

## Following Jesus In the Presence of the Beast

An Explanatory Outline by Earle Craig<sup>1</sup>

### I. Introductory Definitions of Following Jesus and Following the Beast<sup>2</sup>

- A. To follow Jesus is to make an intellectual commitment to the truth and eternal hope taught in the Bible, which describes Jesus of Nazareth as God, the King of Israel, the Teacher of how to live life according to God's moral commandments, the Advocate of sinners before God at the end of the present realm so they obtain his eternal mercy and life, and the Ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>
- B. To follow the Beast is to make a religious commitment to the government and culture with their false ideas, beliefs, and moral values that oppose God and the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

### II. A Basic Understanding of the Beast

- A. The Beast is the repeated, Satanically inspired governmental and cultural opposition to God, his purposes, his promises, and his people down through history.<sup>5</sup>
  - 1. Satan and the Beast are opposed to the Jews, i.e., the nation of Israel, as God's temporary chosen people, who, when Jesus returns, will become the greatest nation in history according to God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.<sup>6</sup>
  - 2. Satan and the Beast are opposed to Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, as God's eternal chosen people, who, starting with Jesus' return, will obtain eternal life according to God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.<sup>7</sup>
- B. The Beast began in earnest with the Babylonian Empire in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. They killed many of the Jews of the Kingdom of Judah and took the rest into captivity. Later and soon after Jesus and the apostles, the Roman Empire destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70, exiled the Jews from the land of Israel in A.D. 132-135, and persecuted Christians until the 4<sup>th</sup> century. There have been and continue to be many other examples of the Beast. Any culture that manifests some degree of anti-Semitism and hostility towards authentic Christians is to this degree following the Beast.<sup>8</sup>

As described in Revelation, the Beast will end with the one supreme individual who subjugates Israel and attempts to destroy all the Jews and Christians on the earth. Instead, Jesus will return, destroy the Beast and his government, and establish his own kingdom—first on the land of Israel over the Jews whom God protected from the Beast, and second over the rest of the world.<sup>9</sup>

### III. The Three Elements of the Beast in Contemporary American Society

#### A. The Superior Class

- 1. That group of people who arrogantly consider themselves superior to followers of God and the Bible and where membership is achieved simply by endorsing their false ideas, beliefs, and moral values.<sup>10</sup>

#### B. The Superior Class's Opposition to God and the Bible

- 1. The Superior Class have created a set of false ideas, beliefs, and moral values that are ultimately opposed to God and the Bible, even while sometimes imitating the Bible.<sup>11</sup>
- 2. Because only the Bible presents a rational explanation of reality, the false ideas, beliefs, and moral values of the Superior Class are inherently irrational and philosophically indefensible.<sup>12</sup>
- 3. Because an intellectual commitment is possible to only the Bible,<sup>13</sup> the commitment of the Superior Class to their false ideas, beliefs, and moral values is a religious

commitment that is stubborn, dogmatic, and not open to rational evidence and argument against it.

4. By communicating the impression that they are morally, intellectually, and socially superior to Christians, the Superior Class have made themselves attractive to many people who eagerly join them.<sup>14</sup>

### C. The Superior Class's Use of Propaganda

1. Definition of propaganda: It is a collection of concepts, arguments, and language that functions to justify the Superior Class's set of ideas, beliefs, and moral values that are inherently irrational because they are unbiblical.
  - a. Therefore, the role of propaganda is not to persuade with rational arguments, but to do three things:
    - i. to hold critics at arm's length so that the Superior Class can avoid having to face into the lack of intellectual validity of their ideas, etc.
    - ii. to bully critics into refraining from raising their objections to the Superior Class's irrational and unbiblical ideas, beliefs, and moral values
    - iii. to seduce with the promises of happiness and approval as many people as possible, so that they willingly join the Superior Class

