

AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY IN CRISIS

(2025)

Examining the church's involvement in politics: The forces, the players, and the erroneous ideas that are moving the American evangelical church to the brink of severe judgment from God. The American nation is also moving towards more severe judgment for its sins.

The title of this paper may seem way too bold. Nevertheless, I feel the urgency from God to speak up to at least some of my friends and others who might be willing to hear. I am basing my thesis here on my study of God's word for over 50 years, including His timeless principles of dealing with nations and with His own people. I have been concerned about American believers being overly absorbed in politics and, in many cases, viewing political involvement as America's last hope to restore America to Biblical values. I realize that not everyone will agree with the ideas offered in this article, and some fellow believers may even be offended by it. I hope we can still love one another despite such differences. I realize that most believers are not interested in reading a lengthy article on this topic. However, **I will say that Christian leaders and others with an interest in this topic should read this article. It likely contains information and perspective not known to you, yet vital for the forward progress of churches and believers in this hour.** Two books have recently helped me fill in the big jigsaw puzzle of what has been happening in the American church relative to politics. I highly recommend these two books and this paper will attempt to bring forth key ideas from these books. Here is some brief upfront information about them.

"The Violent Take It by Force: The Christian Movement that is Threatening Our Democracy."

Author: Matthew D. Taylor. "Taylor is a senior scholar at the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies in Baltimore, where he specializes in Evangelical and Pentecostal movements, religious politics in the US, Muslim-Christian dialogue, and American Islam. He holds a PhD in Religious Studies from Georgetown University and an MA in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary" (information from Amazon). Taylor is a born-again believer who has a background in Pentecostalism. The book was released on 10/1/2024 and has a 4.5-star rating on Amazon.

"The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism."

Author: Tim Alberta. "Tim Alberta is a staff writer for *The Atlantic* and the former chief political correspondent for *Politico*, and has written for dozens of other publications, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Vanity Fair*. He is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *American Carnage: On the Front Lines of the Republican Civil War and the Rise of President Trump*" (from the dust jacket of the book). Alberta is a born-again Christian who grew up in a church pastored by his father. The book was released on 12/5/2023 and has a 4.7-star Amazon rating based on over 3400 reviews. It is the #1 best seller in the Religious Studies – Sociology category.

I will begin by using several pages to acquaint the reader with important details from Taylor's book. Taylor focuses on a movement that has its influence within nondenominational charismatic circles. This area of charismatic Christianity "is a distinct subculture within the evangelical subculture—the realm of nondenominational megachurches, of televangelism channels, of prophecy conferences, of healing revivals and prosperity gospel preachers, of free-range evangelists and exorcists. Starting in the 1980s, some leaders in this Independent Charismatic sector began arguing that God is reconstituting the early-church roles of apostles and prophets to lead the modern church, giving rise

to what we can call the Apostolic and Prophetic movement, a speedily growing global trend of nondenominational churches aligning themselves with these apostles and prophets.”¹ The particular group within the Apostolic and Prophetic movement that Taylor examines is the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). I have studied this group myself for several years. This movement involves networks of churches and ministries, with NAR being a leading network.

Taylor’s meticulous research reveals that NAR leaders endorsed and promoted Donald Trump for the Republican candidate early in 2016. Taylor observes: “By constructing creative theologies and biblical rationales for supporting a debauched real-estate mogul, they prodded and harnessed the latent power of a previously politically disjointed Independent Charismatic world.”² **The false fringe theologies of NAR “have leached into broader American evangelicalism, engendering aggressive and chauvinistic visions of Christian supremacy.”**³ NAR leaders are far from household names to most Christians, yet they became the driving force behind the rise of Christian support of Trump. Not only so, but their religious ideologies and diligent grassroots organizing were influential in the Capitol riot of January 6.

Geir Otto Holmås, a religion scholar, summarizes NAR as follows: 1) The Kingdom of God is advanced on earth through the church gaining dominion; 2) Apostles, aided by prophets, constitute the church’s strategic spiritual leadership; 3) The Kingdom of God will come through spiritual transformation of culture and society; 4) The end-times church will be the complete manifestation of Jesus on earth; 5) A strong focus on prophetic insight and supernatural manifestations; 6) New revelation and casual use of the Bible.⁴

The theological underpinnings of this movement developed over several years, especially led by C. Peter Wagner, an ex-missionary who mainly taught church growth for thirty years at Fuller Theological Seminary. Wagner and his theories were controversial at Fuller, especially as he aligned more with the charismatic movement. He promoted the idea of modern-day apostles and prophets in the church, who are to exercise spiritual leadership over the church. Wagner’s thoughts about the renewal of apostles and prophets led to the New Apostolic Reformation. “Wagner considered 2000–2001 to be the beginning of the second apostolic age and that the lost offices of prophet and apostle were restored around that time.”⁵ His views about apostles and prophets are non-traditional. A more common view held by Bible scholars would be that the apostles and prophets in Eph. 4:11 were gifted men who were foundational for the church (Eph. 2:20; 3:5), given to the church in the early apostolic era, “and their teaching became the norm for Christian faith and practice. The deposit of revelation transmitted by the apostles and preserved in its written form in the New Testament thus forms the basis of postapostolic preaching and teaching in the church.”⁶ Note Acts 2:42, Eph. 2:20, and 3:4–5. Prophets in Eph. 4:11 were similarly given to the early church to provide a foundation of orthodox

¹ Quoted material taken from *The Violent Take it by Force* by Matthew D. Taylor. Published by Broadleaf Books, 2024. Reproduced by Permission of Broadleaf Books. p. 7-8. Website link to book: [The Violent Take it by Force](#)

² Ibid., 8.

³ Ibid., 8.

⁴ Wikipedia entry on New Apostolic Reformation. Accessed 12/1/2024.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology. Edited by Walter A. Elwell. Used by permission.

teaching for the church (Eph. 2:20; 3:5). There have been apostles over the centuries in the basic sense of the Greek word, which means “sent one.” Missionaries to fields of evangelistic labor are certainly “sent ones.” However, to me, there seems to be *no Biblical basis* presented for a new wave of apostles with the authority of the original apostolic office, providing revelation for orthodox teaching, and supposedly set up to govern the church. **In my opinion, the NAR view of current-day apostles and prophets is one of the erroneous ideas leading the church toward judgment.**

In summary, the Apostolic and Prophetic charismatic movement became very influential within the “right-wing” Christian political arena, eventually attaching themselves to candidate Trump. Using faulty reasoning loosely based on Biblical data, these Christians viewed Trump as God’s chosen vessel to restore America to its perceived historical Christian values, and to build a nation dominated by Christians in top positions in society to create the “kingdom of God” here on earth.

Having seen the big picture that Taylor has painted, we will now look more closely at certain players and their roles in this drama to understand the trend lines that brought evangelical support to Donald Trump for President—a man who manifestly does not exhibit Christian virtues.

Paula White. Paula had grown up in a very abusive environment but eventually became a leader, along with her second husband, Randy White, of a large charismatic megachurch. She eventually also branched out with an Oprah-style talk show on TV. With her large church and TV presence she began to rub shoulders with celebrities. In 2002, Donald Trump called her “out of the blue.” He had seen some of her sermons and her talk show and was impressed with her. He liked to watch TV preachers and evaluate their styles. White preached a “prosperity gospel” (God wants to give you health and wealth), which was undoubtedly attractive to Trump. Their relationship developed and Paula White became Trump’s “personal pastor.” Paula’s marriage to Randy White ended in 2007 and the megachurch they led eventually folded. Yet, Paula went to a new church where she eventually embraced the Apostolic and Prophetic movement and added “Apostolic leader” to her resume, although she was in a different apostolic network than NAR.

Taylor writes that the reason millions of evangelicals supported Donald Trump in 2016 and since has “everything to do with Paula White and her Independent Charismatic celebrity class.”⁷ White began to arrange meetings of nondenominational charismatic leaders with Trump, and they prayed over him. Taylor writes: “The Independent Charismatic leaders, led in no small part, as we shall see, by NAR networks, became the vanguard of Christian Trumpism.”⁸ The more mainstream and widely known VIP evangelical leaders did not initially support Trump, but as it became obvious that the regular folks of evangelicalism liked him, and as the competitors of Trump thinned out, even the more mainstream evangelical leaders finally jumped on Trump’s bandwagon.

Paula White chaired the circle of Trump’s evangelical advisors. In 2019 she became a White House staffer running the Faith and Opportunities Initiative. On **January 6, 2021** (the day of the Capitol riot), she led the only official White House-sanctioned prayer. In that prayer, she prayed to God: “I thank you for President Trump. I thank you that he has stood with Israel; he has stood with life; he has stood for righteousness. . . . **He has walked in your ways.**”⁹ To me, that last sentence shows that White

⁷ Taylor, 41.

⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁹ Ibid., 47.

either has no spiritual discernment whatsoever or that she was purposely pursuing another agenda at that moment besides genuine prayer.

