenism, and could not be transformed by a magical stroke. The christianizing of the state amounted therefore in great measure to a paganizing and secularizing of the church. The world overcame the church, as much as the church overcame the world, and the temporal gain of Christianity was in many respects canceled by spiritual loss. The mass of the Roman empire was baptized only with water, not with the Spirit and fire of the gospel, and it smuggled hea-

¹¹ Constantine's coins had the name of Christ on one side, and the Sun-god on the other. He never formally renounced heathenism and was only baptized on his death bed in 337. In the year he summoned the Nicean Council (324), he executed his rival and brother-in-law, Licinius (breaching a promise not to), and later killed his nephew, the young Licinius (hardly eleven years of age), and killed his eldest son Crispus. "At all events Christianity did not produce in Constantine a thorough moral transformation. He was concerned more to advance the outward social position of the Christian religion, than to further its inward mission" (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960, 1st 1910), 3:14-17, quote on 17.

¹² Schaff, 3: 32.

¹³ Schaff, 3:91.

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then manners and practices into the sanctuary under a new name.¹⁴

Baptists in Connecticut objected in 1803 to the union of church and state, referring back to what happened in the time of Constantine:

(T)he doctrines of the gospel . . . retained much of their primitive purity, until the clergy became corrupted by a legal establishment under the Emperor Constantine, then, when church and world became united, and the clergy furnished with rich livings, and large salaries, the constant and main object of every such establishment, civil and religious oppression united their strength to the great injury of mankind.¹⁵

Early champions for freedom of conscience (Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Lactantius) were ignored as the union of church and state restricted “religious freedom.”¹⁶ Heretics were not only excommunicated from church, but considered criminals against the state. Hence, in the middle ages the Roman church persecuted, even with death, those disagreeing with her dogmas.¹⁷

¹⁴ Schaff, 3:93.

¹⁵ Philip Hamburg, 170,171. The Baptists also said “the Christian religion is not an object of civil government, not any way under its control; that the interference of Magistrates to befriend it, has never done it any good, but much harm; and that it is best situated, when left on the same footing where the LORD JESUS himself placed it, and where the constitution of the United States, and most of the States in the union consider it, distinct from the laws of state” (171). Baptists of the early 19th century didn’t demand separation, but focused on religious liberty (177). Protestant concerns about Catholic union of church and state began to be expressed early in 19th century (203), stating that if Catholics gain numerical superiority “religious freedom in this country is at an end” (St. Louis, *Shepherd of the Valley*, Nov. 22, 1851, 210, see also 219-231). Note conclusion, 479-492.

¹⁶ Schaff, 3:138. 139.

¹⁷ Schaff, 3:140. The first beheading took place at Treves in 385, as the first Christian prince (Theodosius) killed those with opposing religious opinions (142, 143). Augustine (354-430) at first was kind to schismatics, believing they should be won by instruction, but through his experience with the Donatists, in the year 400 he advocated persecution partly through his doctrine of the Christian State, but urged magistrates to use clemency, stating, “Nothing conquers but truth, the victory of truth is love.” It is sad that church history exercised the power of persecution rather than the power of “truth is love” (144, 145). Later, Pope Leo the Great (440-461) advocated death for heretics (145). The Crusades and Inquisitions caused a great number of Moslems and Christians to be slaughtered.

Geneva Experiment

The union of church and state in Geneva made it a theocracy. It was a marriage between Calvin's theology and his control of the state. "Calvin extended the authority and civil government to both Tables of the Law."¹⁸ The first table (commandments 1-4, Exod 20:3-11) refers to one's relationship to God (religious matters). The second table (commandments 5-10, Exod 20:12-17) refers to one's relationship to humans (civil matters). The state usually confines its jurisdiction to the second table, but the union of state and church extended the jurisdiction of the state to all ten commandments. This meant that "Offences against the Church are offences against the State, and vice versa, and deserve punishment by fines, imprisonment, exile, and, if necessary, by death."¹⁹ The church in Geneva was a "State Church." This meant that it was the duty of the State to legislate beyond its civil responsibilities. It was to legislate in religious matters, as well.

Here are some of the laws and legal sentences in Geneva: (1) the number of dishes at meals was regulated; (2) attendance at public worship was compulsory, with monetary fines if the law was not obeyed; (3) watchmen were appointed to assure church attendance; (4) a man who heard an ass braying and commented "he prays a beautiful psalm" was banished; (5) men who laughed during a sermon were imprisoned for three days; (6) "The death penalty against heresy, idolatry, and blasphemy, and the barbarous custom of the torture were retained. Adultery, after a second offence, was likewise punished by death"; (7) "A girl was beheaded for striking her parents, to vindicate the dignity of the fifth commandment"; (8) men and women were burned for witchcraft.²⁰

From 1542 to 1546 fifty-eight judgments of death and seventy-six decrees of banishment were passed. During the years 1555 and 1559 the cases of various punishment for all sorts of offences amounted to four hundred and fourteen—a very large proportion for a population of 20,000.²¹

On what basis did Calvin institute a theocracy? "His arguments . . . are exclusively taken from the Old Testament. The Calvinistic as well as the papal theocracy was legalistic rather than evangelical."²² Schaff notes

¹⁸ *History of the Christian Church*, 8:462.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8:463.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8: 490-492,

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8:492, 493.

²² *Ibid.*, 8:472.

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that “The most cruel of those laws—against witchcraft, heresy, and blasphemy—were inherited from the Catholic Middle Ages, and continued in force in all countries of Europe, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, down to the end of the seventeenth century.”²³ No wonder “The union of Church and State is tacitly assumed or directly asserted in nearly all the Protestant Confessions of Faith, which make it the duty of the civil government to support religion, to protect orthodoxy, and to punish heresy.”²⁴ We find this spelled out in a number of creeds.²⁵

Michael Servetus (1511-1553) didn’t believe in the eternal divinity of Christ and opposed infant baptism and predestination. He had other beliefs that need not detain us,²⁶ but Calvin disliked his theology and considered him “the greatest enemy of the Reformation.”²⁷ Since Servetus was only a transient in Geneva (in route to Naples), he was not subject to the laws of Geneva. Legally, all Geneva could do was to banish him. But they put him on trial, denied him benefit of counsel, even though the law (1543) provided the same. This was blatantly unfair.²⁸ All

²³ Ibid., 8:493, 494.

²⁴ Ibid., 8:474.