## IV. The Seductive Power of the Beast

- A. People rightfully long for approval from someone else.<sup>15</sup> However, because all human beings (except Jesus) begin life spiritually oriented away from God and cannot avoid choosing evil in addition to good during the course of their lives, they long for each other's approval instead of God's. They know they stand condemned before God, deserving eternal destruction and needing his forgiveness, but they are afraid and lack the courage to seek his mercy and approval. Through massive and relentless propaganda, the Beast lures people to join the Superior Class and receive each other's approval. And the more members this group acquires, the stronger is their sense of mutual approval as a substitute for God's.<sup>16</sup>
- B. People also rightfully long to be great.<sup>17</sup> However, because they are spiritually oriented away from God, they are too afraid to seek their greatness from God through simply being loved by him and granted the promise of eternal life. The Beast is happy to oblige by using propaganda to encourage them to join the Superior Class and enjoy their greatness, popularity, and sense of well-being and self-satisfaction, all which they believe are greater than anything God and Jesus offer.<sup>18</sup>
- C. People also rightfully long to be wise.<sup>19</sup> However, because they are too afraid to seek wisdom from God, they seek it from one another apart from God. The Beast aids them in convincing themselves they are wise by using propaganda to encourage them to join the Superior Class and support each other in their false wisdom.
- D. People also rightfully long to worship something or someone.<sup>20</sup> However, they are too afraid to worship God the Creator and, instead, worship something within his creation. The American Beast aids them in their erroneous pursuit by promoting a religious commitment to the Superior Class with their false ideas, beliefs, moral values, practices, and goals.<sup>21</sup>

## V. Examples of the Beast's Practices in America

- A. There is an increasing tendency for government officials to lie, ignore their oath of office, ignore their job description, ignore the constitution, engage in corruption, prefer personal power over serving the people, and to act like an arrogant elite who are above the law.
- B. There is a growing tendency for government agencies and private companies to place significant restrictions on Christians and their practicing their faith that includes stating publicly their beliefs and moral values.
- C. Increasingly certain government officials characterize Christians as dangerous and extreme, implying that they should not proclaim publicly the message of the Bible.
- D. There is a growing disregard for justice in the criminal system. Publicly known criminal cases become ideological battles where the important goal is not that justice be served, but that "my side" wins.
- E. The use of misleading propaganda against God and the Bible is increasing and effective.
- F. Biblical sexual morality is increasingly ignored.
- G. The American public feel more and more at liberty to mock, deride, and publicly express contempt for God and the Bible.
- H. True dialogue and rational discourse in American society is being lost.
- I. People are increasingly dishonest, selfish, and immoral without an active conscience.

## VI. Understanding the Left and the Right in American Culture<sup>22</sup>

### A. Recent Origins of the Beast in American Culture

- 1. Rejection of God and the Bible in Western Civilization began in Europe as a result of the Enlightenment and gained a growing audience in America after the Civil War. Some of the prominent ideas were and continue to be:
  - a. Darwinian evolution and its atheistic and naturalist beliefs
  - b. Marxism and its atheistic and naturalist beliefs
  - c. "Higher Criticism" that rejects the sole authority and inerrancy of the Bible

### B. The Committed Left and the Naïve Left in America

- 1. The **Committed Left** are members of the Superior Class who wholeheartedly believe in the goodness of mankind and their ability and right to regulate and control people's lives for the common good *without reference to God and the Bible*. Thus, as I am defining them, the Committed Left are not authentic Christians.
- 2. The **Naïve Left** are members of the Superior Class who wholeheartedly believe in the goodness of mankind and their ability and right to regulate and control people's lives for the common good *while referencing God and the Bible*. Thus, the Naïve Left may be authentic Christians, but they have not come to understand the Bible well enough in regard to the inherent and unavoidable evil of all human beings apart from work of the grace of God within them.<sup>23</sup>

### C. The Committed Right and the Naïve Right in America

1. The **Committed Right** are authentic Christians, true followers of Jesus who practice biblical love, kindness, and compassion. They are Radical Biblicists who have made an intellectual commitment to God and the Bible. Therefore, they understand that all human beings are inclined to seize power and control over others. But their greatest interest is not individual liberty as that which America has traditionally enjoyed with its limited government. Their greatest interest is truth, specifically the truth of the Bible as the divinely given, authoritative, and inerrant source of truth.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, the follower of Jesus is a Radical Biblicist who defines love, justice, compassion, etc. strictly from the Bible and not from anyone else's political/social/global agenda that rejects God and the Bible. The follower of Jesus does not ultimately trust human institutions, such as the American government, but only God.

