

How to Follow Jesus When You Cannot Kill the Beast

by
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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to address a very important personal question. How should I prepare for the future? Given that American culture appears to be collapsing before my very eyes, what can I expect America to look like in the future and, as a follower of Jesus, how ought I to respond to the direction America is taking?

I write this paper from the perspective that the Bible is true. Indeed, I believe that the Bible is an inspired, absolutely authoritative revelation from God. And, hence, I believe that the biblical worldview is true and that the system of moral values it teaches is wholly right and good. I write this paper from this assumption; and I am writing it to readers who share this assumption.

I am fully aware how odd it feels to read someone engaged in social, political, and cultural critique from a standpoint that assumes the Bible is actually true. It strikes us as somewhat naïve, certainly unsophisticated, clearly ignorant, and vaguely illegitimate. Indeed, to engage in a cultural analysis that actually proposes Satan as a plausible historical cause seems downright wacky. I know that. I live in this culture too.

But what I feel and what I believe are two very different things. As a matter of fact, I believe that the person who embraces the perspective that the Bible is actually true is, of all the people living, among the most intellectually serious, among the most philosophically sophisticated, among the most truly reasonable and open-minded¹, among the most morally serious, among the most self-aware, among the most loving and compassionate, and among the most grounded in reality. But exactly the opposite is what I typically feel to be the case. I know all too keenly how odd, how eccentric, how unsophisticated, how naïve, and how basically “uncool” it is to take the Bible seriously. I can never articulate what I actually believe to be true about God, Jesus, and the Bible without hearing a voice of self-condemnation deep within my own psyche—“you sound like an unintelligent, uneducated, unpolished hick, and perhaps even a little wacky.”

Why is that? I know that I am intelligent and well educated. Yet, at the same time, I can feel deeply that, because of my belief in Jesus and the Bible—well-considered and intelligent thought it be—I am an intellectually and socially inferior. How can we account for such a truly strange phenomenon? I hope that the analysis I offer in this paper will, at least in part, explain the genesis and nature of this mysterious phenomenon. Indeed, I would maintain that the existence of this strange phenomenon is significant evidence for my primary thesis in this paper: that American culture has been shaped and determined by the Beast.

This paper is divided into three major parts following this introduction. I shall proceed in this introduction to offer an assessment of our current cultural situation, arguing that American culture has become, and is becoming, hostile to The Good and that it shows

¹ In the 1960's, *Psychology Today* ran an article about a study that had been done on objectivity. The study measured the amount of objectivity was evidenced by different groups of people as groups. Fundamentalist preachers ranked #2, with #1 (I don't remember who that was) being the group that exhibited the highest level of objectivity.

evidence of becoming progressively more hostile in the future. In part one I offer an analysis of the dynamic cultural power that has led to this hostility to the Good and that promises to intensify it in the future. In part two I argue that, given the likely path of American society, our top priority must be to save our own souls, a task that will be increasingly difficult in the days that lie ahead. Finally, in part three I add a few remarks about some of the important changes that I believe are necessitated by the future of American culture—changes in our own lives as individuals and changes in our believing communities.

America's Hostility to The Good

I submit that the level of hostility toward the Good² that is evident in American culture today is unprecedented in the history of America. No period of time in American history has seen as much animosity toward and resistance to the truth of the Bible as is manifest in America today, at all levels of society. This hostility to the Good is becoming increasingly entrenched in official, governmental institutions and bureaucracies. As a result, resistance to the Good is becoming increasingly powerful. The more ingrained it becomes in our culture's institutions of power, the more it will impact our individual lives. It will cease to be something we merely hear about and will increasingly become something that impacts us directly, controlling what we do, say, think, and believe.