Peter Wagner had several close people around him who influenced him and NAR with their ideas. Wagner was always open to new ideas and often incorporated what others brought into his theological thinking. Two of these close associates or mentees would be Dutch Sheets and Lance Wallnau. Both of these men brought Dominion Theology ideas into Wagner's view and NAR's theology. Dominion Theology holds that Christians should establish a world kingdom governed by Mosaic moral law and then Jesus will return. A modified strain of this teaching became common in charismatic circles and is called "Kingdom Now" theology.¹⁰ Wagner published a book in 2008 that laid out his vision of Christian dominion over society. Taylor writes how Wagner's solidified vision of "Dominion" affected NAR: "From this point on, a marked shift becomes visible in NAR identity, ambition, and method—**toward focusing on politics and conquering positions of influence in society**. NAR apostles and prophets began building ties with right-wing political campaigns and insinuating themselves into activist circles on the right. Wagner and the NAR started out with a vision to revolutionize the governance of the Christian church [through modern-day apostles and prophets.] During the 2000s, they began scheming for the full-scale re-formation of society."¹¹ The NAR view (and other views within charismatic Christianity) of **"Kingdom Now" theology is another erroneous idea moving the church toward judgment**. See footnote 10 below for why this is an erroneous idea.

In February 2016, when the Republican party was still undecided on a Presidential candidate, Wagner posted on Facebook that he liked Trump. After that post, "the NAR leaders became the trailblazing Christians championing the political career of Donald Trump."¹²

Cindy Jacobs. From an early age Cindy thought that she had some powers of insight into future things that she felt were from God. In the 1980s she was introduced to the Latter Rain teachings of the 1950s, which declared that the fivefold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers was being re-established in the church, and the words from these gifted ones would "be with authority." After being exposed to these teachings, Jacobs became convinced that she was one of these modern-day prophets. She also believed that she got a personal word from God in her private prayer that the devil's success over nations was due to "strategy." "She believed God was calling her to form a group of Christian "generals" who would develop prayer strategies to do battle against Satan's strategies. So, in 1985 she and her husband Mike founded "Generals of Intercession" to train others in prayer and intercession.

Further, Jacobs developed a novel interpretation of the great commission Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father

¹⁰ A discussion on Kingdom Now theology is beyond the scope of this article. Basically, the adherents of Kingdom Now theology believe that this present fallen world needs to be brought under the control of the "overcomers" within the church. However, we do not see this commanded or implied in Scripture. We see God's plan to build the church separately from society and be a witness to society. God commands us to preach the gospel and make disciples, changing men's hearts. He does not command us to "take over" society. Jesus told Pilate that His Kingdom is not of this world. Jesus never urged or implied that His disciples should take over the Roman Empire. The world will come under Christ's dominion when He returns.

¹¹ Taylor, 69-70.

¹² Ibid., 76.

and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Mat 28:19-20, ESV).” In contrast to the normal understanding of the great commission—to take the gospel to people in the nations, baptizing and teaching them (individuals)—Jacobs came to believe that Jesus was commanding His followers to disciple and teach nations as a whole. “Adapting the Latter Rain ideas, Jacobs began teaching that prophets and other Christian leaders could mobilize massive intercession campaigns to tactically defeat Satan and bring whole nations under the kingdom of God.”¹³ Jacobs shared these ideas with Wagner in a casual car ride with him in 1989, which proved life-changing for both of them. “Jacobs ushered Wagner into a whole new theological universe, one populated by modern-day prophets and apostles, prophecies and expectations of global revival, and charismatic strategies for healing and discipling whole nations.”¹⁴ The interpretation of the “great commission” in Matthew 28:19-20 as a commission to disciple all “nations” (as in “countries”) is absurd. Disciples in the New Testament are constantly depicted as **individuals**, and each one must “learn” to take up “his own” cross and follow Jesus in obedience (Luke 14:27). A disciple is an individual who learns from his teacher (Luke 6:40; Matt. 10:24). In line with *every other use* of the word “disciple” in the New Testament, the term disciple in Matthew 28:19 means **individuals**, and, in this verse, it refers to individuals within “people groups”—the meaning of “nations” in this verse. Baptism is also pictured in the New Testament an act of obedience by an individual believer.

Wagner was so impressed with Jacobs’ vision that he immediately latched onto her, helping her publish her first book. Cindy Jacobs became a key member of Wagner’s inner circle and took on a role similar to an adopted daughter in the Wagner household. The only problem is that once again we see **an erroneous (unbiblical) idea—making disciples of whole nations through strategic warfare prayer—directing a Christian movement**. Cindy Jacobs later introduced Wagner to Dutch Sheets and Chuck Pierce, who operated in the independent charismatic church arena. These two men also became very close to Wagner. Through Wagner’s academic classes and other connections in the larger evangelical world the ideas of strategic-level spiritual warfare spread, but not without pushback in some evangelical circles.

Taylor’s book describes Cindy Jacobs as a leading influence in C. Peter Wagner’s life and the development of NAR. Jacobs acted as one hearing from God (as a prophet) and then speaking to Wagner (as an apostle) who would implement the ideas from God. She helped him build NAR and introduced him to Independent Charismatic groups. At times she would give him personal prophecies about his life and work. As an example of a personal prophecy, in 1995 Jacobs came to Wagner and prophesied to him that God was anointing him that day to be “an apostle of prayer” and commissioning him as a patriarch like Abraham to go forth into the land of promise.

Wagner was very receptive to personal prophecies given to him, and he kept a journal of 159 pages of all the personal prophecies made to him by prophets. Let us remember that all supposed prophecies should be subject to scrutiny and discernment: “Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:20-21, ESV). The *regular practice* of personal prophetic words in some charismatic circles does not seem to align with Scripture. The instances of such practice are fairly scarce in the New Testament. Taylor concludes his assessment of Cindy Jacobs as

¹³ Ibid., 85.

¹⁴ Ibid., 86.

follows: “It is not a stretch to say that by 2015, and very much continuing today, Cindy Jacobs was perhaps the most recognizable and respected modern-day charismatic prophet in the world.”¹⁵

After Wagner made known his backing of Trump for President in February 2016, Jacobs organized a prayer campaign, enlisting several spiritual warfare networks to pray for Trump to become the Republican candidate and to win the 2016 election.

Taylor records that after Trump was elected, the prayer support and the influence upon the White House of these charismatics continued throughout his Presidency. Taylor also writes: “Indeed, in the midst of the 2020 election cycle, **hundreds of charismatic prophets** (many of them attached to the NAR, but also from other Independent Charismatic streams) **were prophesying in chorus that it was God’s will for Trump to win the 2020 election** (emphasis added).”¹⁶ It should be noted that the Bible indicates false prophecy is a sign of a false prophet.

In 2019 Paula White was placed in a White House position. She formed the One Voice Prayer Movement. NAR leaders were enlisted to set up this movement. Supposedly, this movement was nonpolitical, yet Taylor writes that it acted as a prayer support group for the 2020 Trump campaign.

Following the calling of the election in Joe Biden’s favor, this prayer movement organized prayer conferences or zoom calls for “election integrity.” These calls were a place where Christians gathered who opposed the election results, often based on conspiracy theories, and wanted Trump back in the White House again. Matthew Taylor writes: “The little-noticed prayer movement that Paula White started in 2019 transformed into one of the most important vectors for gathering Christians to oppose the legitimacy of the 2020 election.”¹⁷

“**The Second Apostolic Age**” is the title of Chapter Four of Taylor’s book. I will give only a highlighted summary of some of the main points of this chapter. In this chapter, Taylor follows the story of **Ché Ahn**. Many US evangelicals have probably never heard of Ché Ahn, but he is the founder and leader of a huge apostolic network called Harvest International Ministry (HIM). Under his apostolic umbrella are over 25,000 churches and ministries in more than 65 countries. Ahn was the son of Korean immigrants who fled communist North Korea and came to the US in 1960 when their son Ché was four. His father became a Southern Baptist pastor in America. After Ché was born again in his teen years, he eventually landed at Fuller Seminary and developed a close mentor/mentee relationship with C. Peter Wagner at Fuller. Ahn eventually earned a doctorate at Fuller. Taylor comments that Ahn became the most loyal of Wagner’s disciples, attempting to fulfill Wagner’s ideas of a new apostolic reformation. Wagner’s church governance model envisioned “a *spiritual oligarchy*, one in which the newly commissioned apostles and prophets take over huge chunks of the Independent Charismatic landscape.”¹⁸

Although the HIM website lists governance boards for various apostolic teams, all of the board members are appointed by Ahn and these members are fellow apostles and prophets (fellow

¹⁵ Ibid., 97.

¹⁶ Ibid., 101.

¹⁷ Ibid., 103.

¹⁸ Ibid., 122.

oligarchs). There is no independent oversight of the ministry as in other Christian circles. Under NAR's vision, the apostle can exercise independent authority over his network.

Ché Ahn prayed at a Christian rally in Washington, D. C. on January 5, 2021, the day before the Capitol riot. Matthew Taylor, who has studied Ahn extensively, says that his prayer that day was delivered as an apostle —“binding the spirit of Jezebel off of this election.”¹⁹ Since this prayer took place after the election gave the presidency to Biden, Ahn was employing his perceived apostolic authority to deal with evil spirits that he viewed as having stolen the election from Trump. Ché Ahn believed that God had ordained Donald Trump to win. Taylor does not believe that Ahn is a lunatic, but that he is an educated and respected leader in his circles, someone with whom many churches and ministries have aligned worldwide. Ahn's prayer was entirely consistent with the beliefs of his audience.

Taylor believes that what Ahn and NAR envision goes beyond *Christian nationalism*. Christian nationalism desires to make a specific country more Christian. According to Taylor's study, Ché Ahn and many of the apostles, prophets, and others in the movement are not just Christian nationalists, but “*Christian supremacists* . . . [those at] the most extreme end of the Christian nationalist spectrum.”²⁰ They believe “that Christians should occupy authoritative and privileged positions in culture, politics, and other domains of public life.”²¹ Their ambitions to govern are global, not focused simply on the US.