2. The **Naïve Right** includes three types:

- a. **Authentic Christians** who naïvely believe that government and institutions of society can provide people with genuine, individual liberty. They have made only a partial intellectual commitment to the Bible because they have not understood it well enough to know that only God can grant individual liberty and that true individual liberty exists even under the most authoritarian government. This is because no government can take away an individual's inner choice to believe in God and the Bible and follow Jesus as Lord and Savior.

- b. **Pseudo-Christians** who naïvely believe that government and institutions of society can provide people with genuine, individual liberty. They have made a religious commitment to religious practices that are labeled Christian, but in their hearts they are actually opposed to God and the Bible.<sup>25</sup> Like Authentic Christians above who are naïve, they do not realize that only God can grant individual liberty and that the true individual liberty of believing in God and following Jesus exists even under the most authoritarian government.

- c. **Cultural Conservatives** who naïvely believe that government and institutions of society can provide people with genuine, individual liberty. They have made a religious commitment to the traditions of American culture that were originally established on the basis of the Bible. However, in their hearts they stand opposed to God and the Bible. There are three kinds of Cultural Conservatives:

- i. The **Constitutionalists** who have made a religious commitment to the American constitution.<sup>26</sup>

- ii. The **Libertarians** who have made a religious commitment to the ideal of American freedom.

- iii. The **Republicans** who have made a religious commitment to their political party as the wisest to lead America.

## VII. God's Options and Christians' Options in America

### A. The Options

1. God **DOES INTEND** to save America from its current moral collapse and transform a large portion of the population into authentic followers of Jesus. And the role he expects all Christians to play is one or more of the following:

- a. **strictly personal**, where individual Christians are examples of God's love, mercy, and righteousness in their everyday personal interactions with others;

- b. **cultural (but not political)**, where Christians work in and through the various institutions of art, music, education, etc. in American society;
  - c. **political**, where Christians work in and through the political institutions to transform the laws and institutions of America;
  - d. **military**, where Christians take up arms and use force to take control of the government.
2. God **DOES NOT INTEND** to save America from its current moral collapse, and more and more people will oppose him and the Bible. And the role he expects his followers to play is **strictly personal**, where Christians are examples of God's love, mercy, and righteousness in their everyday personal interactions with others. God will continue transforming Americans into authentic followers of Jesus, but, in this scenario, they will be relatively few.

#### **B. Evaluating the Options**

1. My impression of the New Testament is that the Christians in the Roman Empire during the 1<sup>st</sup> century and even Jesus himself did not expect God to reform the empire and create both greater individual liberty and a majority of Christians within society. Therefore, they embraced option #2 above for themselves.<sup>27</sup>
2. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the American Colonies, with much of the population being Christians, they expected God to grant them freedom from the tyrannical English government so that, with their biblical understanding of the nature of God and man, they could establish a country with a constitution and a culture that enjoyed limited government and maximum individual liberty.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, they believed they were justified in embracing the military option #1,d. above.
3. My guess is that with the current sizeable trends in our government and culture away from biblical beliefs and moral values, we should not expect God anytime soon to reform America by bringing about a large increase in the number of Christians and a reversal in the losses of our individual liberty. Plus, it will become increasingly difficult for Christians to use both cultural and political institutions to make any significant changes that will considerably slow the spiritual, moral, and ethical decline of America. Nevertheless, those Christians who believe God has called them to work for change in these institutions should do so with all the courage, energy, and enthusiasm they can muster by the grace of God. Therefore, as Jesus and the 1<sup>st</sup> century believers did, the rest of the Christians are correct to embrace option #2 above. Yet, they should also continue to exercise their right to be involved in the cultural and political arenas as much as the government and other citizens allow.

