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### **Politics, Religion, and Christian Worldviews at this Point in History**

Normally, I prefer not to write about current events on this blog. I do not want to imply that current events influence what I believe. My goal is to look for key principles in Scripture that are reflected in both my own life and human history in general, and then let readers decide how to specifically apply it to the present time or their own lives.

However, many Christians today (especially Fundamentalists) *are* putting current events at the center of their expression of their faith. Some of them almost go as far as to say that being a faithful Christian requires you to see what is going on today from their perspective. What I seek to do in this article is present an alternative Biblical perspective on the world today (that I believe better fits Scriptural themes), in order to show that the predominant Evangelical perspective is not the only worldview that can result from a study of Scripture. How you view the world from a Biblical perspective also has implications for what a Christian life entails, which is another reason why I am addressing this topic.

Key points that will be addressed in this article include:

Why I believe secular liberalism is near its peak in world history, and why religious conservatism is about to surge in the Western World

Parallels between institutionalized church systems and political systems.

How Christians should view their relationship to church systems and politics.

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*Romans 1:20 – Ever since the creation of the world [God's] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.*

Throughout history, atheism has been a minority in the world's population. Even today, when there seems to be a shift away from religion, atheists are probably not more than ~13% of the world's population <sup>1</sup> and ~3% of the U.S. population <sup>2</sup>. Most people are unable to definitively believe that humans are the highest power, and that the natural order is the only dimension to the universe. Deep inside most people is an intuition that something beyond the natural exists, or that the universe was not formed completely through chance. It is very difficult to see Creation, the world, and our own lives, and not have some inkling of a supernatural dimension. Even if people have no doctrines or theological models to explain it, the intuition is there.

Now, suppose that the devil wanted to keep people from acknowledging God. What would he do? Trying to convert the world to atheism would be a futile pursuit because most people cannot be atheists. So, what the devil does instead is create twisted understandings of God so that people can acknowledge some aspect of God but fail to recognize Him for who He really is.

Some of the earliest manifestations of this tactic were idol worship and nature worship. The Apostle Paul wrote that the problem of this was that people worshipping “the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). People saw a divine design in nature. But then they went awry by treating nature as if it were God Himself.

But not everybody is going to fall for this tactic. The Jewish teachings of the Old Testament proclaimed that there is only one God, that He is above all creation, and that He cannot be worshipped in the form of a human image. Even though some Jews in the Old Testament still got caught up in idolatry despite these teachings, the more observant Jews (such as the Pharisees) knew better than to fall for that. So, evil supernatural agents would have to come up with new tactics to keep folks like the Pharisees from knowing the true nature of God.

Many Pharisees were deceived by an idea of spiritual superiority. This was going on when Jesus was on earth. The Pharisees and other elite ranks of Jews thought that God’s favor was on them, and Jesus rebuked them for getting fixated on technical details of the Mosaic Law while looking down on the poor, the Gentiles, and people with certain illnesses and disabilities.

However, Christianity, in contrast, has emphasized generosity, forgiveness, and outreach, in response to Jesus’ admonishments to the Pharisees. So, is there any way that spiritual forces can keep Christians from recognizing the true nature of God? It turns out there is.

Romans 8:15 says, *“For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.”*

Some types of Christianity have found a way to preach love and forgiveness, but still cause people to have fear about their spiritual standing. They do this by saying that God loves everybody and has made a way for everybody to be forgiven, but if people sin without repenting or “backslide” (something that is often ambiguously and subjectively defined), then despite God’s love for them and longing for them to repent, there is nothing He can do for them because they have chosen by their own “free will” to depart from Him.

In response to this teaching, the minister J Preston Eby wrote,

*“As a child I was told in church that God so hated sin, that God could not look upon sin, could not excuse sin; so if I fell, if I slipped into sin, if I made a mistake, if I disobeyed the Lord, if I cussed or lusted or cheated or told a lie, and didn’t confess my sin to God and get it “under the blood” before I went to bed, should I die in my sleep before the sun rose I would certainly burst hell wide open! According to the doctrine of condemnation living holy keeps you saved, whereas sin in your life causes you to lose your salvation . . . I tell you today — there is no hell anywhere worse than that one! To live under*

*condemnation is hell! The doctrine of condemnation . . . contradicts the word of our reconciliation which declares that God does not impute our trespasses unto us, and denies that we are justified by grace through faith alone, not of works, lest any man should boast!"<sup>3</sup> (quoted from Revelation Series, Part 39 at kingdombiblestudies.org)*

There are many people who see the problem with this teaching of condemnation. But unfortunately, they do not know of any Biblical alternative. So, even though they still believe in God in some way or another, they drift away from Christianity. If people are able to see the problem with religious condemnation, but manage to stay in the Christian faith and discover the true Gospel of grace, it's literally a miracle and a sign that God has chosen them for a special role in life.

