

AGAINST CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Dave Williams
FAITHROOTS

Against Christian Nationalism

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1 What is Christian Nationalism?

Do you remember 6 years ago, we were becoming aware of a new coronavirus, novel because this particular strain of virus had not been seen before. It seems to have originated in a lab in China but spread around the world like wildfire resulting in many deaths. Over time, that virus mutated into different strains, each given names based on the Greek alphabet. The mutations were all slightly different, sometimes with different symptoms and different levels of virulence and resistance to vaccines but were related closely enough to still be considered the same virus.

That analogy is helpful for our understanding of something that has begun to get noticed in Christian circles and in wider society, something that tends to go under the name “Christian Nationalism.” Arguably, there are a variety of ideas and movements that seem to be placed under this label and there seems to be diversity between them. However, a careful look under the microscope shows that they are closely related.

At one level, Christian Nationalism may be seen as simply the belief that God deals with people through nations and so we were called to disciple the nations. That though wasn’t how the early church seemed to understand the Great Commission with their focus on seeking to call people to follow Jesus and be baptised as a sign of repentance. However, after Constantine, it became the presumption for much of the known world that nations were Christian and this was accepted by the reformers including Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. The name “magisterial reformation” reflects a controversy early on in the reformation. Should the magistrates (civil authorities) have authority in church matters, particularly around belief and discipline. Dissenters, particularly the early Baptists argued no. They insisted that people should have liberty of conscience and that it was the sword of God’s Word and Spirit that should be used to confront sin and unbelief not the sword of the state.¹

The term Christian Nationalist seems to have first found usage amongst South African nationalist politicians, particularly BJ Vorster, in the early 1940s who saw it as the best description for their attempt to apply national socialism or fascism in their context. It does not seem to have taken off in common usage following them for perhaps obvious reasons but was used pejoratively in the early noughties.

The contemporary use of the term to describe a movement and ideology can be traced to Stephen Wolfe in his book, “The case for Christian Nationalism”. Wolfe defines Christian Nationalism as follows:

“Christian nationalism is nationalism modified by Christianity. My definition of Christian nationalism is a Christianized form of nationalism or, put differently, a species of nationalism. Thus, I treat nationalism as a genus, meaning that all that is essential to generic nationalism is true of Christian nationalism.”²

There are three particular ideas or movements that have come together over the past few years in order to create the modern phenomena of Christian Nationalism. Federal Vision, New Apostolic Reformation/Dominion Theology and political nationalism.

Federal Vision is a theological position associated with high Presbyterianism and with pastors and theologians such as Douglas Wilson, James Jordan and Peter Leithart. There are

¹ On this, see particularly Ryan Burton King, *Everyman’s Conscience*.

² Wolfe, Stephen. *The Case for Christian Nationalism* (p. 10). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

differences between those key thinkers and some have disavowed the label but the common themes are: an objective view of paedobaptism where the children of believers are considered elect and likely regenerate so that they should receive the covenant sign and the benefits that come with it (such as paedo-communion), postmillennialism and reconstructionist theonomism (the idea that nations should be subject to God's law). It is from within this thought tradition that Wolfe writes (he writes for Wilson's publishing house, Canon Press).

The New Apostolic Reformation is a movement primarily within the US charismatic family not to be confused with UK apostolic networks such as New Frontiers, Icthus and Pioneer. Key figures within the movement notably C Peter Wagner and Bill Johnson of Bethel have argued that Christians should see themselves as "invading Babylon" to exercise strategic influence or dominion over seven spheres or mountains in the world: family, politics, arts, education, business, technology and entertainment.

The third strand is nationalist politics. This is seen both in the US and over here particularly over the past year through Christians developing close ties with Stephen Yaxley Lenon, the far right activist who uses the pseudonym "Tommy Robinson." Historically, the Far Right in the UK has been associated with overt racism and antisemitism. In recent years we have seen a pivot in their strategy which seems to be reflected in moves by the radical right across Europe with a greater emphasis on cultural nationalism and a call to stand against Islamisation.

So, why does this all matter? I want to suggest two reasons for now. First, the theological underpinning that we see in both "Christian strands" amounts to serious error. It relies on significant misunderstandings both of what Scripture says and a confusion of the overall shape and direction of the Biblical narrative. Specifically, the paradigm that we are called to live under as believers is one of exiles in this world. Whilst people such as Joseph and Daniel found themselves in positions of influence in the empires of their days with even Paul appearing before Caesar, that was not so much through choice as compulsion as they were captured and delivered as prisoners or slaves to those authorities.

Christian Nationalism is therefore a distraction from our calling to make disciples. It is the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit that brings people into God's kingdom and extends Christ's Kingdom rule not worldly power tools such as the state. Furthermore, because it believes that nations like the UK and US are subject to covenants with God including blessings and curses, this theology should be seen as a form of Nationalist Prosperity Gospel.

Secondly, the alignment we are seeing with political nationalism is especially grievous. The far right is not merely one extreme on the political spectrum, it is a different agenda that relies on conspiracy theories in order to identify specific groups of people to dehumanise and demonise as the enemy and to blame for all of society's ills. The light has nothing to do with this darkness. Christians need to be alert to how this type of ideology gives space for overt hatred and even violence so that many of our brothers and sisters from immigrant backgrounds live in fear and danger.

It is my belief that the coming together of these strands has resulted in a serious danger where the church cannot afford to be silent and sit on the fence as we see evangelical Christianity co-opted into a heretical and extreme movement.

2 The Reformers and the Christian State

The Reformers including Luther, Calvin and Zwingli were acting in a context in which it was the established norm that the state was Christian. If the early church fathers were acting pre-Christendom and we live in a post Christendom world, Calvin and the early reformed lived within Christendom. Whilst the radical reformers would in effect reject the concept of Christendom, the magisterial reformers arguably sought to continue and reform not just the church but the state as well.

Gatgounis suggests that:

“Calvin advances a doctrine of separation of church and state, not religion and state. Because God is sovereign, Calvin postulates that he should rule both church and state, since both are spiritual entities predicated on God's authority, even though the two structures are distinct organizations.”³

He considers Calvin to offer an alternative to both an Erastian position where the Church acted as an arm of the State, and an Ecclesiocracy where the state acted as an arm of the state, what today we might consider to be a form of theocracy, a Christian equivalent of the Ayatollah's rule in Iran.⁴ Rather, Gatgounis argues that Calvin supported a true form of theocracy with God ruling over both church and state.⁵

For Calvin, this means that “the church has not the right of the sword, to punish or restrain, has no power to coerce, no prison, nor other punishments which the magistrate is wont to inflict.”⁶ However, the magistrate does have the power to inflict punishment for moral failure.

“Does anyone get intoxicated? In a well ordered city, the punishment will be imprisonment. Has he committed whoredom? The punishment will be similar or rather more severe.”⁷

So, Calvin believed it was the duty of the state, or civil authorities to:

““foster and maintain the external worship of God [and] to defend sound doctrine and the condition of the Church,”⁸

In other words, they were responsible for ensuring:

“that no idolatry, no blasphemy against the name of God, no calamities against his truth, nor other offences against religion break out and be disseminated among the people.”⁹

Civil order existed in his view, in order to protect the well-being of God's people and the work of Christian religion. We might see the foundations of this idea in Paul's instruction in 1 Timothy 2:1-3.

³ [Cman_110_1_GatgounisB.pdf](#), 60.

⁴ [Cman_110_1_GatgounisB.pdfm](#) 61.

⁵ [Cman_110_1_GatgounisB.pdf](#), 61.

⁶ Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (IV.xi.3).

⁷ Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (IV.xi.3).

⁸ Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (IV.xx.3).

⁹ Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (IV.xx.3).

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ²for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, ⁴who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

In Romans 13:1-7, Paul says:

“Everyone must submit to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are instituted by God. ²So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God’s command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. ⁴For government is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For government is God’s servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. ⁵Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath, but also because of your conscience. ⁶And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God’s public servants, continually attending to these tasks.^[a] ⁷Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honour to those you owe honour.

On this, Calvin is clear that “although dictatorships and unjust authorities are not from ordained governments, yet the right of government is ordained by God for the wellbeing of mankind.”¹⁰ Calvin sees Government as useful, especially in that it restrains disorder and war. We can even see unjust, ungodly government as acting unwittingly for God in that our experience of it indicates that we are under curse and judgement for sin.¹¹

There is a sense then in hsi perspective that all things and all people are under God’s rule, whether we know it or not and whether we like it or not. Believers know this explicitly and experience this spiritually through the rule of the Church but unbelievers and unbelievers alike experience God’s temporal rule through the civil authorities. One can see, from this perspective why it might seem better for all, for God’s hand to be seen explicitly at work and acknowledged. Indeed, there is surely here an argument against a Christian support for principled pluralism here. In other words, it is hard for us to argue that it is better for people to live in a secular state where God as the source of goodness is left unacknowledged and where the State itself lacks moral clarity is unable or even unwilling to determine what goodness is. At its worst, the State may even choose to promote evil instead of good either because it sees such evil as for its benefit even whilst recognising its wrongness or because a distorted ideology leads it to call good evil and evil good.

Calvin’s views were not unique to him and were held more widely in the Reformed tradition. This is what the Westminster Confession has to say about Church and State.

God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil magistrates, to be, under Him, over the people, for His own glory, and the public good: and, to this end, has armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers.¹²

¹⁰ Calvin, Romans, 280.

¹¹ Calvin, Romans, 281.

¹² Westminster Confession, 23:1. [Westminster Confession.pdf](#)

It goes on to say that

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he has authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administrated, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he has power to call synods, to be present at them and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.¹³

The question though is whether or not we can and should expect a state of affairs where the State overtly acknowledges God and his morality. My thesis is that whilst this is a good thing, and that Christians placed in positions that of influence them should use those positions to seek good. That is of course what we have seen throughout history through the likes of Wilberforce and others campaigning for the abolition of slavery, others seeking factory reforms to protect children and still others looking to bring forward the provision of universal education and healthcare. However, I have argued that this is not something we can expect as we live in a now and not yet world, waiting Christ's return. This of course reflects, in my case, an a-millennialist eschatology whereas a post-millennialist presupposition will expect with confidence a situation where there is a greater acknowledgement of Christ's temporal as well as spiritual reign before his return.

I've also argued this because, the paradigm in Scripture seems to consistently be one of exile. In 1 Peter 2, the apostle says:

“¹¹Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you.^[1] ¹²Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles,^[s] so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do what is evil, they will, by observing your good works, glorify God on the day of visitation.^[1]”

Note, it's in this context that Peter gives similar instructions to Paul's in Romans 13. We are to:

“¹³Submit to every human authority^[u] because of the Lord, whether to the Emperor^[u] as the supreme authority ¹⁴or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good.”

Peter, as with Paul, reminds us that the civil authorities are there for our good and to confront and restrain evil. However, remember that in both contexts, the apostles wrote to people who were not living under just and godly government but rather under the tyranny of Rome, a foreign and pagan government. Now, Calvin very clearly recognises both the paradigm of exile and the tyrannical nature of Roman rule. On the former he writes:

“And he so calls them, not because they were banished from their country, and scattered into various lands, but because the children of God, wherever they may be, are only guests in this world. In the former sense, indeed, he called them sojourners at the beginning of the Epistle, as it appears from the context; but what he says here is common to them all. For the lusts of the flesh hold us entangled, when in our minds we

¹³ Westminster Confession, 23:3. [Westminster Confession.pdf](#)

dwell in the world, and think not that heaven is our country; but when we pass as strangers through this life, we are not in bondage to the flesh.¹⁴

Whilst on the latter he goes on to say:

As Peter referred especially to the Roman Emperor, it was necessary to add this admonition; for it is certain that the Romans through unjust means rather than in a legitimate way penetrated into Asia and subdued these countries. Besides, the Caesars, who then reigned, had possessed themselves of the monarchy by tyrannical force. Hence Peter as it were forbids these things to be controverted, for he shews that subjects ought to obey their rulers without hesitation, because they are not made eminent, unless elevated by God's hand.¹⁵

This leaves us with a conundrum. How is it that the Reformers were able to see quite clearly the paradigm at work and the tension that rule for God's people was often experienced as pagan, tyrannical and unjust? Well, it is possible that there is a clue in what Calvin says above. Did they primarily see the motif as influencing our attitude to worldly desires and temptations rather than the structures and systems of government in this world?

Another possibility is reflected in Zwingli's position. Zwingli took a more Erastian position. As Larson observes:

"Zwingli labored in a setting in which church and society were identical. The church was not a distinct entity in the larger society. The church and Zurich were one and the same thing. Zwingli nevertheless distinguished between minister and magistrate. The office of the minister is to teach the Word of God (art. 36). Rulers, on the other hand, "look after the office of the sword" (art. 41). In this connection, Zwingli addressed the pope, who wanted to take up arms against the Ottoman Turks who were threatening Europe. Zwingli exhorted, "Listen to Christ, oh pope, 'Put it away'" — referring here to the sword. "The secular princes," he said, "are undoubtedly quite capable of protecting their own land." He then added, "Take no other sword into your hand than the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (art. 36).¹⁶

It is important to remember that both Calvin and Zwingli functioned not within nation states but city states. It is possible to see then how they might have considered the city state as either providing shelter and respite for pilgrims in their Exodus or in Zwingli's case, to be the actual people of God on pilgrimage in this world.

These options are both possible. I think too that we should allow for two other factors. First a post-millennial framework which would allow them to see the journey out of metaphorical Egypt of Babylon to be reaching its conclusion for them. Secondly, we can simply allow for human inconsistency. We are capable of compartmentalising our theological thinking allowing us to grasp a truth in one aspect of our thinking whilst failing to follow through on its implications elsewhere.

Whatever the reason, that tension does seem to be there in early reformed thinking. We may see the way in which this lead to serious problems acting as a catalyst for more radical forms of reformation, particularly from the Reformed perspective. First, there is the example of Servatus

¹⁴ Calvin, John. Commentary on 1 Peter . Ravenio Books. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵ Calvin, John. Commentary on 1 Peter . Ravenio Books. Kindle Edition.

¹⁶ [Zwingli's Theocracy | Christian Library](#)

who promoted a heretical view of the Trinity and disagreed with Calvin on other matters. He exchanged correspondence with Calvin and when he indicated his intention to travel to Geneva, Calvin apparently commented:

He takes it upon himself to come hither, if it be agreeable to me. But I am unwilling to pledge my word for his safety, for if he shall come, I will never permit him to depart alive.”¹⁷

When Servetus came to Geneva, he was arrested, charged with blasphemy and burnt at the stake. Calvin apparently sought leniency and argued for him to be beheaded instead.¹⁸ Heinze argues that:

Although future generations have judged Calvin harshly for his part in the Servatus affair, in his own age people praised him and it helped him to win the day in Geneva.”¹⁹

I’m afraid I find such an argument unconvincing. This was surely an opportunity for a leading Reformer to set a different tone and standard rather than to conform to such a standard and indeed he seems to have encouraged that approach by expressing his own wishes to see Servatus killed.

The second horrific expression of the Magisterial Reformers approach is seen in their response to the Radical Reformation and how in turn that encouraged early Baptists to advocate for freedom of conscience.

In his book, “Every Man’s Conscience, Ryan Burton King King explores the responses of early Baptist movements to the Magisterial Reformers reliance on civic authorities to enforce religious and moral conformity. He starts in Zurich with those under the leadership of Felix Manz, Conrad Grebel and George Blaurock who objected to Zwingli allowing the civic authorities responsibility over church practice. Manz, Grebel and Blaurock became convinced of

“the institutional separation of church and state and a church membership comprised of believers at an age of understanding, baptised after profession of faith in Christ.”²⁰

This position led to their persecution. The idea of being rebaptised (anabaptism) was considered to be heretical and dangerous. The new protestant and reformed churches used their relationship to the magistrates to enforce discipline and conformity through imprisonment and even the death penalty.

“Grebel died in 1526 after imprisonment. Manz was drowned in 1527...Blaurock was burned in 1529.”²¹

The response of early Baptists is exemplified by John Smyth who argued that:

““the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion or matters of conscience to force or compel men to this or that form of religion or doctrine but to leave Christian religion free to every man’s conscience, and to handle only civil

¹⁷ Cited in Heinze, *Reform and Conflict*, 189.

¹⁸ Heinze, *Reform and Conflict*, 189.

¹⁹ Heinze, *Reform and Conflict*, 190.

²⁰ King, *Everyman’s conscience*, 9.

²¹ King, *Everyman’s conscience*, 10.

transgression ... injuries and wrongs of man against man, in murder, adultery, theft, etc., for Christ only is the king and lawgiver of the church and conscience.”²²

It is of fundamental important that those who wish to defend a form of Christian Nationalism on the basis of the Magisterial Reformers approach answer the question as to how those men ended up in a position where they saw it as approach to imprison, exile or execute through drowning or burning, those who dissented from their position.

It is also important to note that those from within a Magisterial Reformed and Presbyterian position, themselves over time reflected on these matters. In 1788, a revised version of the Westminster Confession was produced that amended Chapter 23. Kevin De Young observes that:

A church officer in the OPC or PCA, for example, who subscribes without exception to his denomination’s version (the American version) of WCF 23:3 is implicitly rejecting the view that the civil magistrate has the duty to purify the church, to suppress heresies, and to call ecclesiastical synods. He is, instead, affirming a different view of the civil magistrate that does much more to restrict the magistrate’s power and gives members of the commonwealth much more freedom and liberty in the realm of religion (even to the point of practicing no religion at all).²³

The text of the revised 23:3 is as follows:

“3. Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretense of religion or of infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.”²⁴

The intent of the new clause is to ensure that there is liberty of religion. In context, the focus is less likely to have been on full blown religious pluralism. Religion would have been considered to include a diversity of Christian denomination and sects. So, the intent is still to protect Christian faith and worship. However, the principle is that the State cannot interfere into the church and so is not there to enforce orthodoxy.

It is important therefore to recognise that the 1788 version is not supporting secular pluralism and it does not fully land where those who have followed a dissenting tradition do. However, it is

²² Propositions and Conclusions concerning the Christian Religion, containing a confession of faith of certain English people living in Amsterdam (Article 84). Cited in King, *Everyman’s conscience*, 27.

²³ [‘Of the Civil Magistrate’: How Presbyterians Shifted on Church-State Relations](#)

²⁴ Cited at [‘Of the Civil Magistrate’: How Presbyterians Shifted on Church-State Relations](#)

different to the position followed by Christian Nationalists. De Young notes that Stephen Wolfe, author of “The Case For Christian Nationalism” holds to a different view.

Wolfe insists the Christian prince “has the power to call synods in order to resolve doctrinal conflicts and to moderate the proceedings. Following the proceedings, he can confirm or deny their theological judgments; and in confirming them, they become the settled doctrine of the land.” According to Wolfe, the prince may look to pastors for theological advice as a father seeks advice from his son, but the prince “still retains his superiority.”²⁵

De Young considers the revised version to be “irreconcilable” with the original. This also means that it is irreconcilable with the position held by early reformers including Calvin and Zwingli. We hear a lot from those advocating for Christian Nationalist positions today about the diversity of Christian Nationalism but less acknowledgement from them about the diversity that there has been within the Reformed tradition. It is reasonable to ask someone who says that they are simply advocating for a classical reformed position, “which reformed position?”

²⁵ [‘Of the Civil Magistrate’: How Presbyterians Shifted on Church-State Relations](#)

3 Federal Vision and Christian Nationalism

Douglas Wilson has written on his website, Blog and Mablog, answering a series of questions about Christian Nationalism. In answer to the question, “What is Christian Nationalism”, Wilson writes:

“Christian Nationalism is the view that secularism is a hollow construct, now plainly revealed to be bankrupt. Additionally, CN is the belief that human societies require a transcendent anchor to hold everything together, and that this transcendent anchor should be the true and living God, and not a placeholder idol.”²⁶

As well as advocating for a form of Christian Nationalism himself in his book “Mere Christendom” Wilson has also published Stephen Wolfe’s book “The Case For Christian Nationalism” through Canon Press. Wilson acknowledges that there are differences between him and Wolfe on some aspects of Christian Nationalism but explains his reasons for publishing it as follows:

Stephen’s book is an important scholarly work that helped to precipitate a conversation that really needed to occur. And in that respect, it was a great success. I enjoyed reading it very much, and profited from it. My book is not addressing precisely the same issues, but I would regard the two books as occupying a similar space. There are no glaring contradictions between the books, although there are some differences. We do have some divergent assumptions at the tectonic plate levels, differences which result in some variations on the surface—Stephen is a Thomist and I am not, he is operating directly out of a tradition of political theology and I am more of a biblicist, and so on. Canon Press practices an evangelical ecumenicism on such issues. But it is worth pointing out that my general equity theonomy and the Reformed common law tradition have much in common, and differ largely in time and stage of development. The Reformed common law tradition is general equity theonomy after six centuries of maturation.

So if I sat in the back row with all my convictions, and watched Stephen and his minions take over and obtain all that they wanted, from my perspective this would be *way better* than what we are dealing with now. And I also think Stephen would feel the same if those positions were reversed.

My thesis is that the contemporary form of Christian Nationalism draws on three stands of thinking or movements, New Apostolic Reformation/Dominionism, Federal Vision and political nationalism. I want to focus here in the second strand, Federal Vision. Douglas Wilson has been a significant player in that movement and so that is why it makes sense to focus on his position regarding Christian Nationalism so it makes sense to focus on what he has to say. First of all though we need to spend a bit of time defining and describing the Federal Vision.

Like the idea of Christian Nationalism itself, and indeed both the Reformed Theological and Charismatic traditions, there is a diversity as well as a unity within Federal Visionism. Indeed, some who have long been associated with the movement seem to have disagreed sharply with one another and even, including in Wilson’s case disavowed the term altogether. However, we

²⁶ [FAQs on Christian Nationalism | Blog & Mablog](#)

will see as we delve a bit deeper that whilst Wilson may have disowned the label, he has not renounced the associated positions that gave rise to the term.