²⁵ For example, (1) The Second Helvetica Confession (1566), article 30: To a magistrate, “let him draw forth this sword of God against all malefactors, seditious persons, thieves, murderers, oppressors, blasphemers, perjured persons, and all those whom God has commanded him to punish or even to execute. Let him suppress stubborn heretics (who are heretics indeed), who cease not to blaspheme the majesty of God, and to trouble the Church, yea, and finally to destroy it.” Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom With a History and Critical Notes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, 1st 1931), 3:908; after as *Creeds*. (2) The French Confession of Faith; Gallicana (1559), article 40: God “has put the sword into the hands of magistrates to suppress crimes against the first as well as against the second table of the Commandments of God” (*Creeds*, 3:382). (3) The Belgic Confession (1561, revised 1619), article 36: God appointed civil leaders and “he hath invested the magistracy with the sword, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.” They “may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship; that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed, and the kingdom of Christ promoted” (*Creeds*, 3:432). (4) The Scotch Confession of Faith (1560), article 24: (my translation from 16th century English) “Moreover, to Kings, Princes, Rulers and Magistrates, we affirm that chiefly and most principally the conservation and purgation of the Religion appertains; so that not only they are appointed for Civil policy, but also for maintenance of the true Religion, and for suppressing of Idolatry and Superstition whatsoever: As in David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah and other highly commended” (*Creeds*, 3:475-476).

²⁶ See his system, explained in *History of the Christian Church*, 8:736-757.

²⁷ Schaff’s comment, *History of the Christian Church*, 8:765. Calvin must have disliked the insults Servetus hurled at him during the trial.

²⁸ See *History of the Christian Church*, 8:768.

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the Geneva churches consulted said Servetus should be banished, but none suggested execution. But on October 27, 1553, Servetus was burned at the stake. Irwin Polishook says Calvin was “ruthless in suppressing heresy,” and with “few exceptions, the leading Protestants shared the intolerance of the medieval past.”²⁹ Castellio writes, “What a tragedy that those who had so lately freed themselves from the terrible Inquisition should so soon imitate its tyranny, should so soon force men back into Cimmerian darkness after so promising a dawn!”³⁰ Schaff says Servetus’ death had no support in the NT, because “directly contrary to the spirit of the gospel.”³¹ In his defense, Calvin referred to the ferocious decrees in the OT (Deut 13:5-15; 17:2-5; Exod 22:20; Lev 24:16).³²

Zürich and Infant Baptism

Infant baptism was practiced by all the Reformers, who considered re-baptism a heresy.³³ Anabaptists were those who discovered that infant baptism is not taught in Scripture and argued that baptizing infants is an act without faith, for infants cannot exercise faith. The act of baptism without faith on the part of the baptized goes against salvation by faith, the message of the Reformers in opposition to works in the Catholic system. So Anabaptists rightly saw an inconsistency between the message of the Reformers and their practice of infant baptism.

Zürich was an early city where many Anabaptists lived. Although Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) worked in Zürich to forward the Reformation against the Catholic church, he didn’t go any faster than the city council’s approval in religious matters such as abolishing the mass and images. The Anabaptist leader Conrad Grebel (ca. 1498-1526) opposed the fact that the State should control the Church. But civil rule, not biblical truth, prevailed. In January, 1525, “the city council decided to stand by infant baptism and ordered Grebel and the Brethren to discontinue their movement.” The Anabaptists did not comply, so Grebel and others were arrested and condemned by the State to life imprisonment. One of them (Manz) escaped, then was recaptured and executed by drowning on

²⁹ Irwin H. Polishook, *Roger Williams, John Cotton and Religious Freedom: A Controversy in New and Old England* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 3.

³⁰ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: The Reformation, A History of European Civilization from Wyclif to Calvin, 1300-1564* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 6:479-486, quote on 486.

³¹ *History of the Christian Church*, 8:463.

³² Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, 6:485.

³³ *History of the Christian Church*, 7: 607.

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January 25, 1527.³⁴ Anabaptists “were cruelly persecuted in Protestant as well as Roman Catholic countries.”³⁵ It didn’t matter whether the state was united to Protestant or Catholic churches—persecution replaced proclamation as the arbiter between truth and error. The union of church and state was an affront to the Reformation Scripture principle, where Scripture interprets Scripture (*sola Scriptura*). Often the union of church and state, rather than Scripture, handed down verdicts. The union of church and state in Protestant countries had become a new magesterium, the same kind of power opposed by Protestants in their battle with the Catholic church.

New England Experiment and Beyond

Background in England. The medieval church ruled the consciences of humans, high and low, for more than a millennium. John Wycliffe (ca. 1330-1384) pointed out the errors of the Catholic church at Oxford University and is considered the “Morning Star of the Reformation.” For that reason, a ban was placed on him and his followers (1428), and later his body was exhumed, burned, and his ashes thrown into the Swift River. In the 16th century, God brought the truth of the gospel (“the just shall live by faith,” Rom 1:17) to Martin Luther (1483-1546), and later the gospel as union with Christ, with God’s sovereignty replacing Papal sovereignty, to John Calvin (1509-1564).³⁶ But the gospel penetrated only partially into the minds of Luther and Calvin, who both persecuted.

The 16th century Reformation was mostly confined to continental Europe, although the influence of John Calvin came to Scotland. Because Pope Clement VII refused the king’s request for a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, King Henry VIII (1509-1547) broke away from the Catholic church and became the head of the Church of England (Anglican). He seized Catholic monasteries and demanded total obedience to the new religion. Queen Mary I (1553-1558) tried to bring England back to the Roman church, but during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) the church was not considered as Protestant as in Holland and Scotland.

³⁴ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Reformation to the Present* Peabody: Prince, 1997, expanded version, 1st 1953), 2:780, 781.

³⁵ *History of the Christian Church*, 7:607.

³⁶ There are problems with Calvin’s focus on God’s supremacy, not in replacing Papal supremacy, but in replacing God’s love. His double decree, with human election and reprobation decreed by God irrespective of human choice, is not a biblical revelation of the God who loves the world (John 3:16,17).

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Some Christians thought the church should follow John Calvin. But Queen Elizabeth steered a middle course between Catholicism and Calvinism, like her father King Henry VIII. Her death brought an end to the Tudor dynasty, and the first of the Stuart line, King James I (1603-1625), ascended the throne³⁷ and favored the Anglican church. ‘However, he persecuted certain Protestant groups such as the Puritans.’ Later, King James II (1685-1688) favored Catholics.³⁸ Roger Williams commented, “It hath been England’s sinful shame to fashion and change her garments and religions with wondrous ease and lightness, as a higher power, a stronger sword, hath prevailed; after the ancient pattern of Nebuchadnezzar’s bowing the whole world in one most solemn uniformity of worship to his golden image.”³⁹

When James I ascended the throne, a thousand clergymen signed a petition opposing church practices they considered inclined to Popery. Six months later, at Hampton Court, the king rejected their petition. So 300 ministers preached against the abuses of the State church, lost their job, some were consigned to prison, and a silent emigration began.⁴⁰ The swing back and forth between a Papal and an Anglican state church made no essential difference, for both were tyrannical against other religions, with limited room for religious liberty. These were troubled times in Great Britain.⁴¹

For example, the punishment for non-compliance to state legislated religion was severe, as described in the story of John Lathrop, a minister in England’s Newgate prison, with its filth, stench, and people of conscience locked into cells with the worst of criminals, who vented their cruelty on them. The cells were dark, damp, cold, small (nine feet by six

³⁷ Edwin S. Gaustad, *Roger Williams: Prophet of Liberty* (New York: Oxford, 2001), 9, 10; see Polishook, 92; Everett H. Emerson, *John Cotton* (New Haven: College & University, 1965), 21, 22.