Now, keep in mind that the devil's goal in religion is to cause people to have faulty notions about God. If people simply lose interest in Christianity and drift away, they're not misleading people about God anymore. But the devil wants to get them back into the religious system. How can he do that? I believe that he has plotted a way to do that by constructing an enemy of religion. The ultimate goal is to provoke religion into a holy war against that enemy and *make burdensome religion look good by contrast*, thus drawing people who are seeking virtue and safety back into religious bondage.

I believe the enemy created to instigate this process was Secular Humanism.

The plot began five centuries ago, during the Renaissance. In response to religious violence, some philosophers began reasoning that traditional conceptions of God and religion were inherently harmful and divisive to society because of conflicts over who was on the side of God and who wasn't. This, coupled with advancements in science and the arts, led many philosophers to think that humans had far more inherent potential than religious tradition had assumed, and thus, instead of reliance on God and confrontations over religion, people should simply seek to maximize their inherent, natural potential. This philosophy constituted Humanism. A new religion called Deism developed, which taught that there is a God who set the world into motion but is not actively involved in people's lives.

Secular Humanistic thinking got a big boost in the mid-1800s. Continued advancements in science led some scientists to conclude that the existence of the world does not depend on God at all, but could be explained entirely through natural means. Darwin's theory of Evolution was used by atheistic naturalists to further their agenda. Prominent atheists such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche wrote some of the most vicious attacks on religion ever written, claiming that it was deeply damaging to society and personal development.

These 19<sup>th</sup> Century criticisms of religion gained attention among some progressive church leaders in the U.S. during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In response to the social problems which plagued that era and the widespread poverty resulting from laissez-faire economics, progressive Christians began to perceive that traditional Christianity was not impacting society that way it should. Although they did not see a need to abandon Christianity, they decided that the critics of religion had some valid points. In response, liberal Christians began emphasizing social justice, downplayed the themes of personal salvation and individual spiritual rebirth, and focused instead on the collective salvation of society. Liberal Christianity viewed the Bible as an ancient source of wisdom that was culturally conditioned, as opposed to being authoritative in every aspect.

In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, conservative Christians began aligning themselves with strongly capitalist economic models that emphasized smaller government and pro-business policies to boost job creation and economic growth. Liberal Christians, while often stopping short of socialism in the U.S., viewed the government as having a greater responsibility to fund programs to reduce poverty, and to enact policies to combat corporate greed.

Also, amid many high profile social movements, traditional views on moral issues (such as sexuality and gender roles) started getting called into question, and this is what often draws the ire of conservative Christians today. Liberal Christianity, with its culturally-conditioned view of Scripture and elevated view of inherent human nature, aided these movements to some degree.

In the late-20<sup>th</sup> Century, many countries in Western Europe adopted quasi-socialist economic policies, and Western Europe also began a trend toward secularization which was associated with significant declines in church attendance and interest in organized religion. The United States, however, seemed to be less affected by liberalism following a sharp resurgence of conservative politics in the 1980s. Although a Democrat was president in most of the 1990s, Congress was controlled by Republicans for the majority of the decade, which prevented any dramatic progression of liberalization. Conservatism in the U.S. seemed to remain intact during the early-mid 2000s decade as a Republican president was elected for two term.

However, it seemed that the country took a sharp liberal turn with the election of the current president in 2008. This was driven, to a significant degree, by the 2007-09 financial crisis which was often blamed on the previous administration. But the political shift was also driven by a strong movement of social liberalism that had been brewing for a while but did not shift elections until a new wave of Millennials became old enough to vote.

So, then, it would seem that post-2008, liberalism achieved the kind of dominance in the Western World that it had waited five centuries for. This alarmed many conservative Christians, and in subsequent years there was a sharp surge in apocalyptic prophecies on the internet. Some Christian Fundamentalist websites even began declaring the current president the anti-Christ as a result of the perception that he had favoritism toward Islam, promoted economic globalization, and suppressed Christian freedom.