What do we mean by Federal Vision?

I thought it would be helpful to talk a bit more about Federal Vision as a thought/movement. This will help to explain the concerns that I and others have about its potential ongoing influence. It's worth noting that there are numerous people that have been identified under the label. This can make it a little complex because there are a diversity of views among them.

Another complication is that there are a number of theological and ethical positions that have become particularly associated with Federal Vision thinking that are not in themselves core Federal Vision ideas and it is possible to hold them without being a Federal Visionist. Some will however be held consistently across the spectrum and some views are perhaps unique to specific people. For example, Douglas Wilson has come under fire for the position he has taken on the history of the slave trade and its abolition. As far as I'm aware, these views are unique to him.

To complicate things further, some of those who have been closely associated with the Federal Vision label have since disavowed it, most notably, Douglas Wilson.²⁷ However, whilst he has dropped the label and talks about different directions of travel, he is also insistent that he hasn't changed his core beliefs. When talking about Federal Vision, we perhaps want to talk about people who have shared a specific agenda in common which has led to some shared doctrine and shared practices.

In terms of a timeline, a key date was 2002 when papers were presented at the Auburn Avenue Pastors Conference (Federal Vision is sometimes referred to as Auburn Avenue Theology). The word Federal is from the Latin Fides and so the controversy was and is to do with covenant theology. In other words, on what basis does God have a covenant with his people. Those involved believed that they were restating a robust version of reformed theology.²⁸

Key people that have been involved in some way include Douglas Wilson, John Barach, Steve Wilkins and Steve Schlissel who were involved in the conference. A number of others later identified with Federal Vision theology including Peter Leithart, James Jordan and others. There are a few things that seem to be at the heart of the thinking that you are likely to see in common across the board.

Here is one attempt at a summary:

“Federal Vision proponents tended to focus on the objectivity of the covenant of grace, downplay the distinction between [law and gospel](#), conflate the [visible church](#) and the [invisible church](#), assert [presumptive regeneration](#) or [baptismal regeneration](#), embrace a functional sacramentalism, affirm paedocommunion, deny the [covenant of works](#), reject [the imputation of Christ's active obedience](#), and promote the idea of a [final justification based on Spirit-wrought good works](#).”²⁹

Let's flesh the key points out a bit. The emphasis on objectivity in relation to the God's covenant brings two things together. First, the belief that covenant signs (baptism and communion)

²⁷ [Federal Vision No Mas | Blog & Mablog](#)

²⁸ [The Federal Vision](#)

²⁹ [The Federal Vision](#)

actually do something, they have a real objective effect. They are not just outer symbols of what we hope has happened/will happen/is happening. They are having a genuine effect on the person.

Second, this meets with paedobaptist/presbyterian interpretations of Acts 2, where Peter talks about the promise being for you and your children. Many paedobaptists have over the years taken this as a promise that we can have a high confidence that our children will be saved. Federal Vision thinking pushed this further. If God objectively promises that our children along with us are in the covenant and if baptism actually does something, then we must presume that if and when we baptise our children, this includes them fully into the Covenant.

At times, some paedobaptists have distinguished out the idea that we can presume children to be elect from presumption that they are regenerate. Children are therefore treated as to some extent being under the benefits and blessings of God's covenant. Federal Vision insists that if they are in the covenant, then they are surely full recipients of all covenant blessings and carry all the responsibilities too. This means that they are treated as regenerate and so also expected to share in the covenant meal, the Lord's Supper (this is referred to as paedo-communion).³⁰

To those of us from a baptistic persuasion, this is perhaps the most central and obvious issue. Indeed, I am convinced that this is foundational to other aspects of Federal Vision thinking. However, it is not the only element of core thinking. As the quote above observes, Federal Vision downplays the distinction between law and Gospel. Now, Reformed Theology as opposed to Lutheran Protestant thinking would generally be cautious about over distinguishing the two. We believe that there was grace in the Law and that there is a degree of continuity between the old and new covenants so that the Law is fulfilled in Christ not abolished by him. However, Federal Vision thinking has tended to align with New Perspective on Paul thinking concerning justification and would emphasise faith as itself a form of obedience so that it is still our obedience that leads to our justification.

Another factor was that proponents embraced a form of post-millennialism. There are three primary views concerning eschatology relating to Revelation 20:1-6 which refers to a 1000 year reign of Christ

- Premillennialism assumes a literal 1000 year reign and places this at the end of history. So, the Church will be raptured, Christ will reign for 1000 years and then we will see the final defeat of Satan, judgement and the new creation.
- Postmillennialism tends to assume that the 1000 years is figurative for a long period of history but believes that Christ's return will be after (post) this period of time which is when we will see Christ's reign on earth through his church.
- Amillennialism believes that the number is figurative and that rather than there being a specific period of time before or after Christ's return when we will see his triumphant reign, we should expect all of history to include both evidence of his increasingly reign and of increasing darkness, and resistance to Christ. The two things happening in tandem.

The approach to postmillennialism we've seen associated with Federal Vision therefore presumes that as Christianity has greater influence, nations will be discipled, becoming Christian nations and therefore having Christian laws and constitutions. What will these laws/constitutions be? Well, Federal Visionists are likely to point us towards the Law of Moses,

although there will be some variation in terms of how they approach it and some reject what might be seen as a strict theonomism with the Ten Commandments and Torah directly applied across the Church today. Rather, Torah is seen as setting out principles to be applied now.

Now, whilst it is possible to hold one or other of the above positions outside and independent of Federal Visionism, it is worth making three observations here. First, that the Federal Vision really brings these three strands together and so the implications for theology, culture and ethics are founded upon the unified whole. Second, that whilst people may be picking up on just one strand of the thinking and indeed, whilst it is possible to arrive at those individual conclusions independent of Federal Vision, it has been Federal Vision proponents who have played a major role in popularising those ways of thinking, talking and acting.

The third thing to say is that the Federal Vision is not just about theological or cultural content but is about methodology too. This is best understood by reference to an article my friend Steve Kneale wrote here about “maximalism.” This approach when applied to exegesis and hermeneutics encourages us to take typology maximally. By typology, we mean that we see in events and figures, types that point prophetically to Christ. Maximal typology invites us to assume wordplay at all times and every level (hence maximally). So for example, if you see the word “bread” in one Bible passage and find it again in another, then there must be a connection.

Now on one level, this isn’t that crazy and we certainly might want to spend more time looking closely at the way the whole Bible holds together in its finer detail. However, the problem comes when in effect, this approach becomes untethered. Hence my concern when it is presented in terms of giving the benefit of the doubt and seeing where the flow takes us. This approach invites us to suspend critical judgement and is seen not just in exegesis but across the range as we look at theology and culture too.

Federal Vision then is not just about what we think, say, do but about how we think, say and do. It’s not just the conclusions but how we arrive at them.

This hopefully gives a bit more of a flavour for what Federal Vision is. Now at this stage, I suspect that many will be still wondering why I’m particularly exercised by this issue. Part of my response to that question will require us to do some more work on the specific examples. We will return to them. However, at this stage I think it is worth stating that there are things about the beast, taken as a whole which make it particularly complex, challenging and dare I say it slippery.

Because it is not so simple as dealing with a couple of odd balls and their obviously created cult, what I would suggest we see is a way of thinking and specific thought that can get its tentacles in all over the place, often subtly and often unnoticed. Because it appears to just be a bit of a minority academic interest, I think it is possible for us to miss it at the grass roots, local church level. Thirdly because it is really about different strands of thought coming together, it is possible for those strands to break off again and get into the life of the church without is spotting what else we may be importing into church as well as the specific issues with that particular doctrine.

The Federal Vision Statement and Christian Nationalism

The 2002, Auburn Avenue conference was followed by a further Federal Vision statement in 2007. The 2007 statement was signed by John Barach (minister, CREC) Randy Booth (minister, CREC) Tim Gallant (minister, CREC) Mark Horne (minister, PCA) Jim Jordan (minister, teacher at

large) Peter Leithart (minister, PCA) AD 2007 Rich Lusk (minister, CREC) Jeff Meyers (minister, PCA) Ralph Smith (minister, CREC) Steve Wilkins (minister, PCA) Douglas Wilson (minister, CREC).

There are two significant elements to the statement that touch directly onto Christian Nationalism although I am inclined to think that the whole philosophy underpins the outcomes. Those two specifics start with the idea of post-millennialism. The Statement reads:

As the Waters Cover the Sea. We affirm that God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but rather so that the world through Him would be saved. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world—He is the Savior of the world. All the nations shall stream to Him, and His resting place shall be glorious. We affirm that prior to the second coming of our Lord Jesus, the earth will be as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. We deny that eschatological views are to be a test of fellowship between orthodox believers, but at the same time we hold that an orientation of faith with regard to the gospel's triumph in history is extremely important. We deny that it is wise to imitate Abraham in his exercise of faith while declining to believe the content of what he believed—that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed, and that his descendants would be like the stars in number.³¹

You will notice that with one hand, the statement gives, assuring readers that eschatological views are not a test of orthodoxy before going on to take away with the other hand. Whilst we might argue, that yes, all eschatological views expect the triumph of the Gospel, it is specifically post-millennialism which expects this ultimate triumph to take place “prior to the second coming of our Lord Jesus.”

Now, here is where the propositions of federal vision fit together. Is this expected triumph to take place through evangelism, conversions, revivals and awakenings? Well, those things might play a part. However, if our expectation is that the promises of God are for those who believe and for their physical descendants, then one way in which we expect the world to be filled with God's knowledge is through Christian fecundity.³² We can expect Christians to prioritise having children, lots of them, baptising them into the faith and catechizing them.

The other way in which God's knowledge is expected to fill the earth according to Federal Visionists is through the instruments of the state. Therefore, the Statement commits to Christendom and to Christian states or nations. It says:

The Next Christendom We affirm that Jesus Christ is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. We believe that the Church cannot be a faithful witness to His authority without calling all nations to submit themselves to Him through baptism, accepting their responsibility to obediently learn all that He has commanded us. We affirm therefore that the Christian faith is a public faith, encompassing every realm of human endeavor. The fulfilment of the Great Commission therefore requires the establishment of a global Christendom. We deny that neutrality is possible in any realm, and this includes the realm of "secular" politics. We believe that the lordship of Jesus Christ has authoritative ramifications for every aspect of human existence, and that growth up into a godly maturity requires us to discover what those ramifications are in order to implement

³¹ [A Joint Federal Vision Profession](#)

³² “The ability to produce an abundance of offspring.

them. Jesus Christ has established a new way of being human, and it is our responsibility to grow up into it.³³

Notice that it is the nations who “submit themselves...through baptism” which is a little ambiguous. That would however, link with the idea that “disciple the nations” in Matthew 28:19 means literally that it is the nations who are disciplined, rather than individuals within and from nations.

Christianity is meant to be something expressed publicly with an impact on public life, it is therefore political. Federal Vision is therefore a rejection of secular pluralism with neutrality not possible. Whilst the term “Christian Nationalism” does not appear in the statement, we can see how some of the key ideas were being introduced, 20 years before Stephen Wolfe wrote “In Defence of Christian Nationalism.”

Mere Christendom and Douglas Wilson

Douglas Wilson suggests the term “Mere Christendom” for his take on the relationship of Church and State, of Christianity and Nation. He writes:

I argue ... for a principled abandonment of the disastrous experiment of secularism, and for a corporate confession of the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, and all done in such a way as to preserve and protect our liberties. This no doubt raises questions, and hence this book.³⁴

On secularism

This means that we have to start by defining secularism. Wilson writes:

“What is secularism? Aside from being the villain of this book? Secularism is the idea that it is possible for a society to function as a coherent unit without reference to God. It is the idea that a culture can operate on the basis of a metaphysical and religious agnosticism. It is the idea that we can understand what human rights are without knowing what a human being actually is.”³⁵

This immediately raises a couple of questions, one of which is as to whether or not secularism is the only alternative to Christian Nationalism, hold on to that thought because it is a theme common to interactions with most proponents of Christian Nationalist type ideology and so one that we will need to return to. The second question is whether or not he has offered a fair definition of nationalism. It is worth noting that the National Secular society offers its own definition of secularism as follows:

“Secularism is a principle that offers two basic propositions. The first is the strict separation of the state from religious institutions. The second is that people of different religions and beliefs are equal before the law.”³⁶

They go on to argue that:

³³ [A Joint Federal Vision Profession](#)

³⁴ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 10). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

³⁵ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 13). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

³⁶

The separation of religion and state is the foundation of secularism. It ensures that religious groups don't interfere in affairs of state, and makes sure the state doesn't interfere in religious affairs.

Similarly, The Humanist society say:

“We are committed to secularism – the principle that, in a plural open society, where people follow many different religious and non-religious ways of life, the communal institutions that we share (and together pay for), should provide a neutral public space where we can all meet on equal terms.”

One may debate whether or not that approach has worked out in practice in those societies that consider themselves secular but at this stage, we can acknowledge that the self identification of avowed secularists is different to the way that Wilson seeks to define their position. Whilst the underpinning philosophy of organisations like the National Secular Society seem to be humanist, it seems to be possible to argue for their definition of secularism whilst believing in God. Indeed, some might argue that the US constitution aligns, at least on paper with their approach.

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Wilson goes on to argue that:

The public square cannot be neutral. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar isn't. If Jesus is Lord, the liberties of those who don't believe in Him are far more secure than the liberties of everybody in the hands of a Caesar who answers to no one above him.³⁷

There is something in this for us to consider. Whilst secularists argue that there is the possibility of neutral ground, we are left wondering if a public square that insists that all religious voices are silenced is truly neutral or is weighted in fact to the irreligious. Theoretically though we might argue that it is possible to determine the laws and customs of a land based on an agreed consensus such as fundamental human rights. Though what we do when those rights come into conflict as we see with the right to life and the right to choose in the case of abortion is a trickier question. Perhaps even there we should be able to argue for a priority to those rights. The right to choose is surely dependent upon the very idea of an autonomous human being being worthy of dignity and respect whether or not we posit that in a belief that we are made in God's image. The right to life should logically trump the right to choose as the latter is dependent on the former. The secularist can at least theoretically reach common ethical decisions with the Christian, though it may be harder for them to provide a basis for those decisions.

When Wilson argues that “If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar isn't”, this might prompt the response that it depends on exactly what we mean by the statement. Again, there is a sense in which the ruler who can directly articulate a reason for their rules based on God's revelation is in a better place than one who has no reference to God. However, the alternative is “Jesus is Lord” is not

³⁷ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 14). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

that our governors answer to no-one. Further, whilst Caesar may not recognise that Jesus is Lord, this does not negate the reality of his sovereign Lordship. Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 both point us to the genuine lordship of Caesar and the objective reality that Jesus is Lord, that God enacts his sovereign will, even through pagan emperors.

Wilson argues that:

In Christian societies, overreach is a possibility. The Scriptures teach that all men are sinners, and men will sin in Christian societies as well as in secular ones. But in secular societies, overreach is not a possibility, but rather a necessity, by definition. If there is no God above the state, then the state has become god—the point past which there is no appeal. If there is a God above the state, then hubris in high places will always be dealt with appropriately.³⁸

However, the reasoning that underpins this is, as we have begun to see rather shaky. It should be possible to anticipate the rather blatantly obvious counter arguments from secularists. Indeed, as Christians we should note that from our perspective, the very reason that neutrality is impossible is that there is always a god above, personal or abstract, true or false. That god might be democracy, the rule of law, the market, ideologies such as communism and fascism etc. In some cases we get closer to seeing the State itself as god but that is not necessary so. However, in all but that last case, it isn't true to say that "overreach is a necessity by definition." Checks and balances are present.

Wilson concludes this little thought movement by saying:

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. If the Spirit has been exiled, how can we still have what only He can give? How can we reject the Giver and keep the gift? Those who puff themselves up and say that they can do this thing need to remember—wisdom is always vindicated by her children."³⁹

This is rather the woeful corrupting of out of context Scripture and the denial of what other Scriptures teach. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty/freedom" comes from 2 Corinthians 3:17. It comes as Paul draws to a conclusion a passage that has argued that under the New Covenant, we have something that the people of God did not have under the letter of the Law of Moses. The new covenant means that the Spirit of God is present with his people and so we do have freedom, we do have liberty whether or not we live under a government that acknowledges God or desires or freedom.⁴⁰

We can see the same underpinning thought at work therefore when Peter tells his readers, that even under a repressive, tyrannical regime, they are free, that God is even using that regime for his purposes, for good and that they are to "live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover up for evil."⁴¹

Despots and Taxation

³⁸ Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom* (p. 15). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

³⁹ Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom* (p. 15). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁰ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

⁴¹ 1 Peter 2:16.

Wilson's book "Mere Christendom" is really a collection of articles, so it doesn't offer a systemic outline or blueprint for Christian Nationalism, or to use his term, Christendom 2.0. However, as you spend a bit of time working through it, you can begin to get a feel for his vision. It is also possible to look at what he has written elsewhere to get more of a flavour of his worldview.

The second chapter of Mere Christendom takes a look at taxation and the state.

"One of the central techniques that is used by despots for divesting themselves of moral legitimacy is the technique of governing through arbitrary administrative law. A free people live under laws passed by legislatures in which they have freely chosen representatives. The prerogative of passing such laws may not be transferred. So if you chafe under rules and regs that spew forth from all the alphabet agencies, then you are not free. It doesn't matter that you are currently not being harassed. No despot can torment all his slaves simultaneously."⁴²

This places Wilson on the political right and towards a libertarian understanding of government. It is worth observing a couple of things here. First, that there has been a long running debate away from Christian philosophical musings about the role of the State and the art that administrative law through directives and regulations as opposed to direct legislation has to play. Wilson claims that:

"When there is no standard above the state, then the state becomes the standard. If there is no God above the system, then the system becomes god."⁴³

This is a repeat of the kind of claim that we engaged with above and it is helpful to highlight here that the reality is more nuanced for administrative law than Wilson's broad brush comments imply. Specifically in western, liberal democracies, the rule of law means that administrative law is challengeable through the courts via Judicial Review. Whilst from one perspective, judges might be seen as part of the State, the judiciary is meant to be independent from the legislature and executive both organisationally and in terms of interference.

That the role of administrative law is a debating point away from Christian theological and philosophical thought and that the arguments advanced by Wilson would be familiar to small state libertarians with no faith is perhaps another reminder that there are other gods available as alternatives to Yahweh, other than the state.

Wilson's main concern about a large state is that:

"And because the state is always ravenous for tax money, the tax burden gradually becomes a monstrosity. The people carrying this burden have gotten gradually used to it and don't even notice anymore how radically unscriptural it all is."⁴⁴

How does Wilson reach the conclusion that this is unscriptural? His starting point is the sin of stealing. He says:

⁴² Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 31). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁴³ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 32). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁴ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 32). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

“Obviously it is a sin to steal, and it is not a sin to be stolen from. The first part is flat prohibited in Scripture (Exod. 20:15; Eph. 4:28), and the second part is intuitively obvious. Better to be wronged than to do wrong. But when making this point that it is not a sin to be stolen from, we are talking about someone sneaking into your garage at two in the morning and taking your bicycle. It is not wrong to be wronged in this way.”⁴⁵

However, Wilson believes that there is a context in which we can say that it is a sin to be stolen from. He writes:

“Our current sin is found in the way we are being stolen from. When God prohibits stealing, this assumes the institution of private property. When God prohibits adultery, what is in the background? Unless there is such a thing as marriage, you cannot have adultery. Adultery is defined as violation of marriage vows. In the same manner, stealing is a violation of someone’s right to remain in possession of their own property. So the requirement here is to learn a little blunt force honesty with yourself. It is not a sin to write a big check to the government. It is not a sin to be stolen from. It is a sin to write that check and tell yourself that you are just “doing your share.” That is the sin of being delusional when God has required us to be clear-headed. It is a sin to believe that our government is anything other than a pirate ship of the thieves, by the thieves, and for the thieves. It is a sin to go on believing the lies when we have no good reason to.”⁴⁶

We are sinning by our complicity in something that is wrong, we are apparently believing lies and thus turning to a form of idolatry but what makes government taxation theft, or piracy to pick up on another term that Wilson applies?

Wilson basis his argument on two parts of Scripture. First, he takes us to 1 Samuel 8:14-18 where Samuel warns the people that if they appoint a king then:

“¹⁴He can take your best fields, vineyards, and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵He can take a tenth of your grain and your vineyards and give them to his officials and servants. ¹⁶He can take your male servants, your female servants, your best young men,^[a] and your donkeys and use them for his work. ¹⁷He can take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves can become his servants. ¹⁸When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you’ve chosen for yourselves, but the Lord won’t answer you on that day.”

Wilson argues

“When Samuel warns the people against anointing a king like the other nations have, he warns them of the consequences to their property. In other words, it is reasonable to worry about the pickpockets in town, but wise men worry about another set of men, whose grasp of the distinction between meum and tuum is every bit as tenuous. These rulers will rise to the pinnacles of hubris, claiming to be equal to God, deserving of a tenth.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 32). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁶ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (pp. 32-33). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁷ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (pp. 34-35). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

This also points us to the second place that Wilson will take us to. Wilson will argue from the Biblical laws on tithing that:

God claims a tithe, and if that is all God needs, and if God is a jealous God, then we ought to see any attempt on the part of the civil government to go past ten percent as an aspiration to Deity.⁴⁸

Now, it is worth observing that in the case of Samuel's warning and examples such as Ahab's attempt to seize Naboth's vineyard,⁴⁹ the concern is that the king will take wealth and property for his own personal needs and gratification. Even so, in the case of Samuel's warning, the levying of customs and taxes is not condemned as sin, it is merely described as a coming burden. The issue with Naboth's vineyard is that it is seized, stolen as an attack on an individual rather than as an accepted levy. Remember that godless, non-Christian cultures can distinguish between corrupt officials who take what is not theirs and legitimate but overbearing governments that impose a heavy burden.

