

THE PRICE OF CULTURAL COMPROMISE: A WARNING FROM HISTORY

CHRISTIANS ARRESTED FOR DISTRIBUTING PAMPHLETS OPPOSING HOMOSEXUALITY!

SUPREME COURT BANS 10 COMMANDMENTS FROM COUNTY COURTHOUSES IN 41 STATES!

SUPREME COURT GIVES GOVERNMENT THE POWER TO SEIZE CHURCH PROPERTY TO BUILD OFFICE COMPLEX!

If the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, 21st century Christians are paying a much higher price for complacency and compromise. While the true news headlines listed above are still light years from the persecution early Christians experienced in 1st century Rome, America's recent past proves it is not an exaggeration to warn that many of America's political leaders and institutions are pursuing policies more hostile to Christianity than at any time in this country's history. Unlike their courageous 1st century ancestors, many Christians today are responding to those policies with a timidity that merely encourages their anti-Christian antagonists. This new "Christian" defeatism, characterized by compromise, retreat, and above all, gross distortion of Scripture, has many roots but its consequences are already proving disastrous for Christians and non-Christians alike.

To be sure, Christians who try to live distinctively righteous lives will always face a certain amount of persecution and ridicule, but for those who persevere, Christ promised "the Kingdom of Heaven." However, God also warns of innumerable persecutions and hardships to those who seek accommodation with and assimilation into the secular world we are called to live in but not conform to. Certainly, the Old Testament is crowded with examples of the Hebrews adopting the idolatrous ways of their pagan neighbors only to lose their freedom and ultimately their lives to the very neighbors they sought to imitate. In *America's Real War*, Daniel Lapin

draws a provocative comparison between the plight of German Jews in the Holocaust and Christians in America today. While in no way suggesting America's Christians face an impending Holocaust, Lapin, a Jewish rabbi and author, points out the simple historical fact that Germany's Jews were the most secularized and assimilated of all Europe's Jews in 1900. German Jews discarded traditional garb in public and went so far as to remove the two-thousand-year-old reference to rebuilding the Holy Temple in Jerusalem from their prayers, replacing it by citing Berlin as the New Jerusalem. In the 1920's prior to the Nazi era many Jewish actors, entertainers, novelists, and playwrights identified with and contributed to the assault on traditional values in Weimar, Germany. Best symbolized by the decadent cabarets that glorified free-love, nude dancing, transvestitism, and homosexuality, Germany's post-World War I "cultural war" against traditionalism closely parallels the current struggle in America between those who seek to preserve America's Godly heritage and those who want to replace it with a pleasure-centered, non-judgmental universe. While Germany's revolution in values was attractive to youth from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds, the more Germany's Jews disassociated from the Torah and joined the modernist assault on their country's religious heritage, the more ammunition they unwittingly gave extreme nationalists who would later use it to isolate, segregate, and even exterminate them. Ironically, Germany was the country in which Jews had nearly fully assimilated, and their acceptance in the democratic city of Weimar would trigger their greatest rejection in what became Nazi Germany. ¹

Many 21st century Christians in America are making much the same mistake as Germany's Jews made in the 1920s and 1930s. Not only does America's "cultural war" mirror that of Weimar Germany, but increasing numbers of Christians have responded to it by assimilating into this fun-addicted society rather than being distinctive. Listening to the same radio "shock jocks" (even over a Christian school's intercom), attending the same vulgar movies and concerts, watching the same "trash" television programs, many Christians are becoming just as desensitized to moral decadence as everyone else. In 2004 pollster George Barna, who specializes in religious-related cultural trends, reported that among evangelical Christians the divorce rate was the same as for non-evangelicals. Even more alarming was that only 25% of "born-again" respondents said divorce without adultery was sinful. Barna's survey also found that while abortion, pornography, homosexual sex, and co-habitation were the least acceptable

behaviors to evangelicals, more than 1 in 10 non-evangelicals found these behaviors to be morally acceptable. Instead of being “salt and light” at school, work, and in the civic arena, too many Christians have become masters of separating their spiritual lives from their secular ones rather than practicing Christianity as a lifestyle. American political and social institutions once **respected** and even **reflected** Christian values because Christians lived and voted in such a way that they shaped those institutions. Today the opposite is true. As a consequence of accepting the false notion that a Christian’s spiritual life should be kept strictly private, “New Age” Christians have given secularists with anti-Christian agendas in government, business, and education their greatest opportunities to remove religious values from public life. ²