Lance Wallnau

We now come to someone in the independent charismatic arena named Lance Wallnau. Matthew Taylor observes that “we cannot fathom evangelical support for Trump without understanding **the pivotal role that Wallnau's theology and prophecies have played in creating an evangelical rationale for making Trump king of the mountain.**[emphasis added]”²² I attribute the thoughts in this section on Lance Wallnau to Matthew Taylor's research and book.

Wallnau's Christian background was rooted in the teachings of the Latter Rain movement among independent Pentecostals, a revival movement from the late 1940s until the mid-1950s. Their teaching was based on the rainy season pattern in Israel, marked by heavy rain in October (the former rain) and then heavy rain in May (the latter rain). The teaching of the movement aligned the early church's demonstrations of spiritual gifts with the “former rain.” They believed that their Latter Rain movement was part of a burgeoning end-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They also believed that global revival would break out once the government of the church was restored by the modern-day offices of the fivefold ministry in Ephesians 4. This would include a restoration of “apostles and prophets” who could function much like the foundational, first-century class of apostles and prophets. Although Wallnau attended some Pentecostal Bible schools, he attributes much of his learning to a woman, whom he called his “spiritual mother,” who was a leader in the Latter Rain movement.

It is important to note that in the selection process of a Republican candidate Trump's support was lacking among well-known “establishment” evangelical leaders (mainline denominational leaders

¹⁹ Ibid., 134.

²⁰ Ibid., 137.

²¹ Ibid., 138.

²² Ibid., 142.

and seminarians), but he found support from the masses of everyday folk, especially in the independent charismatic circles. These latter folks were ones that Wallnau did reach.

Wallnau also picked up ideas from those who believed that Christianity could greatly increase its influence if it focused not only on the home and family spheres but also aimed at influencing major spheres that shaped culture, like media, the arts, government, education, etc. These proponents of such cultural influence foresaw believers working in these spheres and bringing a grassroots testimony of faith within them. But Wallnau revamped these ideas a step further by proposing that Christians should be at the top leadership level of these spheres, thus shaping the whole culture of these spheres. Wallnau considered the seven basic spheres in society as “mountains” where believers could climb to the top and assert a top-down influence over each mountain. In line with Cindy Jacobs, Wallnau embraced the idea that “nations”, not just individuals, should be disciplined. And this would be accomplished through his vision of Christian leaders conquering the mountaintops of society’s “Seven Mountains.”

Lance Wallnau’s called his teaching on this subject “**The Seven Mountain Mandate.**” This title became a “prophetic meme.” A meme can be defined as an idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture. Outside of independent charismatic Christianity, teachings come from developed systematic theology or denomination creeds or statements of faith. But, inside this charismatic world, prophecy from individuals is valued and some prophetic ideas become iconic. Matthew Taylor terms these widely accepted prophetic ideas as “prophetic memes.”

Note Matthew Taylor’s very significant statements about Wallnau’s prophetic meme: “The Seven Mountain Mandate is one of the most important prophetic memes in all of global Independent Charismatic Christianity today. **It has become the organizing structure for how millions of Christians think about politics and the relationship between the church and the world.** [emphasis added]”²³ Taylor notes that there are frequent references to conquering the Seven Mountains in Christian political broadcasts or Christian nationalist meetings.

Peter Wagner heard Wallnau speak at a conference in 2001 on the Seven Mountains and Wagner was impressed with Wallnau’s prophetic meme. Wallnau moved into NAR’s ICA (International Coalition of Apostles) in 2004 and then in 2007 he moved into the most exclusive council within NAR. The worldwide network of NAR spread the Seven Mountain Mandate meme everywhere. To underscore how powerful and widespread this meme has become, a 2013 survey of Americans, *not just believers*, indicated that 20.4% of respondents agreed with the following statement: “God wants Christians to stand atop the ‘7 mountains of society,’ including the government, education, media, and others.”

Thinking believers, however, should not accept memes just because they are catchy or attractive to their desires. Rather, the Bible explicitly commands us to test prophetic declarations to see if they are indeed from God.

“Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. (1Th 5:20-21 ESV)

²³ Ibid., 152.

The best measurement for testing prophetic statements is the Word of God (note Acts 17:11). If a prophetic statement is not in accord with the Bible then it must be rejected.

The giant problem is that this “mandate” has no ground whatsoever in Scripture. In the pages of the New Testament God calls His believers to share the gospel in society, love our neighbor, do good works, make disciples of individual converts, and build up the church through serving it with their spiritual gifts. Nowhere do we see a mandate to “head up” sections of society by placing believers at the top of these spheres as “kings” to influence them. The New Testament sees believers as ruling in the *future* millennium and eternity. Of course, a talented believer may gain a position of influence in society, but this is not the “calling” or a “mandate” for the church. **The Seven Mountain Mandate as taught by Wallnau is an erroneous (unbiblical) idea** that is leading many believers to pursue a faulty agenda contradictory to God’s New Testament calling.

Wallnau declares that Donald Trump has the “Cyrus Anointing” – another prophetic meme.

There was a crowded field of Republican candidates in 2016 and several of them had good evangelical credentials and backing from notable mainline evangelical personalities. So, how did Donald Trump, a person sorely lacking in Christian character or initial support from top-tier evangelical people, end up with the nomination and the votes of a high percentage of evangelical voters? Wallnau’s prophetic statements about Trump and C. Peter Wagner’s endorsement of Trump in a Facebook post in February 2016, were significant factors in Trump’s success.

Taylor records the history of this meme and its forward movement. In September 2015, Wallnau and Trump met in a gathering initiated by Paula White which included other televangelists and “prophets and apostles” from independent charismatic circles. Wallnau claims that when he returned home he heard God say to him, “Trump is a Cyrus.” **“This image of Cyrus—or the “Cyrus Anointing,” as Wallnau sometimes phrases it—would become a central pillar of Christian Trumpism** [emphasis added].”²⁴.

Wallnau describes the revelation he supposedly got from God from Isaiah 45 about the Cyrus/Trump connection. He saw that Cyrus was a political leader called by God, but one who did not know God. Yet, God had predicted that He would anoint Cyrus to free His people and bring them back from exile. Taylor says that Wallnau viewed Trump as one anointed by God to defeat the American Christians’ enemies and bring His people back from “cultural exile.” Wallnau was an early supporter of Trump for the Republican candidacy when most well-known evangelical leaders were not supporting Donald Trump. His Biblical analogy regarding Trump was received by many regular pro-Trump folks.

This kind of proclamation fits well with the idea of the Seven Mountain Mandate *if we buy into* Peter Wagner’s spin on Wallnau’s prophetic claims in his February 2016 Facebook post supporting Trump. Wagner posited that only the religion mountain requires spirituality as the leading characteristic for leadership and influence. The other six mountains only require “success” in that area of influence. Noting how Trump was successful in the media and business mountains, then Wagner had no problem seeing Trump as a successful influencer in the government mountain. Further buttressing this notion is Wagner’s understanding of the Seven Mountains framework. Wagner wrote: “a leader in one of the nonreligion mountains doesn’t have to be pious or even necessarily religious to govern

²⁴ Ibid., 160.

according to the kingdom of God. They just have to exert their power in conformity with Christians' (here, conservative charismatic Christians') interests."²⁵ To me, this kind of argument seems to be an effort to do anything to make the Seven Mountains paradigm fit Trump.

Again, we must not be naïve in accepting prophecy, but rather we must put it to the test (1 Thess. 5:20-21). This Cyrus Anointing meme has real problems. Firstly, it "works" for Wagner and Wallnau primarily because it fits "hand in glove" with the faulty meme of the Seven Mountains Mandate. Secondly, there should be some support elsewhere in Scripture to validate the construction of such a detailed analogy, using an ancient *incident* and then *applying* it to a modern-day situation in a very inventive way. Otherwise, anyone can play with a single portion of Scripture to invent a novel analogy and declare it as true. Since we have no other Scriptural support for this meme, in principle or explicit statement, we should not be swayed by clever analogies. As we shall explore later, *the trajectory* for the US and American Christianity, *based upon sound Scriptural principles, is for further judgment* from God due to a lack of repentance, *not a trajectory of favor* from God in blessing America with greater Christian values in its culture.

It should be noted that the fundamental reason the Jews could return by Cyrus' decree was not because Cyrus was going to defeat the enemies of the Jews and send the Jews back to their land. Rather, it was because the allotted time of judgment of 70 years, caused by the disobedience of the Israelites, had run its course (Jer. 29:10) and the people had responded appropriately to God in captivity by returning to God (Deut. 30:1-10; Dan. 9:1-19). God put Cyrus in place, and his role was prophesied well ahead of time. When Cyrus read the word of God declaring his role, he responded by fulfilling that role.²⁶ His role was limited: to make a way for the Jews to get back to their land with the right to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. After that, *godly Jewish* men (Zechariah, Haggai, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Ezra) led the people to return to God and to rebuild the city and the temple. Cyrus did not accomplish the vital work of reestablishing acceptable worship of God. **The idea that Trump has a "Cyrus anointing" that makes him a vessel destined to be used by God to restore America as a Christian nation is an erroneous (unbiblical) idea being foisted on American believers.**

Once Wagner declared that he liked Trump in early 2016, the leading apostles and prophets associated with **NAR became the leading force backing Trump in the Christian world.**

Taylor writes that **the two prophetic memes of the Seven Mountain Mandate and the Cyrus Anointing became the most effective tool to garner support for Trump in 2016** among independent charismatic believers, and it also affected the more traditional evangelical groups.