Wilson however argues that taxation becomes theft first, when it exceeds the ten percent that goes to God in taxes. Second, it is theft when those taxes are used to do what the Government is not authorised to do.

“We know that taxation can be done right because the Bible talks about paying taxes to the one to whom it is due (Rom. 13:7). These are taxes that we owe, and they may not be considered theft at all. We should no more chafe at paying our legitimate taxes than we do paying our bill for satellite television. There are taxes we do not owe, but ought to pay anyway, having more important things to do. This is the meaning of what Jesus teaches Peter—we don't owe it, but go ahead and pay it (Matt. 17:24–27).⁵⁰

However:

“the taxes need to be levied, in the main, so that the rulers can perform the functions that God requires them to perform. Coercion is a big deal, and so the government must only be allowed to exercise it when they have express warrant from the Scriptures for what they are doing. If they have express warrant to hunt down murderers, and they do, then they have express warrant to collect money to pay for certain men to do this. They are God's deacon of justice, and the deacon of justice needs to be paid just like the rest of us (Rom. 13:4). They are not allowed to collect fees to pay for activities that are prohibited to them. If they are not allowed to do it in the first place, they are not allowed to tax us to pay for it. To do so would be theft.”⁵¹

Here is a small government argument. The State from this perspective only has permission to protect people from foreign attack and to ensure the rule of law through a criminal code. There is an argument for this and it is particularly associated in Christian, reformed circles with the

⁴⁸ Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom* (p. 37). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁹ Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom* (p. 36). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁰ Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom* (p. 37). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵¹ Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom* (p. 38). Canon Press. Kindle Edition. I'm sure that allies of Wilson will want to use his arguments to demonstrate why Donald Trump should not be levying punitive customs rates on trade, a taxation both on the citizens of other countries and on the citizens of the US.

idea of Lex Rex, that under the rule of law, there are three distinct spheres of authority, state, church and family. However, Lex Rex is an artificial construct not found explicitly in Scripture and arguably, the modern state acts more like an extended family comparable to a clan and tribal system.

There may be good economic and political reasons for low taxation, it may indeed be an effective application of Biblical morality but this does not mean it is the only way to apply Biblical morality and so, I'm not convinced that low taxation and a small state is a Biblical principle. It is not the place here to debate the morality of low and high taxation, of big and small government. I happen to support low taxation and a smaller state. However, the critical point is that Wilson's vision of Christendom and a Christian Nation is rooted in a particular political philosophy that is not necessarily Christian.

One could equally argue that the people of Israel were asked to provide much more than the tithe in offerings, that they were expected to provide for the poor and alleviate debt, that eventually the early church held everything in common. So, from a socialist perspective, a Christian Nation might legitimately be seen as authorised to raise much higher taxes and do far more than a non-Christian one.

Mere Christendom

Whilst Douglas Wilson has expressed support for the idea of Christian Nationalism, he has also indicated a preference for the idea of "mere Christendom." By this he means:

a network of nations bound together by a formal, public, civic acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the fundamental truth of the Apostles' Creed. I mean a public and formal recognition of the authority of Jesus Christ that repudiates the principles of secularism, and that avoids both hard sectarianism and easy latitudinarianism both. Easier said than done, but there it is. That is what we have to do, and we have to do it because secularism has run its course and does not have the wherewithal to resist the demands of radical Islam. Or a radical anything else, for that matter.⁵²

This definition is helpful because it shows that the idea is not in competition with the concept of Christian Nationalism. Indeed, at this point we might be able to see why his position may at first glance sound different to Stephen Wolfe's "The Case For Christian Nationalism" whilst at the same time, Wilson says he would be happy if it was the Wolfe variant that took hold. Wilson and Wolfe are operating at different levels and coming from different disciplines. Wolfe's approach might arguably be seen as a potential subset of Wilson's, a model for one of those "nations bound together", specifically the US.

Wilson goes on to say that:

"It is possible to argue for this without supporting an "established church," which—in the form of tax revenues—I do not support. But in order for this to happen at all, the Church must be established, in the sense that the magistrate has the responsibility to recognize her, to convene synods and councils to seek her counsel, and to listen to her.

⁵² Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom* (p. 75). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

The magistrate himself has the responsibility, as a public figure, in the discharge of his office, to believe in Jesus, Lord of Heaven and earth.⁵³

This suggests that he holds to what looks closer to the Erastian position of Zwingli with the church being established under the direction of the magistrates or government. This would differ from an ecclesiocratic position where the state derives its authority from the church.⁵⁴ It also looks different to what we have seen defined as a “theocratic” position in Calvin’s approach where church and state separately derive authority directly from and under Christ’s Lordship. I say “Erastian”, not merely because Wilson talks about recognising the church, this could simply refer to an acknowledgement of her existence but because he goes on to give the magistrate responsibility for calling synods and councils.

We are also left with big questions about the nature of the church that the magistrates recognise. Are they expected to recognise all church denominations, so long as they conform to the Apostle’s Creed, or does the state chooses which church it specifically recognises. If so, under what criteria? Wilson does go on to say that:

Mere Christendom needs to be thin when it comes to the differences between Lutherans and Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists, and so on. But it needs to manage to do this without thinning out the contents of the Apostles’ Creed. It needs to be thick there.⁵⁵

This may indicate a leaning towards the former rather than the latter. However, Wilson does not explicitly spell it out. It is possible to have a “thin” approach to Presbyterian/Baptist distinctions when it comes to offering a level of tolerance but not to formally recognise a church. Further, whilst Wilson suggests that under his criteria, unitarianism would be rejected, he omits to discuss the ways in which other denominations may have hugely problematic and heterodox positions on the inspiration of Scripture, the historicity of the incarnation and nature of the atonement whilst affirming the Apostle’s Creed on paper. Are churches allowed to “self-affirm” or do the authorities have a responsibility to vet and assess?

Wilson acknowledges that a Christian nation cannot be established top down and externally only.

“A formal recognition of the Lordship of Jesus is necessary but not sufficient. More is required than paper commitments. All true constitutions arise from the people, and genuine allegiance to Christ is not going to happen unless there is a reformation and revival. In order for any of this to work, we must have countless preachers of the gospel, faithfully declaring the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The role of the government here is to stay out of the way, allowing such preachers free access to the people, and thereby encouraging them to have at it. If you don’t give a heck about the man with the Bible in his hand, as the Staple Singers taught us, just “get out the way and

⁵³ Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom* (p. 75). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁴ This would have been the nature of Christendom 1.0 where political rulers derived their authority from the Pope.

⁵⁵ Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom* (p. 77). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

let the gentleman do his thing.” There is a straight line blessing that runs from free grace to free men, and from free men to free markets.”⁵⁶

He goes on to say that:

“Culture wars should be fought in the culture, not in the courts. One of the central reasons for having a constitutionally limited government is so that one cultural faction does not get to cheat, using the force of law to skew the outcomes in their favor. Since law is coercive by definition, the areas in which coercion is allowed should be radically limited. The law should protect life, liberty, and property. After that, the alternative visions for truth, goodness, and beauty may freely compete. Using their own money, voluntarily donated, the secularists and atheists may build their own schools, write poems and novels, produce plays and movies, build cathedrals, compose concertos, and so on.”⁵⁷

This rather misses the point that culture war battles have been fought in the courts because it has been the courts that have been determining whether or not the state have overstepped their powers, what individual rights people will have and if a crime has been committed. This will remain the same even in Wilson’s Christian nation with regards to abortion, same-sex relationships, adultery, divorce and alcohol consumption.

Wilson writes:

“One of the more notable features of the life of our Lord, as recorded in Scripture, is the fact that references to the outside world are overwhelmingly political. When Jesus was born, Augustus was Caesar (Luke 2:1) and Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:2). Herod the Great was ruler in Judea (Luke 1:5) and wielded his power to the grief of many mothers in Bethlehem. Tiberius was Caesar when John the Baptist began his ministry (Luke 3:1–2), and Luke includes a number of interesting names when he dates the arrival of the forerunner of the Messiah. Tiberius was still emperor when Jesus died, and this political orientation is sealed by the fact that Pontius Pilate was included in the Apostles’ Creed. The New Testament is silent when it comes to the other outside celebrities. We are told very little about their poets, their actors, their singers. We know little of their architects from the pages of the New Testament, even though they had magnificent architects. No, Scripture focuses on the political rulers, and this is because it is where the fundamental challenge was mounted.”⁵⁸

This is a strange argument to make. It may be true that politics is significant in a way that celebrity culture is not, or indeed any other examples of culture. We are not told much about philosophers, doctors or theologians either. We are told about some specific emperors or governors either because of their active involvement in the story or to help us locate where in time the narrative is happening.

Doug Wilson’s defence of Christian Nationalism

As we’ve already seen, Wilson doesn’t focus on the term Christian Nationalism, preferring “mere Christendom” but that’s the top level architecture. Christendom is made up of Christian

⁵⁶ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (pp. 79-80). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁷ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 80). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁸ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 83). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

nations. Mere Christendom is made up of Christian Nationalisms. So, Wilson does take time to defend Christian Nationalism. However, he wants to be clear about what he is defending and not defending. He says:

A Christian nation should never be mistaken as being the same thing as a chosen nation. There is no exceptionalism in it. In the Old Testament era, Israel was God's chosen nation, and the other nations were not. But in the era of the new covenant, the commandment that Christ left for us meant that we were to disciple all the nations. The first Christian nation (which was probably Armenia) was not an only child. She was simply the eldest, knowing that there were going to be lots of other kids. And as that family fills out, God doesn't want us squabbling about which one is the greatest, any more than Jesus wanted His disciples to argue about that same thing on the road to Jerusalem. So the "American exceptionalism" of the neocons is actually the idolatrous construct. What we are urging is simply one more Christian nation among many, and to God be the glory."⁵⁹

He adds:

"In the meantime, down here on earth, you cannot teach children to have respect for other cultures by inculcating in them a contempt for their own. A son who honors his own mother deeply is going to understand why another honorable son wants to honor his mother. That makes good sense to him. A man who loves his American heritage in the proper way is going to understand and appreciate it when an Englishman loves his, and a Korean loves his, and an Israeli loves his, and an Argentinian loves his. As they are all supposed to."⁶⁰

So, Wilson rejects the idea of American exceptionalism. This is positive. However, there are again things to consider here. It is okay insisting that you are encouraging respect for your culture but if you retell the story of your culture in a way that puts down other cultures including those that belong to prior indigenous peoples and that constantly casts your culture and nation as the hero in the story then you might have a problem.

Secondly, and this is related, he wants to deny and indeed dismiss the charge of racism in terms of white supremacy.

In our day, the mud-gobbing that calls conservative Christians names like white supremacist, or theo-fascist, or religious extremist is so overdone that it is easily answered and then dismissed.⁶¹

In answer to a frequently asked question on his blog, he writes:

"Is Christian Nationalism simply a dog whistle for *white* Christian Nationalism?"

No. The people who keep bringing this up are doing so because they have forgotten how to engage with arguments, but still need a stick to beat us with. If CN grows and spreads internationally, expanding into my Mere Christendom territory, some of those nations will be white. Shoot, Finland is white *now*. Some of them will be black, and others Asian. And some will be a color jumble, like America. That's all good.

⁵⁹ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 90). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁶⁰ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 91). Canon Press. Kindle Edition. FAQ ques

⁶¹ Wilson, Douglas. Mere Christendom (p. 87). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

In other words, we might suggest that Wilson wants a “mere Christian Nationalism” to go with his “mere Christendom”. The big question is whether or not he achieves this. Partly this will mean giving a bit of attention to how others develop the idea of Christian Nationalism and so, shortly we will have a look at Stephen Wolfe’s approach. We also have to look at criticisms and questions of Wilson himself. So, it is worth having a look at a specific challenge relating to Wilson, namely questions around his attitude to the slave trade.

Douglas Wilson on Slavery and racism

on racism, Wilson is adamant that we have been made equal in God’s image. He writes at length in his book, *Black and Tan* on this about his friendship with Afro-Americans as a child and his experience of seeing the horrors of segregation at work.⁶²

However, he goes on to argue that whilst all humanity is equal, he argues that not all cultures are. He argues that we must value progress in terms of science, technology, academic learning and culture.

“In reaction to the legacy of racism that has long been directed toward blacks, many liberals have adopted the emotionally secure (but intellectually indefensible) position of egalitarianism, the view that equality in the sight of God means sameness in the sight of man. This is the facts-be-damned approach. But there is no effective way to address racial hatreds by insisting that everyone (all together now) start denying the obvious. All men exhibit the image of God equally, but all cultures are not equal. As we look at all the tribes of men, we see some that have landed a man on the moon, and some that have not yet worked out the concept of the wheel. We have some with one whole row in the supermarket dedicated to shampoo, while in another tribe hair is washed in cow urine. We have orchestras playing *The Brandenburg Concertos* compared to someone beating on a hollow log with a couple of sticks.”⁶³

He insists though that where we see such developments, they are not a cause for cultural and ethnic pride because they reflect the influence of the Gospel on cultures.

“But there are such disparities, and they are present because of the uneven progress of the gospel throughout the world. Everything that we enjoy culturally is simply the grace of God. What do we of “the West” have that we did not receive as a gift? And if as a gift, then why do we boast as though it were not a gift (1 Cor. 4:7)? Before the gospel came to my ancestors, what were we whites (with our alleged superior genetics) doing with ourselves? Well, we were painting ourselves blue...”⁶⁴

At this point, I want to challenge Wilson’s view. The rhetoric here is impressive but I think that there are a couple of questionable moves in his logic. First of all, we do need to recognise that common grace has resulted in technological developments and indeed cultural developments

⁶² See especially Wilson, Douglas . *Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America* . Canon Press. Kindle Edition. (1444-681).

⁶³ Wilson, Douglas . *Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America* . Canon Press. Kindle Edition (1630).

⁶⁴ Wilson, Douglas . *Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America* . Canon Press. Kindle Edition (1644)

in un-Christianised contexts, so we cannot simply say that it is solely a Gospel consequence.⁶⁵ Secondly, we would need to account for the way in which western cultures used the benefit of technological developments in transportation and military warfare in order to exploit and constrain other cultures.

Thirdly, I believe that Wilson in a way that is unhealthy and unhelpful, conflates cultural maturity and technological maturity. In the examples he gives of soap and cosmetics or music, it is clear that the two cultures exemplified share a mature and positive concern for hygiene, art and aesthetics. The difference is in the technological execution of those concerns. Furthermore, Wilson does not allow for the negative aspects of technological development on a culture and its morality. The same developments that enabled a culture to produce medicine, cosmetics, advanced musical instruments etc also enabled it to produce bombs, nuclear weapons and the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

There is therefore in Wilson's approach, a western-centric view of how we evaluate cultures which I do not find in Scripture.

On slavery, Wilson insists that it is a positive thing that slavery has been abolished, it is not something he wants to go back to, particularly in the race based form that was prevalent in the States prior to the civil war. He writes:

“The slave trade was an abomination, and those evangelicals in England like William Wilberforce who led the fight against it are rightly considered heroes of the faith.”⁶⁶

He further writes:

“American slavery had the additional complication of its racial basis. And so we as Christians, and especially as American Christians, must denounce as a matter of biblical principle every form of racism, racial animosity, or racial vainglory.”⁶⁷

However, he wants to make the following arguments. First of all, that in so far as slavery was sinful, the sin was against God and not against the State.⁶⁸ Secondly, that the experience of slavery in the southern states was much more benign than has been claimed.⁶⁹ Thirdly, that the Bible did allow for and regulate slavery because whilst the result of the Gospel should have been a gradual ending of the slave trade and slave ownership, this was intended to be gradual

⁶⁵ Wilson argues that pastors should be amateur historians. Well if we are going to do that we need to be good ones too. As great as his comment about his ancestors painting themselves blue may work as a rhetorical flourish, it rather misses the point that it wasn't so much the arrival of the Gospel on these shores that put a stop to that so much as the arrival of the Roman legions. I have great delight in the benefits the Gospel brought but because of that and because I see God's common grace at work, I don't need to overclaim for it.

⁶⁶ Wilson, Douglas . *Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America* . Canon Press. Kindle Edition (l689).

⁶⁷ Wilson, Douglas . *Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America* . Canon Press. Kindle Edition (l703)

⁶⁸ Wilson, Douglas . *Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America* . Canon Press. Kindle Edition. (l342).

⁶⁹ Wilson, Douglas . *Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America* . Canon Press. Kindle Edition (l741).

and evolutionary rather than revolutionary.⁷⁰ This means that in his view, attacks on those like Edwards who held slaves and Dabney who resisted abolition are unfair.

I want to come back to the specifics of Wilson's argument shortly but I think it is helpful to understand first of all what underpins his position because his argument is not primarily to do with race and slavery. Rather we need to remember these four things about Wilson.

1. He is a post-millennialist who believes we should be optimistic about the future because over a lengthy period of history we can expect God's kingdom to gain ground and transform politics and culture.
2. Linked to this, he believes in something called Theonomism which is the belief that as a country becomes progressively Christianised, it should conform more and more to God's Law.
3. There is a strongly related view held by those from this background that we are protected against tyranny by limiting authority to specific spheres (This is part of the concept of Lex Rex – The Rule of Law). Those spheres are family, church and state.
4. These things come together so that Wilson claims to be a confederate. In other words, he believes that the southern states were right in the American Civil War in that they were resisting the imposition of an overbearing federal government, the result of which he considers to have been the introduction of such evils and legalised abortion.⁷¹

At this point, we can see what his issue with the abolition of slavery was. He believes that this was about the State overstepping its legitimate powers and interfering into another sphere. The matter of slave ownership for him was a private/household and family sphere issue and a sin issue so that it should have been dealt with by the preaching of the Gospel through the church enabling families to respond and to reform household life in conformity with the Gospel. He writes:

“That our nation did not remove slavery in the way it ought to have been removed helps to explain many of our nation’s problems in dealing with contemporary social evils. Those evils include abortion-on-demand, radical feminism, and rampant sodomy. In the pursuit of our constitutional rights, we have legally executed over forty million unborn children in this nation, and we are about to be oppressed with sodomite marriage.”⁷²

So, here are the problems I have with Wilson's position. First of all, I think he is seeking Biblical cover for a particular political position and I'm not sure it is there. I don't think a Federal Government in the States is any less Biblical than a confederate one. Secondly, whilst sin is against the Lord, and him alone, because, as we acknowledge that sin also brings harm to others that does mean that the State does have a role in stepping in to protect against harm, hurt and exploitation, in those contexts we talk about crime rather than as well as sin and I do not buy into the notion that the church or the family can shut their doors and say that the state has no jurisdiction there. The point about the spheres of responsibility are to do with what you are

⁷⁰ Wilson, Douglas . Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America . Canon Press. Kindle Edition (l718)

⁷¹ See Wilson, Douglas . Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America . Canon Press. Kindle Edition. (l309)

⁷² Wilson, Douglas . Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America . Canon Press. Kindle Edition. (l129)

responsible for, not where you are responsible for. This means that abuse of spouses and of children rightly comes under the criminal law too.

Now as to whether or not the African Slave Trade and its consequences in terms of ownership were benign, I would make two simple points. The first is that you can go and read the eyewitness accounts and quite rightly the abolitionists at the time gave short shrift to the notion. Secondly, the act of depriving someone of their liberty, compelling them to work for you without pay and denying them access to things like education, treating them as chattels is in and of itself anything but benign and should be recognised for the unjustifiable abuse that it was.

With regard to Christian slave owners of that time, the argument that they were justified or at least excused in holding to their position for Biblical reasons is refuted by three standards. First of all, that there were evangelical Christians carefully taking the time to show them Biblically why they were wrong. Secondly, a prominent argument of the abolitionists was that it was the enslavers who were innovators so that church history was on the side of the abolitionists. Thirdly, whilst people like Whitfield and Edwards may have argued that the issue was debatable in their day, those supporting slavery by the time of the American Civil war could no longer make that argument.

Furthermore, in suggesting that scripture isn't categorically pushing for immediate abolition, Wilson concedes far too much to liberal theological hermeneutics. I have argued elsewhere that the redemptive movement hermeneutic which sees the Gospel of creating a trajectory towards abolition does not stand up to scrutiny and yet Wilson in effect endorses it. Furthermore, within the context of Christians not having control over state power at the time Paul writes, it is clear that he is insisting that Christians voluntarily dismantle the instruments of slave ownership. He does so by insisting that slaves are given their reward.

Wilson argues that in the 1st century, a slave owner would not have been denied membership of a church and therefore he implies that slavery is not on the same level as abortion. Yet, ironically, he chooses as his example Philemon.

“Suppose a man presented himself for membership in your church. Upon inquiring as to what he did for a living, you learned that he was an abortionist. Should he be admitted into membership? Of course not. Now suppose this same church was moved back in time, and a man presented himself for membership along with three of his slaves. Now what do you do? If he is admitted to membership, then it is clear that abortion and slavery cannot be considered to be ethically equivalent. And if he is refused membership, then what are you going to do when he (his name was Philemon) goes back and tells the apostle Paul what you did to him? For the year was not a.d. 1860 but rather a.d. 60.”⁷³

This means we know what Paul would have said to Philemon when he showed up looking for church membership. He would say “okay -but you need to treat those slaves as sons now.”