One of the many misconceptions about democratic government is that the majority rules. To be more exact, the majority rules only if the majority votes. During the last half century, that has seldom happened in America. Apparently, many Christians have joined the apathetic majority. In fact, Christian voter turnout actually declined 40% from 1992-2004. Until 2004, 50% of all eligible Christian voters were not even registered to vote! In this same period, key legislation directly involving Christians failed to pass Congress, including bills that would have banned human cloning, prevented the I.R.S. from revoking the tax exempt status of churches that oppose abortion and gay marriage, and limited the jurisdiction of federal courts to hear cases involving “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance. Moreover, Congress failed to enact constitutional amendments banning gay marriage and restoring religious freedom in schools including the protection of prayer and the posting of the 10 Commandments. ³

To a great extent, the type of persecution Christians face in America today is self-inflicted in the sense that political lethargy and cultural compromise have only led to increased anti-Christian bigotry in our society. The floodgates opened in the 1960s and have continued non-stop for four decades. Indeed, since the 1962-63 prayer and Bible-reading cases in public schools, federal courts have banned voluntary, non-denominational prayers at school assemblies, graduations, and football games. Likewise, federal courts have declared as unconstitutional war memorials or any public monument designed in the shape of a cross, have forced cities like Edmond, Oklahoma, to remove crosses from its city seal, and have declared Wisconsin’s Good Friday holiday unconstitutional. In 2005 the Supreme Court, a key weapon in

the secular humanist arsenal, banned the 10 Commandments from county courtrooms across the nation in *McCreary County v A.C.L.U of Kentucky*. It also ruled in *Kelo v New London* that city and state governments could use eminent domain to seize private property, including tax-exempt Church property, to make way for private development that could generate additional tax revenues. Equally frightening, the United States Navy in 2006 ordered its chaplains not to conclude public prayers in Christ's name. ⁴

Unfortunately, state and local governments, as well as businesses, have imitated many of the federal government's anti-Christian policies. Pennsylvania passed bills criminalizing verbal harassment of homosexuals. They defined "harassment" in such an ambiguous way that in 2004 Philadelphia police arrested 11 Christians and charged them with violating a local "hate crime" law because they read Scripture and passed out Gospel literature in protest to "Outfest," a gay pride event. When Massachusetts became the first state in the Union to legalize same-sex marriages, Catholic Charities of Boston came under intense pressure to place foster children with same-sex couples or lose its state license to operate adoption agencies. Catholic Charities ended its adoption services and warned other faith-based charities that they would face these same obstacles if same-sex marriage is legalized nationally. Consequently, religiously affiliated schools, psychology clinics, social workers, marital counselors will be forced to choose among violating their own deeply held beliefs, giving up government contracts and tax-exempt status, or even being denied the right to operate at all. In the business world, Motorola is one of a growing number of businesses mandating "homophobia" workshops and gay sex education courses, while Allstate in 2005 fired a manager for creating a website opposing same-sex marriage. ⁵

Curiously enough, I have talked to Christians who are totally unconcerned about public efforts to intimidate, silence, and politically marginalize *them* as Christians. They claim that faith-based involvement in the civil arena usually amounts to supporting active nationalists who promote righteousness through laws. Certainly, government should **not** be doing the work of evangelizing. It is not Scriptural, practical, or Constitutional, but it is also **not even the issue**. It is not a matter of Christians forcing non-Christians to accept Christianity through political means. Over the past few years, the deluge of anti-Christian bigotry in America makes it clear that the real issue is whether Christianity will even be an option for people in the future. Already

it is an option being eliminated by government, school districts, and businesses. The anti-Christian prejudice so common in today's culture, news media, and government should worry Christians, but in truth, it affects **everyone**. If there are no moral absolutes in society, we cannot expect them in government. Without them in government, policies cannot be based on anything but raw power. Hence, whoever is in power shapes the laws to serve themselves rather than protecting the constitutional rights and freedom of the people. If private morality does not matter in public leadership, then public laws do not matter either, and therefore, elected leaders are not bound by them. The President then becomes king or dictator with awesome power, but with **no** responsibility to God's laws, the Constitution, or his fellow citizens. ⁶ Thus, as secular humanism replaces God and moral relativism replaces moral responsibility, William Penn's 17th century caveat appears more astute than ever when he observed that, "those who will not be governed by God will be ruled by tyrants." ⁷