³⁸ Lacey Baldwin Smith, “James,” in *The World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1973), 11: 23, after as TWBE.

³⁹ Roger Williams, quoted in Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of Our Fathers: Religion and the New Nation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 23.

⁴⁰ Emily Easton, *Roger Williams: Prophet and Pioneer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 7, 8.

⁴¹ King Charles I (1600-1649) tried to “force Scotland to use English forms of worship,” but the Scots rebelled in 1639. Later, civil war broke out in England (1642) with a struggle between factions of Puritans. Presbyterians dominated the Parliament, but Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) sided with the Independents. In 1649 King Charles I was beheaded (W. M. Southgate, “Charles” in *TWBE*, 3:293, and W. M Southgate, “Oliver Cromwell” in *TWBE*, 4: 918.

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feet), with no bathrooms, and plagued by disease and rats. In this tomb-like space, food was scarce and lacked nutrition—being only water, soup, and bread boiled in water, served once a day. Prisoners were gaunt with sallow faces, and the sane were crowded in with the insane.⁴²

Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud's persecution caused 23,000 people to come to New England between 1629-1640.⁴³ John Lothrop and thirty-two members of his congregation arrived in Boston, Massachusetts, September 18, 1634.⁴⁴

Pilgrims. The Virginia Company of London brought Anglicans to Virginia in 1607, and they became the established church, whereas in Massachusetts, a generation later, Congregationalists became the established church.⁴⁵ The New England Experiment, in this article, is a comparison between Massachusetts and Rhode Island in the early formation of those colonies, between the Congregational and Baptist churches with respect to the state, perhaps best contrasted by John Cotton and Roger Williams, both graduates of Cambridge University and pastors who fled from persecution in England.

The Puritan movement began in England in the 1560s and 1570s.⁴⁶ Fifty years later, in 1620, the Mayflower took 66 days to cross the Atlantic with 102 passengers and 20-30 crew packed into cramped quarters.⁴⁷ Although they wanted to improve their lot, perhaps 50% of them wanted to improve their church experience, which they hoped possible due to the 3000 miles between them and the English king and the Anglican church.

Pilgrims who escaped to the new world included Puritans, who remained loyal to the Anglican church and to England, wanting to purify the church from within, thus forwarding the Reformation. Others were separatists, like Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, and John Lothrop, who separated from the Anglican church and England in order to create a separate and thus a reformed church in the new world. Both sides were

⁴² Helene Holt, *Exiled: The Story of John Lathrop 1584-1653* (Moses Lake: Crest Haven, 2005, 1st 1987), 75-85.

⁴³ Holt, 223.

⁴⁴ Holt, 222. The Lothrop family were forefathers of four United States presidents: Ulysses S. Grant, Franklin D. Roosevelt, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush.

⁴⁵ Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton: University P, 2003), 18.

⁴⁶ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1961, 1st 1939), 367.

⁴⁷ James Deetz and Patricia Scott Deetz, *The Times of Their Lives: Life, Love, and Death in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Freeman, 2000), 36.

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reformers and likened their mission to a new exodus, leaving behind slavery (state church persecution) to cross the Red Sea (Atlantic) to arrive in Canaan or the New Jerusalem (New World), an analogy applied at other times in history.⁴⁸

The Puritans were Calvinists,⁴⁹ and I concur that theirs was “a theology of Divine sovereignty rather than Divine love.”⁵⁰ They wanted to establish a theocracy in the new world as Calvin had in Geneva, and this included a number of rigid rules.⁵¹ The English Calvinists brought the doctrine of persecution with them, and they persecuted other religions much as the Anglican church did in England.⁵² It follows that Puritanism gave rise to “Pharisaism” and was “ruthless in inflicting its will upon dissenters and those whom it judged sinners.”⁵³

For example, the Massachusetts Bay colony organized like a new state with one religion (Anglican) following its charter from England. They ended up persecuting just as they had been persecuted. Among many others, they banished Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams. Hutchinson claimed direct revelation from God, thus making Scripture

⁴⁸ A group of Anabaptists “took over the town of Münster” (western Germany, 1534). They “attempted by bloody force and polygamous revolution to turn Münster into a New Jerusalem” (Edwin S. Gaustad, *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 3). John Lothrop and others hoped London, England would become a New Jerusalem (Holt, 7).

⁴⁹ Perry Miller and Tomas H. Johnson, *The Puritans* (New York: American Book, 1938), 56. Roger Williams did not like the Geneva theocracy (Gaustad, *Roger Williams*, 97). Although Calvinism was being refined (see Perry Miller, *Errand Into The Wilderness* [New York: Harper & Row, 1956], 50-60), the intolerance of religious freedom was the same in Geneva and Massachusetts.

⁵⁰ *History of the Christian Church*, 8:261.

⁵¹ Perry Miller, *Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 23. There were differences in church polity, but the New Englanders complied with social philosophy, so “in any one society only one orthodox regime should be allowed and that the civil magistrate should suppress and, if necessary, extirpate every form of ecclesiastical or doctrinal dissent.” Heresy was punished; all citizens, church members or not, were compelled to attend church and pay taxes to support the clergy. A charter from King Charles I to the Massachusetts Bay colony delegated it to act as in England “to suppress heresy and put subversives to death” (24). “Religious freedom was not a part of the colonial inheritance in America. The mass of immigrants expected uniformity of worship and demanded the persecution of notorious dissenters. Even those who fled from the Old World because of persecution had no intention of favoring religious freedom in America. Persecuted and persecutor alike agreed that liberty of worship should be forbidden.” Polishook, *Roger Williams*, 1.

⁵² Polishook, 3.

⁵³ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, 33.