Wallnau, who was experienced at commenting on the supposed prophetic implications of current events (as he viewed them), grew in stature as an influencer. As the 2020 election season was moving toward its finish, Wallnau became a leading prophetic voice on a new media program called *FlashPoint*, which aired on Kenneth Copeland's Victory Channel and was replicated on YouTube. According to Matthew Taylor's research, "*FlashPoint* was an unwavering, pro-Trump, Big Lie, conspiracy-spreading religious broadcast through the period between the 2020 election and January

²⁵ Ibid., 164.

²⁶ According to Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Cyrus read Isaiah and responded to God's predictions. Isa. 44:28-45:1-5.

6. And the forerunner—the leading voice on *FlashPoint*—was, of course, Lance Wallnau.”²⁷ The program had over 32.4 million views in January 2021 and is still a very popular religious/political program.

Taylor writes that if anyone thinks he is using hyperbole in describing this program, then they should view an episode. But he warns: “There you will discover the epicenter of prophetic Christian Trumpism and charismatic Christian nationalism today. If you do hazard entry, be prepared to experience a topsy-turvy world where down is up, where Christians are simultaneously imperiously persecuted and gloriously triumphant, where prophetic memes replace actual news reporting, where right-wing politicians mingle with charismatic prophets. *FlashPoint* is Lance Wallnau’s worldview and ambition made manifest.”²⁸

January 6 – Washington D. C.

Based on detailed research of social media accounts of Christians who were at the protests or the riot on January 6, Taylor says plainly that Wallnau’s Facebook rants and his *FlashPoint* programs were key mobilizers in getting Christians to come to D. C. on January 6. Three rallies were planned for “Stop the Steal” in D. C. The first one was on January 5 and was called the Rally to Revival, where Ché Ahn, a star NAR apostle, spoke. The second rally was the one where Trump spoke. The third planned rally never materialized because the Capitol riot broke out. It was to feature Christian Nationalist politicians and activists, including Rep. Lauren Boebert, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, and Lance Wallnau.

Wallnau was there on January 6 to “Stop the Steal” and keep Trump (with the Cyrus anointing) in office. Cindy Jacobs and around 30 other NAR apostles, prophets, and prayer warriors had a permit to occupy a small stage near the Capitol on January 6. They were praying, prophesying, blowing shofars, and doing spiritual warfare during the riot. They prayed for peace during the riot. After the riot, these NAR leaders rejected the violence of the riot, saying that they did not agree with it. On the evening of January 6, Wallnau claimed that what happened in the riot should not be attached to believers. But Taylor thinks that NAR’s prophecies and teachings gave religious impetus to an uprising to keep Trump in power.

No doubt, in my view, many of these charismatic believers who had bought into the memes of Wallnau, did not believe that Trump would lose the 2020 election. Taylor records in his book that hundreds of charismatic prophets, from NAR and other independent charismatic groups, were prophesying in unison that Trump would be reelected. So, they had to explain what happened. One explanation was simply that the election was indeed stolen from Trump and the steal was a demonic plot. The fact is that Trump was out of office after January 20, 2021.

Dutch Sheets

Sheets is the final key player to be highlighted from Taylor’s book. Taylor assesses that Sheets was the Christian leader most responsible for mobilizing the insurrection on January 6 at the US Capitol. He was not doing this directly but laid the impetus for it in his teaching. Matthew Taylor writes: “But Sheets is also a prophet-apostle who believes that he has the unique spiritual authority to fashion

²⁷ Taylor, 167.

²⁸ Ibid., 167-168.

the outcomes of American elections through prayer and spiritual warfare.”²⁹ Sheets went to Bible college at Christ For the Nations, an institution that primarily serves the independent charismatic sector of Christianity. Through Professor Jim Hodges at school, Sheets became involved with Kingdom Now theology, a mixture of Latter Rain and Reformed Reconstructionist ideas. Later, both Sheets and Hodges would join the elite inner circle of Wagner’s NAR.

In 1996, Sheets wrote his first book titled *Intercessory Prayer*. Around the same time, Wagner moved to Colorado Springs to join a church pastored by Sheets. In the late 1990s, Colorado Springs was where the real formation of NAR happened, with Sheets, Cindy Jacobs, Chuck Pierce, and Peter Wagner working together. Their work developed a “Strategic Prayer Network” that was organized with fifty state coordinators and other ranks that could mobilize many hundreds or thousands of charismatic intercessors in a single state. It should be noted that Sheets, Wagner, and other NAR leaders believe in a form of “open theism” in which, according to their view, although God is Almighty, His will can be thwarted if His enemies are too strong or if His intercessors do not carry out their duties. Most conservative theologians would disagree with these ideas.³⁰ The bottom line is that Sheets and NAR leaders believe that their prayers are necessary for “God’s will” to be accomplished. In the NAR world, prophets, apostles, and intercessors work together to make things happen.

Dutch Sheets resigned from the most exclusive inner circle group in NAR after a disagreement with Wagner over church growth methods and the apostolic approval of Todd Bentley, a disgraced evangelist at the “Lakeland revival” of 2008. Sheets was not even convinced that the Lakeland meetings were a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Still, although no longer part of NAR, Sheets continued to practice the role of an apostle-prophet among the charismatics.

Sheets did initiate a unique meme that undergirds his concept of the “dominion” authority of the church (*ekklesia* in Greek) on earth. His radical view is that the church is Jesus’ legislative body on earth based on Matt. 16:18 (ESV): “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Taylor writes: “In Sheets’s *ekklesia* theology, the church, as led by apostles and prophets, is God’s appointed spiritual government on the earth. He argues that Jesus intended in Matthew 16 to invoke the imagery of Roman colonization. When the Roman Empire would conquer new territory, according to Sheets, they would send some of their Roman citizens to be the local *ekklesia*, as in governing assembly, and thereby impose the culture of Rome on the new territory. He argues that Jesus meant for Christians to become his colonizing *ekklesia*, bringing the culture of heaven to earth.”³¹ Taylor could not find any qualified Christian theologian who agreed with this interpretation of *ekklesia*. And, Taylor rejects the idea because Jesus stated on the day of His crucifixion by Rome that His kingdom was not of this world—not aligned with worldly ways. The Roman pattern of “conquering and imposing Roman culture on others” is not the way of Jesus. **Sheets’ idea of the dominion authority of the church is another erroneous idea misleading believers.**

Sheets claims a dramatic shift happened in his ministry when a “spiritual son” presented him with a flag as a gift in 2013. The flag had a plain white background offset by a lone green pine tree and featured the motto: “An Appeal to Heaven.” This flag was loaded with rich historical meaning as it

²⁹ Ibid., 206.

³⁰ Clear Bible references would contradict open theism: Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Dan. 4:34-35; Eph. 1:11.

³¹ Taylor, 216.

was used in the American Revolution. The motto originated with John Locke (1632-1704) in his *Second Treatise on Government*, where the motto was employed to justify the right to revolution. The argument of Locke's motto was that when a people or an individual is deprived of their right and has no earthly authority to which to appeal, then "an appeal to heaven" can be made. Dutch Sheets later stated "'this flag would also represent God's next great assignment for my life.'"³² Taylor comments that this flag would indeed direct Sheets' life and political activism.

Taylor records that **this flag, with its rich meaning, would become a prophetic meme originated by Dutch Sheets.** Sheets was joined by some NAR leaders in spreading the Appeal to Heaven flag meme far and wide. Since Sheets introduced this flag afresh in 2015, it has been regularly seen in right-wing and Christian Nationalist rallies. Some public figures, including lawmakers, have displayed this flag, but they decline any Christian Nationalism through its use by claiming it is simply a historical flag of the American Revolution. Yet, Taylor writes: "But to people on the inside, the flag signals a prayer-and-spiritual-warfare driven form of American Christian nationalism."³³

In preparation for the spiritual battle attending the 2016 election, Sheets also created a "Give Him 15" phone app providing a devotional and linking to a website containing daily prayers and prophetic declarations to be used by the many recipients of his material.

Sheets finally supported Trump when he became the Republican candidate in 2016. He strongly chided believers that they must vote as part of the *ekklesia* of God and it must be for Trump because of the Supreme Court issue (not personality). This shows us how decidedly Sheets was pursuing election results to accomplish what he viewed as God's goals. Sheets aimed to accomplish as much as possible for the US' spiritual reformation during Trump's first term in office. Dutch Sheets essentially headed up a multitude of charismatic intercessors in Trump's first term through the charismatic prayer networks he created along with Cindy Jacobs and Wagner. And his Give Him 15 app had a half million followers by 2020. In October 2020, while on the campaign trail, Trump attended a Sunday service at a large charismatic church in Las Vegas. A NAR pastor there spoke directly to Trump, saying, "The Lord said to me, 'I am going to give your president a second win.'"³⁴ According to Old Testament Scripture, such a false prophecy is serious and the speaker was to die (Deut. 18:20-22).

After Biden was declared the winner in 2020, Sheets became a regular panelist on *FlashPoint* alongside Wallnau. In addition, Sheets started posting YouTube videos where he would read his material from Give Him 15 and share prophecies and dreams passed on to him from his intercessory network. There- was a lot of chatter and anxiety over Trump being officially defeated while unofficially he was declaring that he won. Most of the believers in Sheets' networks likely held that Trump had the election stolen from him and that intensified spiritual warfare (praying, prophesying, decreeing) was needed to battle against the demonic forces that were behind the steal.