This would simply be annoying and obnoxious if what it required of us was conformity to unimportant and inconsequential ways of acting and thinking.³ But what has begun to emerge within various bureaucracies is the intent to block us from thinking and acting like followers of Jesus.⁴ That is not harmless! No state whatsoever has the authority to tell us that we cannot follow Jesus, that we cannot seek to be obedient to him. What is the ultimate end of the path we are currently on? It is this: a government that gives us this choice—I can follow Jesus, gain eternal Life, but suffer some kind of harm from the government; or I can conform to what the government dictates, protect myself from immediate harm, but thereby deny Jesus and earn eternal destruction.

² For the sake of brevity, whenever I employ the phrase "the Good" throughout this paper, it is a technical term for all that pertains to God, Jesus, the Bible, and all things righteous. Hence, hostility to "the Good" is meant to include all of the following: (i) hostility to God, the creator, (ii) hostility to Jesus, (iii) hostility to the gospel, (iv) hostility to the Bible, (v) hostility toward the biblical worldview, (vi) hostility toward the system of moral values taught in the Bible, (vii) hostility to the purposes of God in history, (viii) hostility toward Israel, (ix) hostility to the promises of God in history, (x) hostility toward the Jews, (xi) hostility toward truth itself, generally, (xii) hostility to the very concept of truth, and (xiii) hostility toward anything connected to God and/or moral goodness. I mean all of the above whenever I use the phrase "the Good" in this paper.

³ E.g., forcing us to wear a uniform, forbidding us from chewing gum, etc.

⁴ As I write this, the news is reporting that an employee at Sonoma State University required a young woman who was working at a table during new student orientation to remove (or hide) the cross necklace that she was wearing, lest she offend someone. The employee, in this case, was likely not enforcing an official policy of the university. But in the current state of our culture, it would not surprise us if he was. All too often, just such policies are quietly being adopted in our institutions. The fact that it is not official policy in this case makes it an even more alarming example. It reflects the tangible fact that Americans are feeling more and more emboldened, and *justified*, in insisting that Christians and their ilk "shut up." Increasingly, the American population wants the Good to be eliminated from public life.

Is my assessment a realistic appraisal of our situation, or is it alarmist and paranoid? Is there anything I could say to prove that my assessment is realistic? Could I convince you that it is likely accurate?

I shouldn't think so. How does one prove that he has rightly assessed the moral, spiritual disposition of a culture? If I could cite thousands of examples where some element of American culture showed animosity toward the Good⁵, would that prove anything? I don't think so. We know that evil exists. We know that, at times, some people will manifest a striking hostility to the Good. One could easily chalk up each of the thousands of examples to that—an isolated instance of evil being evil. Hence, no number of such examples could prove that America itself has become hostile to the Good. How can one know that he has "seen" the moral and spiritual condition of a culture? And how can one know that he has "seen" its future?

It seems to me that the moral "shape" of a culture is like the appearance and shape of a person's face. The appearance of a person's face cannot be understood by analyzing it into its different parts and elements. You "see" how a person's face appears when that person's face appears to you. To recognize a face is to "see" a pattern, a gestalt. I cannot point out a pattern by drawing your attention to an element within the pattern.

So, if I recognize someone by their appearance, can I "prove" to you that I recognized them? If you challenge me, "I don't think you recognized him," my only possible response must be, "Yes, I did. I know what he looks like and that was him." No other evidence can be offered except the raw fact that I saw what I saw. The moral "shape" of a culture is a gestalt, just like the "shape" of a person's face. Either that gestalt is known, seen, and recognized for what it is, or it is not. Nothing can be done to prove to another that I have seen it.