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secondary,⁵⁴ and Roger Williams argued that the state church in Massachusetts meant a civil magistrate was placed over the clergy to enforce religious matters. Furthermore, the use of the civil sword to enforce religious compliance was not the way to reform the church. Rather, it was the way to produce hypocrites, persons who merely complied outwardly to escape persecution. So the exercise was counter-productive and made the church in even greater need of reform. Williams rejected persecuting persons for differing religious beliefs, believing that freedom of conscience was far more important. In the 1650s Puritans “executed three Quakers.” In 1692 “the colonists hanged (not burned) nineteen persons for practicing witchcraft.”⁵⁵ Membership in the church was required for citizenship in Massachusetts.⁵⁶

Perry Miller and Thomas Johnson comment:

There was almost always an element of narrowness, harshness, and literal-mindedness associated with Puritanism, enough to justify some of the criticisms of the bishops and some of the condemnations that have been made on the Puritan spirit in recent times.⁵⁷

David Hull notes (among other things) that 17th century Puritans portrayed “God as indeed a stern disciplinarian and one not to be trifled with,” yet with a caveat that God is not savage enough to place his “helpless captives” in “protracted writhings.”⁵⁸ I would suggest, however, that Calvin’s theology of God’s eternal hell for those He doesn’t choose to save calls this statement into question, for eternal burning of those God doesn’t love is as severe a view of God as one could imagine. Puritans considered the reprobate as “monuments of his (God’s) severity.”⁵⁹ John Cotton, who was trained at Cambridge University but persuaded by Calvin’s theocracy and his part in the death of Servetus,⁶⁰ had a large impact

⁵⁴ Read her story by Eve LaPlante, *American Jezebel* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), and her trial in David H. Hall, ed., *Notes, The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (Middletown: Wesleyan U, 1968), 311-388.

⁵⁵ David D. Hall, ed., *Puritanism in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 1.

⁵⁶ Larzer Ziff, ed, *John Cotton on the Churches of New England* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1968), 1.

⁵⁷ Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, *The Puritans*, 59.

⁵⁸ David D. Hall, *Puritans*, 13.

⁵⁹ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, 17 (parenthesis added).

⁶⁰ Larzer Ziff, *The Career of John Cotton: Puritanism and the American Experience* (Princeton: University P, 1962), 94.

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on Massachusetts (he arrived in 1633). Six years later he became a Congregationalist, and the union of church and state was illustrated by the civil magistrate excommunicating a church member, which was “a type of papal excommunication.”⁶¹ Cotton opposed democracy, promoting government by governors, not by people.⁶² “The theory that America, at least the northeastern portion of it, was a haven for the persecuted had never been accepted by John Cotton.”⁶³ A law passed in 1644 forbade the existence of a Baptist church in the colony of Massachusetts.⁶⁴

Roger Williams and Rhode Island. Williams was a graduate of Cambridge University who arrived in Boston in 1631, two years before John Cotton. Though a Calvinist, Williams was so different from Cotton and the Puritans that they banished him from Massachusetts (1635) because he respected those who differed with him in matters of religion.⁶⁵ He fled south during the winter (1635-1636) and befriended Indians. He believed in “soul liberty.” His greatest work was *The Bloudy Tenet, of Persecution, for Causes of Conscience* (1644), which notes how church and state union since Constantine (Geneva, Massachusetts) has harmed the church, for the church is not Christian if it persecutes, for Jesus used no secular weapons, only love.⁶⁶ (Cotton and Williams debated these issues). Williams recognized that churches can excommunicate members for spiritual matters, but to persecute for matters of conscience was wrong.⁶⁷ Nearly all of the critics of Williams relied upon the OT views of

⁶¹ Ibid., 97, 98 (quote 98).

⁶² Ibid., 100, see “antidemocratic provisions of Congregationalism,” 228.

⁶³ Ibid., 229.

⁶⁴ Gaustad, *Roger Williams*, 101.

⁶⁵ Even though John Cotton thought he was trying to be purer than anyone else and thought it God’s will that he was banished from Massachusetts (Gaustad, *Roger Williams*, 28, 29. How harsh to banish Williams in the cold of a New England Winter, all in the name of Christ and Christianity.

⁶⁶ For an excellent summary see Gaustad, *Roger Williams*, 89-97, and the debate between Williams and John Cotton (98-100). For practicing his Baptist faith, Obadiah Holmes was tied to a post in Boston’s marketplace and received 30 lashes with a three-pronged whip on his bare back (Sept 5, 1561). Roger Williams was furious, and in a letter to Governor John Endicott of Massachusetts, decried this barbaric treatment in the name of Christianity (101-104). Williams said it was “impossible for any man or men to maintain their Christ by the sword and to worship a true Christ . . . and not to fight against God . . . and to hunt after the precious life of the true Lord Jesus Christ” (Gaustad, *Faith of Our Fathers*, 24). Holmes resided in Rhode Island and went on a preaching mission to Massachusetts (ibid., 23, 24 [in some ways reminiscent of Servetus in Geneva]).

⁶⁷ Charles Smull Longacre, *Roger Williams: His Life, Work, and Ideals* (Takoma Park: Review and Herald, 1939), 160.

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dealing with religious offenders.⁶⁸ Williams showed respect for Indians, including their religion and language. He learned their language and traveled with the Algonquins, and wrote *A Key into the Language of America* (1643). “Williams was perhaps the only educated colonist willing and able to cross the cultural barrier between English and Native Americans in early New England.”⁶⁹

We need to remember the early history of America when we read president Lincoln’s Gettysburg address (Nov 19, 1863): “Four score and seven years ago our fathers, upon this continent, founded a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Lincoln spoke about 1776, and not about Massachusetts Bay colony and those that followed a rigid union of church and state, so different from Roger Williams and Rhode Island. Roger Williams used the metaphor of a hedge or wall of separation of church and state long before Jefferson.⁷⁰ Rhode Island was the last of the 13 original colonies to approve the U.S. Constitution (May 29, 1790), delaying until the Bill of Rights was added.⁷¹ Rhode Islanders were the earlier forefathers that grasped the understanding of liberty of which Lincoln spoke, and were the first Americans to accept all humans as equal, whatever their differences—racial (Indians, English) or religious (Baptists, Quakers, Anglicans, separatists).

Williams lived as a Christian (unlike other nominal Christians). He was troubled that in the name of Christianity Indians were deprived of their land without due compensation.⁷² Rhode Island became “the safest refuge for liberty of conscience.”⁷³ Williams invited persecuted Baptists and Seventh Day Baptists to Rhode Island and became a Baptist. He said: “I believe their practice comes nearer the practice of our great founder Jesus Christ than other practices of religion do.”⁷⁴

Religious Establishment and Beyond. Two hundred years after the pilgrims first landed in the new world, the New England Baptists had a

⁶⁸ Polishook, *Roger Williams*, 32.

⁶⁹ Carla Gardiner Pestana, *Liberty of Conscience and Religious Diversity in Early America, 1636-1786* (Providence: John Carter Brown Library, 1986), 38, see 35-38.

⁷⁰ Nathan O. Hatch in “Foreword” to Gaustad, *Liberty*, ix.

⁷¹ William D. Metz, Joseph M. Ungaro, and Marion I. Wright, “Rhode Island/History,” in TWBE 16: 288h.

⁷² Gaustad, *Roger Williams*, 17.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷⁴ Longacre, *Roger Williams*, 97.