In mid-November 2020, Sheets got a call from some unidentified persons inside the Trump administration asking him to come to Washington, D. C., and pray with them. After he got there a plan was proposed for Sheets to assemble a 20-person prayer team and travel to several states

³² Ibid., 218.

³³ Ibid., 219.

³⁴ Ibid., 222.

where Trump lawyers were contesting the votes. The plan turned into action immediately and overnight the team was assembled from the networks that Wagner or Sheets had constructed. The team set out on a whirlwind *prayer tour* of seven states from November 21-December 13.

Taylor writes that these three-hour “prayer meetings” were broadcast live on Facebook and YouTube. However, they are not what most Christians would recognize as normal prayer meetings. These meetings were streamed to hundreds of thousands of believers. First, there was an hour of intense worship music. Then Dutch would invite the apostles and prophets to come up and prophesy about the 2020 election (*after it was already over*). The prophesying and declaring were dramatic, energetic, and often filled with militant language. Taylor writes with some details about it: “This raging prophesying, full of images of militia and swords and battlefields and decapitations, went on night after night . . . It’s hard to overstate how violent this rhetoric became, how frenzied the crowds in the videos get. The camera would occasionally pan to the audience during the prophesying, and they are screaming and shouting and speaking in tongues in fervent agreement with the unrestrained prophecies.”³⁵

Despite this prayer tour, accompanied by hundreds of thousands watching and being energized online, the election results did not change. Then, on December 27, 2020, one of the prayer team members dreamed about a group of eagles going to the nation’s capital and landing on various national monuments. That dream was enough to spur a team of NAR people to go to D. C. for another attempt to engage in spiritual warfare. Within two days the returning team of fifteen had a secretive meeting with some Trump administration officials in a White House meeting room. But no other details have been learned about the meeting.

We have already noted some details about January 6. We finally need to add that Taylor records that dozens, and maybe hundreds, of Appeal to Heaven flags were being carried on January 6 at the Capitol. Since there were few wide-angle photos, a better estimate could not be obtained. All of this points to the effect of the flag meme put into circulation by Dutch Sheets. Media reporters were told by some who carried these flags that Trump had been prophesied to serve another term.

I will end this long summary of Taylor’s book with a collective reading of a “decree” led by Dutch Sheets and a comment by the book’s author, Matthew Taylor.

In July 2022, Sheets and Wallnau taped an episode of *FlashPoint* before a live audience of thousands. Sheets had prepared a “Watchman Decree” beforehand to be *recited by the audience*. Here are excerpts from this decree:

“WHEREAS

- we, the Church, are God’s governing Body on the earth
 - we have been given legal power from heaven and now exercise our authority
 - we are God’s ambassadors and spokespeople over the earth . . .
- . . . We declare that we stand against wokeness, the occult and every evil attempt against our nation.

³⁵ Ibid., 227-228.

. . . We declare that we take back influence at the local level in our communities.

. . . We decree that we take back and permanently control positions of influence and leadership in each of the Seven Mountains. We will NEVER stop fighting! We will NEVER, EVER, EVER give up or give in! We WILL take our country back.”³⁶

Matthew Taylor: “If January 6 teaches us anything, it is that we ignore what people like Dutch Sheets are doing at our own peril. If we don’t pay close attention to the theologies, prophecies, decrees, and declarations of far-right charismatic Christians, we may sleepwalk into another Christianity-inflected insurrection.”³⁷

***The Kingdom, The Power, and the Glory*, by Tim Alberta**

Tim Alberta’s book is a long read, over 400 pages. **I will only touch on key themes in the book, and some key players.** The goal is to try to understand what has happened to American Christianity since it became so intertwined with politics, visibly starting in the 2016 election cycle.

Tim Alberta (born 1986) was the chief political correspondent for Politico magazine in July 2019. Having studiously observed the rise of Donald Trump and his take-over of the Republican party, Alberta published his first book titled *American Carnage: On the Front Lines of the Republican Civil War and the rise of President Trump*. His book was rated as one of the New York Times Top Books of 2019. The book was released just days before the worst day of Tim’s life—July 29, 2019, when his beloved father passed away suddenly.

Christian Broadcasting Network interviewed Tim regarding his newly released book earlier in the day before Tim learned of his father’s passing. The interviewer’s big question that day concerned how Trump came to have the solid backing of the majority of white evangelical voters. In 2016, the election statistics showed that 81% of white evangelical voters supported Trump, even though Trump showed no credible evidence of being a sincere Christian or having an admirable character. Per Alberta, initial support of Trump by this group was “transactional”—giving him votes in exchange for certain policies. But Alberta writes about 2019: “Polling showed that born-again Christian conservatives, once the president’s softest backers, were now his most unflinching advocates.”³⁸ The question on the interviewer’s mind was: “Why?” Alberta at this point could not come up with all the answers. Alberta knew Christians who voted for Trump for various reasons and convictions and with varying enthusiasm. His book explores some factors of Trump’s grip on the evangelical vote.

The funeral service of Alberta’s father brought fresh challenges to Tim’s considerations about American Christianity. His father had retired as the pastor of a large Evangelical Presbyterian Church. At the visitation, several people made comments to Tim about his new book, in which he made some unflattering disclosures about Trump. Folks had been hearing about his book on Rush Limbaugh’s radio program. Several of them were unhappy about what they heard and expressed their displeasure to Tim during the visitation portion of the service. This was the church where Tim had grown up. He knew many of the people there. Some were making light about Tim’s comments about Trump, but

³⁶ Ibid., 239-240.

³⁷ Ibid., 240.

³⁸ Alberta, Tim. *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism*, 2. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

others were seriously concerned. Some were upset and even confrontational. At a time when consolation of the family should have been the only thing on people's minds, it was apparent that political views were steering many people's thoughts and actions.

Later that evening Tim and his family were gathered at his parents' home where some ladies from church fed them. One of the ladies handed Tim an envelope containing a letter for Tim. It was written by a long-time elder of the church, a man who had known Tim for most of his life and had mentored him in a youth group. The long note called Tim to task, telling him that he was part of an evil scheme to undermine the President God ordained to lead the country. But the man assured Tim that if he would use his journalistic skills to investigate the "deep state" then Tim could find forgiveness and be in God's good graces. This event triggered a turning point in Tim's journalistic career. He knew it was time to take his father's advice and pursue things of more eternal value than political stories. He knew it was time to find out why the evangelical church was experiencing a "crack-up."

Tim Alberta spent four years traveling across the US, visiting many churches and ministries to understand what had happened to American Christianity.

Early in his book Alberta starts to uncover some **root problems in the church**. "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory" is the title of his book and comes from the closing phrase of the Lord's prayer in the King James Version: "For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen" (Matt. 6:13).³⁹ Alberta comments on the significance of this passage:

That word, Thine, implies something more than mere ownership; it connotes exclusivity. Everything that Satan offered Jesus in the wilderness—to give Him power over all the kingdoms of the world and the glory that comes with it—Jesus rejected. Why? Because the only authentic version of those things belongs to God. What the devil tempted Jesus with two thousand years ago, and what he tempts us with today, are cheap counterfeits.

God has His own kingdom; no nation in this world can compare. God has His own power; no amount of political, cultural, or social influence can compare. God has His own glory; no exaltation of earthly beings can compare.⁴⁰

Alberta observes that throughout Scripture God warns His people to resist idolatry steadfastly. "Jesus frames the decision in explicitly binary terms: We can serve and worship God or we can serve and worship the gods of this world. Too many American evangelicals have tried to do both. And the consequences for the Church have been devastating."⁴¹ **The idea of evangelical believers compromising their devotion to God with devotion to the things of this world is a recurrent theme in Alberta's book.**

³⁹ Many Bible readers may notice that although the King James Version includes this concluding sentence, many modern versions do not include it or place it in brackets. This is because some ancient manuscripts do not include this doxology.

⁴⁰ Alberta, Tim. *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism*, 12. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

Alberta touches on the idea of personal sanctification—becoming more like Jesus. He notes that this process involves Jesus’ requirement for discipleship—denying one’s self, taking up his cross, and following Christ (see Matt. 16:24-27). Whoever loses his life in this way will gain it. Tim writes: “The crisis of American evangelicalism comes down to an obsession with that worldly identity.”⁴² In other words, most believers want to hold onto our lives in this world. Instead of viewing ourselves as sojourners in this world, most want to hold tightly to citizenship here. “Instead of fleeing the temptation to rule all the world, like Jesus did, we have made deals with the devil.”⁴³ **This theme of wanting to win, or possess (whether as ruler or citizen) a kingdom here is another recurring theme in the book. This is especially evident in believers’ heavy investment in political battles. We can easily see how it dovetails with similar aims unveiled in Taylor’s book, *The Violent Take It by Force*.**

Alberta writes that what was affecting American evangelicalism at large was easily discernable in his home church in Brighton, Michigan. The successor pastor, Chris Winans, whom Tim’s dad had brought in less than two years before his death, had a rough time breaking in. He was in the Brighton bubble—a place of white, conservative, mostly wealthy Republicans. Winans was a solid Biblical teacher, but he was not a conservative Republican. He was not a big pro-gun guy. He was more interested in programs for the poor than in cutting taxes. He did not excuse the misbehavior of Donald Trump. The congregation saw or interpreted some of his comments as criticism toward Trump or leanings toward liberalism. The complaints about him grew and were aired to Tim’s father. However, when Mr. Alberta asked if there were errors in Winans’ theology no complaints were lodged. Differences in cultural views or non-essential doctrine always seem to plague the church with unnecessary division. Then covid hit and division was evident on how to deal with it.