⁷³ Wilson, Douglas . *Black & Tan: A Collection of Essays and Excursions on Slavery, Culture War, and Scripture in America* . Canon Press. Kindle Edition (L783)

Wilson is adamant that he neither endorses slavery nor racism and yet I want to suggest that his position on both issues is extremely unhealthy and out of line with what the Bible calls us to. There may not be examples of overt racism and yet his approach gives cover to the kind of ideologies that enable racism to breed. In that respect whilst his position may seem more nuanced and subtle, I would argue that it is more dangerous. Similarly, whilst he claims to reject American and white supremacy, his very understanding of how a Christian culture is meant to develop creates a big risk for that.

Technicalities?

I am now going to engage with perhaps the least easy to read and write about of the concerns raised about Doug Wilson. I think that this links significantly with Wilson's understanding of the role of the State, especially his suspicion of what he would perceive as bureaucratic overreach.

The issue here centres on two specific cases. The first concerns a man called Stephen Sitler a paedophile who was convicted of numerous, serious offences. The concerns raised are that despite the significant concerns raised, Wilson allowed Sitler to continue to attend church and further to marry a young lady from the congregation and for them to have a child together despite concerns that this presented a potential danger to the child. Further that, as with the other case, Wilson wrote on behalf of Sitler to the court. Wilson has responded by writing to the congregation at Christchurch, Moscow, Idaho to say that whilst Sitler is welcome to attend the church, he does so accompanied by a chaperone. However, from what I can tell from the available reports, he neglects to mention that the chaperones are his wife and his mother-in-law both of whom failed to report on serious concerns and further abuse allegations when they arose.⁷⁴

The second case concerns Nathalie Greenfield, a young girl who was 14 at the time and Jamin Wright, a student in his 20s who lodged with Nathalie's family. Jamin engaged in a relationship with Nathalie which seems to have to some extent been allowed by her parents and which is described by Wilson as a "secret courtship." Again, Wilson is reported to have written to the court's in support of Wright. Furthermore, when Greenfield went public about her experience in later years, Wilson's response was to:

- Argue that Greenfield's testimony was not reliable because of performance art videos that her Christian had produced.
- Claim that Greenfield had been happy with his pastoral care until disciplined for marrying a non-Christian. Again, he is seeking to undermine her credibility and suggest that she is motivated by bitterness.⁷⁵
- Attempt to persuade Greenfield to be silent by suggesting that raising her grievance was unfair to her mum.

In correspondence with Nathalie, he goes on to argue that her case was not comparable with the Stephen Sitler situation. He recognises that a crime of "statutory rape" has been committed but insists that other factors should be brought into consideration. I am going to quote Wilson directly here:

⁷⁴ On this case see, [Steven Sitler Update: The House that Doug Wilson Built | The Truth About Moscow \(moscowid.net\)](#) and [Steven Sitler | The Truth About Moscow \(moscowid.net\)](#) see also Wilson's statement on this case: [An Open Letter from Christ Church on Steven Sitler | Blog & Mablog \(dougwils.com\)](#)

⁷⁵ For these two points see [Justice and the Ad Hominem | Blog & Mablog \(dougwils.com\)](#)

“As my letter makes plain, Jamin was guilty of sexual behavior with a girl who was below the age of consent. She was underage. Our letter acknowledged fully that Jamin was guilty of criminal behavior, and we wanted him to pay the penalty for that criminal behavior, which was a species of statutory rape. The question before the court was what kind of criminal behavior it was, not whether it was criminal, and we instructed Jamin that he needed to take responsibility for what he had done. But what he had done was very different from subsequent reconstructions that Natalie has been periodically posting.

In short, his crime was not in the same category as Steven Sittler's crimes at all. Steven's behavior was with young children and was simply predatory. Jamin's crime was that of engaging in consensual sexual behavior with an underage girl.

So -- Jamin was in a romantic relationship with a young girl, her parents knew of the relationship and encouraged it, her parents permitted a certain measure of physical affection to exist between them (e.g. hand-holding), Natalie was a beautiful and striking young woman, and at the time was about eight inches taller than Jamin was. Her parents believed that she was mature enough to be in that relationship, and the standards they set for the relationship would have been reasonable if she had in fact been as mature as she seemed to them.

What we wanted the court to know was simply this: it is simply not possible to have it both ways. If you are pressing charges of child abuse, you are saying that Jamin failed to respect the fact that Natalie was a child. But this was the same failure that he shared with her parents, who thought she was a remarkably mature young woman. That fact ought to be recognized on all sides. Jamin was brought into the house in order to make Natalie the object of his romantic intentions, and to do so more conveniently. He certainly abused that trust sinfully and grotesquely. He abused it in criminal ways, and the time he spent in prison for it was no miscarriage of justice. However, the time he has spent on the Internet, characterized as a pedophile, by people who were entirely ignorant of the facts of the case, and whose only interest in it was finding a rock to throw at me, is the very definition of injustice. ⁷⁶

I want you to get a sense of what Wilson's argument is here. He is in effect saying that whilst a technical crime has been committed that the issue is not really that serious. The basis of his argument is that the relationship was consensual and that in effect Nathalie seduced Jamin and that her family supported this. Let's name this for what it is, it is victim blaming. It is excusing sin and it is seeking to impose shame and guilt on the victim to silence them.

We need to remember here that the point of statutory rape is that the child is not able to give consent. This is based on the law of the land and it is based on the fact that a young person aged under 18 is defined as a child. Furthermore, we need to remember that what we observe in terms of predatory behaviour is the grooming and manipulation both of victims and families. Finally, it is shocking to suggest that any complicity by Greenfield's parents in Wright's behaviour somehow excuses him.

⁷⁶ [My Email Exchange With The Pastor Who Defends My Rapist \(natalierose-livewithpassion.blogspot.com\)](http://MyEmailExchangeWithThePastorWhoDefendsMyRapist(natalierose-livewithpassion.blogspot.com))

So, what we see here is a confusion of ethics leading to a serious failure of pastoral care and a young person put at risk but this has been further followed up with behaviour that was bullying and abusive towards Greenfield by Wilson in order to gaslight, intimidate and shame her into staying silent.

I want to raise this here because I suspect that most people within the UK conservative evangelical context will be aware that Wilson has some iffy theology on infant baptism (not just that he is a paedo-baptist but that his position would be questioned by other paedo-baptists) and justification. Some may be aware that there have been other concerns raised about possible plagiarism, issues about his views on slavery and maybe even that there was some controversy around child-safeguarding. However, I suspect that a lot of people will not be aware of the actual cases behind this and haven't been trawling the internet to find out more because Wilson is not a key leader in the UK church but rather is simply seen as a provocative writer with some controversial views, someone we won't always agree with but still worth hearing from time to time.

However, I think we need to be a little bit more alert, not just to Wilson himself but to the kind of views and ideas that circulate from a common theological and philosophical root. If we don't start to understand the distinctive underpinning philosophy, then we might miss the different ways in which the problematic aspects of it might present themselves in the future and indeed may already be doing so. I think we have seen some of this here in the UK with recent negative reactions to safe-guarding agencies and reports. We also see something of this coming through in the response of some to Government regulations relating to COVID-19.

Once again, I think what we are seeing is that the issues are presented as family and then perhaps church matters. Whilst a technical offence has been committed and so the law of the land has to be considered, what really matters to Wilson is the sanctity of parental authority within the home and from his perspective, the father had already made his judgement. This sits within a philosophy where the state's authority is seen as extremely limited. If, as Wilson has argued in mere Christendom, the State is restricted to what it has explicit authority from God to legislate for, then can it really get involved in setting arbitrary age limits?

The consequence of this is that a philosophical concept, not scripture is elevated to the point that as with slavery, it takes precedent over the immediate welfare of a victim. Furthermore,, again we see that there is confusion about what the Bible actually says about authority, submission and marital/sexual relationships. I think we also need to bare in mind my observation in the previous post that Wilson interprets, the Deuteronomy case of pre-marital sex as rape and therefore holds open the possibility of marriage as a solution to rape.

My concern remains that Wilson should not be seen as some kind of provocative shock jock, occasionally causing offence and a bit iffy on his theology. Rather, we need to be alert to the whole system of thinking that underpins this. Furthermore, what we get a sense of here is from observing how the church and magistrate interact in a real-life context on a small scale, is what that would look like on the larger scale should Wilson's mere Christendom vision be realised.

Against Christianity: Christendom and Christian Nationalism in Peter Leithart's thought

As mentioned previously, there is a diversity to Federal Vision with differences between key proponents, just as you might identify differences among the early reformers, Calvin, Zwingli and Luther disagreeing on the nature of the sacraments among other things. Some have talked in

terms of a Federal Vision, dark and a Federal Vision, light. Take for example, this quote from Stephen Wellum on the Gospel Coalition website.

“After 2012, the direction of the Federal Vision movement seemed to fragment further and go in different directions. On the one hand, when Peter Leithart departed from Moscow, Idaho, to create the Theopolis Institute in Birmingham, Alabama (with James Jordan), “Federal Vision Dark” became more “Reformational catholic” in emphasis. In 2016, Leithart published *The End of Protestantism* calling for more unity within the larger church, including Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and mainline Protestants. On the other hand, by the end of 2013, Doug Wilson wrote *Against the Church*, calling people back to a more traditional covenant theology, and by 2017, he stopped identifying with the label, “Federal Vision,” as he became more critical of those he had earlier identified with, within the movement. Recently, Wilson has strongly affirmed the imputation of Christ’s active obedience in our justification, and the Reformed understanding of justification and sanctification, while still strongly stressing what he thinks is crucial to covenant theology, namely, the objectivity of the covenant.”⁷⁷

Leithart and Wilson have had their strong disagreements. Leithart has also critiqued Stephen Wolfe’s position. So, it is important to not just look at what Douglas Wilson is saying to understand the Federal Vision roots of Christian Nationalism. We need to look at what the likes of Leithart have been saying as well.

In his book, *Against Christianity*, Peter Leithart critiques the modern social construct of Christianity. He offers a counter vision for what it means to be the Church.

“The church is not a people united by ideas, ideas which go collectively under the name, Christianity... Christian community by the same token is not an extra layer on social life. The church is not a club for religious people.”⁷⁸

Instead, Leithart argues that “The Church is a way of living together before God, a new way of being human together.”⁷⁹ What this means is understood by words like “fellowship” and also the word normally translated as church, *ecclesia*.

“In the Greek world, *ekklesia* referred to the assembly of citizens of the *polis*...In short, the Church presented herself not as another “sect” or cult that existed under the umbrella of the *polis*, she was an alternative governing body for the city and the beginning of a new city.”⁸⁰

Here we see alignment with Wilson’s perspective and we see the roots for recent Christian Nationalist understanding of the church or *ecclesia* as a political assembly. The church is political, not just in the sense that Biblical beliefs have an impact on how we live, on individual policies such as abortion, euthanasia and so on but rather that the church is claiming to rival the civic authorities of this world. There is an eschatological question here as well. Christians would agree generally with the statement that the church offers the beginnings of “a new city.” We look forward to the realisation of the new Jerusalem. However, a-millennialists and pre-millennialists, that city is a future reality in terms of its full realisation. Post-millennialists however see its realisation in this world, prior to Christ’s return. Leithart, is a post-millennialist. His

⁷⁷ [The Federal Vision - The Gospel Coalition](#)

⁷⁸ Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 14-16.

⁷⁹ Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 16.

⁸⁰ Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 30-31.

position therefore, like Wilson's and Zwingli's tends towards Erastianism. The aim of the church is to become the city, or the state.

Therefore, whilst The Church is "not of this world" and exists separately, providing a counter culture, it is not meant to settle for this.⁸¹

"She has been given the subversive mission of converting whatever culture she finds herself in. She works to the end that her language, her rites, and her way of life may become formative for an entire society."⁸²

Leithart therefore favours an attempt to revive Christendom. This is not because the West as it currently looks is Christendom, nor is it because Christendom and Constantine were perfect. In that sense, he follows Wilson, or maybe Wilson follows him in arguing for a Christendom 2.0.⁸³ He sets the exam question as follows:

"The issue is whether the hope of forming Christian culture in the wider society is inherent to the Church's mission, or a deviation from the church's mission. Should the Christian *ekklesia* want to remake the earthly city in her image?"⁸⁴

Leithart's answer to that question is "Yes." In that respect, he and Wilson, despite what other differences they may have are in agreement.

Conclusion

The Federal Vision approach sees the Church as offering an alternative culture in its fullest sense, an *ecclesia*, or assembly of the people ready to take on the responsibility of producing art, educating people and determining the laws and norms of society. In that respect, it aligns closely with the ideas found in The Seven Mountain Mandate associated more with the New Apostolic Reformation. It also provides the thinking, the intellectual capital, such as it is that contemporary Christian Nationalism builds on. Federal Visionists such as Douglas Wilson may claim to reject some of the wilder extremes of this Christian Nationalism because they reject the alliance with political nationalism that it has formed. Specifically, Wilson rejects American exceptionalism and white supremacy. However, the at best ambiguous manner in which questions to do with ethnicity and culture are handled give space for an ethno-cultural nationalism to develop.

⁸¹ Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 123.

⁸² Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 123.

⁸³ Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 124-125.

⁸⁴ Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 125.

The New apostolic Reformation (NAR) and Seven Mountain Mandate

If Federal Vision provides one strand of Christian Nationalism and that strand is particularly associated with Reformed or Conservative Evangelicalism, then a second strand, more associated with Charismatic movements and networks is the New Apostolic Reformation.

What is the NAR?

I suspect that it is something we will be less familiar with in the UK, both the term and the concept. However, we will be familiar with some names because people such as C Peter Wagner who was a key figure in the Church Growth movement of the late 20th Century and Bill Johnson have particularly been associated with it. Bill Johnson is of course the founding pastor of Bethel Church, Redding, California which has had a significant influence particularly on worship through a number of worship leaders and also through Jesus Culture, the youth movement that grew out of it.

One of the first challenges with understanding the term and movement is that we might associate it with the new church movement of the late 20th Century that emerged in the UK in the 60s and 70s. This included figures like Terry Virgo, Roger Foster, Bryn Jones and Keri Jones. It has sometimes been referred to as Restorationism because at its heart was the belief that apostles need to be restored to the church. Like many movements including both Pentecostalism and the Brethren, there was a desire to return to a more New Testament church culture and practice.

The challenge with that movement was exactly what was meant by “apostles” and “apostolic”. I get the impression that some elements in the early days did think they were restoring the church to its foundations with apostles equivalent to the 12. However, much of the movement would see a distinction between what we might refer to as capital A Apostles of Christ and small a apostles of the 12. The latter are seen more as missional leaders, planters and father figures to churches and movements with an “invited in” relational authority. It is fair to say that most church networks and movements including non Charismatic conservative ones would have a history of such people even if they do not use the term. For example, in the mid 20th Century conservative evangelicals and even some Charismatics looked to Martyn Lloyd Jones as a father figure and later to Stott and Lucas. In recent years we may recognise the influence of Piper, Keller, Carson and dare I mention John MacArthur. At more local level churches might invite trusted leaders in to offer wise counsel. Which not being able impose their will, such people often have more influence than just giving “take it or leave it” advice.

So, we would recognise the legitimacy of networks such as New Frontiers, Pioneer and Icthus. Indeed such movements have tended to be protected from excess by their accountability within mainstream evangelicalism and moreover have been a gift to the wider body in many ways.

However, whilst we can distinguish the 20th C Restoration movement from NAR, there may be potential relationships that we need to alert to especially on the extremes where there was at times an emphasis on authoritarian heavy shepherding and a tendency towards the dominionist thinking that we will come to shortly.

The potential for confusing these two phenomena may have slowed our ability to understand and engage the NAR movement. In particular, some of the earliest and quickest off the mark critiques came from those on the cessationists wing of conservative Evangelicalism and so

tended to focus on gifts and emotionalism. Even non Charismatic Christians may be tempted to conclude that we are just dealing with an excessive extreme element within the charismatic movement.

However, I want to suggest that we are dealing with something a little different. The crucial matter is the issue I mentioned above of “dominionism”, sometimes referred to as “the seven mountain Mandate”. This is central to Bar thinking with the restoration of apostles being key to this. Whereas the new church apostolic movements was thinking about relational leadership within the church, this is more about the generals in a spiritual battle to extend God’s kingdom’s dominion on earth. It is about bringing heaven on earth.

And that means two things. First, it means that Christians are expected not just to have an impact but authoritative influence over those spheres or kingdoms referred to in the Seven Mountain Mandate: religion, business, arts, family, education and church. This should happen from this perspective on a number of fronts including:

1. Spiritual warfare: The spheres are seen as under demonic control and those spirits are to be driven out by prayer, fasting and worshipping
2. Hard power: Christians or those sympathetic to Christians gaining control of businesses, political parties, courtrooms and governments
3. Soft power as gifted Christians have an influence in their field and also as they shape minds and hearts through education, culture and media.

This approach distinguishes NAR from other charismatic/apostolic movements. It also connects the thinking and methodology with the postmillennial theonomism associated with Federal Vision thinking.

Conservative and charismatic evangelicals here in the UK would do well to engage with the concept to get a better understanding of the movement and why it proves popular.

New Apostles

The New Apostolic Reformation may be seen to have a similar take on the Church and gifts to charismatic networks with an apostolic emphasis. After all, it refers to a five fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor teachers. However, what is meant by “apostle” is something different to the idea of a pioneering founder of a movement or someone invited in to bring authoritative counsel because of their relationship to a church or group of churches.

Within the NAR movement, apostles are specifically linked to the belief that the church is meant to bring heaven down to earth. Danny Silk expresses it this way in his book, A Culture of Honour.

“Within these pages you will find what one of my friends calls a “recipe.” The ingredients in this recipe are a set of beliefs and practices. The steps in this recipe combine these ingredients in such a way that they create something powerful—an environment that is uncommon on the earth today. It is an environment that attracts and hosts the presence of God. We at Bethel Church, in Redding, California, call this environment the culture of

honor. By no means is our “recipe” the only one that creates a culture that hosts the presence of God, but we can tell you that it is one that works.⁸⁵

If it is the case, that we are meant to be creating the environment of Heaven in order to enjoy God’s presence, we need some kind of conduit, a pipe or funnel if you like for bringing down the blessings, particularly the supernatural gifts. In order to do this, it is important that we honour the key parts of that conduit and that means naming them. Silk argues that:

Honor creates life-giving and life-promoting relationships. The key here is “accurately acknowledging who people are.” We can only do this when we recognize their God-given identities and roles.⁸⁶

And adds:

“A culture of honor is created as a community of people learns to discern and receive people in their God-given identities. Throughout this book we will explore some of the “names” that have enabled us to establish very specific kinds of relationships in the Bethel community. These are the relationships that attract and sustain the outpouring of God’s presence and power in our midst. The names “apostle,” “prophet,” “teacher,” “pastor,” and “evangelist” and their distinctive anointings, mindsets, and gifts create a network of relationships designed to bring the focus and priorities of Heaven to earth. Names like “free sons” and “children of light” define the way we must honor and relate to one another, particularly when addressing areas of behavior and relationships that need discipline and restoration. Descriptive names like “royalty,” “wealthy,” and “benefactor” shape our relationships with our resources and with the wider community that the Church is called to bless and encounter with the love and power of Heaven.⁸⁷

Silk argues that the process flows through the fivefold gifts or offices given to the Church by the Holy Spirit at the Resurrection. Ephesians 4:11 says:

“¹¹ And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,

Now, it’s worth introducing two side points here. First, many commentators would suggest that there are in fact four gifts here with pastor-teachers being one gift rather than two separate gifts of teaching and pastoring/shepherding. Secondly, the idea that the apostles and prophets mentioned here are the kind of roles seen in the contemporary church is even more controversial and with good reason. The context of Ephesians 4:11 with its immediate connection to the resurrection suggests that Paul is talking about gifts generally to the whole Church throughout history, not individual local churches. Additionally, apostles and prophets have already been mentioned in Ephesians 2:19-22:

¹⁹ So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and

⁸⁵ Silk, Danny. Culture of Honor: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment (p. 25). Destiny Image. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁶ Silk, Danny. Culture of Honor: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment (p. 26). Destiny Image. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁷ Silk, Danny. Culture of Honor: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment (p. 26). Destiny Image. Kindle Edition.

prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. ²¹The whole building, being put together by Him, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord. ²²You also are being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.

It is likely that Paul is talking about the same things in chapter 2 and chapter 4, especially when we remember that the chapter divisions weren't there at the time. So, Paul is most likely to be talking about the foundational apostles, the twelve, or capital "A" Apostles who were with Jesus. The point is that apostles and prophets together bring revelation to hand over the Gospel or Scripture to us.

Now, that isn't to say that there isn't a type of gift within the church that has a part to play beyond the local church. In Romans 16, Paul refers to someone being outstanding among the apostles whilst Titus, Timothy and Barnabas seem to have a role which goes beyond local church leadership. So, many church networks today think in terms of people who have some kind of invited in, relational authority that goes beyond take it or leave it advice. In some cases, as with ours (New Frontiers) people are happy to refer to it as "apostolic" whereas other networks very clearly have such people but would stay clear of the label.

However, here's the crucial point. Silk offers a definition of the role of apostle which is very different to that. He says:

"You have likely heard the term apostolic ministry used more in recent years. I am confident that we will hear and see more of it in the years to come. This term is something that needs defining early in this book because I will make frequent references to it from here on. Through this term, I will be referring to the primary goals and objectives of the apostle's leadership, and therefore, the goals with which all the people under the apostle align themselves.