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minority status compared to the Congregationalists.⁷⁵ This is why the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut wrote to President Thomas Jefferson (October 1801) and months later (January 1, 1802) received his famous reply about the separation of church and state. Philip Hamburger argues that Jefferson disliked the power of clergy in Massachusetts and Connecticut.⁷⁶ On the other hand, “no Baptist organizations made separation their demand. Instead, Baptists focused on other, more traditional, claims of religious liberty.”⁷⁷

New England church establishments collapsed in the 1820s and 1830s.⁷⁸ One could argue that in its place, a growing fear of the Catholic church in America developed. In 1832 pope Gregory XVI issued his encyclical *Mirari Vos* condemning the separation of church and state.⁷⁹

For Americans, the crisis of slavery eclipsed worry about Catholicism, but by 1870 Elisha P. Hurlbut, former judge of the New York Supreme Court, “argued that there was an irreconcilable conflict between ‘Democracy and Theocracy’—a conflict ‘stronger and fiercer’ than between ‘freedom and slavery.’ He argued that “the theocracy of Rome and the democracy of America, being utterly antagonistic, have no other way to peace, but by an entire separation.”⁸⁰ With respect to Calvin’s Geneva, Schaff says: “The union of Church and State rests on the false assumption that all citizens are members of the Church and subject to its discipline.”⁸¹ This applies to all the experiments considered above.

⁷⁵ As late as 1774, James Madison deplored the imprisonment of Baptists in Virginia because five or six were in “close jail” for publishing religious ideas, mostly orthodox. See *On Faith*, 9.

⁷⁶ Hamburger, 144-162. “Although Jefferson took justifiable pleasure in his contributions to religious liberty, he was indifferent to the religion of most of his countrymen and downright hostile to their religious institutions. Not until he came under scrutiny as president did he publicly suggest that he considered religion essential to the preservation of liberty. Even then, unlike many of his contemporaries, he certainly did not consider American religious groups and their clergy valuable for this purpose” (482).

⁷⁷ Hamburger, 177. There is no record that Baptists used the president’s letter to promote separation (see 163-189).

⁷⁸ Hamburger, 198.

⁷⁹ Hamburger, 230, 231. It should be noted that “many clergymen persisted in their adherence to a version of Calvinism and, on this account, envisioned the church as the religious and moral guide for the state.” They hoped the “connection” between church and state “would flourish all the more profoundly in the absence of an establishment” (230).

⁸⁰ Hamburger, 247.

⁸¹ *History of the Christian Church*, 8:489.

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The Augsburg Confession is the founding manifesto of Protestantism. It was issued in 1530 after Martin Luther, on October 31, 1517, nailed the 95 Theses, or arguments, against the practice of indulgences on the door of the Catholic Church in Wittenberg, Germany. Article 28, “Of Ecclesiastical Power,” includes the following:

Therefore, since the power of the Church grants eternal things, and is exercised only by the ministry of the Word, it does not interfere with civil government; no more than the art of singing interferes with civil government. For civil government deals with other things than does the Gospel. The civil rulers defend not minds, but bodies and bodily things against manifest injuries, and restrain men with the sword and bodily punishments in order to preserve civil justice and peace. Therefore the power of the Church and the civil power must not be confounded. The power of the Church has its own commission to teach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments. Let it not break into the office of another; Let it not transfer the kingdoms of this world; let it not abrogate the laws of civil rulers; let it not abolish lawful obedience; let it not interfere with judgments concerning civil ordinances or contracts; let it not prescribe laws to civil rulers concerning the form of the Commonwealth. As Christ says, John 18, 33: My kingdom is not of this world; also Luke 12, 14: Who made Me a judge or a divider over you? Paul also says, Phil. 3, 20: Our citizenship is in heaven; 2 Cor. 10, 4: The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the casting down of imaginations.⁸²

Contemporary Arguments

J. Budziszewski writes: “Evangelical Christians have been conspicuous in the American public square since colonial days.” He notes that conventional wisdom says their reentry into public affairs began with “the spectacular rise of the fundamentalist Religious Right in the 1970s,” but he suggests that “the founding in 1941 of the National Association of Evangelicals” is a better reentry date.⁸³

Ronald Reagan’s presidential victory in 1980 heartened conservative Christians. “Suddenly, faith and politics seemed a promising match.”⁸⁴

⁸² <http://www.nationalcenter.org/AugsburgConfession.html>

⁸³ J. Budziszewski, *Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices on Political Thought and Action* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 15.

⁸⁴ Comment on flap of the book, *Blinded By Might: Can the Religious Right Save America*, by Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1999).

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Later, when the Moral Majority petered out, the Christian Coalition took over and became the new evangelical presence in political activism. Conservative evangelicals become a force in politics. Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson's book *Blinded by Might* (1999) shows that both movements failed in their mission to stop abortion and pornography and to restore the American family in order to bring about a new world built on "traditional values." They tried to build the kingdom of God through their own works (political means), which is just as impossible as earning salvation through one's own works.

The failure of these movements was due to mixing two kingdoms, human and divine. They were repeating what had failed at the time of Christ. "Many of the religious leaders," said Cal Thomas, "and even his disciples were looking for a political deliverer to break the grip of Roman rule. They wanted a Messiah who would give them heaven on earth, end their oppression, and put them in charge. But Jesus would have none of it. His kingdom, he said, "is not of this world" (John 18:36)."⁸⁵

There is an important distinction between (1) using the state to push one's religious agenda, which has happened often in history, and (2) allowing religious values to inform politicians in making decisions for the good of all citizens. The first method overrides the religious freedom of those whose beliefs differ from those held by the state-enforced religious ideas. The second method takes into consideration the broader context (beyond the merely secular) for addressing moral issues like abortion and euthanasia.

Philosopher Brendan Sweetman, in his book *Why Politics Needs Religion: The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public Square* (2006), considers secular and religious ideas that are brought to the political table. He argues that secularism and religion are both worldviews.⁸⁶

Furthermore, he argues that secularism is a religion.⁸⁷ I know this to be true from my study of evolutionary theory. It takes faith to believe foundational premises of evolution, and once secularism has been accepted, the believers become as ardent as any believer who has faith in the existence of God. In fact, evidence for God is found in nature (intelligent design, ID) whereas evolutionists credit ID to the blind forces of the survival of the fittest and natural selection over deep-time, which

⁸⁵ Ibid., 177.

⁸⁶ Brendan Sweetman, *Why Politics Needs Religion: The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public Square* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 46-84.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 81-83.