Yet, adding to the turbulence was Donald Trump. He was claiming that the election of Joe Biden in 2020 would be a dark day for Christians. Trump enlisted “leading evangelicals to help frame a cosmic spiritual clash between the God-fearing Republicans who supported Trump and the secular leftists who viewed the forty-fifth president [Trump] as the last obstacle standing between them and a conquest of America’s Judeo-Christian ethos.”⁴⁴ **This brings up one of the most important themes in Alberta’s book—the fear of losing America’s historical greatness and perceived Christian values. Alberta credits Trump and his supporters’ use of fear as a key factor in Trump’s success among the populace. Such a fear likely propelled many Christians to vote for Trump despite misgivings about him as a person.** We only need to recall Trump’s famous words on January 6 to the assembled, agitated crowd before him: “We fight like hell. And if you don’t fight like hell, you’re not going to have a country anymore.”

Tim Alberta’s church was rocked by the forces and chaos caused by the aftermath of the 2020 election, including the claims that the election was stolen, conspiracy theories, etc. A popular church leader was fired from the church staff for spreading QAnon conspiracy nonsense that Trump was “a messianic figure battling a satanic cabal of elites who cannibalized children.”⁴⁵ The result of this chaos was that many people left the church. Sadly, this type of division and fallout happened in many other congregations. **Whereas the Bible calls us to unity through a common faith and loving**

⁴² Ibid., 13.

⁴³ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 21.

one another, the political division and extremes in America have overwhelmed the church and split congregations throughout the land. When Tim Alberta and pastor Winans got together as the shaking was going on, Tim, for the first time, told him about the accusatory note he got from an elder the day of his father's funeral. Tim told him a paraphrased account of his wife's verbal reaction when she read the note: "What's wrong with American evangelicals?" Winans reflected and then stated: **"America. Too many of them worship America."**⁴⁶ Alberta's book notes that C. S. Lewis wrote the book *The Screwtape Letters*. In that fictional account, a high-ranking devil advises a junior one that patriotism is a beguiling "religion" to use for sidetracking people from true worship.

The theme of compromised devotion, one might even use the word **idolatry** where it fits, is again evident. Not only that, but **the book portrays an unbiblical agenda presented to American believers.** Starting with the Moral Majority in the 1980s and being replayed again and again is **the theme that Christians are supposed to make America, or keep America, a Christian nation.** That seems to be the notion many American believers hold as their primary assignment as Christians. In other words, **the Biblical calling and commission** to make disciples and build up the church as a spiritual house and witness to the world **has been replaced** in the minds of many American believers. There may be some preaching about building the church today, but the action often focuses on culture wars and/or political involvement to change the downward path of American culture to reflect Christian values. However, the New Testament never calls believers to change the culture or to take over the government for a Christian witness. **The Bible calls the church, not the nation, to be the "city on a hill" shining out its godly character through good deeds** (Matt. 5:14-16). Believers, not the nation, are to be lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:14-15). Through such a witness of the Christian life, along with the sharing of the gospel, a way is made for unbelievers to believe. The gospels and the epistles never called believers to "fight" all the evils of the Roman Empire or to take over its government. The gospels and the epistles call believers to love others, serve others, tell the "good news", and do good deeds, all while accepting their lot in society even if that entails imprisonment or mistreatment. **The notion that God wants American believers to make America a Christian nation is an erroneous (unbiblical) idea.**

Tim Alberta, a meticulous journalist, records many visits to churches, ministries, and key people over four years. My aim in this article is to place before the reader key ideas, players, and history that will help him or her understand what Alberta discovered. So, to shorten this account to its basics, I will present only some selected persons and history.

The Moral Majority and Liberty University. These two organizations and people related to them highlight significant themes in Alberta's book. Wikipedia records: "The origins of the Moral Majority can be traced to 1976 when Baptist minister Jerry Falwell Sr. embarked on a series of 'I Love America' rallies across the country to raise awareness of social issues important to him. These rallies were an extension of Falwell's decision to go against the traditional Baptist principle of separating religion and politics, a change of heart Falwell says he had when he perceived what he described as the decay of the nation's morality. Through hosting these rallies, Falwell was able to gauge national support for a formal organization and also raise his profile as a leader."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁷ Wikipedia.

The Moral Majority (MM) organization was founded by Liberty University President Jerry Falwell, Sr. in 1979 and it became the flagship movement of the Christian right in politics (aligned with the Republican party) in its time. From its beginning, the MM wedded both heart-stirring patriotism and Christian morality with a goal of using politics to put America back on the right track. Falwell disbanded MM in 1989, sensing that he had lost sight of his responsibilities as a pastor (of Thomas Road Baptist Church, affiliated with Liberty U.).

Cal Thomas has been a well-known syndicated columnist and commentator for decades. Thomas was Vice-President of MM from 1980-1985 and was the primary spokesperson for Falwell. However, in 1999 Thomas and Pastor Ed Dobson (former Dean at Liberty U.) wrote a book titled *Blinded by Might*. Their book reasoned that the MM did not achieve its goal of reversing America's moral decline and seemingly made things worse. The book did not call for abstinence from politics by believers but for revised priorities. "The Moral Majority's use of shameless scare tactics had tempted the masses of American churchgoers to put their faith in princes and mortal men. This 'seduction by power,' the authors wrote, was sabotaging the message of Christ. Winning campaigns had become more important than winning converts; scolding the culture had become more important than sanctifying the Church."⁴⁸ In addition, they reflected that the country seemed angrier and more divided by the Moral Majority. "Thomas and Dobson warned their old boss Falwell—and his many descendants, biological and otherwise—to stop confusing "spiritual authority for political authority."⁴⁹ WOW. Did the current crop of Christian political activists ever prayerfully consider this rearview analysis of Christians **"winning through politics"**? If we agree with Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, it looks like we are currently seeing a repeat of the same mistakes made by the Moral Majority.

In the late 1980s, Liberty University was nearly bankrupt due to overbuilding and overborrowing. Jerry Falwell, Jr. had graduated from college and now he came in to help his father right the ship. He proved to be a savvy businessman. He cut expenses and halted the overbuilding. In 2007, Jerry Falwell, Sr. died suddenly. Jerry Jr. took over as President of Liberty. Jerry's brother Jonathan became the pastor at Thomas Road Baptist.

Jerry Falwell, Jr. and Donald Trump.

Alberta writes that Jerry, Jr., although a Christian, never professed to be pious or a spiritual leader. In fact, he made sure that people understood that he was at Liberty to help the business side of things, not in any spiritual capacity. In terms of business success, Jerry, Jr. achieved a remarkable turnaround for Liberty University.

By 2012, Donald Trump was a well-known national figure. He was known not only for his real estate holdings, his lavish living, and his hit reality TV show, but also for his sinful life of womanizing, not paying his bills, and suing people as a way of beating down opponents. He had ambitions for the office of US President but decided not to run in 2012. In the fall of 2012, Trump was invited to speak at a Liberty University convocation, an event scheduled three times each week. Donald Trump was famous but who knows why he was invited to speak at this Christian institution. Alberta says that from Trump's standpoint, he came to prepare for a future campaign. At the Liberty podium, Trump lauded the university's financial turnaround. He also had words of advice for the thousands of

⁴⁸ Alberta, 202.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 202.

students gathered that day to hear him: “Get even.” In other words, don’t let anyone hurt you, or try to run over you—hit back. This is a classic tactic of Donald Trump: hurt your enemies and those who oppose you. *Don’t turn the other cheek.*

Jerry, Jr. was comfortable with Trump, praising him as “one of the great visionaries of our time,” and as an influential political figure. At the convocation, he honored Trump by awarding him with an honorary doctorate from Liberty. Alberta observes that both men were much alike. They were both businessmen. They both liked to play tough. They did not care about the niceties of etiquette.

In January 2016, early in the presidential campaign, Jerry Jr. announced his support of Trump for President. The Liberty University campus, now a leading Christian institution, was shocked because Trump had not exhibited a Christian character. He belittled people constantly and roughly treated anyone who opposed him. He stated he had never asked God for forgiveness as he had not done anything that needed forgiveness. This inexplicable endorsement by the President of Liberty came at a time when there were several other Republican candidates still in the race who had solid Christian reputations. Falwell’s audacity to make this unorthodox endorsement was most likely based on his success in making Liberty a national powerhouse institution during his reign. And, he had already been running Liberty with authoritarian control over the university, according to reports. There were also sweetheart business deals for family and friends using Liberty assets. Sadly, at the same time, his personal life was drifting downhill. There were reports of alcohol on his breath. He reportedly talked openly about his sex life to some male employees. Finally, in 2020, Falwell had to resign due to a published inappropriate picture with a woman on a yacht followed by the shocking revelation that his wife had carried on an affair with a younger man for several years, perhaps with Falwell’s knowledge.

Falwell’s early endorsement of Trump was soon joined by C. Peter Wagner’s endorsement in February, which was boosted by his NAR networks. Then, in June 2016, after Trump had won the nomination, Jerry, Jr. introduced and promoted Trump to 500 evangelical leaders at a meeting in New York City. In 2018, the *New York Times* described Lynchburg (the home of Liberty) as “the heart of pro-Trump Evangelical Christianity.”⁵⁰

Russell Moore. Moore was serious about living for Christ since he was a teenager. He was dedicated to serving the Lord in his denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). He never missed a church service as a youth and became a youth pastor at a Southern Baptist church. He got advanced degrees from Southern Baptist Seminaries and was a standout destined for future important positions in the SBC. At 41 years old he became the president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, an executive in the SBC. Moore is conservative in his theology and is a model witness for Christ.