### **VIII. Suggestions for the Personal Role Christians Can Play in America**

#### **A. Two Priorities That Christians Should Maintain in Their Lives**

1. Their first priority is to prepare themselves for God's final judgment and save themselves through his grace from his condemnation and destruction in order to acquire eternal life by being committed followers of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>29</sup>
2. Their second priority is, with love, kindness, and patience, to encourage others to do the same as in #1.

**B. Four Essentials for Christians to Guard Their Belief in Jesus**

1. As I say above, Christians must make their commitment to God and Jesus their highest priority. No other person, institution, or thing, including their country, their family, and individual liberty, should capture Christians' hearts and minds more than God and his promise of eternal mercy and life through his gracious love demonstrated by Jesus' death on the cross and the Holy Spirit's work within their hearts.<sup>30</sup>
2. Christians must decide to fear God and to seek his approval rather than man's.<sup>31</sup>
3. Christians must anchor their lives intellectually and morally in the Bible.<sup>32</sup>
4. Christians must become practiced in discerning the anti-biblical lies within their American culture.<sup>33</sup>

**C. Important Pursuits In Order For Christians to Maintain Their Belief in Jesus**

1. Christians will benefit greatly from small communities of support such as home Bible studies where, in discussion with others, they can educate themselves in the Bible.<sup>34</sup>
2. It will be important for Christians to avoid the temptation to create church services and practices that focus on entertaining people rather than on providing genuine education in the Bible.<sup>35</sup>
3. It will be important for Christians to maintain a loving and moral counterculture with practices that are in line with the biblical moral commandments and the teachings of Jesus.<sup>36</sup>
4. It will be important for Christians to act with the greatest love, patience, and compassion in society, and to explain the gospel with "gentleness and respect" to those who oppose God and the Bible, thus providing them with the maximum potential to be willing to change their minds and become followers of Jesus.<sup>37</sup>

**D. Important Possibilities for Christians and Their Relationships With Others**

1. Even if God is not going to produce a large-scale spiritual renewal in America, Christians should still pray for him to bring one about. But they should be willing to see the spiritual darkness in America increase, if this is what God has sovereignly planned.
2. Christians should be willing to see the material prosperity of America decline.<sup>38</sup>
3. Christians should be willing to value and work towards the temporary and eternal well-being of non-Christians even if the latter do not value the same for them and instead become more hostile towards them.<sup>39</sup>
4. Christians in America should be willing to see a reduction in their freedom to proclaim the gospel publicly.

O Sovereign Lord, who has made the sky, the land, and the sea, and everything that is in them, who, through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David, Your servant, said, "Why are the nations disrespectful, and why do the peoples ponder futile things? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers have gathered together for the same purpose, against Yahweh and His Messiah." For truly in Jerusalem there were gathered together against Your holy servant, Jesus, whom You made the Messiah, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your plan predestined to occur. And now, Yahweh, grant that we Your bondslaves may live and proclaim Your truth with bold openness. [adapted from Acts 4:24-29]

<sup>1</sup> In 2013 and in response to what he saw as a growing movement in America away from belief in God and the Bible, my friend Jack Crabtree wrote a paper “How to Follow Jesus When You Cannot Kill the Beast” for Gutenberg College’s Summer Institute. I have derived this outline from his paper while changing some of the wording and the order in which he presented his ideas as a way to help my own understanding of this subject.

<sup>2</sup> In **Daniel 7**, the term Beast refers to a government, culture, and society that opposes God and his purposes. The term is used with the same meaning 39 times in visions of the book of Revelation. For example, there is **Revelation 13:1**, “And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.” This verse speaks of the origin of the Beast from the “sea,” i.e., from the Gentiles. It also implies the origin of his power and authority, i.e., from the “dragon,” who is the devil, Satan.