When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He brought a key phrase into their core values. He told them to pray, "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."⁴ His instructions taught them to long for Heaven on earth. I believe this core value is the primary objective of the apostle's ministry. Apostolic leaders are focused on Heaven, and their mission is to see Heaven's supernatural reality established on the earth. They long to see the evidence of Heaven's touch in the environment they lead or influence. Having this motivation at the foundation of a church leads to an entirely different emphasis in the church's governing priorities. The apostle will make the presence of God, the worship of God, and the agenda of Heaven the top priorities in the environment. An apostolic government is designed to protect these priorities.

from which we derive the English word "architect." This perfectly describes the role of the apostolic ministry. It is as though God Himself has given blueprints to certain individuals to reproduce Heaven on the earth. Along with this blueprint, the anointing of the apostle contains a quality that stimulates and draws to the surface the diverse anointings in the people around him. As those around the apostle begin to manifest their own unique anointings, it creates an environment of "sub-contractors" who help the "master builder" to realize the blueprints of Heaven. The following are some of the key characteristics of an apostolic environment and culture: Worship and supernatural activity are priorities in the environment and the lifestyle of the saints, because God's presence is the top priority.

The saints are sent, as Jesus was, to destroy the works of the devil, including disease, sickness, and affliction. The saints live to demonstrate to all the people on earth that God is always the good guy and the devil is always the bad guy. The Kingdom of God is “joy in the Holy Spirit.”⁵ Therefore, church is to be a place of exceeding, abundant joy. God desires those who don’t yet know Him to come into a relationship with Him where the primary emphasis is love, not merely service. The Body of Christ is being built up and equipped to become a glorious and victorious Bride, no matter how the conditions of the earth may presently appear. The Church is to create global awakening and impact. Successive generations must be equipped to carry and demonstrate Kingdom revelation.⁸⁸

I wanted to give the full quote here so that we are absolutely clear about what is being argued about the role of apostle. We will come back shortly to why this matters and the impact it has but I want to do two things before that. First, I want you to observe that this is all completely made up. There is nothing here that is drawn from what Scripture has to say both in terms of its specific words about the 12 apostles or how it describes the work and ministry of anyone else in the church including those like Timothy and Titus who might be seen as most closely fulfilling the modern role.

Secondly, I suspect that the retort would be something along the lines of “but you would say that because you are just a teacher in the church.” And so, it is important to see what Silk has to say about the role of teacher.

“Next we have teachers. As I mentioned, the teacher is generally accepted as the highest anointing level in the American church. But the truth is that it is not the highest anointing, but only the third level of anointing. It is a “C” in a grade scale, and it is what keeps the Church only average in its effects and influence. Our need and opportunity to upgrade the anointing to an “A” is growing. Before I get too far into this section about teachers, I need to confess that this will not satisfy the needs of the teachers reading it. For most teachers, this section would have to be a book in itself, because teachers need lots of information before they can conclude most anything. I respect that about teachers. I am not going to try very hard to convince teachers that I am right or they are wrong. I am simply going to present why I think we’ve made a big mistake in making the teacher the highest anointing operating in the leadership of the American church. Our current church culture has a high value for the security we feel when we are able to prove that what we have devoted our life to is right. In order to assert our faith, we assume that we must be able to argue a case to a logical conclusion. But the fact is that our need for so much certainty comes from great uncertainty. When Heaven stops manifesting itself in the Church, Christians have to prove somehow that they are reasonable for following Jesus. When the power of the Gospel is replaced by arguments, everyone should be concerned. When cancer, paralysis, tumors, and mental illness leave people’s bodies and minds, we do not require an argument. A person experiencing the touch of Heaven is proof enough that Jesus is who He says He is. But when the Church insists on having a logical culture, we demand a logical gospel, and therefore, we turn to the teachers. Most teachers today are fixated on the written Word of God.

⁸⁸ Silk, Danny. Culture of Honor: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment (pp. 61-63). Destiny Image. Kindle Edition.

They believe that the Word of God is the source of life and truth on the earth. Their value for the Word is much higher than their need for the supernatural. These are the lawyers, scribes, and Pharisees of our day. They can wield the “Sword” with the best. The teacher has a deep, driving need to be right, and predominantly sees the world in terms of “scriptural” and “non-scriptural.” Because the teacher’s focus is on the Word, the anointing of the teacher influences the Church to focus on the Word. Please don’t misunderstand me; I am not trying to devalue Scripture. But I want us to understand how unimportant Heaven has become because of this dreadful error and disorder. The teachers, as the primary influence in the Church, have turned our attention to the law. When we focus solely on the Word, eventually we begin to fight amongst ourselves over the Word. We begin to pull apart the Body of Christ because there is a right and a wrong. Each teacher is compelled to be right. As Paul said to the Corinthians, we have “many teachers” in the Body of Christ.⁸ And when the teachers disagree, and many do, there is division. Leader after leader begins to assert his or her case of doctrine and theology and builds a case to prove his or hers and disprove the others. What then is the role of the teacher in the church if it is not to prove that Christians are right to believe what they believe? In order for teachers to play their true role in the culture of the Church, they will first have to be willing to pursue a supernatural lifestyle. They will have to be dissatisfied with the armor of their arguments and the lifelessness of their theology. They will need to increase their courage to risk failure and live a life that is unable to answer all the questions of their world. The teachers must embrace mystery. The anointing on teachers will always cause them to have a high value for education. They will be those who believe that most problems are solved through training and informing people according to Scripture. But the real change they want to see will come under the leadership of an apostolic and prophetic culture. In a supernatural culture, teachers will teach with supernatural results. When Jesus taught a crowd about the Kingdom of Heaven, He always showed them the Kingdom. His disciples were in a never-ending classroom experience. Jesus took “show and tell” to a whole new level. Our teachers must put the “show” back into their lesson plans. I’ve heard Bill Johnson say many times, “Jesus is perfect theology.” I agree. If we see Jesus doing it, then we are on to something good. If He wasn’t doing anything like what we are doing, we’d better ask ourselves, “What went wrong?” Teachers must take the passion and the revelation of the apostles and prophets and show us how it becomes truth that we apply to our lives. The role of the teacher is to help replicate the processes of the supernatural and then train and equip the saints to cooperate with those processes. The love of Scripture and the knowledge that teachers carry help them to communicate complex processes in simple analogies and applications. Randy Clark of Global Awakening is a prime example to me of someone with a teaching gift who uses it to help the world and the Church. understand the supernatural. Although he is an apostolic leader himself, his teaching gift operates in that higher anointing. Therefore, he uses his understanding of Scripture, history, theology, and people to connect mysterious revelations to practical daily life. His models for training people to pray for the sick are excellent and highly effective methods for mobilizing prayer teams to minister to large groups in his crusades. Believers who have never prayed for others to be healed in their whole Christian experience are, within a few hours of training, seeing miracle after miracle. A successful revival culture has teachers who are perpetuating the supernatural in it. The days of teaching our limited

experiences are over. We now must learn to teach how and what Heaven is doing every day to everyone.⁸⁹

Again, I wanted to make sure that you have the full statement. It's pretty shocking isn't it? Not only is this not in Scripture but it goes directly against Scripture. Silk claims that he does not want to downgrade the role of teacher or Scripture but that's exactly what he does. First, he creates a hierarchy within the church Timothy 3 where he recognises the high calling of eldership and insists that the primary qualifications of those responsible for churches is that they are self controlled, godly leaders of their own family, hospitable and able to teach. Secondly he dismisses a concern for safety when Paul explicitly makes that our first concern as elders in his commission to the Ephesian elders (in Acts 20). Third, he suggests that the only way to recover a place for teachers is if they see themselves as subordinate to Bethel's apostles. In other words their job is to pass on the ideas and revelations of these apostles and prophets. This goes right against all that Paul has to say about not setting in place other foundations or preaching other gospels. This is just utterly wrong.

I said that I would come back to the impact and implications of Danny Silk's view of a kind of process and of the different roles. So, here it is. First, I think you can see why such a culture is deeply uncomfortable with the idea that people can be challenged and confronted. Why honour prevents disagreement. You see, the belief is that these people, the apostles and prophets, the big senior guys are the conduit that links heaven to earth and you don't want to cut yourself off from that. It feels like the kind of struggle people might encounter when they discover a leak or worse, the water coming out of the tap is gunky and brown. You really should shut the water supply off and find out what the problem is so you can fix it but you worry that then you won't have water.

Secondly, what this theology and practice does is to place these men (it's usually men though occasionally some women) into an intermediary position between Heaven (God) and us. This is why it is important to be clear. There is no vacancy for that position. It's already taken by Jesus.

Thirdly, if our job is to recreate heaven on earth and apostles are the vehicle by which this happens, then this begins to align with the ideas we have begun to see from the Federal Vision of the church offering an alternative ekklesia and an alternative polis. NAR leaders such as Bill Johnson talk in terms of an invasion. The church is not just in defensive mode but expected to storm the gates of Hell and to take earth for the King of Kings.

Invading Babylon: The Seven Mountain Mandate

If you want to dig a little further into the New apostolic Reformation teaching on Dominion Theology and the Seven Mountain Mandate then a good place to start is "Invading Babylon: The Seven Nation Mandate" by Lance Wallnau, Bill Johnson and others. This multi-author work in effect sets out the NAR manifesto.

Johnson begins the first chapter by saying:

⁸⁹ Silk, Danny. Culture of Honor: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment (p. 67-7070). Destiny Image. Kindle Edition.

“We have been given authority over this planet. It was first given to us in the commission God gave to mankind in Genesis (see Gen. 1:28-29) and was then restored to us by Jesus after His resurrection (see Matt. 28:18).”⁹⁰

Restoring the Creation mandate

The starting point for Dominion Theology is that the Great Commission is a continuation or restoration of/return to the Cultural mandate of Genesis 1. Humans were given dominion over creation but the Fall impedes that sovereignty. Jesus’ arrival, ushering in God’s kingdom through his death, resurrection and ascension means that those who belong to his kingdom are called to fill and to subdue the earth, to exercise godly dominion again.

Johnson does insist that this dominion is different to normal human expectations. It is an authority not to “lord it over” but to serve.

18). But Kingdom authority is different than is typically understood by many believers. It is the authority to set people free from torment and disease, to destroy the works of darkness. It is the authority to move the resources of Heaven through creative expression to meet human need. It is the authority to bring Heaven to earth. It is the authority to serve.⁹¹

This is a theme that will be repeated through his chapter.

The Church is sometimes known for its willingness to serve, but usually with well-meaning spiritual agendas as the ultimate goal. It almost sounds blasphemous, but serving simply to get people saved is a religious agenda. As pure and noble as it may seem to us as believers, it is manipulative to the world and is viewed as impure service. The world can smell it a mile away. We put them on the defensive when we carry such reasons for serving into their sphere of responsibility.⁹²

It is important to recognise this. Johnson will use a variety of examples to argue that we do best when we come in not to be seen to be taking over but rather to help those within the system. This may not fit with our expected image of Christian Nationalism and may look different from a lot of what we have seen in the US culture wars. There are still though a couple of questions around the approach. First of all, one may counter that whilst there is a nuance here, the aim is still to ultimately take control. Indeed if our concern is ultimately to have that control then isn’t that just as manipulative as doing things to get people saved? Indeed, aren’t we seeking their well being when we prioritise their salvation over our influence?

The other question raised at this point is one of over realised eschatology. Many Christians will recognise the connection between the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission. However, reformed evangelicals would also recognise that our current experience is “now and not yet.” We look forward to the day when Jesus is seen as the one, coming with the clouds, receiving authority from the Ancient of Days and so coming to reign as judge and king. Revelation

⁹⁰ Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 21). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.”

⁹¹ Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 21). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

⁹² Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 26). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

portrays the new Jerusalem coming down to earth, Creation is restored, renewed, perfected into its ultimately glory but that is then, when he returns. In the meantime the focus of Matthew 28 is on making disciples and teaching them to obey Jesus. Whilst some have suggested that it is the nations that are collectively disciplined giving Christians political power, that it is after baptising disciples that we then teach them to obey makes it clear that the authority Jesus gives his followers is a spiritual authority for the church.

Storming the gates of hell

Wallnau in his chapter recounts how Loren Cunningham and Bill Bright had claimed to have received the “seven mountain mandate” as a direct revelation from God at about the same time. He quotes Cunningham as follows:

First, we take territory from satan in the place of prayer, with the power of the Holy Spirit, through the mighty weapons available to us. We know that spiritual warfare involves pulling down strongholds of false reasoning. We pray against the enemy’s influence in whatever area we are aware. Our prayers should be specific. Listening to the Holy Spirit in our minds, He will tell us how to pray. Regional and local matters should be part of our specific focus. Second, after we have prayed for a specific sphere of influence, be it government, a school system, an area of the media, or whatever, God may then choose to use us in the very sphere for which we have been praying. He may call us to penetrate that influential place for Him, placing us, like Daniel or Joseph, in a place of authority.⁹³

Wallnau is in agreement with Cunningham that spiritual strategies are required. For him, this is about Jesus’ promise that:

“...I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18 NKJV)⁹⁴

However, this becomes an explicitly offensive strategy. It’s not just that Hell will not be able to overcome the church, we are to take over the gates of Hell themselves. The so called “Seven mountains” of family, religion, culture, media, education, business, technology and politics are seen as those gates or gateways by which Hell and Satan seek to exercise their dominion. So that these become kingdoms with kings, mountain kings, each “with a significant sphere of authority.”⁹⁵

He argues that this means Jesus instruction to his disciples in Matthew 10 to find the person of peace was not about finding the nicest rabbi but finding the person who has authority. The “wolf king.”

In fact, if the wolf will cooperate, he will find that the One King who rules over all men and judges nations will help that wolf king succeed. This all-powerful One will drive out the influence of the powers of “spiritual wickedness,” that fester and thrive off of the chaos and control they exercise in that king’s domain. When wolf kings honor the King of

⁹³Cunningham cited in: Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 55). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁴ Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 56). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁵ Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 58). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

glory, they do not become weak kings. Quite the contrary, they become truly great, and more so, they have authority to reveal the glory hidden within their sphere of authority.⁹⁶

This is perhaps one of the most bewildering sections in the book and seems to be based on a confusion over what Jesus means when he says that he sends us out as sheep among wolves. The vivid imagery of our vulnerability in an evil world is over interpreted as an overt strategy to reach the wolves. This is confusing because Scripture presents wolves not as those to be served and co-opted but rather those that we are to lay down our lives to protect the church from. Perhaps this helps us to understand better some of the political strategies and tactics that we are currently seeing on both sides of the Atlantic.

Indeed, this links to an overall theme that arises out of such confusing. Scripture doesn't focus on us seeking to occupy hell's gates. That's not our interest. Nor is the idea of invading Babylon really present. Babylon, both literally during the exile and figuratively in Revelation represents a worldly power which we have no choice to live under the rule of. Danile and his friends did not invade Babylon. They had no option but to serve the emperor because they were taken as exiles, as hostages. They no more were invading than Nicolas Maduro has invaded New York.

The theme of taking the gates of hell is continued in Alan Vincent's chapter. The Seven mountains strategy is not just about exercising influence through gifting, wisdom or clout but is about spiritual warfare through prayer, fasting and exorcism taking on territorial spirits.

Kingdom prosperity, financing the war

C Peter Wagner poses a question:

The question in the minds of many who are bold enough to probe beneath the surface is: Why haven't we seen more of the reformation that we've been talking about?⁹⁷

It's a good question and you might expect a number of possible responses. Could it be that there has been a lack of faith, or sin in the camp? Whisper it quietly but might it be that they've got their understanding of the Gospel and of God's mission wrong? No, Wagner's answer is money. He says:

We will not see measurable, sustained transformation of our cities or states or nations if those who are providing strategic leadership do not have access to large sums of money. Throughout human history, three things have contributed toward the reformation of society more than anything else, namely, violence, knowledge, and wealth. And the greatest of these is wealth!⁹⁸

This statement should shock us but it has either been missed or accepted. Wagner unquestionably pushes us towards worldly strategies for accomplishing kingdom aims. For Wagner, the role of apostolic figures includes stewarding and directing financial resources towards ministries and networks.

⁹⁶ Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 60). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁷ Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 99). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁸ Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 100). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

There are two kinds of distributors, Narrow-Band Distributors and Wide-Band Distributors. If the link was divided in two, the Narrow-Band Distributors would be toward the right, in direct contact with the Field Marshals. Ché Ahn, John Arnott, Bill Johnson, and Heidi Baker would be Narrow-Band Distributors because they each oversee networks of Field Marshals.⁹⁹

So, network leaders/apostles are the narrow band distributors whilst he offers himself as an example of being a wide band, possibly the wide band distributor able to resource and command across networks with international reach.

When we realise that the aim is to fund an agenda and specifically to fund the leaders and their agendas then it also begins to make sense as to why there has been a prosperity gospel undertone to the concept. Wagner says:

Prosperity is the will of God, while poverty is the will of satan. The spirit of poverty is satan's agent assigned to infiltrate the Church with the pervasive notion that there is something very suspicious about prosperity.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

Dominion or seven mountain mandate theology as expressed through the New Apostolic Reformation movement should be setting off some red lights. Coming through in the teaching is an over realised "kingdom now" prosperity Gospel. This significantly misunderstands Scripture. It is also exactly the kind of teaching that is catnip to those promoting a Christian Nationalist agenda.

⁹⁹ Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 106). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁰ Wallnau, Lance; Johnson, Bill. *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate* (p. 101). Destiny Image, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

5 Stephen Wolfe And The Case for Christian Nationalism

The term Christian Nationalism may have been coined in 1940s South Africa and indeed, we may have seen aspects of the ideology present in particularly Christian movements over the past 20 years but it was Stephen Wolfe's book "The Case for Christian Nationalism" that really brought the concept and term into the public conscience. Wolfe writes for Canon Press which is in reality the in house publishing arm of Christ Church, Moscow Idaho and of Douglas Wilson.

Wolfe's case can be summarised as follows.

1. Humanity has two ends or purposes, an earthly one and a heavenly one. The first concerns life here and now with each other and the second is concerned with our pursuit of eternity and immortality.
2. This heavenly goal is something received by grace, however, we can and should structure and orientate life now towards it.
3. There is continuity between life before and after the Fall. This means that humans exist for the same ends.
4. This means that prior to the Fall, it was already intended that people would form families, clans, tribes and nations under different earthly governments. Nations and governments are therefore an absolute good and not merely a post fall necessity.
5. The ideal therefore is a Christian Nation which will be best placed to order society for those objectives.

Wolfe defines Christian Nationalism as follows:

Christian nationalism is nationalism modified by Christianity. My definition of Christian nationalism is a Christianized form of nationalism or, put differently, a species of nationalism. Thus, I treat nationalism as a genus, meaning that all that is essential to generic nationalism is true of Christian nationalism."¹⁰¹

He chooses to define nationalism after he has defined Christian Nationalism.

My definition of nationalism is similar to that of Christian nationalism, though with less content: Nationalism refers to a totality of national action, consisting of civil laws and social customs, conducted by a nation as a nation, in order to procure for itself both earthly and heavenly good."¹⁰²

Before, looking at the content of his argument, it is worth making some observations about his methodology. Wolfe explains:

I assume the Reformed theological tradition, and so I make little effort to exegete biblical text. Some readers will complain that I rarely appeal to Scripture to argue for my positions. I understand the frustration, but allow me to explain: I am neither a theologian nor a biblical scholar. I have no training in moving from scriptural interpretation to theological articulation."¹⁰³

He goes on:

¹⁰¹ Wolfe, Stephen. The Case for Christian Nationalism (p. 10). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰² Wolfe, Stephen. The Case for Christian Nationalism (pp. 10-11). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰³ Wolfe, Stephen. The Case for Christian Nationalism (p. 16). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

Instead of drawing from Scripture to prove the Reformed system of doctrine, I've chosen to assume this system and work from it. I am unable to exegete better than the Reformed exegetical tradition anyway, and I frequently cite theologians whose work, to my mind, demonstrates the soundness of the Reformed system."¹⁰⁴

And concludes:

To be sure, some of my conclusions are expressed differently than this tradition. After all, Christian nationalism was not used in the 16th through the 18th centuries. But none of my conclusions are, in substance, outside or inconsistent with the broad Reformed tradition."¹⁰⁵

Wolfe's argument supporting his methodology appears to be that he is not a theologian but a political theorist and that as theology is not his area of expertise, he isn't subjected to the same rules and constraints that theologians are. We are expected to simply accept that his political theory fits within the theological tradition. He does however frequently draw on those theologians to back up his argument.

Now, here's the problem with his justification for his methodology. Like it or not, his book is a theological work. It became a theological work as soon as he sought to argue for a worldview based on how God has created and sustains mankind and the end for which God created us. It is not a mere work of political theory.

Secondly, it may be reasonable to assume the Reformed tradition but that does not allow us when writing and arguing to shirk the hard work of digging into the text of Scripture. There are two reasons for this. First, that when drawing on the framework created by other theologians, we want to be certain that we have interpreted them and understood them correctly. I'm not convinced that Wolfe does understand the Reformed tradition correctly.

First, there is the small matter of "ends". What are the goals or purpose for which we were created? Well, the Shorter Catechism famously sums it up as follows:

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

Reformed Christians have insisted historically that we have just the one end or goal, not multiple goals. This end is both an earthly and a heavenly one. It describes our life goal here and now and into eternity. This is important because Wolfe quotes theologians including Maastricht, Luther and Turretin to back up his position. Yet when we check out the context those theologians in context, it becomes clear that they are not saying the same as Wolfe, rather, they are simply answering the question about whether human beings were created immortal.

Then, even if Wolfe has correctly understood the Reformed Tradition, this does not mean that it is itself infallible. I am Reformed by conviction and I believe that Reformed Theology offers the best fit to what Scripture teaches. However, I do not think believe this means that we can rely on the theology untested and unchecked because whilst the best fit it is not perfect. The reformers

¹⁰⁴ Wolfe, Stephen. The Case for Christian Nationalism (pp. 16-17). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁵ Wolfe, Stephen. The Case for Christian Nationalism (p. 17). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

were finite human beings who did not get everything right. As an obvious example, the vast majority of reformers continued to hold onto a questionable understanding of baptism.