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takes great faith, given the complexity of the cell—thought simple in Darwin’s day but now proven to be a veritable factory of inter-connected precision machines discovered by biochemists using sophisticated electron microscopy.⁸⁸

It is no longer acceptable to call secular beliefs reasonable and religious beliefs unreasonable. Secular worldviews cannot claim ownership of the rational realm. It is as appropriate to apply reason to a religious worldview as it is to a secular worldview. Faith-based reason qualifies as a religion, and this must include secularism. Supernaturalism and naturalism both qualify as a religion. Sweetman points out that the ideas of both are based on (1) a written source, such as “the Bible, the Qur’an, John Stuart Mills’ *On Liberty*, Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital*, John Rawl’s *A Theory of Justice*”; (2) an authority like Billy Graham or Richard Dawkins; (3) “a profound personal experience of some kind (e.g., the experience that God is near, the experience that people are fundamentally equal”; (4) on tradition; and (5) on an “appeal to faith.”⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Sweetman concludes: “I am prepared to agree that one should not introduce into the public square religious beliefs based on the above five sources.” He suggests the same policy for the secularist.⁹⁰

Space does not allow presenting all that Sweetman says in his book. But note his significant statement:

We must also note that all positions that are made the basis of law—whether secularist or religious—restrict human conduct. This is true even if an activity is made legal (and not just illegal). If abortion is legalized it also restricts the conduct of religious believers in the sense that although they want to live in a world where abortion is illegal, they are forced to live in a society where it is legal. Almost everyone who contributes to public debates wants some aspect of their views imposed (usually by law) on those who disagree with them.⁹¹

Sweetman argues a difference between higher-order and lower-order religious beliefs. The distinction is made between the moral rights of workers, or treatment of the homeless (lower-order) compared to the Eucharist (higher-order). Only lower-order religious beliefs can be

⁸⁸ For example, see Michael J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box : The Biochemical Challenge of Evolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁸⁹ Sweetman, 86, 87.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89, 117.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

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brought to the debate in the public square. So for Sweetman, the phrase “separation of church and state” now means that higher-order beliefs only must be excluded from the public square.

We live in a postmodern world where absolutes are dismissed. Rampant relativism is not conducive to true living, a topic I have addressed elsewhere.⁹² With this in mind, Sweetman is right to state:

the secularist often approaches many of the topics in dispute in U.S. society mainly from a relativistic perspective, while proponents of the religious worldview approach them from a more objective moral perspective. Most important, secularists often appeal in U.S. society to what I like to call “the rhetoric of relativism.” This rhetoric is used in an attempt to keep traditional religious beliefs and values out of public arguments and debates, while at the same time avoiding a substantive debate about these beliefs and values.⁹³

As Sweetman notes, moral relativism has problems: logical and practical. First the logical problems: Relativists oppose objectivists for imposing moral values on all persons, but by stating that this is wrong, relativists make an absolute moral statement, the very thing they oppose. Now for the practical problem: A true relativist (1) could not criticize someone for stealing his car, (2) could not complain about a bank for overcharging him, (3) could not condemn racism, or (4) could not condemn murder, to name some examples.⁹⁴

It seems to me that in a secular postmodern world, where relativism does not contribute to life in a pragmatic or practical way, persons with religious values need a place at the table to bring to the debate values that benefit human life. This means that politicians informed by religious values of the lower-order can better contribute to society. Their values enable them to rise above meaningless relativism and speak from a broader context that evaluates the liability of relativism and points to a better way forward. But this in no way allows any religion to legislate higher-order religious doctrines to impose their understanding of biblical insights on others, whether religious or secular. Whatever help religious values bring to the state must never violate the religious freedom of all citizens.

⁹² Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP), 1:455-517.

⁹³ Sweetman, 234.

⁹⁴ Sweetman, 237.

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This is why Chief Justice of Alabama Supreme Court Roy Moore was wrong to place a large monument of the Ten Commandments in the central rotunda of the Supreme Court building, unveiled on August 1, 2001. The monument suggested that the state of Alabama endorses the Christian religion, which is only one of many religions among its citizens. Therefore, by August 21, the Alabama Supreme Court unanimously voted to remove the monument.

I concur with Presbyterian Paul C. McGlasson, a Yale graduate, who said,

As Christians we affirm the separation of church and state. We denounce every effort to establish the Christian religion as the law of the land. The role of the state is to protect religious freedom, not to ensure Christian truth. Thus, the widespread effort to enshrine the Ten Commandments in the public sphere—however well intended—does not spring from the confessing church but from a misguided conservative ideology.⁹⁵

Writing in *The Christian Statesman*, Gordon Keddie calls for a “restoration of the so-called blue laws” (Sunday laws), for the state to uphold the law of God. He argues that it is proper for the state to protect Sunday, irrespective of what the majority might say to the contrary, because such legislation upholds God’s unchangeable law. He evidently overlooks that God’s unchangeable law singles out Saturday as the Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11), as a memorial of creation (Gen 2:1-3). That’s why Christ said “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27)—for the human race, and not just for the Jewish race. That’s why Christ urged that the same Sabbath law be kept nearly forty years after His resurrection at the time of Jerusalem’s destruction (Matt 24:20), which refutes any change of God’s immutable law in honor of the resurrection. Keddie says God’s law is immutable, but evidently has not understood the biblical meaning of God’s unchanging law.⁹⁶

Scripture has predicted that a power would “try to change the set times and the laws” (Dan 7:25). This needs to be understood in its original Aramaic. There are two words used for time in Daniel 7:25; (1) *id-dan*, meaning a span of time (“a time, times and half a time”), and

⁹⁵ Paul G. McGlasson, *Invitation to Dogmatic Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 251.

⁹⁶ Gordon Keddie, “Should Civil Government Enforce the Sabbath,” *Christian Statesman*, May-June, 1997.

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zeman, plural of *zimmin*, meaning a point in time in the singular and in the plural means repeated points in time. Law is singular in the original, so the text speaks of changing repeated points of time in the Law, which can only refer to the weekly seventh-day Saturday Sabbath.⁹⁷ This is why Christ urged His followers: “when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand” (Matt 24:15). William Shea insightfully says: “the setting up of the abomination of desolation of Daniel 12:11 can be seen as the union of church and state and what the church set out to accomplish through the power of the state.”⁹⁸

Churches are uniting on common points of doctrine. CCT means “Christian Churches Together,” an organization that began in the United States in September 2001, and thirty-four churches adopted the by-laws and officially organized in Atlanta in 2006. Among other purposes, the corporation is formed “to speak to society with a common voice whenever possible” and to “promote the common good of society” (Article Three, numbers 6 and 7).⁹⁹

Biblical Contribution¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ William H. Shea, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier : Daniel 7-12* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1996), 139.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁹⁹ <http://www.christianchurchestogether.org>

¹⁰⁰ Postmodernity, which rejects universals, is not equipped to interpret self-evident biblical truths any more than logical positivism (1923 to Postmodernity), which confined truth-statements to mathematicological and empirical statements, all others being meaningless (including religious statements). In our postmodern age, when truth is truth if it is truth for me and not because it is truth in itself (cf. Kant), the objectivity of divine revelation is exchanged for meaningless pluralism and polyvalence.