<sup>3</sup> I am defining an intellectual commitment as that which is logical, rational, and valid—because truth, whether the Bible (as the primary example) or mathematics (as another example), is inherently logical and rational. For example, I can make an intellectual commitment to the statement, “God exists,” but I cannot make the same kind of commitment to the opposite, i.e., “God does not exist.” Therefore, the logical and rational description of reality presented in the Bible, which is the only authoritative and inerrant written source of truth, requires an intellectual commitment in order to believe it genuinely.

<sup>4</sup> I am defining a religious commitment as that which is illogical, irrational, and invalid—because, by opposing the rational truth of God and the Bible, a culture embraces false ideas, beliefs, and moral values that are inherently illogical and irrational. For example, I can choose to believe that God does not exist, but it would be illogical to do so. Therefore, I can make only a religious commitment to it. In addition, I can make only a religious commitment to all lies and falsehood, which is exactly what the Beast, any anti-God culture, encourages. Because the Beast opposes God, it opposes intellectual commitments and champions religious commitments. It opposes commitments to truth and that which makes sense. It celebrates commitments to nonsense and lies. The Bible indicates that there are two kinds of people in this world. Some have made an intellectual commitment to God and the Bible, and some have made a religious commitment to the Beast of their culture.

<sup>5</sup> It is all this that the apostle Paul is implying when he says to Christians in **Ephesians 6:11**, “Put on the armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” While sinful human beings are capable on their own of inventing lies and opposing God’s plans and purposes, he has created Satan as an invisible and powerful (but obviously not as powerful as God) arch-inventor of lies and opposition that some human beings follow in every culture.

<sup>6</sup> **Genesis 12:1** Now the LORD said to Abram [Abraham], “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; **2** and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; **3** And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

<sup>7</sup> See footnote above—“**in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.**” Included in the group of “Christians,” who are both Jews and Gentiles, are those in Old Testament history who became authentic believers in the God of the Old Testament and Israel—people such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, et al.

<sup>8</sup> I say “authentic Christians” because unfortunately there have been so-called Christian cultures and societies who have persecuted or ostracized both Jews and Christians who are not willing to join the mainstream “Christians” in their understanding of God and the Bible. Examples are the Spanish Inquisition and the treatment of African-American Christians in parts of the United States. Indeed, the fact that genuine Christians would persecute and mistreat anyone is completely unbiblical.

<sup>9</sup> According to **Revelation 20 & 21**, Jesus’ kingdom occurs for “a thousand years,” symbolic of a long time. Then, God will destroy the present realm and create a completely new one with an earth which will last for eternity and on which all authentic believers in God from history will live with Jesus as their ruler. There will “no longer be any death” or “mourning, or crying, or pain” on the new earth (cf. **Revelation 21:4**). Everyone will be immortal and morally perfect like Jesus. This is the true hope of the good news of Jesus as the Christ, Messiah, and Savior.

<sup>10</sup> The key word here is “arrogantly.” Certainly every human being considers his ideas, beliefs, and moral values to be superior to those of anyone with whom he disagrees. Otherwise, he would not believe them to be true. But it is vital to be humble in one’s sense of superiority so that each of us is open to the possibility of being wrong and changing his views if someone can validly demonstrate that he is wrong.

<sup>11</sup> In our day, the Superior Class encourage love and equality, and there is a degree of love and equal treatment in their actions. However, by not defining love, equality, and morality exactly as the Bible does, and by not referring to God in their discussion of love and any other topic, their “truth” is contaminated with lies and opposed to the real truth. For example, they do not love God and his people. And they do not consider it loving to warn people of God’s wrath and eternal condemnation and to encourage everyone to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They even become offended if anyone mentions not only this but also the biblical commandments regarding moral behavior. Therefore, in spite of any goodness the Superior Class promote, their goodness is not that of God and the Bible.