Christian defeatism is as unnecessary as it is dangerous. Unlike the presidential election of 2000, in which only 15,000,000 evangelicals voted, there was an 80 % increase among evangelical voters in the 2004 election. The voter turnout among Christians was especially heavy in the eleven states that also enacted constitutional amendments by popular referendum banning same-sex marriage. Many exit polls seemed to indicate that moral issues, rather than taxes or the economy, were decisive in the election's outcome. If this is true, Christians have a tremendous opportunity to re-engage in civil stewardship. Those that have already re-engaged helped sustain President Bush's recent vetoes of bills that would have used tax dollars to destroy human embryos for research purposes. On other "life issues," churches and faith-based civic organizations have been instrumental in confronting and defeating established abortion rights groups such as N.A.R.A.L. by successfully lobbying for bills to establish parental consent laws for minors, prohibit state funding for abortions, and make abortion clinics conform to the same health and facility standards as other ambulatory surgical facilities. On church-states questions, Congress last year responded to pressure from constituents by passing legislation signed by President Bush that restored the right of military chaplains to lead Christian prayers in public. Even the Supreme Court recently ruled in *Hein v Freedom from Religion Foundation* that religious charities could be eligible for federal funds the same as private secular ones, thus

blocking a lawsuit by a group of atheists and agnostics against the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives.⁸

Of course, these victories will be little more than a passing aberration if the majority of Christians continue to retreat from civic responsibility and compromise with the strong anti-Christian bias in today's secular culture. Author John Chalfont labels this trend "Abandonment Theology," a type of defeatist rationale based on a distorted interpretation of Romans 12:1-2 and Galatians 6:8-10. Myopically, "abandonment theologians" interpret these Scriptures to mean that since we are "not of the world," we have no civic responsibility in America.⁹ It is worth remembering that early Christians not only withstood murderous persecution by Roman authorities, but, in time, succeeded in improving the lives of women, established legal protections for children, promoted better treatment for slaves, prisoners, and the poor, and even abolished the brutal gladiatorial games.¹⁰ By heeding Christ's teaching to "render unto Caesar," they were able to change their culture. Of course, in America, "Caesar" is "We the People," and to refuse Christ's admonition to be "salt and light" is to ignore God's warning that "when the righteous rule the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule the people mourn." Obviously, the righteous cannot rule unless Christians help to elect them, and without Christian values in government, we subject ourselves to devious, immoral leaders who will bring hardship on "we the people." However, in the final analysis Christians cannot change a culture for Christ by just using worldly means such as politics. Real cultural change comes from the inside. Therefore, Christians must confront the dominant ideological basis for American culture – secularism - with the same passion that the early Church confronted the philosophies of pre-Christian paganism. To do otherwise and keep Christianity hidden behind the church building's protective walls is to accomplish the secularist's main goal and lose the "cultural war" by default.¹¹

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Rabbi Daniel Lapin, *America's Real War* (1999), 336-8.
- 2 Cal Thomas, "Values at Home Must Be Valued," *The Tennessean*, October 2004.
- 3 David Barton, *Inside the Election of 2004: A Moral Mandate?* (2005), 4-6.
- 4 David Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, and Religion* (1997), 13-15; American Center For Law and Justice *Bulletin*, February 2005, www.aclj.org; David Limbaugh, *Persecution: How Liberals Are Waging a War against Christianity* (2002), 229, 241; Mark Bergin, "Clanging Symbols," *World*, vol. 20, no. 27, 2005, 18; Les Sellers, "Fade to Gray," *World*, vol. 20, no. 50, 2005, 24-5.
- 5 Lynn Vincent, "A Coming Storm," *World*, vol. 21, no. 23, 2006, 31-33; Limbaugh, 229, 241.
- 6 William J. Bennett, *The Death of Outrage: Bill Clinton and the Assault on American Ideals* (1998), 133.
- 7 David Barton, *Winning the Cultural War in America* (2002), 4.
- 8 Barton, *Inside the Election of 2004 A Moral Mandate?* (2005), 4-6; Gene Edward Vieth, "Scary Movie," *World*, vol. 20, No. 43, 2005, 33; American Center For Law and Justice *Bulletin*, June 2007, 1.
- 9 John W. Chalfont, *Abandonment Theology: The Clergy and the Decline of American Christianity* (1999), 9.
- 10 Tom Minnery, *Why You Can't Stay Silent: A Biblical Mandate to Shape Our Culture* (2001), 24.
- 11 Ed Vitagliano, "Blurring the Message," *American Family Association Journal*, vol. 31, no. 3, 12-13, 2007.