Fundamentalists are portraying the ultimate battle today as a conflict between those who want to push God and Christian morals out of America vs. those who want to preserve the country's Christian heritage and Biblical values. However, I believe the Fundamentalists are making a mistake in this portrayal. I believe that Secular Liberalism is not the ultimate enemy today. Instead, I believe it is an *intermediate* enemy designed to provoke religious conservatives into a holy cultural war that would ultimately make burdensome religion look safe and noble in contrast.

I perceive that in Western politics, most notably the United States, the tide is turning against liberal politics. Even though since 2008, liberalism got the kind of dominance it had waited centuries for, some people are starting to feel that it did not produce the ideal world that it promised. The U.S. and European economies still face a lot of difficulties in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Western countries have become more vulnerable to terrorism. Racial and ethnic tensions seem to be just as bad

if not worse than before. A lot of people are unhappy and frustrated, and are having problems in their personal lives and family lives.

In the U.S., conservatives started making a surge shortly after the current president took office. In 2010, the Tea Party movement generated a wave of anti-establishment Republican candidates that caused Republicans to win a majority in the House of Representatives. Republicans started winning many governor races, and in 2014 they got a majority in the Senate. Now, this year, the anti-establishment movement is aiming for the White House in a big way.

The modern-day liberalism provoked the Republican Party to make a very sharp turn to the right, and this year, Republican voters are going along with this trend, as is obvious from the results of this year's primaries. It appears many conservatives feel that moderate "Establishment" candidates are not strong enough to confront the dangers of modern liberalism.

Ultimately, I cannot confidently predict who will win the Republican nomination, or the presidency. But even if a Democrat wins the election this year, I believe that secular liberal dominance is in its last days and that we will see a powerful conservative become president in the near future. A key point is that, in recent decades, religious voters have generally aligned themselves with conservative politics. Thus, the reason I expect conservatism to take over the political scene is that I expect religion to regain its dominance in Western politics and society. I do not believe that modern-day liberalism is going to be at the center of any apocalyptic spiritual phenomena.

Why do I believe that? Well, we often hear people talk about having a "Biblical worldview." A "Biblical worldview" is often presented as being on the right side of an ultimate battle between conservative Christianity and Secular Liberalism. However, I do not believe that a truly Biblical worldview puts believers in Christ on the frontlines of a battle with Secular Liberalism.

In the Bible, spiritual conflict does not take place between the people of God and Secularism. Instead, spiritual conflict takes place between the people of God and idolaters. In other words, the ultimate enemies of God are religious, not secular.

Think about the times in the Old Testament when Israel was being judged for their disobedience. What were they doing? Were they prohibiting prayer in schools? No; instead they were worshipping idols.

Think about the time when Jesus was on earth. Who did Jesus have conflict with? It was the religious people of the day. Furthermore, it was primarily the Pharisees, who were the *most conservative* type of Jews. Jesus said that it was Jewish religious leaders who were responsible for persecuting God's prophets in past eras (Matt. 5:12).

Think about where the earliest persecution of Christians came from. It was from religious leaders (Acts 6-7).

And then there's the Book of Revelation. Now, regardless of what you think Revelation is (literal prophecy, symbolic depiction of spiritual warfare, symbolic outline of history, etc.), the villains of Revelation are religious, not secular.

*Revelation 2:14 [To the church of Pergumum]: I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication. So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.*

*Revelation 2:20 [To the church of Thyatria]: I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols.*

*Revelation 17:20 – The rest of humankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands or give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk.*

In Revelation, there is also the subject of “the beast” (Ch. 13) which many believe is the same entity as the anti-Christ depicted in the epistle of 1<sup>st</sup> John. Now, again, regardless of what you think the anti-Christ is (a literal person, a spiritual power, etc.), there is a common misconception about the anti-Christ. People think the anti-Christ will be something or someone that vehemently opposes Christ. But the Greek term underlying the prefix “anti” does not imply overt opposition. Instead, it implies deception via imitation <sup>4</sup>. In other words, the anti-Christ is not something or someone that says terrible things about Christ. Instead, the anti-Christ has an appearance that resembles Christ. The anti-Christ appears to have the virtues of Christ. Thus, some people who are looking for Christian values will think that the anti-Christ embodies those values.