<sup>12</sup> Some Christians believe that certain truths presented in the Bible do not make sense and need not make sense in order to be true. This involves a much longer discussion than is possible in this outline, but I believe that God himself is the very personification of the laws of logic described by Aristotle, so that all truth is logical and rational. Otherwise,

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Christians have no firm basis for disagreeing with the Superior Class when they contradict the Bible with their irrational ideas, etc.

<sup>13</sup> Of course, as mentioned above, an intellectual commitment is possible to mathematics and any other true ideas of this reality which God has created. The Bible is not the only source of truth, just the only authoritative and inerrant written source.

<sup>14</sup> My contention would be that even if a society begins with a majority of Christians as was probably the case after the Protestant Reformation in Europe of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and after the large European immigration to America and the spiritual renewal in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, eventually the inverse occurs and a society becomes mostly followers of the Beast. In other words, Christians normally find themselves in the same situation as those in the Roman Empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.

<sup>15</sup> This is what Jesus implies in the parable of the man who entrusted his possessions to his slaves, went on a journey, and when he returned told those who properly fulfilled this responsibility, “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master” (cf. [Matthew 25:21,23](#)). What a wonderful gift that God approves of Christians for their faith and obedience.

<sup>16</sup> Jesus is the best example of being content with only God’s approval. After his closest friends and disciples, except Peter and John (even though Peter denied him three times), had abandoned him, and his enemies cried out for and chose to execute him, he willingly suffered death on the cross—in obedience to God the Father. And what remarkable courage the apostle John demonstrated by following Jesus into the very arena of his trial before his enemies and then standing with the courageous women at the foot of the cross, thus risking his own life for his Lord and Savior (cf. [John 18:15ff. & 19:25-27](#)). Three days later, it was a bold group of women who risked the disapproval of the Jewish leadership by going to the tomb where Jesus was buried. God calls all his followers to this level of contentment and courage in the face of the world’s disapproval.

<sup>17</sup> The apostle Paul indicates this fact when he says in [Romans 2:7](#) that God will grant eternal life “to those who by perseverance in doing good **seek for glory and honor and immortality**” [emphasis mine].

<sup>18</sup> Again Jesus is our example of ultimately desiring only God’s greatness. In [Hebrews 12:1,2](#) the author encourages his Jewish Christian readers to persevere in their belief [2](#) “while we fix our eyes on Jesus, the leader in belief and the one who finished his race. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, while thinking nothing of the humiliation, and he has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [my translation].” Jesus looked forward to God’s granting him the greatness of sitting “at the right hand of [His] throne” as the ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God. His enemies had rejected his greatness, while his followers always embrace it and will share in it. The apostle Peter exhorts the recipients of his first letter to persevere in their faith through persecution “so that [their] assessed belief, which is more valuable than destructible gold that has even been authenticated through fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor [that God will give them!] at the revealing of Jesus the Messiah [my translation]” (cf. [1 Peter 1:7](#)). Jesus’ followers will participate in his glory and greatness for all eternity.

<sup>19</sup> The apostle Paul implies this point in [Romans 1:22](#), “Professing to be wise, [sinful human beings in the Ancient Near East and all sinners by extrapolation] became fools, [23](#) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.” In America for example, people believe they are wise by exchanging God as the origin of the creation and life for the theory of atheistic Darwinian evolution. According to Paul, they have chosen to be fools instead of wise followers of God and Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> Paul implies this point in [Romans 1:25](#), “For [sinful human beings in the Ancient Near East and all sinners by extrapolation] exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” In America, people believe they are right to worship and serve each other as mere creatures in the Superior Class as they grant one another approval, greatness, and the status of being wise, while ignoring God’s approval and greatness and biblical wisdom.