The other aspect of his methodology is that he spends extensive amounts of time discussing things like “The Covenant of Works” whereby some (though not all) theologians have argued that Adam’s relationship to God in Eden was based on a covenant which unlike the later Covenant of Grace was conditional on his good works. He also argues that we have misunderstood the meaning of “Total Depravity” with Wolfe arguing for a far more positive understanding of how much of human character and ability survived the Fall than he believes his reformed contemporaries appreciate.

Once again, I am not convinced by Wolfe’s arguments on these issues and at some point may engage with them in more detail. However, I don’t see the need to here because we would do better to cut through the waffle. Wolfe has written a book, just shy of 500 pages and much of the stuff he writes about Covenant Theology and Human nature is in reality at best tangentially related to his main argument. In other words, much of his book is just filler and padding. It seems to me that he has sought to create a weighty tome with many scholarly citations in order to disguise the thinness of his argument. You see, if we got straight into the sum total of his argument then we would realise how ludicrous it is.

His argument boils down to this. He believes that God would have needed to institute nations even if there had not been sin and that therefore nationalism, especially infused with Christianity is a good and necessary thing. Yet, nowhere does Scripture suggest such a thing. He has based his entire argument on an assumption unsupported by Scripture. There is no case to answer. He’s just making stuff up.

Furthermore, the aim of his argument is to encourage a specific vision of nationalism which is unapologetically Western and White. He talks about “Western European” but in fact his focus is on the US. His agenda is for a supposedly Christian, American Nationalism. He writes:

One might accuse me of assuming and norming the “Western European male” experience in this chapter. I am not worried about this, since I am male, and am rooted ancestrally in Western Europe, and am speaking largely to a Western European male audience. I fully acknowledge that my goal is to reinvigorate Christendom in the West—that is my chief aim. The question for most of my audience is, “Which way, Western Man—the suicide of the West or its revitalization?”³

He says that he is not worried by this but should he be? I would suggest that he should, or at least we certainly should be. You see, just at a baseline level, this shows an ignorance and disinterest in his brothers and sisters around the world. Furthermore, given that if Wolfe and his fellow travellers are responding at least in part to the US culture wars and if he then has the so called Woke agenda in his sights then he has simply ignored the arguments and complaints of his opponents. Given that the concern most of us will have is that nationalist agendas, including those he so admires that were nurtured in the 19th Century have led to oppression, slavery and genocide in the past, it is reasonable to ask how his current proposals will avoid such evils being repeated. In effect Wolfe is shrugging his shoulders and saying “not my problem.”

And so we turn to that matter of concern. What exactly is the nature of Wolfe’s Nationalism? He is explicitly clear that this is an exclusive one designed along ethnic lines.

the nation is rooted in a pre-reflective, pre-propositional love for one's own, generated from intergenerational affections, daily life, and productive activity that link a society of the dead, living, and unborn. Concrete action—past, present, and future—which enlivens space to the benefit of generations, is what grounds the nation.”¹⁰⁶

Now, Wolfe does indicate that ethnicity in his mind is not limited to a purist view of bloodlines.

Ethnicity, as something experienced, is familiarity with others based in common language, manners, customs, stories, taboos, rituals, calendars, social expectations, duties, loves, and religion. These permit the ease of action and communication, the efficient completion of common projects, clarity of mutual understanding, and the ability to achieve the highest ideals and works of civil life.¹⁰⁷

His definition of nation and ethnicity reflects shared culture, space and language and so it is possible for people to immigrate and integrate into the nation through marriage but only on a limited scale. A small number of refugees may be hosted if the nation can sustain that but they are not included into citizenship until several generations have passed.

He has a pessimistic view of the ability of people from different ethnic backgrounds to interact and integrate beyond a superficial level.

People of different ethnic groups can exercise respect for difference, conduct some routine business with each other, join in inter-ethnic alliances for mutual good, and exercise common humanity (e.g., the good Samaritan), but they cannot have a life together that goes beyond mutual alliance.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, whilst not insisting that repatriation is necessary, he doesn't appear to have a problem with a nation opting for that and also promotes a form of segregation within society.

To be sure, I am not saying that ethnic majorities today should work to rescind citizenship from ethnic minorities, though perhaps in some cases amicable ethnic separation along political lines is mutually desired. What I am saying is that in-group solidarity and right of difference along ethnic lines are necessary for the complete good for each and all; and, therefore, even in multinational civil arrangements (e.g., the United Kingdom), national distinctions must be prudently upheld, and each person ought to (in normal circumstances) prefer their own people over others.¹⁰⁹

He even seems to encourage segregation within churches, writing:

Indeed, civil fellowship is what makes strong church fellowship possible, because people do not lose their particularity when they pass through the doors of a church building. Spiritual unity is inadequate for formal ecclesial unity. People do not suddenly speak some Gospel language and then assume a Gospel culture. The people's way of life permeates the visible church, and it serves as an ancillary feature that makes possible the administration of sacred things (e.g., preaching in the vernacular). The administration of the Word and Sacraments require, at a bare minimum, a common

¹⁰⁶ Wolfe, Stephen. *The Case for Christian Nationalism* (p. 120). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁷ Wolfe, Stephen. *The Case for Christian Nationalism* (p. 136). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁸ Wolfe, Stephen. *The Case for Christian Nationalism* (p. 148). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁹ Wolfe, Stephen. *The Case for Christian Nationalism* (p. 149). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

language; and church fellowship requires at least a core culture serving as the cultural norm for social relations. Culturally distinct groups of Christians could, of course, start their own churches, and this would solve one problem.”¹¹⁰

Now, let’s just pause for a moment to take in what we have just read. All of the dressing up of this as Christian and reformed cannot disguise the reality that this is an alignment with the ethno-cultural nationalism of the far right. . Of course, the proponents of Apartheid dressed up their position as backed by Reformed Theology, the Far Right in Britain within the National Front and BNP have often claimed to be fighting a Christian crusade and sadly, segregation in the US was supported and defended by churches and Christian leaders. Their racism, their ethnic idolatry was Satanic and sinful then, just as it is today.

Now, it is a shame that Wolfe chose not to engage with the text of Scripture itself because if he did, then he would have discovered that in so far as God calls a people to himself, his nation, it is the people of Israel set apart from the nations of this World. We do not need a replacement Christian nation, whether or not this is a single nation such as the US or a number of nations claiming to be Christian. You see, as Romans 11 shows, believers are ingrafted into God’s Holy Nation.

Yes, despite Wolfe’s protestations, Christians are called for this time to live as strangers and exiles. This means that we have a higher citizenship. This enables us to care for the good of our city and its citizens not out of nationalistic zeal but as God’s people were told to do when in Babylon.

¹¹⁰ Wolfe, Stephen. The Case for Christian Nationalism (p. 200). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

6 An untested experiment? Tracing the Historical foundations of Christian Nationalism

One of the arguments for Christian Nationalism is that it is simply historic Christianity as accepted and continued by the Reformation. It is certainly true that for most of history,, Christianity has been afforded a special place in western culture referring to Europe and North America both through Catholic and Protestant influence. We also see that influence through eastern orthodoxy into Greece, Russian and the Coptic communities of Egypt. Where Christianity has been taken to other contexts such as Africa and South America, that has also been the case too.

However, it is not correct to say that this has always been the case or that it has gone uncontested. Prior to Constantine's conversion, Christians found themselves to be a persecuted and scattered minority. Even following his conversion, it was not always the case that orthodox Christianity was the dominant influence. In particular, there were significant struggles over what it meant to believe in the Triune God. Those like Athanasius who held to an orthodox Biblical Christology and understanding of the Trinity found that they were up against Arian beliefs that were backed by the civic authority of the Empire and so were frequently subject to persecution and exile. It took several ecumenical councils to establish orthodox unity, Even then, schism followed as the eastern and western traditions divided, each seeking to enforce their view of orthodoxy within their sphere.

By the time of the Reformation, kings and rulers were both subject to the Pope in the West and there to enforce papal decree. Early dissidents such as Wycliffe who sought to translate the Bible into English faced persecution as did many of the reformers including Luther who was imprisoned. In England, many who joined the reformation movement were imprisoned and burnt at the stake.

Yet, rather than seeing the dangers in this mixing of church and politics, the leaders of the reformation in Europe and England used power when they achieved dominance to oppress both Catholics and protestant dissidents. In his short but compelling book, "Everyman's , Conscience, Ryan Burton King describes the beginnings of the Baptists as a movement beginning with the anabaptists who separated from Zwingli in Zurich. He particularly highlights Felix Manz, Conrad Grebel and George Blaurock who objected to Zwingli allowing the civic authorities responsibility over church practice. The mainstream reformation became known as the Magisterial Reformation due to the willingness of its leaders to rely on the civic authorities, the magistrate to enforce church discipline and doctrine. Manz, Grebel and Blaurock became convinced of

"the institutional separation of church and state and a church membership comprised of believers at an age of understanding, baptised after profession of faith in Christ."¹¹¹

This position led to their persecution. The idea of being rebaptised (anabaptism) was considered to be heretical and dangerous. The new protestant and reformed churches used their relationship to the magistrates to enforce discipline and conformity through imprisonment and even the death penalty.

"Grebel died in 1526 after imprisonment. Manz was drowned in 1527...Blaurock was burned in 1529."¹¹²

¹¹¹ King, *Everyman's conscience*, 9.

¹¹² King, *Everyman's conscience*,10.

If dissenter Christians fared badly under both the Catholic and the Protestant magisterium so did those from other faiths. The programs against Jews both on the mainland and in England during the medieval period are well documented. Often Jews were excluded from professions and driven to the margins hence you will find historic synagogues built on the outskirts of towns close to the site of former leper colonies. This was a violent period of time most graphically represented by the siege of Jews who sought refuge in Clifford's Tower, York in 1190. Rather than face the expected torture and slow death offered by their assailants, those in the tower chose instead to set fire to the place, burning to death inside. One hundred years later, in 1290, a royal edict by Edward I excluded all Jews from England.

Muslims also faced distrust, prejudice and conflict across Europe reflecting the great clash of civilisation with the Caliphate reaching as far as Spain. King observes that the "Turks" or "Moors" fared a little better in Elizabethan England as the Queen was dependent on whatever allies and trade routes she could establish as protestant England became isolated from continental and Catholic Europe. However, even in England there was still opposition and distrust. King writes:

Of course, England was not without its prejudices. Doubtless there were Muslims who fell afoul of Elizabeth I's anxieties about the growing black population. In an open letter to the Lord Mayor of London, Elizabeth explained in 1596 that 'there are of late blackmoores brought into this realm, of which kinde of people there are already here to manae.' A week later she expressed her 'good pleasure to have those kinde of people sent out of the lande'¹¹³

Many from a Reformed perspective will look back to the Dutch Reformed Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) as influential both in the idea of Christian influence in the public sphere and specifically the ideal of a reformed, confessional state. It was Kuyper who famously said:

There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all does not cry 'Mine'."

Whilst one consequence of Kuyper's legacy was the 20th Century dominance of Christian Democrat parties in much of Europe including The Netherlands, Germany and Italy, there was a darker side to his legacy too. In South Africa, the Dutch Reformed influence on apartheid cannot be ignored. Indeed, a later Prime minister and at the time, politician within the National Party, B.J. Vorster stated in 1942:

"We stand for Christian Nationalism which is an ally of Nationalism Socialism. You can call this anti-democratic principle dictatorship if you wish. In Italy it is called Fascism, in Germany, National Socialism and in South Africa, Christian Nationalism.£

This appears to be the origins of the term "Christian Nationalism". It was later to be used pejoratively in the early years of the 21st Century before being picked up more positively by Stephen Wolfe in his book "The Case For Christian Nationalism."

All of this matters because first of all, Christian Nationalists are right to argue that their movement is not completely novel and has precedent within the church. However, this requires two further observations. First that the Reformers and the Dutch Reformed of Kuyper's time

¹¹³ King, *Every man's conscience*, 18.

would not have recognised the current association with political nationalism on the far right that is in vogue as reflecting their understanding that Christ is Lord over everything.

Secondly, they cannot have their cake and eat it so to speak. They must also account for the failings of the Christian confessional state and engage with the critics of that time, notably the Baptist dissenters who experienced severe persecution at the hands of Christian nations for the sake of freedom of conscience.

What does the Bible say about Christian Nationalism?

Ultimately the test for Christian Nationalism is what the Bible actually has to say about it. In this chapter, we are going to have a look at some of the proof texts for the ideology.

Healing the land (2 Chronicles 7:14)

¹⁴if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

These words from 2 Chronicles 7:14 are perhaps amongst the most well known, most quoted and perhaps most misunderstood and misused in Scripture. Frequently over the years, I've heard them used to promise that repentance either within The Church or wider populace would lead both to revival and to national renewal. Similarly, the inverse has been true. Verse 13 says:

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people

The result has been that everything from foot and mouth disease through storms and floods to the COVID-19 pandemic have been blamed on specific sin leading to specific judgement. All of this despite the fact that plagues, floods and pandemics have always been part of life in a fallen world. My own home city, Bradford, has faced its own tragedy, the 1985 Fire Disaster. Fortunately, I've not heard anyone claim that was some judgement of God. If I did, I would be furious and so I get to some extent what it must be like for people to hear the tragedies they experience to be blamed directly on them.

Now, all of this significantly predates the recent rise of Christian Nationalism as a term, concept and movement. However, it does seem that this new movement has increased that kind of language. Specifically, some Christian Nationalists are arguing that this nation has in the past made covenants with God and so are subject to the same blessings and curses that we find in Deuteronomy 11 and 28. The problem with this is first, that when you look at covenants in Scripture they are initiated by God with his people. A nation might attempt to make a covenant but in fact, manmade efforts tend to prove futile. We need God's infallible covenant promises.

Secondly, it is to miss the context of what is happening. Why is it that sin and idolatry leads to curse on the land in 2 Chronicles 7:13 whilst repentance leads to blessing in v14? It's that back in Genesis 12:1-3 the initial covenant with Abraham and his heirs was one of people (descendants), land and blessing. We often talk in Biblical Theology terms of God's people, in God's place under God's rule, provision and protection.

Christians according to Ephesians 1 receive their glorious inheritance in Christ. This is a reminder that the Covenant promises are fulfilled in him. We are God's people because Christ is the firstborn, the second Adam, the true and better Abraham. We are in God's place and that means in Christ. We are under God's rule because Christ is our king. There is of course expectation of full physical fulfilment but that is not just for one people group in one place, the promise is that God's people will be from every tribe and tongue and will inherit the earth.

What this means is that we cannot take this covenant promise and apply it to one nation. It's a promise for all God's people. It means, big picture, that because Christ humbled himself, not only do we have all the spiritual blessings of Ephesians 1 but that also God is healing the whole

of his creation. It means that in this time, when the church humbles itself and repents, then God brings fruitfulness where there has been barrenness.

The nations as God's chosen vehicle

One of the arguments for Christian Nationalism is that God particularly cares about nations, that prior to Christ coming, we see his concern for the nations as entities and that we still see that after Christ's coming. So, two crucial texts are Deuteronomy 32:8-9 and Acts 17:26.

In the first, Moses says:

“When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.^[b] ⁹ For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.

Does this mean that each nation is set up with permanent boundaries because of God's Will? Well, there is a sense in which that must be true because everything is subject to God's sovereign will. However, does that mean that God has some special plan for the US or the United Kingdom. Is his purpose, his focus, to make America or Britain “great again”?

It's helpful to see those verses in their wider context.

Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you. ⁸When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.^[b] ⁹ For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance. ¹⁰In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, ¹¹like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft. ¹²The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him.”¹⁴

The wider context makes abundantly clear, if there had been any doubt that the focus and purpose of God's words is not on the nations. We are not meant to see this as a blueprint for how nation states are to operate. The point is that the sovereign God who has created all peoples, all nations, all ethnicities, chose one people for his special purposes and that was Israel. The concern of Christians today then is to grasp what it means for us to be God's inheritance, his treasured possession as those ingrafted into Israel,

Acts 17:26 says:

²⁶From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

Again, this comes in context:

²⁴“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 28:7-12.

their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ 'For in him we live and move and have our being.'^[b] As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'^[c]

It's part of Paul's sermon to those at Mars Hill considering the altar to the unknown God. Who is this God that the Athenians want to make some space for but do not know? Paul's point is that this is the true and living God, the creator who sustains and orders time and space. Notice that this ordering of things includes time boundaries as well as geographical boundaries. There is nothing here that requires us to assume that modern nation states are required to go on for ever, anymore than there is a need to create mythology to suggest their eternal existence prior to now. Kingdoms and nations come and go.

The point Paul is making is all to do with what God is like. Again, it is a pointer to his purposeful sovereignty and this is all about drawing a people for himself. It is not to do with the building of nations with a nationalistic agenda.

Seek the welfare of the city (Jeremiah 29:7)

One example that I've heard alluded to is that of what God's people did in exile, particularly the example of Daniel who found himself serving as an official in the Babylonian and Persian Empires.

Then there is Jeremiah's instruction to those going into exile. They should expect to be there for the long haul and that meant they should settle in and "seek the welfare of the city" because what was good for Babylon's well-being was good for theirs.

So Daniel served. However, it is worth remembering that he did not specifically choose to serve in government. He didn't run for office, he didn't launch a campaign organisation. Rather, Daniel was a captive. He had no choice in the matter.

However, once placed in that context, it is clear that Daniel sees himself as placed there by God. He uses his gifts and skills for the well-being of the Emperor and Babylon. More than that, he uses that place to speak God's Word as a prophet. He can challenge and even rebuke the Emperor.

Now we live in a democracy so we aren't compelled into servitude. However, we are also exiles. That's how the New Testament speaks of the Church. Our home is in the age to come. However, we are here now. I believe that Daniel offers us an example of how to live now. It is worth remembering that his example is not of an attempted take over, a Judaisation of Babylon though Jews including Esther and Nehemiah in Persia.

We can use the opportunities that God gives us wherever he places us, in our own neighbourhood, in the workplace, as voters and constituents. God may well place some of us into politics. Others will be educators and some will have influence through art and the media. Each and every one of us can pray.

This gives a healthy model for living in the world now but it has nothing to do with Christ Nationalism.

Disciple the nations

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus tells his disciples to, according to the translations we are all familiar with

“Go and make disciples from all the nations.”

However, a more wooden translation of that phrase would be

“Go and disciple the nations”

The argument runs that this means Jesus wasn't simply sending his apostles out to go and bring individual people from each nation to faith in him. Rather, it was the nations themselves, represented by their governments and leaders. The nations were meant to be the Lord's possession and so the Church's responsibility was to bring them back, ethnic group by ethnic group under his Lordship.

There are two things that link into this. First, there is a post-millennialist eschatology at work. The expectation is that Christ returns to receive his inheritance, made ready for him. He will come, once the nations are under his rule and reign to be acclaimed. The second is that a disciplined nation is one that conforms to God's law as found in the covenant with Moses. This is what is sometimes referred to as “theonomism. It's the idea that nations today should be governed by the Old Testament Law.

Now, on one level, that might sound appealing. After all, we are being offered here the most straight forward, literal translation. Here though is a good example of why we need a bit of caution before assuming that wooden, literal makes the best sense of the text. What we have to do is look at a text in its context to get a sense of its purpose.

So, here are a couple of clues in terms of the immediate context. Specifically, there are two participles hanging off of the command to disciple. These help us to understand how we are to go about discipling. The first is “baptising.” This pretty obviously doesn't mean that we are to sprinkle a country with water. That would make Scotland about the most Christian of all countries! Rather, baptising is something you do to people. Discipling was going to happen, one person at a time. Second, “teaching”. The important question then is to do with what it was that these disciples were to learn. The answer is that they were to learn to obey all that Jesus had commanded. Remember that in terms of commanding and teaching, we know two things. First Jesus confirms that love of God and love of neighbour are the two greatest commandments. Secondly, Jesus famously had emphasised a heart transformation not mere external Torah obedience along the lines that might be achieved by a nation introducing Christian laws. In both cases, those commands begin to look like what individual people do. Add in that the teaching on heart obedience comes in the context of the sermon on the Mount and you realise that this was teaching for those who belonged to his kingdom.

The other big clue is to look at what Jesus' first followers did. How did they respond to the Great Commission. The answer is that they did not focus on culture wars and politics. Instead, they went out and they told people, every day, ordinary people about Jesus and the good news that he was the true king, that he had died for them and risen, ascending to glory. They baptised people and they saw them receive the Holy Spirit. They were not concerned with earthly states and empires but with God's kingdom.

Now, if you pick up a Bible translation or look up a commentary, what you will spot is that the idea that whole nations are to be politically disciplined as institutions just isn't something on anyone's radar. They are engaging different questions and that is telling too. You see, it helps to remind us of what the actual purpose of the statement was. It wasn't to start a debate about

individuals or states. Rather, the emphasis is probably best put on the word “all.” God’s people were not to stay put and focus just on Judea but to go to all nations and make disciples.

The wrong paradigm

What we have seen here is that Christian Nationalism fails the test when it comes to handling Scripture. However, this is not just about looking at particular texts in isolation. Even more important is the question of how we look at the whole narrative of Scripture. There are two aspects to this which we have been picking up on as we’ve explored the question but are worth returning to here.

The first is that the Biblical narrative treats the experience of the people of Israel in Egypt as a paradigm. God’s people are not to forget that they were exiles, persecuted strangers. This would be their future fate if and when they rebelled against God. They would experience exile again in Babylon. There would also be another form of exile even after they had returned to the land. Just as the Israelites spent 400 years in Egypt before God brought them out of slavery, so God’s people would experience 400 years of silence between the last prophetic word of the Old Testament and the angels bringing good news of a saviour in the Gospel accounts. The people were back in the land but they were still exiled from God’s audible presence.