Thus, I believe that all of the people who are looking for the anti-Christ in the present-day Hollywood, or the IMF, or the United Nations, or the Freemasonry, etc., are off track. I do not claim that these institutions are inherently good or bad. But you see, these organizations and their leaders do not have a stated mission of promoting Christian virtues. In contrast, I believe that the anti-Christ is found in Christian contexts.

When people read Revelation and see the spiritual warfare that takes place, it often sounds mystical, obscure, and bizarre. Thus, they start looking for the religious enemies depicted in Revelation through conspiracy theories, secret societies, etc., thinking that the ultimate enemies of God will be found in these shadowy places. But I think this is the wrong approach.

Signs of the mysterious religious evils can be found anywhere in which people are under religious bondage. Whether its pagans who worship idols and summon spirits, or Christians who go to bed every night worrying about their salvation but still feel obligated to go to the same church every Sunday and hear the sermons that put them under condemnation.

The spiritual warfare in Revelation between God's people and religious enemies is the reason why I believe secular liberalism is going to lose its dominance, and conservative religion will surge in the

Western World. This also implies a return to conservative politics in the West given the alliance of conservatism and religion. I hope that it will not take some sort of catastrophe in order to decisively turn the tide toward conservative. But I am concerned that it might.

Suppose that there were to be a terrorist attack, economic crisis, or natural disaster worse than anything we have seen in recent years. Religious people will come out and say that it happened because the country turned away from God, because people abandoned Biblical morals to serve their own desires. And then they will appeal to people's fears and say that people must protect themselves in these dangerous times by living in complete obedience to God, and that if they sin without repenting, it is only a matter of time until God judges them too!

Now, here's the thing. Some people can genuinely live by that principle, and their conscience assures them that they are truly living for God, in which case they are true, repentant believers. But there are other people, both church leaders and ordinary people, who are not repentant in every aspect of life, but they are not fully putting their trust in Christ's finished work and God's sovereignty for their salvation either. They are still trying to mix grace and works, and they think they are saved because they chose Christ by their own free will, and this creates self-righteousness on their end and condemnation for those who are not self-righteousness but are trying in vain to follow their teachings.

Before I close this article, there is an important point I should bring out. We need to distinguish "systems" of the world (whether religious or not) from the individual people working under those systems. Consider the Christian saying "to be in the world, but not of the world." I extend this principle to the church world. Even if we believe that the institutionalized church systems are not inherently Godly, we should not have to shut ourselves away from them (and I personally think we shouldn't). We can work with them in order to have a platform to present our Biblical message to a wide audience. I myself contribute writings to an internet-based Evangelical organization with a large readership.

For me, being "in the world but not of the world" mean that I am willing to work with any reputable organization that is willing to work with me. But being not "of this world" means that I will not change my message in order to conform to any organization. I may refrain from bringing up certain subjects if it isn't necessary, but I nevertheless stay true to my own beliefs.

And there are many people in religious systems who are operating there in accord with God's leading, without making themselves slaves to the system. They may hold some doctrines that I consider unbiblical, but I believe they know the true Gospel in their heart (and it comes out in their preaching), even if I believe their intellectual models are a bit off.

Likewise, with regard to politics, I believe God works with certain politicians and voters found in both major parties, in spite of political systems that are not of God. The things I wrote earlier about spiritual forces scheming with political doctrines refers to systems, not individuals within those systems.

The reason many people are afraid to go against the teachings of prominent systems, religious or otherwise, is that they are afraid they will fall for cults. However, what makes cults dangerous is that, they fail to distinguish individuals from systems. Cults make character assaults on everybody who is in

mainstream systems. As long as you can differentiate individuals from systems, you are not at risk of cultism.

For many years, I had an uncomfortable feeling inside of me about the battle between Christian conservatives and secular liberals. Even though I heard many calls of action to join the conservative Christians' side of the battle, I never really felt at ease. I am not writing this article to call upon Christians to change their activism. I encourage Christians to stay wherever they believe they should be. However, I think that the discomfort I felt with the cultural and spiritual war of our time is something other Christians have felt as well, but did not know how to articulate Biblically. I hope that this article will help such people gain some new insights into what they are experiencing in their own lives and what they are seeing out in the world.

#### Links to External Sources:

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_atheism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_atheism)
2. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/05/7-facts-about-atheists/>
3. <http://www.kingdombiblestudies.org/Revelation/rev39.htm>
4. <http://www.concordant.org/expohtml/TheMysteryOfBabylon/TheMysteryOfBabylon013.htm>