<sup>21</sup> A good example of this point is how the Superior Class are completely convinced that the greatest threat to the human race is climate change, while also believing that the earth will last forever and that this is the only opportunity for life for human beings. Certainly, no one should ever willingly waste the earth’s resources and destroy its environment, but Christians know from the Bible that God himself will eventually bring about not only worldwide cataclysmic catastrophes immediately before Jesus returns, but also the complete destruction of the present universe before he creates a new, eternal one for those who have embraced the biblical message and God. All this is described in the book of [Revelation](#).

<sup>22</sup> I am using the labels “Left” and “Right” since they are familiar in American society. It just so happens that I think that the Right are more right and correct than the Left. I will also use only the label “Committed Right” to refer to authentic Christians who properly understand the Bible (in my opinion, although I am certainly open to being corrected in my theology and beliefs from the Bible regarding the nature of reality).

<sup>23</sup> As I imply in V.,A. above, human beings tend to grab for power and control over others—in governments, institutions, families, and any gathering of people, even churches.

<sup>24</sup> Here is a quote from Jack Crabtree’s paper that describes the proper perspective of the Committed Right—“The typical Right-wing reactionary believes in individual liberty, but he believes that individual liberty must be granted and protected by the right sort of [government]. The biblical believer [a member of the Committed Right] believes in individual liberty as well, but he knows that it is given by God and cannot truly be taken away by anyone. Hence, the follower of Jesus will not “fight” to protect individual liberty. Rather, his “fight” will be to defend truth against



falsehood. That truth will include individual liberty. But it is truth the believer fights for, not individual liberty per se. The follower of Jesus believes that the ideal of individual liberty is consistent with the [biblical] truth that he follows. He exercises and enjoys his individual liberty, and he would wish for a society where no one's individual liberty is punished by or constrained by the [government]; but his passion is not for individual liberty. His passion is for [God's] TRUTH."

<sup>25</sup> In his letter to the **Galatians**, the apostle Paul confronts the influence of false Christians who claim that Jesus is the Messiah but who are harsh, critical, and unloving towards other Christians who are not placing the Mosaic Covenant instead of Jesus at the center of their relationship with God. This is the same point that I am making that people can be more committed to religious practices within Christianity than they are to their belief in Jesus, thus actually demonstrating that their belief is false as Paul talks about in **Galatians**.

<sup>26</sup> I am not saying that everyone who uses one of these labels (Constitutionalist, Libertarian, or Republican) to describe himself is a pseudo or false Christian. I am saying that, for my purposes in this outline, these are handy labels for false Christians who have NOT made an intellectual commitment to God and the Bible and have made only a religious commitment to the constitution, freedom, and the Republican party respectively. Certainly there are people who call themselves Constitutionalists, Libertarians, or Republicans who are authentic Christians.

<sup>27</sup> The Apostle Paul was the most aggressive in his actions, but even he never promoted options #1,b; #1,c; or #1,d—in spite of, for example, the existence of slavery in the Roman Empire. This, unfortunately, has been interpreted by many as his support of slavery, which makes no sense in the light of the good news of eternal salvation for all individuals which he proclaimed. But God had given Paul the unique responsibility of traveling throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome and to proclaim the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, with mostly Gentiles becoming followers of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus. Nevertheless, he himself never sought nor encouraged others either to change cultural and political institutions or to take up arms to transform the empire. His strategy was simply to expose people in his personal interactions with them to the gospel which God had entrusted to him. Some people believed and followed Jesus, but most people reacted with hostility, violence, and persecution. Still, Paul persevered in his divine calling!

<sup>28</sup> The Great Awakening in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that God brought about by using the teaching of such men as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley was the last truly large-scale increase of Christians in America. There was a smaller spiritual renewal in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and then another fairly sizeable one in the late 1960s and early 70s, the so-called Jesus Movement. It took place mainly on college campuses through the efforts of Campus Crusade for Christ, Intervarsity, and Athletes in Action. I became a Christian during the Jesus Movement while in college in California.