The paradigm of exile is then used to describe the situation of God[‘s people in the New Testament. Peter writes:

“¹ Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you.^[1] ¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles,^[s] so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do what is evil, they will, by observing your good works, glorify God on the day of visitation.¹¹⁵

Our decision making, our conduct and our engagement with society around us is not as permanent citizens of this world, nor as triumphant conquerors. The day will come when Christ will return as king but in the meantime, our model is the slaves in Egypt and the exiles in Babylon. To be sure, those exiles were to bless the nation and city where they found themselves. There would be Josephs and Daniels who would be in places of influence. There would be Esthers raised up “for such a time as this” to protect God’s people but the posture was not of take over and triumph but of living faithfully in exile, blessing the city and waiting God’s deliverance.

The second problem is that Christian Nationalism shifts the Gospel narrative off centre. Instead of the problem being sin and death leading to a saviour who takes that shame and guilt on himself, the problem is national decline and salvation is seen in the restoration of nations. In fact, this can be described as a form of Nationalist Prosperity Gospel. If the nation does the right things, God will prosper it.

Christian Nationalism depends on a mishandling of the Bible in order to give us a false gospel and a false God.

¹¹⁵ 1 Peter 2:11-12.

8 Political Nationalism – What are Christian Nationalists aligning with

On the 13th September, 2025, a number of professing Christians, identifying as “Patriot Pastors” joined the Unite the Kingdom rally organised by Tommy Robinson with some participating from the platform. When other Christians have raised concerns about this, we received a lot of push back. Initially we told that these people were simply joining the rally in order to witness to the crowds, then we were told that marching with the crowd might be seen as identifying with the same hopes, dreams, fears and grievances as the crowd but did not mean that they were identifying with the event organiser, even though a number of them were given a platform. However, it wasn’t long before we were being told emphatically that we were being unfair to Robinson himself. We had to recognise that he was on the way to professing Christian faith, if he hadn’t already.

Finally, we’ve been told by one Christian blogger, Aaron Edwards:

““Much of the vitriol shown to Tommy Robinson seems utterly bizarre. When I first came across him a few years ago, I expected to hear awful things in his speeches and interviews, but I only ever heard a reasonable but salty and impassioned Englishman who opposed Islamism, exposed political and journalistic corruption, and was unusually unwilling to back down under pressure. There was salty language and a combative spirit, for sure, but I waited to hear the supposed moments of fascist hatred which never seemed to arrive. If anything, it was obvious that he has always been treated this way by the established institutions—including the mainstream media—precisely because they are directly threatened by his approach.”¹¹⁶

What Tommy Robinson has to say

Now, whenever people supporting Robinson has been challenged by others about the fact that Robinson’s track record includes membership of the BNP, being a co-founder of the EDL and then numerous criminal convictions, his fall back response has to some extent been that these are things from the past and we should not just judge him from them but allow for the possibility of repenting. However, Edwards moves into the territory of suggesting that Robinson may always have been maligned and unfairly, perhaps even unjustly treated when he says

“If anything, it was obvious that he has always been treated this way by the established institutions—including the mainstream media—precisely because they are directly threatened by his approach.”¹¹⁷

This is deeply concerning because first, Robinson’s prior reception by the media came when he was a member of the BNP and leader of the EDL. Was he at that time maligned in Edwards’ opinion? Were the courts and the police involved in this too?

However, let’s stick with the original presumption and make allowances for the possibility of change on Robinson’s part. I’ve been challenged by a number of people as to what problem we

¹¹⁶ This is from the blurb on Edwards’ Facebook page introducing an article “[Is Tommy Robinson Welcome at Your Church?](#)” I think this may be from the article but elements of it are behind a subscription paywall.

¹¹⁷ This is from the blurb on Edwards’ Facebook page introducing an article “[Is Tommy Robinson Welcome at Your Church?](#)” I think this may be from the article but elements of it are behind a subscription paywall.

might have with what Robinson says and does. Edwards has not been alone in recent conversations in insisting that they

“only ever heard a reasonable but salty and impassioned Englishman who opposed Islamism, exposed political and journalistic corruption, and was unusually unwilling to back down under pressure”

So, what I have done in this article is stick closely to one recent interview given by Robinson to South African businessman Rob Hersov.¹¹⁸ I want to pick up on three specific things here.

First, early in the interview, Hersov asks Robinson whether things are better or worse in the UK than in South Africa under the ANC which he identifies as anti-white as well as anti other, non-black ethnic groups. Robinson responds

“It’s anti-white anti British here. In fact, the only people getting accelerated or elevated here are migrants. Our Government care more about are Pakistanis, Afghanis, Iraqis than they do about British people.”¹¹⁹

So, the first thing to notice is that Robinson sets things up in terms of white English or British people (he jumps between the two) being an ethnic group under threat, a threat that he insists needs to be resisted and responded to with a cultural revolution where the people take back power. He sets those white British people up in competition with other ethnic groups.

He argues that this is because the Labour party has concluded that their future lies demographically with Islamic people¹²⁰ because their populations are increasingly Muslim. This prompts Hersov to ask if all the major cities have Islamic mayors.¹²¹ Robinson affirms that this is mostly true. This was rather surprising to hear. Obviously Sadiq Khan is mayor of London but the other metro mayors, Andy Burnham (Manchester), Richard Parker (West Midlands including Birmingham and Wolverhampton) who succeeded Andy Street, Tracy Brabin (West Yorkshire including Bradford and Leeds). Steve Rotherham (Liverpool City Region) and Kim McGuinness (North East including Newcastle) are fairly obviously not Muslim.

They go on to discuss grooming gangs. Robinson interjects:

“What they call grooming gangs which is a rape jihad.”¹²²

Note, that he moves beyond a term which perhaps understates the severity of what has happened in a number of cases. The term “grooming gang” may suggest that girls were simply drawn in and prepared for inappropriate relationships and misses the force of the violation done to them. However, he adds the word “jihad” indicating that this is an intentional act of war. Now, rape has been used as a cruel weapon during war but I am not aware of any evidence suggesting that there is this kind of racial/political/military intent to the gangs. Robinson then adds:

“Muslim men make up 3% of the British population. They are responsible for 90% of the convictions of groups of men who rape children.”¹²³

¹¹⁸ [INTERVIEW: Uniting The Kingdom | Tommy Robinson & Rob Hersov](#)

¹¹⁹ {01:50}

¹²⁰ [3:00}

¹²¹ [3:20}

¹²² [4:10}

¹²³ [4:2-}

I don't know where he gets his data from. A report in 2017 found that 85% of grooming gang convictions were men of Asian origin. However, that report noted a distinction between two categories of groups that targeted sexually. The first type were those who targeted based on vulnerability roughly equating to grooming gangs and in those cases, the majority were Asian. However, the second group targeted specifically on age (children), in other words paedophile rings and in that category, 100% of offenders were white. Of course, what is not talked about is whether or not convictions replicates instances or whether some crimes may go unreported, under-reported or categorised differently. Nor, does Robinson include in his figures examples of individual targeting of children either by strangers, trusted persons or within the home. Therefore, Robinson offers a headline to create an impression that distorts our view of what is going on.

Why does this matter? Well, it matters because what Robinson is doing is telling the story in a particular way, selecting the data which characterises a specific ethno-cultural group (Pakistani Muslims) negatively, as a threat, a predatory danger. They are deliberately targeting our children with sexual violence in order to fulfil Jihad. Now, we cannot ignore that many people over time, from Jack Straw to Sarah Champion have raised concerns about whether specific cultural factors have been at work. However, what that might show is how culture affects the way in which sin and crime happen. What we cannot say is that one ethno-cultural are more sinful, more evil, more dangerous than others. Further we should not conflate "the majority of x type crimes are committed by y people" with "the majority of y people are x type criminals."

There is then a discussion about "good immigrants" and "bad immigrants". According to Robinson and Hersov, the good ones are those who integrate and assimilate. Robinson argue Sikhs, Hindus and Jamaicans have assimilated.¹²⁴ Note that he still insists that whilst "per se it works, it has to be in controlled numbers"¹²⁵ All numbers are too big and need addressing but immigration has worked for all other communities because they have assimilated¹²⁶

"They are proud to be British"

He talks in terms of their "children flying the flag."¹²⁷

"But the Pakistanis... You can be third, fourth generation. It's the Pakistani flag."¹²⁸

He adds:

"There's no integration or assimilation from any Islamic community. I mean none."¹²⁹

And further he claims:

"Go through Luton and find me any Muslim with a non-Muslim unless they are selling them drugs or raping them. You won't."¹³⁰

Whose fault is all this? Well he answers as follows.

¹²⁴ [5:50]

¹²⁵ [5:55]

¹²⁶ 6:10]

¹²⁷ [6:25]

¹²⁸ [6:30]

¹²⁹ [6:40]

¹³⁰ [6:48]

“It’s them and its us. Now we didn’t create that.”¹³¹

There are a number of statements there which may be intended as hyperbolic but are simply not true. It is not the case that no Pakistanis are integrating with wider society and his claim that they only mix to rape and sell drugs is untrue and offensive. By the way, you will pick up that whilst he has talked in general about Muslims and Islam, it becomes clear by this point that his specific issue is with Pakistanis and those of Pakistani origin, they are the problem to him.¹³²

Again though, whilst there are issues around integration and assimilation for Pakistani immigrants and that’s long been a concern in places like Bradford and Birmingham, we need to correct three misrepresentations here. First, that it is exclusively a Pakistani-Muslim issue. There are higher concentrations of Punjabi Sikhs in some places such as Smethwick and some parts of Manchester and London are predominantly Afro-Caribbean. Secondly, Robinson overlooks other factors such as that often immigrants arrived together from communities and cultures, sometimes from poorer or more rural communities and that they had to take the accommodation available to them often in poorer, less desirable areas. What we tend to see is that there is migration out from those areas leading to integration that accompanies increased prosperity. Thirdly, when Robinson places the blame on the so called “bad immigrants” for failing to integrate, he denies host responsibility and ignores significant experience of rejection and racism that put up barriers to integration.

Robinson then talks about NGOS engaging with issues around racism and fascism. He claims that people are paid to make complaints and that there is heavy, external financing of this. When asked who funds anti-fascist efforts like hope not hope he responds that they are

“funded by George Soros...all of them”¹³³

George Soros is frequently named in conspiracy theories about a supposed shadowy and wealthy cabal that controls what is happening around the world. “Conspiracy theories that unite [antisemitism](#) and [Islamophobia](#).”¹³⁴ It is important to state here that use of conspiracy theory code does not mean that a person themselves is anti Semitic per se. There may be various explanations as to why and how they have picked up the language. It does mean however that the code is being used and spread whether unwittingly or intentional. Note also that this fits in with the argument found in Robinson’s book “Manifesto.” The Amazon blurb for that reads:

“or decades the political class have openly planned to replace the indigenous people of Europe and in Manifesto we focus on how they are doing this in the UK. To ensure no-one disturbs their plans the elite manufacture a mythical far-right, when in truth it is the elite 1% who run a Fascist system of state-control, censorship and discrimination. Whenever someone has publicly addressed what is going on, the ruling class set about to destroy that person. We show how the elitist 1% have openly manipulated democracy to subjugate the masses, their elitist discussions carried on in plain sight for over a century, while they distract the masses with unimportant nonsense. The 1% knowingly plan to bring about another global conflict and in the aftermath they will end up in control of the world's resources and financial systems:

¹³¹ [6:55]

¹³² [11:10]

¹³³ [14:05]

¹³⁴ [George Soros conspiracy theories - Wikipedia](#)

What we can sum up from this interview is that Robinson:

1. Talks in terms of a white ethnic group and a nation under threat.
2. Whilst he uses the language of religious danger, it becomes clear that he sees things in terms of a specific ethnic threat.
3. He uses the known code language of conspiracy theories.

It is worth restating again that this is from one of his most recent interviews. It is not based on things he was saying 10 or 15 years ago, or even 5 years ago. It's current. Note too that this is not impassioned rhetoric from a speech at a rally but part of a reasoned argument during a friendly interview. Those three themes all link into an ethno-cultural nationalism approach. It would be concerning if Christians were hearing those specific themes and arguing that there is nothing to concern us about what Robinson is saying.

You can be right wing without being a fascist

I often hear people complaining that they are being accused of being far right or fascist simply for being patriotic, wanting to see secure borders or speaking up for good old fashioned British and Christian values especially around human sexuality. I have politically identified as on the right for much of my life but have never knowingly been called a fascist, even in debates with far left activists including Communists and the Socialist Worker's Party. So, I thought some autobiography might be helpful here.

The first thing I would say is that you pick up a lot of your political thinking early in life from parents and grandparents. It's one reason as to why politics tends to be tribal. So, for me, whilst I've talked about an act of rebellion, it wasn't against family so much. However to identify as a Conservative in South Bradford was a big deal. I stood as a Conservative in the mock election our school ran in 1992 and finished a distant bottom!

I decided join the Conservative Party the following summer after heading off to University. I was at Sheffield where there wasn't a Conservative Students' branch. So with the help of the area chairman I decided to set one up. You couldn't have a stall at the Fresher's Fayre if you weren't already registered as a society. To register as a society you needed to have a minimum number of members which made for a rather closed shop affair. So, we went into the concourse with bags of goodies, sign up forms and members cards. We were soon surrounded by a large group of Socialist Workers who threatened and jostled us, demanding we left town. Things were looking ugly until a group of other students came and stood with us and helped us escape into the Union building. They introduced themselves as the debating society and then asked if I could help out. They were hosting a panel debate to start term on the new world order. They had a Communist and an Islamist on the panel. Could I represent the centre right?

So I cut my political teeth in student politics. I learned what it meant to be roughed up for your views. My door to my room was vandalized with hate messages. I found out how a politically biased media could distort things. I raised a complaint about the student newspaper. The panel admitted that a Socialist Worker was editor and accepted all of my evidence but then ruled that the paper still wasn't biased! I also got to be the next area chairman. As well as having some great opportunities to regularly visit Westminster for meetings and get to know senior politicians including a visit to Downing Street to meet John Major, I got to learn some other useful things too. I learnt how to debate and respond to hecklers, to speak and hold a hostile argument, to argue a case (my law degree was helping with that too). I learnt too how to grow and multiply

things we started new branches in Huddersfield, Leeds and even Bradford (the branch founding Chairman was a certain Gavin Williams). I learnt how to give media interviews too.

Importantly, I learnt more about the connection of faith and politics. I spoke in that early debate as a Christian as well as a Conservative, especially as moral issues such as abortion were thrown our way.

As quickly as it started, my political career finished. I realised that there were things about the political scene that didn't sit with being a Christian. It's not that I didn't think you could or should be a Christian and in politics, it's that I realised that this wasn't where God wanted me to be and that I had to make a choice in life. So I left the party.

My main political views haven't changed since, though I have changed my mind on some things. For example I grew up instinctively Euro-sceptic and voted to leave the EU. To be honest, I wasn't convinced that was the best time to do it and the way we then implemented Brexit was nuts but I still think that on balance we are going to be better off out.

I changed my mind on the death penalty, a look at the fallibility of the justice system does that for you. I also changed my mind about immigration. That happened over time partly through getting to know asylum seekers, partly because the Holy Spirit convicted me of the sin of racism (and I would have been one of those people who would have said "I'm not racist. I have friends from other backgrounds, it's not about race it's about Islamisation and mass immigration etc). Finally, it clicked that if you believed in free markets which I did and do, then with that came free movement of knowledge, goods and services and with that had to come free movement of people. Then I remember reading a Fraser Nelson article commenting that shops and businesses didn't have queues and waiting lists caused by immigration It was the state/public sector that had a problem with it not the wider/private sector.

When I went into church ministry I concluded that in our context it was best that people did not know the politics of the elders, not so much in terms of their view points on different matters but in terms of their voting habits and by then so much had changed about the Conservative Party that you need not assume I was duty bound to vote for them. I know others who happily declare their politics, though interestingly that seems to suit those more on the left than the right. Then in 2019, I came to the conclusion where morally we did not have to and probably (though I'd not try to impose on others) shouldn't make what was being presented as a choice between the lesser of two evils

I thought it might be helpful at this stage to share a couple of brief reflections. First for those of you who sit on the political left. It is easy to paint a caricature that those on the right are there because of greed and nastiness. It was after all, Theresa May who labelled her own tribe "the nasty party". And yes there is plenty of nastiness, greed, selfishness there. It's true of all parties though and I've encountered the nastiness of the left. But also, yes, the political offering of the right has often been packaged up in that way too.

However, there are plenty of people on the right, in politics or who vote that way out of sense of civic duty and great compassion for others. We will talk about how compassion shapes views on tax and economics probably next time.

I would also want to address those who are now claiming to be representing the right, especially Christians and who are associating themselves with things like the Unite the Kingdom Movement and who complain that they are being maligned as far right. It includes those who

talk about “reaching the right” and mean by that standing in platforms making speeches at rallies with Tommy Robinson. What you have been taught to think of as just “right wing politics” and are being told was considered just mainstream 30 years ago isn’t. It is an entirely different beast. Take it from someone who has been there involved on the political right as a Christian. The very things we hear said and seen done today were considered a different and dangerous beast then. The far right has evolved and pivoted but it is still the same beast. I say this out of love for brothers and sisters. You are being drawn into something toxic, nasty and anti-Christ, something you don’t understand. That’s why I keep offering a conversation. I still hope to see some of you rescued out of it.

Finally, I want to encourage younger Christians who are considering a life in politics whether on the left or the right. First, one way or another, there are going to be costs and sacrifices. For me but meant giving up completely on ambition. I had aspired to go into politics. I thought I might make it to cabinet, some of my peers did. I fancied being Prime Minister one day. I reckon I might just have achieved some of that! For others, the sacrifice will be that your faith limits how far you can go as Tim Farron found out. However, I still think that for the right people, bit is a good and worthwhile thing to get into

Nationalism and the Far Right in the UK

All of this is important because the current, contemporary Christian Nationalism that we are seeing reflects a coming together of three different strands: Reformed Federal Visionism, charismatic Dominionism (New Apostolic Reformation) and political nationalism.

At one level, nationalism simply refers to the idea that the nation state is the most natural and effective political entity as opposed to localised tribes at one extreme and empires or international institutions at the other. In UK politics we see this first of all in independence movements, Plaid Cymru in Wales, the SNP in Scotland and nationalist parties in Northern Ireland such as the SDLP predating the Sinn Fein=DUP hegemony and advocating for a united Ireland. Nationalist politics therefore does not have to be far right or xenophobic.

However, for much of the 20th Century, European nationalism has been primarily associated with the Far Right. In the 1930s, Oswald Mosely and the New Party attempted to model itself in the mould of the National Socialists. The UK had its fair share of Hitler sympathisers.

The Far Right never really broke through in British politics because the First Past the Post voting method meant that it was difficult if not impossible for smaller parties to break the two party system. Arguably too, that system meant that there were ways for the main centre right party, the Conservatives to include those with right-wing nationalist tendencies just as the Labour Party was able to accommodate out and out socialists. Fringe parties such as the National Front and BNP enjoyed some minor successes at a local level primarily focusing on race and immigration.

What I believe we have seen in recent times is a pivoting of the Far Right’s strategy and tactics. There have been two elements to this. First, the COVID pandemic created space for those who spoke up for those suspicious of seemingly authoritarian approaches, this often was accompanied by conspiracy theories about the agenda behind pandemic measures. Secondly, the pivot was away from overt antisemitism and race based politics to concerns for British

culture, hence the reference to ethno-cultural nationalism and linked to that the identification of Islamification as the primary threat to the UK.

What this has enabled nationalist politicians to do is to remodel and rebrand their parties and para-political movements just as has happened on the continent with far-right and alt-right movements. This also means that the kinds of arguments advanced have appeared anti-authoritarian and so appealing to libertarians. By making free speech and attacks on social-liberal agendas along with Islam central to their agenda, they have also sought to appeal to Evangelical Christians.

Reaching the Right

One of the things that has concerned me as I've engaged with the debate about Christian Nationalism, is the confusion about how we reach people with the Gospel whose political views are labelled "right wing" or more precisely "far right".¹³⁵ There seems to be a take that you have got to go along with the political views expressed. I think there are two factors here.

1. Attempting to find a way to say "we share your concerns. Now in some cases that's legitimate but we need to distinguish for example between sharing the concerns of people on a march and sharing the ideology of the organisers. We do the marchers no favours if we give the impression that the people on the platform are the answer.

2. For too long the Church has been far too absent from places we've determined as "hard places.". This includes inner city Bradford and East Birmingham with high Muslim population. It also includes white working class council estates in South Bradford and North Birmingham (I'm choosing those two cities as places I know well but as examples of many places.

The result of the second point is that we do not know people and they don't know us. We are shouting at a distance. This means a couple of things. First, it means that we don't have permission to speak into their lives and challenge them. So, when they get invited on a march by Tommy Robinson, we don't have the relational context to say not just "I cannot join that" but also "nor should you."

It also means that we don't really get to understand them. A helpful concept here is "subversive fulfilment.". The idea is that we have all kinds of hopes and dreams that can only be fulfilled in Christ. However, those desires are fragmented, disordered, distorted and corrupted. That's where the subversion bit comes in. We need to reorder, reorientate and restore the true hope. That's where repentance comes in. Now some of us spend almost all of our time talking subversion and some of us are all about fulfilment but you need both.

It is as you live alongside people that you get to do two things. First, you get to understand what a person's desires and hopes really are. Second, you get to show where there is a true sharing of dreams but also what those hopes and dreams like ok like, subverted and fulfilled in Christ. All of this is hard, long term work. But if we want permission to properly witness to people and for them to let God's word disagree with them, then it's necessary.