Moore became very concerned when Donald Trump was gaining traction in the early days of the 2016 election cycle. In his position at the SBC, Moore made it clear that he was not interested in winning or losing elections, but in furthering the kingdom of God. He was concerned about politics encroaching on the mission of the church. He was especially concerned that Christians were being attracted to Trump despite Trump not living anything resembling a Christian lifestyle. When Trump

⁵⁰ Wikipedia, citing Goodstein, Laurie (May 23, 2018). ["This Is Not of God": When Anti-Trump Evangelicals Confront Their Brethren](#). *The New York Times*.

came to speak at Liberty in January 2016, Jerry Jr. welcomed him with these comments: “By their fruits ye shall know them. Donald Trump’s life has borne fruit.”⁵¹ Russell Moore felt it was time to respond. He tweeted: “Absolutely unbelievable.” As Twitter lit up with comments, Moore added: “Winning at politics while losing the gospel is not a win.” “Trading in the gospel of Jesus Christ for political power is not liberty but slavery.”⁵² Moore himself soon became an object of controversy in the SBC. However, he could not reconcile the SBC’s condemnation of Bill Clinton in 1998 for the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal with support for Trump. The SBC had passed a resolution on the Clinton affair as follows: “Tolerance of serious wrong by leaders sears the conscience of the culture, spawns unrestrained immorality and lawlessness in the society, and surely results in God’s judgment.”⁵³

Eventually, Moore had to leave the SBC due to the pushback on three positions Moore steadfastly held: his rejection of Trump, his insistence on not covering up sexual abuse in the denomination’s churches, and his stance against nationalism.

Robert Jeffress. Jeffress has been the most supportive, high-profile, conservative, (non-charismatic) Christian leader to back Trump. Jeffress is the pastor of one of the most admired megachurches in America—First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. In 2012 he had been *against* Mitt Romney, a respected, principled, successful businessman, and a state governor, for the Republican nomination because of his Mormon religion. Yet, by 2016 he was ready to *support* Donald Trump, a man who by any measure was not governed by Biblical or moral values. Why the change in Jeffress’ requirements for presidential leadership? Jeffress himself said it was because the US culture was “under siege” from evil forces and he wanted a real fighter against those forces. He explained on national media: “I don’t want some meek and mild leader or somebody who’s going to turn the other cheek. I want the meanest SOB I can find to protect this nation.”⁵⁴ Trump and Jeffress had hit it off in a personal meeting before 2016. Jeffress became a national religious figure in the political realm, regularly appearing on conservative talk shows supporting Trump. He stuck by Trump through thick and thin. He had some reservations in 2021 after the January 6 assault on the Capitol and mused that perhaps his involvement in politics had gone too far, according to Alberta. But at the end of 2021, the pastor invited Trump to speak at the Christmas service at First Baptist Dallas. Can we not label this event as a great mixing of a political agenda, with implementation by an immoral man, with the worship of God? Jeffress stayed steadfast in his support of Trump. The day after there was an assassination attempt on Trump’s life on July 13, 2024, Jeffress addressed his church, saying: “I think Donald Trump has a purpose. My own feeling is God spared him for the purpose of calling our nation back to its Judeo-Christian foundation.”⁵⁵ There is little doubt in my mind that Jeffress was a significant voice in persuading evangelicals to vote for Trump in three elections.

A few of the actors in the church arena with political goals:

American Restoration Tour This group toured many churches in the past few years to enlist people to join the fight against America’s decline. A primary aim of the tour was to get church people

⁵¹ Alberta, 98.

⁵² Ibid., 98.

⁵³ Ibid., 99.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 114.

⁵⁵ Transcript from Pathway to Victory archives.

registered to vote. The tour impressed people with the need to vote for Christian values, identifying with Republicans. Per Alberta, David Barton, who was part of the tour, is a Christian nationalist who believes Christians should control government, education, and other cultural institutions. Barton's claim that America was founded as a Christian nation, and some other historical claims, have been rejected by several history scholars, including Christian scholars.

Ralph Reed. Christian Coalition; Faith and Freedom Coalition; Road to Majority events (see Chapter Nine of Alberta's book). Alberta writes in the last 30 years no one has been more effective in getting Christians involved in elections, aimed at helping GOP candidates get elected. The recent Road to Majority and Faith and Freedom events displayed the panicked call to Christians to turn a failing America around through political action.

Interesting views of religious academics:

Miroslav Volf and Cyril Hovorun. In 2022, Tim Alberta attended a conference in France where two scholars spoke to a small audience of journalists and academics. Both speakers had a background in Eastern Europe and watched as politics and religion united to create destructive forces. Cyril Hovorun was a Russian Orthodox monk from Ukraine. He had worked at the highest level in the Russian Orthodox Church while in Moscow for several years. He saw how Putin eventually overtook the church and used it to legitimize his invasion of Ukraine. He left Russia and has been warning of the "political theology of Putinism." The other speaker was Professor Volf, who was raised in Yugoslavia. Volf was educated in the West and is now a theologian at Yale University's Center for Faith and Culture. From the US he witnessed ethnic wars and carnage in the Balkans arising from ethnic identities backed by religion. Volf has studied how these political and religious amalgamations work. According to Volf, there has been an observable change in American Christianity since he came here decades ago. He states that the church here has been overtaken by nationalistic aims. Professor Volf goes so far as to say that **Christian nationalism is now the predominant form of evangelical Christianity.**

Winning and Losing:

There are two interesting observations in Alberta's book regarding winning and losing.

Winning: Martin Sanders, a seminarian who now consults with pastors, stated that a Canadian sociologist he knew said that Americans always want to win. Whereas Canadians might shoot for the bronze medal in an Olympic competition, they are happy just to represent their country well. Not so with Americans. They always want to win. Thus, to them, the church is about winning.

Losing: Bible Professor John Dickson from Australia told a Christian conference audience not long ago that Australia had become a post-Christian nation. For the first time, in 2022, the percentage of Australians who identified as Christians dropped to 44%. He stated that the statistical trend for American Christians was not far behind and on the same downward path. But his message to the audience was positive. He noted that when Paul and the apostles were persecuted, they rejoiced, sang, and reached out to those who persecuted them. Now, believers in the US are acting in fear of losing a "Christian America." Fear like that makes us reactive in negative ways. We can be testy and nasty and push back hard. But, when one learns to lose well (being a marginalized minority) you can

also learn to live more like Jesus and genuinely care for those around you, acting with grace. This section of Alberta's book (Chapter Six) is an encouraging read.

Contrary to the expectation of some, the US may not “return” to, or become, a “Christian nation.” However, the church can always fulfill its calling of being a light to the world (Matt. 5:14-16), reflecting the life and character of Jesus. Being this light, we can rejoice, even if marginalized by the society around us.

Concluding thoughts:

► **Judgment from God.** Biblical principles should convince us that **the USA and the American church** are on a trajectory toward increasing and severe judgment from God. The passage specifically outlining God's judgment upon nations is in Jeremiah 18:1-10 (ESV).

The Potter and the Clay

Jer 18:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

Jer 18:2 “Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words.”

Jer 18:3 So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel.

Jer 18:4 And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.

Jer 18:5 Then the word of the LORD came to me:

Jer 18:6 “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

Jer 18:7 **If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it,**

Jer 18:8 **and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.**

Jer 18:9 **And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it,**

Jer 18:10 **and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it.**

Comments on the passage from the *New Bible Commentary*: “In this incident, Jeremiah goes to the potter's house and observes him at work. The potter, displeased with the pot he is making makes another out of the same clay. The Lord then declares that, like the potter, he is free to revise his intentions for Judah (6). **The principle is developed in vs 7–10 and applied to any nation.** The crucial

point, however (11), is that, even though the Lord has formed a plan to judge his people, there is still time for them to repent and avert the disaster.”⁵⁶

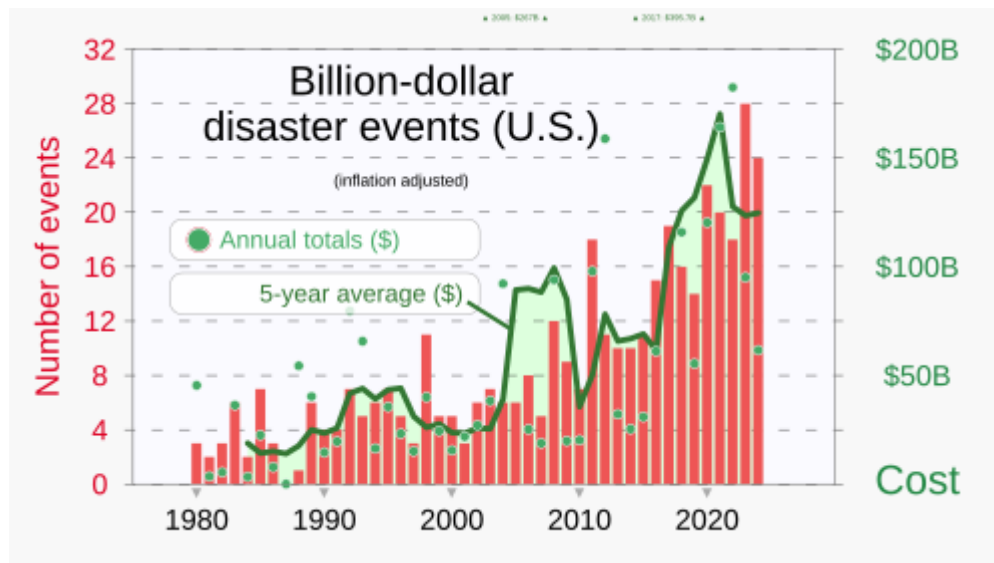
Verse 9-10 declares that after God plants and builds up a nation, if it then does evil in His sight, by not listening to God’s voice, then He will change His plan to do good to it. “Listening to God’s voice” probably refers to honoring His word (the Bible) and/or listening to preachers in the land who are calling the nation to repentance. Especially since September 11, 2001, God has been judging America more markedly for its sins. Although there was a call to repentance following 9/11 by various preachers, the nation did not repent.