Evangelicals who believe in Scripture as trustworthy can evaluate the topic before us with foundational insights not perceived by liberals and humanists who de-construct Scripture, if they give it any time at all. Evangelical epistemology has no room for doubt of Scripture (cf. René Descartes’ approach to reality, 1596-1650), or posit a different God in the OT and NT (as did the Gnostic Marcion, d. ca. 160), but approach all Scripture as God’s infallible revelation meant to inform and inspire. Evangelicals ask the Holy Spirit to make clear His authorial intent in Scripture. I have written more on logical positivism in *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 1: 54-75.

One week before giving this paper, I discovered Gregory Boyd’s book *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church*. It was a great inspiration to me, and I highly recommend it. All evangelicals need to read this book, for it has important biblical insights that space restricts from inclusion in this arti-

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1. “God is love” (1 John 4:8b) means the Trinity experience an inner history of eternal reciprocal love and created Adam and Eve to image that love. The Trinity are three Persons in an eternal freedom of equality, where each one loves the other two more than Himself. The intent of the Trinity was that humans reflect this love in the finite sphere, through the indwelling of God’s love within them.

Selfless love was not new to Christ in becoming the God-man. It was the overflow of the Trinitarian love outward that had always existed inward, as the very essence of God. Here is the profound eternal depth of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, who didn’t enter the world as a conquering King, but as a helpless babe. He left the royal throne of glory where He was praised, adored, and loved and began a long, lonely journey as the Man of sorrows, acquainted with human grief and struggle, often misunderstood, hated, spied on. He came to His own and His own received Him not.

2. Jesus said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:44-48). Christian love reveals a citizenship in the kingdom of heaven, and makes Christians and the church the salt and light to the world (Matt 5:13, 14), for it springs from union with the King of kings, rather than from union with state and rulers.¹⁰¹ Unbelievers need to see the gospel in the lives of

cle, but should be pondered carefully and prayerfully by all Christians who want to follow Jesus, be like Him, and fulfill His intent for His church in these challenging times.

¹⁰¹ Israel/Judah were tempted to replace God by heathen deities (Jezebel and Baals, 1 Kings 18:4-19:2). This illegitimate union (with other gods in place of God) is called “prostitution” (Hos 4:10). In the book of Revelation a woman represents (a) true followers of Christ (Rev 12) and (b) false followers of Christ (Rev 17). The woman of Revelation 12 is persecuted (vs. 6,13,17), and the woman of Revelation 17 persecutes (v. 6). The persecution involves coercion of worship (worship or be killed; Rev 13:15, note how many times worship is used in the chapter). This forced worship under death decree reminds us of Nebuchadnezzar’s pagan decree to worship his image or be thrown into the furnace (Dan 3:4-25). Note Nebuchadnezzar’s theocracy (pagan worship-state union) also issued a harsh coercive decree after the fiery furnace deliverance (Dan 3:29). The woman of Revelation 17 is described by God’s angel as “the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries” (Rev 17:1b,2). This “woman was drunk

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Christians, particularly because “the god of this age” has done so much to keep the gospel from them (see 2 Cor 4:4).

3. In Christ’s day Israel hated the oppressive Romans and thought more of their temporal freedom than of telling their captors how to gain eternal freedom. They were bent on restoring the theocracy for selfish reasons. At the same time Christ gave up His freedom in heaven in order to tell the good news to Israel and others of how to gain eternal freedom—in Him. Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews” (John 18:36). He rebuked Peter for using the sword in response to His capture (John 18:11).¹⁰² The union of church and state (Jews and Romans), although temporary, put Christ through terrible torture, staggering injustice, inhuman humiliation, and the worst death possible: crucifixion. All hell broke loose through that uniting of church and state, yet Jesus did not retaliate in kind, bore it all with longsuffering and dignity, because He was filled with the “fruit of the Spirit,” which is “love” with its attributes of “joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control” (Gal 5:22,23).

4. Calvinistic predestination must be evaluated by Calvary, and not the other way round. Jesus “is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).¹⁰³ Contrary to the Calvinistic TULIP, atonement is unlimited, but is it universalism? Jesus answers: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the

with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus” (Rev 17:6). She is called “Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes” (Rev 17:5, reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon). Here is a union of church and state that persecutes fellow Christians. The book of Revelation is a revelation of Jesus our Lord and of Christ through His followers. The reader is urged to neither add to nor take away from this book, for such acts have eternal consequences (Rev 22:18,19). Here is a call for Christians to carefully study the book of Revelation to see if this last prophetic teaching in Scripture is speaking about a union of church and state which will bring a final persecution of Christians by Christians, and what this means to the topic before us, which would need a separate article to explore.

¹⁰² All the 16th century Reformation leaders advocated persecution for those they considered heretics, and so were not different in this respect from the Catholic church. The statue of Zwingli in Zurich has him standing with a Bible in his right hand and a sword in his left hand.

¹⁰³ The death of Jesus for all humanity was hidden from unbelievers by Christian persecutions.

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world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16, 17). Christ’s mission is global, but belief or disbelief in Him causes one to “perish” or receive “eternal life.”

What did Jesus mean by “perish”? The Greek is *mē apolētai*, an aorist, middle subjunctive verb meaning “destroy.”¹⁰⁴ That’s why “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Christ said it first in Eden: “you will surely die”(Gen 2:17b) if disobedient, but Satan countered to Eve “You will not surely die” (Gen 3:6a). Who was right? Think of it this way. Jesus believes in religious liberty, for salvation is given to those who choose to believe in the Giver and His gift. Jesus respects human freedom to respond to His love. Jesus draws people to Him without coercion. Those who accept His death in their place will live eternally. Those who refuse to come to Christ and accept His gift “perish,” for Jesus allows them their choice to be separated from Him, the source of eternal life. Jesus died to redeem and to destroy the devil (Heb 2:14, cf. 1 John 3:8b), and if the devil perishes, why not his followers? Hell fire is biblical, but needs to be understood in the context of Christ’s word “perish,” for fire consumes, so the result (not process) is everlasting. If we believe God tortures forever, what is wrong with church and state torturing for a fraction of that time? Doesn’t one’s view of God cause one to want to be like

¹⁰⁴ See H. C. Hahn, “Destroy, Perish, Ruin,” DNTT 1:462-465. This agrees with annihilation in Scripture (Phil 3:19; 1 Thess 5:3; 2 Thess 1:6-10; Rev 11:18). The biblical teaching on hell is a burning fire that consumes. That’s why annihilation is also taught in Scripture. Thus, soul and body is destroyed in hell (Matt 10:28), and the lake of fire is the second death (Rev 20:14). Figurative language that describes some passages about hell (“the smoke of their torment arises for ever and ever,” Rev 14:11) needs to be understood in context. This phrase in Revelation 14:10 is drawn from Isaiah 34:10, which describes the desolation of Edom (“It will not be quenched night and day; and its smoke will rise forever), which is qualified by “From generation to generation it will lie desolate” (v. 10). God’s fiery judgment on Edom did not go out until the city was destroyed. It is not burning today. This fact suggests that the fire is unquenchable until all is consumed. That’s how Jeremiah described God’s fiery judgment on Jerusalem: “I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses” (Jer 17:27b). This happened twice, when the city was destroyed through fire by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. and through fire by the Romans in A.D. 70. The fire didn’t go out until it did what fire does—consumes. This is why Christ’s mission, in part, is described as: “he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14). That’s why the eschatological judgment is described as follows: “‘Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘Not a root or branch will be left to them’” (Mal 4: 1).