I don't want to just leave you with a negative critique of current attempts to "reach the right". Rather, I want to encourage more positive ways forward. There are different groups trying to encourage this in different parts of the country. If you want to get involved in living among and

¹³⁵ See e.g. [On Refusing to Reach the Right - by Aaron Edwards](#)

reaching people from estates and inner city areas then there are people like 20 Schemes in Scotland and Medhurst Ministries in the north of England

Conclusion

The pivoting we have seen by the Far Right is exemplified by the Tommy Robinson, Unite the Kingdom movement. We might argue that unfortunately by aligning with the movement, some Evangelical Christians are managing to reverse Jesus' command to be as wise as serpents and gentle as doves. The light should have nothing to do with darkness. There can be no fellowship between far right politics and Christianity.

9 Who is afraid of Christian Nationalism?

So asks Aaron Edwards in an article for his blog, The Good Fight.¹³⁶ Well, I want to answer “not me.” You see, I’m not afraid, I’m not scared of Christian Nationalism. However, I do fear for the affect that it is having on some church contexts, on people we are seeking to share the Gospel with and on the people believing and teaching it themselves. However, that’s very different to being afraid of something. Anyway, I want to engage in detail with what Aaron as an example of the argument for Christian Nationalism.

First, Aaron states:

“Why does the prospect of Christian Nationalism terrify secularists? Because Christian Nationalism is a threat to Secular Nationalism.”¹³⁷

Now, there is some truth in that, though note first that it is the Christian Gospel itself that terrifies secularists. Secular Nationalists may or may not be threatened by Christian Nationalism but that depends on whether or not they see it as a rival to replace them or an ally that can be partnered with or even consumed. The kind of ethno-cultural nationalism that has tended to loiter around far right circles is not Christian in origin, in that sense it is secular. At different times, it has attempted to co-opt Christianity to its cause and that is more noticeable at the moment.

Edwards then goes on to say:

“Debates over “Christian Nationalism” have been standard fayre in the US for the last half-decade or so, especially over Stephen Wolfe’s [book](#) on the subject, and Doug Wilson’s “Mere Christendom” [vision](#). Where this was once seen as a “fringe” topic, over the last couple of years it has gained significant and sustained attention from the national US press (including high profile interviews of Wilson [on Tucker Carlson](#), and more recently on [CNN](#)).”¹³⁸

He is right that the debate has been “standard fayre” for longer, though whilst the specific label may have become more prominent, the debate, particularly in terms of a Theonomist vision for the US goes back much further and arguably predates even the initial Federal Vision debates of the noughties. What has perhaps been more overt is the syncing of this particular theological and ethical outlook with political movements and thought traditionally associated with far-right politics.

Edwards then sets out his stall further.

“Naturally, such a vision tends to invoke the predictable bucket of slander from the evangelical Sanballats and Tobiahs of our times, with some Christian leaders in the US (including Russell Moore and Phil Vischer) teaming up with various secular allies to make a [documentary](#) about what they see as the rising “threat” of Christian Nationalism. As far as I can see, their failing credibility as leftist evangelical sell-outs only seems to have helped the Christian nationalist cause rather than hindering it.”¹³⁹

¹³⁶ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

¹³⁷ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

¹³⁸ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

¹³⁹ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

This is an accusation and assertion but without evidence and he moves swiftly to the pejorative. Moore is identified as a “Sanballat or Tobiah”, these are the bad guys who seek to infiltrate and undermine God’s people in Nehemiah’s day. In other words, without evidence, these Evangelical leaders are being labelled as wolves, serious enemies who do not belong to God’s people and have infiltrated with an intentional agenda to destroy. One of the things that strikes me about the debate is that Christian Nationalists have been swift to go personal. We don’t go through the preliminaries of a discussion about the substance. This is against the backdrop of those endorsing a specific Christian Nationalist agenda, and indeed the Unite the Kingdom Agenda of Tommy Robinson as “Patriot pastors” and the insinuation that anyone who dares disagree has a malign agenda and are traitors. It is also in the context of facebook comments even on Aaron’s own page describing Evangelicals who disagree with Christian Nationalism as “wet” and “whining”.

Later in the article, Edwards identifies John Stevens as an example of a UK evangelical leader opposing Christian Nationalism. He goes on in a facebook comment to say:

“John Stevens et al like the current order and want to leave it just as it is, despite all the damage it does not only to society (lots and lots and lots of human beings) but also to the purity of the Church and the Gospel (which is ironic because defending such things is what anti-CN evangelicalism is, in part, based upon).”¹⁴⁰

I responded to this as follows:

“ I guess I'm one of the et al. I can't speak for everyone in that group but I can speak personally and for those I know to say you could not be further off in your accusation. I can also say that knowing John Stevens your assumptions are wrong too. John is an elder brother in Christ, a faithful servant who loves God, his word, people and the Gospel. He has planted a church that has gone on to be part of multiplying churches in Birmingham and has led a national network that continues to grow. I don't agree with him on everything but I do respect him for those things and would encourage others to engage with him in that manner.”¹⁴¹

To which Aaron’s retort was:

“you seem to misread conversations like this regularly. There's no need to frame valid critique as "accusation". I've met John, he's a friendly and conscientiously godly person. I just believe he's wrong about the culture war, and so are you. I talked about what I mean by my critique of Stevens' in the article above. Perhaps you haven't read it?”¹⁴²

Now, this is hardly up there in examples of academic discourse, there is a quick move to go personal. I also would suggest that yes, if you say that someone is wilfully and knowingly accepting a situation that they know will do damage, then that is an accusation. Of course, the issue is not whether or not something is an accusation or a critique, the question is whether or not it is true and accurate. We will look at that in the case of Stevens later. However, the point is here that you cannot say that someone is “friendly, conscientious, godly” whilst suggesting that they will allow harm to happen willingly. You cannot allow the impression to form that they

¹⁴⁰ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

¹⁴¹ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

¹⁴² <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

come under the umbrella of being “Sanballats” and if you think they are godly and conscientious then you won’t allow slurs about people being “wet” and “whiny” to stand.

Next, Aaron says:

“Even if some of us have been [writing](#) and [speaking](#) about these themes for a little time already, it seems that the Christian Nationalist conversation has finally migrated to our Island too. That is, people now seem to be “allowed” to talk about it. The problem, however, is that the weighing scales for such a conversation are already very much tilted. The most recent example of this was the viral Sky News piece on Bishop Ceirion Dewar, a good man who has [spoken boldly](#) on various socio-political issues and the need for Britain to return to Christianity. Suddenly, secular journalists are alarmed by “the rise of Christian Nationalism in Britain”.

The essence of Sky reporter Tom Cheshire’s [critique](#) of Christian Nationalism is the fear of an “American” brand of Christianity infiltrating Britain. By this, I think he means the kind of Christianity that actually wants to make a socio-political difference—perish the thought! The funny thing is, what is now usually described as “fringe, extreme-Right Christianity” hurling across the Atlantic is, in fact, the kind of Christianity Britain exported to America in the first place. It is the kind of Christianity that does, in fact, still believe its beliefs, and therefore seeks to apply those beliefs to everyday life for the good of society and for the good of all people, even people whose views or actions they may need to oppose.¹⁴³

Observe the dismissive wave of the hand, the man who shared a platform with Tommy Robinson is not to be challenged or questioned because Aaron has decided that he is “a good man” in contrast to the forementioned Sanballats. Edwards then makes the assumption for Sky reporter, Tom Cheshire about what he means by Christian Nationalism. And perhaps that can be forgiven as Alice Roberts, the specifically open secularist that Edwards does quote, is in fact critiquing such a form of Christianity. However, what Cheshire is responding to is the association of professing Christians with the Unite the Kingdom rally. So, to prove that this particular phenomena is not far right requires the case to be proven that the organisers and agenda behind UTK (not the individuals who joined in the march) is not far right. And given that the organiser was a former member of the BNP and founder of the EDL, the onus is on those saying it wasn’t far right to prove their case.

This is important because Edwards says:

“Even basic displays of public faith are now deemed dubious. When asked about his Sky News report on a chat show, for example, Cheshire spoke of being [worried](#) by “how many crosses we saw” and “the Lord’s prayer being read” [at Tommy Robinson’s recent Unite The Kingdom ally](#). One has to ask: would fewer crosses and no prayers be *less* concerning? Is there a certain amount of public Christian expression or influence that is “permitted” at such events *without* causing such concerns? If so, why?

Clearly, the average secular person has become accustomed to a weak, effeminised, and politically inconsequential form of Christianity, the kind that keeps one’s beliefs “private” [and ensures, above all, that they never bring them to bear upon the public](#)

¹⁴³ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

[sphere](#) unless under the strict surveillance of their secular overlords, who are apparently there to ensure that people don't end up *meaning* their beliefs *too much*.”¹⁴⁴

But this is again to miss the point, let's again assume mistakenly and naively. The objections being made were not to crosses being displayed in general or the Lord's Prayer being read anywhere (though some secularists might object). It was specifically to their display at the Unite the Kingdom rally. Now, if the UTK agenda was neutral, one might go along with Edwards suggestion that less crosses and prayers would be worse. However, if the agenda was not neutral and in fact rooted in an ideology that we have been arguing is anti-Christian, anti-Gospel and if those crosses were being displayed as part of a movement of demos and marches that had been going on through out the summer declaring that some people are not welcome here because of their ethnicity and culture then yes, their presence would be a concern and this is exactly the concern that many Christians have expressed.

As I've just said above, Alice Roberts does prove a better example of a secularist conflating a Christian agenda with Christian Nationalism and the so called Christian Right. Though I wonder if Edwards has been oblivious to Roberts until now given that he says:

“Roberts' problem is apparently not with Christian faith itself, but merely the kind of Christian faith that actually makes a difference, that actually opposes worldviews and morals which are detrimental to human flourishing:”¹⁴⁵

Alice Roberts is the professor who gets upset about Christmas and Easter on social media each year. Her problem is very much with the Christian faith!

However, Edwards' main contention is with us Christians who disagree with Christian Nationalism. First there's the hyperbole:

“the national mourning over the assassination of the Christian apologist, [Charlie Kirk](#) (who was effectively a Christian nationalist, for all intents and purposes, in that he was calling the US back to its Christian roots and values) renders the vision of something like Christian Nationalism no longer just a fringe issue for online debate, but an urgent necessity for everyday Christians. There is only so much trauma and humiliation a culture can take before its people will rise up and say, “enough!” What kind of nation do we want? A secular nation? An Islamic nation? A former nation? You will have some kind of nation. Why not a Christian one?”¹⁴⁶

Was Kirk a Christian Nationalist? Possibly, though there seems to be a tendency just to use the term to claim whoever and whatever you want for it. My leaning would be that he was someone who happened to be engaged in politics and happened to be a Christian who happened to seek to let his faith influence his work and his public role. That however, does not make him a Christian Nationalist. One of the arguments I keep seeing put around is that we must all be Christian nationalists if we want there to be a Christian influence in the public square. But here's the thing. When Aaron claims that people are suddenly waking up to the public/political nature of Christianity, it's a bit of a mis-direct. It might be that people who hold to a particular political view point are waking up to it or that some people are waking up to it and at the same time discovering a brand of politics but actually plenty of people had woken up or were always

¹⁴⁴ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

¹⁴⁵ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

¹⁴⁶ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

awake to that point for a long time. Personally, I was involved in student politics as a member of the Conservative Party. There has long been a movement of Christian Socialists and returning to the Conservatives, if you can get hold of it (probably out of print) a collection of essays on Christian Conservatism including a speech by Margaret Thatcher was edited by David Willets back in the 1990s. So, perhaps the people who really are rather new to all of this should at least give those who have been engaging in the public square a hearing when they question this novel idea that they are getting all excited about.

Edwards says:

“Five years ago, there was no such thing as a “Christian Right” in the UK. Today, such a movement is emerging faster than the established leaders and churches can adjust to interpret it. As I have been arguing in various posts, British evangelicals have [refused to reach the Right](#) because they have become ideologically [subservient to secular multiculturalism](#). This is why they often cannot fathom [Christians who oppose mass immigration](#) or who [promote national identity](#), and end up seeing such people as potentially abandoning the faith by trading the Gospel for “Right wing politics”.¹⁴⁷

Well, perhaps not a “Christian Right” in the sense of the US style Christian Coalition/Moral majority but that probably reflects the tone of both British Evangelicalism and British politics. However, yes, there has been for a long time a sizeable body within Evangelicalism that advocate for right wing positions. Indeed, frequently in my life time I’ve known people who would have been likely to vote Conservative because their Christianity and resulting social conservatism meant they could not support left wing and liberal parties even if they may have sympathised with their economics.

Again, let’s be clear on this. Whilst personally I’ve come to a conclusion that if you want freedom of movement for trade, then it’s going to require free movement of people and with long standing conservative thinkers such as Fraser Nelson I’m also inclined to think that if you do believe in free markets then the challenges that come with such free movement will naturally correct themselves over time. However, there is no question that a debate on immigration control is legitimate. I respect those I disagree with on this subject. The reaction you get is to the way that asylum seekers particularly are demonised and dehumanised. The frustration you hear is from those of us involved in the frontline ground war if you like of witnessing day to day to both white working class and those from Muslim backgrounds at the unhelpfulness of many comments and actions from those who see themselves as in some kind of culture air war.

Edwards claims that:

“This lack of awareness among Christian leaders leaves them ill-prepared to deal with the challenges and opportunities of the present moment, which they cannot seem to see as having anything to do with the advance of the kingdom of God. They have become so influenced by secular liberal norms (whilst claiming to conserve orthodox Biblical convictions) that they are astonished that Right wing issues might actually concern faithful Christians. They appear to have no conception that their fears over some nationalist movement “corrupting” Christianity are more secular than they realise.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

¹⁴⁸ <https://thatgoodfight.substack.com/p/whos-afraid-of-christian-nationalism>

He confuses “lack of awareness” with disagreement. Some Christian leaders are definitely ill-prepared. And for example, if you are not prepared or equipped to both love those who hold far right political views so that you proclaim the good news, and to challenge them over their nationalist idolatry and call them to true repentance then you are ill-equipped. Further, bluntly, as I’ve been observing, it is the Christian Nationalist movement that benefits from leaders being ill-prepared because prepared leaders spotted that this was a wolf and where this wolf was going to come for us a mile off. And you will notice that the Christian Nationalists show a reluctance to actually engage with the arguments from those who challenge them.

It is at this point that Edwards turns his fire on my friend John Stevens, national director (not head) of the FIEC.¹⁴⁹

John Stevens, head of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, displays a classic example of the distinctly British form of evangelical prudishness regarding Christian Nationalism. He recently [declared](#) such anxieties in no uncertain terms:

“I have been saying for some years that, with the failure of overreaching liberal progressivism, the great cultural threat that evangelicals will face is authoritarian fascist nationalism. This is antithetical to the gospel and the way of Jesus, but it has attractions to conservatives who have convinced themselves that the most important thing is to fight a culture war against the left, and who will ally themselves with anyone to achieve their goal.

Sadly what I have warned about is increasingly coming to pass. Right-wing Christians and Christian Nationalists, especially in the US, have allied themselves with those who seem to drink from the wells of overt racism, white supremacy & anti-semitism. This is nothing new. It always been a feature of the far right. It is a mistake to think that it is only the radical left and Islamists who are deeply anti-semitic. Views that were once beyond the pale are now routinely espoused on social media, and are attracting young men on both sides of the Atlantic.”

I don’t have time to dissect all of Stevens’ incorrect assumptions here, but I will merely point to the fact that, from his assessment, it seems that anyone who claims the label “Christian Nationalism” in any positive sense becomes an automatic promoter of racial hatred.

These issues are not without complexity, of course, but Stevens’ catch-all interpretation lacks understanding whilst presenting itself as the informed, prophetic voice when, in fact, it is the voice that continues to aid the propping-up of wordly secularism as the political “norm”. He even refers positively to the scaremongering of someone so obviously compromised as Russell Moore: “Russell Moore [challenges](#) evangelicals to make the stark choice between Christ and Hitler. It really has come to that.” Has it? Says who? Russell Moore...?

¹⁴⁹ It is perhaps a minor point but we need to do better at understanding the polity of others. Of course, all evangelicals would answer that no human is head of a church denomination or network, Jesus is. However, in terms of the FIEC and indeed many Evangelical networks, it is impossible to describe anyone as the head over a group of freely associating independent churches.

Notice again the unneeded addition of personal jibes. Russell Moore is “obviously compromised” (says who, on what evidence and does that invalidate his analysis?), whilst Stevens is guilty of “evangelical prudishness”, whatever that is.

More concerning is that Edward’s analysis simply does not stack with what Stevens says (and remember that this was in a quick Facebook post providing links to articles, not a fully worked essay). First, observe that Stevens sees “liberal progressivism” as failed. Edwards may think Stevens to be premature in his assessment or over optimistic but that’s hardly the same as wanting to keep a status quo that damages. What Stevens does not say or even come close to implying at any point is that “anyone who claims the label ‘Christian Nationalism’ in any positive sense becomes an automatic promoter of racial hatred.” Edwards has created a strawman out of something Stevens did not say which distracts from what he does say and prevents proper debate on it. Namely, Stevens; point is that there are those on the Christian Right who are allying themselves with “overt racism, white supremacy & anti-semitism” That is objectively recognised as happening and indeed, it is specifically this with the example of an interview with someone alleged to be an apologist for Neo-Nazi-ism that Moore rebukes in the article that Edwards is so dismissive of.

Now, there is much to discuss in what Stevens does say, noting again that it was a quick comment. For example, there are many in the US who would reject the overtly racist agenda, ethno-cultural nationalism works more subtly as we’ve discussed on this site previously. Further, I have previously commented to the effect that there has been a pivoting at least in the UK so that you are unlikely to hear overt antisemitism, indeed you will hear people lauding Israel. However, at the same time, you get the old tropes banded about concerning globalism, an elite, the Frankfurt School, Cultural Marxism and of course George Soros. However, the point remains that he doesn’t say or even imply what Edwards takes him to.

Edwards continues:

“Despite critiquing the Left in some ways, Stevens is unaware of the extent to which he is unduly influenced by the leftist agitations and fears over Christian Nationalism, which are so vague that it renders the term little more than a stick with which to hit people. For example, some of the characters associated with the movement (e.g. [Nick Fuentes](#)) are not representative of what most people mean by it. Some of what Fuentes has said even in recent months is so obviously abhorrent that it should be clear to anyone that, while he may profess to be a Catholic, and while he undoubtedly has significant political influence upon millions of disenfranchised young men, the Christianness of his “Christianity” is extremely dubious.”

There we get what I’ve learnt to be quite a normal form of attack. If we disagree then it is because we are unaware about the extent to which we are duped and influenced. It’s not possible for us to have made our own assessments, we must have been influenced. And again, Edwards seems to entirely miss the point of Moore’s article when he says that some of what Fuentes says is “obviously abhorrent”. Moore’s point is that despite this, Christians are far too silent and then offers suggestions as to why. Of course, as I pointed out myself, it should not need saying that you can’t marry the cross to Nazi-ism. The interview Moore responds to would have been unthinkable to many of us in the past. It doesn’t seem to be now.

If anyone is going to attempt a defence of Christian Nationalism, then they are going to have to do much better than this.

10 Why is this such a big deal? (Conclusion)

I remember when I started talking about some of the issues relating to Christian Nationalism, whether it be the term Christian Nationalism itself, some of the concepts within it or the strands I've described as making up contemporary Christian Nationalism, I was initially asked "Why are you bothering about this. You are just talking about fringe issues that are of no relevance here. I still get that sometimes and it seems that some Christian thought leaders are just beginning to catch up with the issues. However, I note that responses towards the end of 2025 within the climate of the marches and the flag waving took a different turn where I was at times warned that I should be careful and think carefully about what I say regarding Christian Nationalism.

However, yes, the kind of "Christian Nationalism" that is seen in overt alignment with far right politics remains on the fringes of Christianity. At one point, I was asked for comment about the impact of Christian Nationalist by a journalist who had picked up on some of my articles. I suspect my answer was too dull to make it into print but I stick by it. I don't think that Christians are being drawn into far right politics in their droves, the December 2025, Unite the Kingdom Christmas carol service drew quite a paltry crowd in comparison to previous marches. Nor do I think that senior Christian leaders have been systemically co-opted into an agenda. I have however observed how some Christians have been co-opted into the agenda either willingly embracing the political agenda or with a carelessness towards it. Furthermore, I think that the response of Evangelical leaders has been weak both in that there has mainly been a silence towards the issues. Even those who have spoken up have primarily responded to concerns about overt racism, aggressive language and violent behaviour. It's perhaps what is not said as much as what is said that matters. I don't think that we have really grasped what the underlying issues are yet.

I cannot predict what will happen in the future, not even in the year ahead. If I were a betting man, which I'm not, my money would be on the particular explicit and aggressive forms of Christian Nationalism as a theology aligned to a political movement on the far right will retreat back and fade away. I'm not expecting the kind of situation that those advocating for Christian Nationalism have at times prophesied where we see a move towards civil war and a great uprising on the right.

However, ideologies do not tend to advance in one go. Think rather of the tide coming in, waves advancing and then retreating back, though never quite as far. That's why I think it matters that we understand the strands which underpin the movement and the marches that we have recently witnessed. Whilst on their own, Federal Vision and the dominionism of the New Apostolic Reformation are not the same as the full blown Christian Nationalism associated with far right politics, these specific ideologies are deeply concerning in their own right. They are at best serious error and have a trajectory towards heresy. If the tide goes back a bit from Christians marching and standing on platforms with Unite the Kingdom leaders but those two ideologies have become more embedded into our thinking and our churches, then we have reason to be concerned.

The main reason we need to be concerned is that these ideologies or theologies are a distraction from our real mission, to make disciples, to baptise people and to teach them to obey the commands of Jesus.