God uses calamities to bring a nation to repentance. This principle is seen in Amos 3 and 4 with Israel as the prime example. Note especially Amos 3:6 where God says that if a disaster occurs in a city, God has done it. Then note Amos 4:6-12 where the Scripture records that God’s various judgments were designed to bring the people back to God, yet they refused. So, the disasters continued until a culmination in verse 12. The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* comments on the culmination in verse 12: “**Therefore**, because **Israel** had resisted these chastenings and had continued her sinful rebellion, God would pronounce her sentence of doom. **This is what I will do to you** refers to God’s devastating sweep through the land as predicted in 3:11–15. The nation was commanded to get ready for this terrifying moment—**prepare to meet your God, O Israel**.”⁵⁷ Similarly, Leviticus 26:14-33 shows how God promised severe chastisements upon Israel for disobedience to His commands. Judgments would ratchet up if disobedience continued until finally, God decides to act in fury with a culminating devastation (vs. 28-33).

Below is a chart showing the increase in natural disasters in the USA. In the first month of 2025, we have already had the most devastating wildfires in our history, happening in southern California with estimated property damage of approximately \$250 billion. This outbreak of fires is **likely to become the costliest natural disaster in American history**. Other chastisements besides natural disasters could be cataloged, such as the economic crash of 2008, the defeat of America (the world’s greatest superpower) by Afghanistan (Asia’s poorest nation) in 2021, the ravages of the pandemic, etc. I can only say, with confidence in Biblical principles, that greater judgment is coming. It may be from natural disasters or war or some other means. With the increasing division in America, we are also looking at our downfall. “And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.” (Mk. 3:25)

⁵⁶ J. Gordon McConville, “Jeremiah,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 687.

⁵⁷ Donald R. Sunukjian, “Amos,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1437.



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God states in His Word that **He will judge His church**: 1 Pet. 4:17: “Peter had referred to persecution and suffering as trials that refine and prove one’s faith (1:6–7) if reacted to in the will of God (3:17). Now he added that God allows persecutions **as disciplinary judgment to purify the lives** of those in **the family of God**.”⁵⁹ Although the context of 1 Peter 4 is persecution, God can use other means to purify His church from disobedience and waywardness. If one looks at the **erroneous ideas and wrong agendas** pursued by the American church noted in this article, how could God not bring a purifying judgment upon her?

► **Civic and political participation.** Neither of the two books examined in this article suggests that Christians should withdraw completely from politics or civic engagement. Tim Alberta says that we need to view politics through the lens of our faith, not vice-versa. Our walk should make our faith our priority. We must not seek to build the kingdom of God here. Jesus stated that His kingdom is not of this world. We should seek the things above, the spiritual things, and the spiritual reality as our primary goal. We must be sure that our priorities are absolutely in line and that any civil engagement or political involvement is Spirit-led. It is certainly possible for a believer to hold political office and use his or her position for the public good. An example would be William Wilberforce (1759-1833), a member of Parliament in England. He was a dynamic Christian whom God energized for 20 years to stop the British slave trade. He was allied with John Newton and other Christians in this effort. Wilberforce also began the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to help curb the abuse of domesticated animals, an evil thing. Christians can be empowered to serve God and others in a variety of ways (1 Cor. 12:4-6; Gal. 6:10; Tit. 2:14; 3:8). God calls us not only to love God but also to love others. “Loving our neighbor” may take on different outward forms, but it is always focused on

⁵⁸ Annual data: *"Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters / United States Billion-Dollar Disaster Events 1980- (CPI-Adjusted)". National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).*

⁵⁹ Roger M. Raymer, “1 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 855.

helping those who are in some need and meeting that need (Lk. 10:25-37). We have a couple of women in my local church who strongly disagree with abortion. They are active in a ministry of compassion—not politics—seeking to help women with unwanted pregnancies by offering counseling services along with practical help during the pregnancy period once a woman decides to keep her child instead of aborting the child. Their ministry of serving others has also allowed them to lead some women to faith in Christ.

There is no universal call for believers to reform their country through political action. Voting is a privilege in the USA and helps us have a voice in our governance. But how should we vote? Like all decisions by a believer, our vote should be subject to and informed by our faith. One thing I have realized: when we vote we are voting FOR a candidate; we are not choosing him or her as “the lesser evil.” The candidate should merit our vote. We should vote with a good conscience, not a compromised or doubtful conscience. In 2016, John Piper gave a short word of exhortation about this titled, “Christian, You are Free Not to Vote.” Here are some summary thoughts from Piper:

We are free in Christ to make decisions according to Him. Piper said, “The right to vote in America is not a binding duty for Christians in every election - without regard to other factors.” “We are free from human institutions. As citizens of heaven, we are not bound in every situation to participate in the processes of human government. This is not our homeland. We vote — if we vote — because the Lord of our homeland commissions us to vote. And he does not absolutize this act above all other considerations of Christian witness.” “The aim of every citizen of heaven in all human engagements is to display our allegiance to the values of another world.” “I am saying that the children of God are free to hear the voice of their Master about how to best witness to his supremacy.” With respect to the 2016 election, Piper said that he could not vote for either presidential candidate because of “the flagrant wickedness of both party candidates.”⁶⁰

We should give liberty to every believer to vote as he or she feels they can do so with a good conscience before God. Diversity in the body of Christ on non-essentials is to be expected (Rom. 14:1-12). Leave room for others to be differently persuaded than you concerning his vote. Leaders should be careful about putting pressure on the flock to vote a certain way or insisting that believers must vote. It seems to me we witnessed too much of this pressure in the most recent national election. Romans 14 ends with an admonition that we pay close attention to avoid doing anything that registers doubt in our conscience. “But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.” (Rom. 14:23, ESV)

► **Personal application.** Information alone, even if true, is not enough to live the Christian life. Application and obedience are always needed in our lives. I respectfully challenge my brothers and sisters to consider the thoughts raised in this article. Please go back and look at all the **“erroneous ideas”** I have brought forth in bold print. I suspect that these ideas are misleading the majority of American Christians. Do you need to repent of any of these ideas and change your ways? Do you need to reorder your priorities? Christ reminds us that repentance is always an individual matter among Christians. **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** (Rev. 3:22, ESV) **“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”** (Rev. 3:19,

⁶⁰ Video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8x2o5992tqg>. Accessed 2/8/2025.

ESV). **I appeal especially to Christian leaders, or anyone having significant influence in the body of Christ—please be open to the Lord on these matters.** You are responsible for teaching, feeding, training, and preparing the flock for the future. Please consider how, with God’s grace, patience, and wisdom, you might help the flock overcome the challenges raised in this article and follow the Lord with a good conscience, being well-pleasing to Him.

► **A plea for prayer.** May those who hear and agree with the need for repentance, take up the task of praying for the believers in America. Our task is not to criticize others who may have gone astray in understanding God’s Word and following His plan for His church, but to pray for all who have gone astray. Pray for two things: **enlightenment** on the matters covered in this article and **repentance** in our minds and actions accordingly. I have been reminded by a brother of the prayers in Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah when God’s people had gotten off track. The prayers included confession and commitment to obey God’s Word in the future. Below is a review of key chapters. These chapters can provide inspiration and guidance for our prayers for God’s people in America.

Daniel 9: The background of this juncture was God’s judgment upon Israel for 70 years. It was time for the confession of sins of unfaithfulness and rebellion against God’s commandments. Daniel’s prayer acknowledged that the people had come under God’s hand of judgment in the great calamity upon Jerusalem, the temple, and the people. He prayed: “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive.” (Dan. 9:19, ESV) God listened to Daniel’s prayer and sent Gabriel in reply.

Ezra 9-10: The first six chapters of the book of Ezra chronicle the first of three returns to the land by the Jews from Babylon. The first return under Zerubbabel was ultimately successful, even when opposed, in rebuilding the temple and restarting temple worship. However, when the second return under Ezra happened (Ezra 7-10), problems were uncovered among the people. They had intermarried with the people of the land (non-Jews) and had taken on their unclean ways. Ezra prayed, confessing that God’s people (including himself) had sinned in breaking God’s commandments for separation from the people of the land. In Ezra 10, others joined in the confession of guilt and committed to change their ways. “Now then make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.’ Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, ‘It is so; we must do as you have said.’” (Ezra 10:11-12, ESV)

Nehemiah 9-10: Nehemiah led the third return to the land to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Once again, however, the people confessed that they had strayed from God’s commandments. In hearing the public reading of the Book of the Law, the people confessed their sins and acknowledged God’s righteous actions of judgment upon them throughout Israel’s history. Most of chapter 9 seems to be a corporate prayer led by the Levites. The people then committed to follow God’s law in the future.

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