<sup>29</sup> This is the heart of the gospel. God is calling out for himself a group of people who, with an intellectual commitment to the Bible, Jesus, and him, humble themselves and obey God in order to receive his promise of eternal forgiveness and life. If a human being does anything during his entire earthly existence, this is what he should do. While it sounds selfish that Christians' first priority should be to save themselves, this is nothing more than saying that their first priority is to worship God who has provided through Jesus and his grace the means to acquire his ultimate gift of eternal life. Peter says as much in **2 Peter 1:10** "Therefore, brothers, **make every effort to confirm [God's] calling and choosing you**. And if you [practice genuine love and morality], you will never experience [eternal] disaster, **1:11** because, in this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah, will be richly supplied to you" [my translation and emphasis].

<sup>30</sup> Jesus means all this when he says in **Matthew 10:37**, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." The apostle Paul states God's love for sinners in **Romans 5:5**, "And waiting confidently [for eternal life] will not be disappointing, because **God's love has been poured out in our hearts in the manner of the Holy Spirit who was given to us**. **6** Indeed, while we were still weak, at that proper moment the Messiah died for the ungodly. **7** Someone will hardly die for a righteous man. Though, perhaps for a good man someone may indeed have the courage to die. **8** However, **God demonstrates His own love towards us in that while we were still sinners, the Messiah died for us**" [my translation and emphasis].

<sup>31</sup> Jesus means this when he says in **Luke 12:4**, "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. **5** "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" He makes the same point in **Matthew 6:1**, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with [or approval from] your Father who is in heaven."

<sup>32</sup> This is what Paul is getting at when he encourages his co-worker Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:14**, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them **15** and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings [the Old Testament] which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture [the Old Testament, and by extrapolation the New Testament] is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; **17** so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

<sup>33</sup> Because the lies within any culture originate with Satan, who is the greatest created enemy of God, Paul's words in **Ephesians 6:11** apply very well here, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." Paul goes on to say that the armor of God is the biblical truth which includes, an understanding of our situation before God as those who stand to acquire his eternal forgiveness, a grasp of the gospel of the eternal shalom (well-being) that God has promised us, and our belief in Jesus and the salvation which he brings us through his

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advocacy. The more we ground ourselves in all these truths, the better we can discern the lies of Satan and our culture that stand in opposition to God and the Bible.

<sup>34</sup> Preaching the Bible to large crowds is certainly one way to educate people in the truth. But equally important is Christians' honing their critical thinking skills by discussing the Bible with one another in small groups.

<sup>35</sup> Peter encourages his readers to be "like newborn babies [and] long for the truthful milk of the message [of God], so that by it [they] may grow towards salvation" (1 Peter 2:2; my translation). The better Christians know the Bible, the better equipped they will be to navigate through life with all the false ideas that surround them.

<sup>36</sup> Peter also exhorts his readers to "keep their behavior morally excellent among the non-Christians, so that, because they have observed their good deeds, they may be without any defense and will know before God at the judgment that they were wrong in following lies and pursuing immorality" [my adaptation of 1 Peter 2:12].

<sup>37</sup> Jesus says this clearly in Matthew 5:43, "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, **love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" [emphasis mine]. And Peter exhorts his readers who are being persecuted and might be tempted to be harsh, angry, condemning, and critical towards their opponents to offer an explanation of the gospel with "gentleness and respect" for them as fellow sinners who need the mercy of God (cf. 1 Peter 3:15,16).

<sup>38</sup> While the psalmists and Old Testament prophets indicate that the wealthy prosper even while rejecting God, the Bible and history also show that eventually rebellion against God results in a society's losing its wealth. It is not that moral behavior guarantees wealth, but certainly immoral, unscrupulous, and dishonest behavior cannot perpetuate wealth in an entire society.

<sup>39</sup> The recipients of Peter's first letter were experiencing intense persecution from their non-believing friends. Peter reminds them that they are called to suffer as Jesus did and always imitate him in doing good—to love one another and non-believers and to entrust themselves to a faithful God and his Son, Jesus, who will judge all human beings at the end of this realm.