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Him, and is this why there has been so much torture of others in the name of Christ by Christians?

How can the unselfish eternal reciprocal love in the Trinity ever have anything to do with torturing the reprobate whom they have allegedly never loved? If destiny is based on an arbitrary choice of God in eternal history, why did the Trinity send Christ to tell the world that destiny is based on human choice? And why have a future judgment if the Trinity have already judged in eternity? And why take the gospel to the whole world when it cannot change God's predestination?

On the cross Jesus pled, "Father forgive them." His love was unconditional. He loved His enemies just as He taught His church to do. This was His response to the worst religious persecution ever committed by a union of church and state. He died loving everyone, even His persecutors, for Scripture says: If I "surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:3). Can God ever forget those who turned Him down? Can His love for them ever be less than eternal, though hating their sins? Eternal suffering in the heart of God, missing His children who rejected Him, is a view of God compatible with His Calvary love.

I believe this eternal love may illumine a text about the cross: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). Has this ever been fulfilled? Few were drawn to Him among the rabble at Calvary. Christians have been drawn to Him through two millennia, but when have all been drawn to Him? Not yet. Not until the final judgment, when all bow before Him (Isa 45:23b; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10, 11; Rev 5:13; 15:3; 19:1-6). Although rebels don't change, they will realize Jesus died for them, He wanted to save them.

5. Jesus said entrance to His kingdom is based on the way we relate to others, for this reveals our relationship to Him. We can only love as He loves when filled with His love. In the end Christ will say: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of those brothers of mine, you did for me" (see Matt 25:31-40), just as He said to Saul, the persecutor of Christians: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4b). Christ changed Saul the persecutor to Paul the proclaimer. Paul declared: "The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal 5:14), and he also said "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink" (Rom 12:20a, quoting Prov 25:21). Saul could never forget the words of Stephen about those stoning him to death: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts

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7:60:b), which echoed Christ's "Father forgive them." Stephen was "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:55a).

Spirit-filled Christians love their enemies, for such is Calvary love. Those devoid of Calvary love cannot enter the kingdom (Matt 25:41-46). Sadly, Christ says, "many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matt 7:22,23). Works done in the name of Christianity devoid of Calvary love are evil, for they fail to reflect Christ's love, and so fail to reveal the gospel to the world in order to win unbelievers to Christ, just as Christ won Saul. This is the foundational problem with the experiments studied above. Calvary love extends the gospel through revealing it in acts as well as words. Calvary love is foreign to secular kingdoms, even if they are a union of church and state, for loving everyone as Christ does cannot galvanize armies to kill enemies. But God's lavish love for His world, revealed through Christian lives and acts, is the mission Christ gave to His church (Matt 28:19,20), and not through alliances or acts unsupported by Jesus in the NT.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

The lives of great Christians and the death of martyrs has done more to extend the gospel than all of the crusades, inquisitions, "Christian"

¹⁰⁵ In OT Scripture God associated with the nation of Israel and its capital in Jerusalem in the most holy place of the temple. He instituted a theocracy (union of church and state) to govern and guide His people. The OT theocracy was a type of the future theocracy, when the new "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16b), the redeemed of all ages, will have God in their midst in the New Jerusalem in the new earth (Rev 21:1-3). Between the past (OT) and the future (New Earth) is the Christian age. Does God intend a theocratic form of church and state in this interim time?

Unlike in the OT, Christ said "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), and taught His followers to pray "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10). The central emphasis in Matthew is "the gospel of the kingdom" (4:23; 9:35; 24:14; cf. 26:13). The Greek word "kingdom" (*basileia*) appears more frequently in Matthew than in the other gospels and nearly three times as much as in Mark. It is the "kingdom of heaven" (4:17; 5:3b; 10b,19,20; 11:11b,12; 13:24,33; 13:44,52; 18:23; 19:12,14 23; 20:1; 25:1), and has drawn near (10:7). There is a present and future dimension to the kingdom, the well known "already-not yet" of the NT. So what is the present dimension?

Christ advised that wheat and tares be allowed to grow together until harvest (Matt 13:27-30). Jesus taught, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5). "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (v. 7). "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (v. 9).

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theocracies, and religious legislation by states combined. The greatest life and death is that of Jesus Christ. No other life and death has done more to advance the gospel through revealing to hearts and minds that God is love (1 John 4:7-16). Jesus Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), and “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another” (John 13:34,35).¹⁰⁶

Christ calls Christians to unite with Him, rather than calling for the church to unite with the state. God calls Christians to extend the kingdom of heaven, rather than them to extend any kingdom on earth. God “sets up kings and deposes them” (Dan 2:21) and calls individuals to be as salt and light to the world (Matt 5:13,14) and hence to kings and kingdoms as He did through Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, and Esther in Medo-Persia. But Christ does not call His church to rule any state or any state to rule His church, but to follow Him in servant-leadership to impact the citizens and leaders of states to become citizens of the kingdom of Heaven.

In a post 9/11 world, where terrorism has caused the loss of some freedom to gain an elusive security, we need to be reminded of what happened in 68 BC. In the *New York Times* (Saturday, September 30, 2006, Robert Harris refers to pagan Rome as the world’s only super-power, and it was dealt a profound psychological blow when Mediterranean pirates attacked Rome’s port at Ostia in a terrorist attack that destroyed their fleet, resulting in decisions that set them on a path to the destruction of their Constitution, democracy, and liberty. Is history being repeated?¹⁰⁷ Will the separation of church and state be thrown away in

¹⁰⁶ Some may argue that God punishes in the OT, and will do so, in part, through the “wrath of the Lamb” at the second advent (Rev 6:15-17). God sets up and deposes kings (Dan 2:21b). He has a providential care over the world even though it is the realm where the “god of this age” works (2 Cor 4:4), and humans reap what they sow (Gal 6:7). These are true, but so are the following: (a) Jesus said: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), for the Trinity is as loving as Jesus (1 John 4:7-16); (b) “I the Lord do not change” (Mal 3:6a), and (c) “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8). All God’s judgments should be understood in the light of the words of Jesus: “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:31,32); which is compatible with John 3:16, where God offers a choice—to perish or have eternal life through His judgment for all humans, for “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us” (2 Cor 5:21a).

¹⁰⁷ <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract>

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the end-time? Careful study of Revelation 13 indicates this eventuality, but that is a study for another time.

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