Accordingly, I could never prove that I have accurately and realistically assessed the moral condition of American culture. Perhaps I am paranoid. Perhaps I am being ridiculously alarmist. I don't think so. But all I can do is ask you to take a look for

⁵ Here is one such example of the kind of hostility to the Good that I am talking about. A young Christian woman at a graduate school in Kansas (I believe?) was denied the degree she had earned in some branch of social work because she clearly did not have the right sort of "temperament" (code for moral character) for social work. Why? Because she believed that homosexuality was a sin. In the minds of the faculty members in her department, belief that homosexuality is sin automatically and necessarily disqualifies you from social work. One could cite many instances where the mere fact that a person believes that homosexuality is an immoral way to express one's sexuality is perceived as evidence of hate. Accusing a Christian of hatred because he declares homosexuality to be sin is an absurd and ignorant accusation. To equate "judging something to be sin" with "hate" demonstrates a deep ignorance of the relevant concepts and facts. But there is more than ignorance at play. If ignorance were the problem, the accuser would withdraw the accusation when the relevant concepts and facts were explained to him and his ignorance had been dispelled. But that is not what we find. Those who make the charge are obstinate. They stubbornly insist on pressing the charge even after all the relevant facts, distinctions, concepts, and reasons are offered to them. When all is said and done, they clearly *want* to believe that Bible-believers are haters. It makes no difference to them what the truth is. Their charge is not a just and rational judgment of a person's character; it is, rather, an expression of sheer hostility to God, the Bible, and anyone who sides with them. This sort of scenario is ubiquitous in American culture today.

yourself. Do you see? Do you see what we have become? Do you see where we are going? You will either see what I see, or you will not. But one of us is right and one of us is wrong.

I am not alone in my assessment. Many contemporary believers see the same trends that I see. Is it mass hysteria? Or are they seeing objective reality? You must decide for yourself.⁶

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But let me offer a general orientation to the sorts of things I see that enter into my assessment. What do I see today that leads me to think that America is becoming increasingly hostile to the Good? Here is a partial list of noteworthy trends:

(1) There seems to be an increasing tendency for government officials (elected and non-elected) to shamelessly lie, to ignore their oath of office, to ignore their job description, to ignore the constitution, to engage shamelessly in corruption, to prefer personal power to serving the people, and, generally to act like an arrogant elite that is above all law and morality. This is not new in world history at all. But the degree to which it is true in America seems to me to be clearly unprecedented.

(2) There is a growing tendency for government agencies to place significant restrictions on Christians, interfering with their actually “practicing” their faith. This has occurred most aggressively in the military. (There are reports that the army has censored Christian material on websites, prohibiting soldiers from viewing it.) Increasingly, we see representatives of the government using their power and authority to block, hinder, and seek to interfere with the activities of people who hold Judaeo-Christian values.

(3) Increasingly we see representatives of government agencies officially characterizing people within a Judaeo-Christian tradition as dangerous, potential terrorists, monsters, extremists, etc.

(4) There is a growing disregard for justice in our criminal system. Criminal cases that come into public purview and stimulate public debate typically become ideological battles where the important thing is that “my side” wins. That justice be done is not even a concern.

(5) There is an increasingly greater use of (and presumably greater effectiveness of) bad propaganda (especially in political campaigns). We are subjected to propaganda that is so bad, and so obviously propaganda, that it is unthinkable that anyone could possibly be

⁶ If you happen to be skeptical, here is something important to consider. Just as I may be paranoid, you may be deluded. Part of the purpose of this paper is to explore how a force greater than any individual is shaping and controlling the character and direction of our culture. It works, in part, through deception and illusion. If I am right, it is just as possible that you are deluded by this cultural force (this “beast”) as it is that I am deceived by my own paranoia.

swayed by it. And yet, shockingly, it seems to work. It would appear that the general populace is becoming supernaturally stupid.

(6) There appears to be a trend to accept, normalize, and even celebrate an ever more depraved and degraded version of sexuality. This is reflected especially in the portrayal of sexuality in music, movies, television, and books. There appears to be an increasingly broad acceptance of sensuality, sexual impurity, and sexual perversion.

(7) The American public, generally, seems to feel more and more at liberty to mock, deride, and publicly express contempt for the Good.

(8) Increasingly, we see a complete absence of true dialogue and rational discourse in every segment and sector of society.

(9) It seems that personal moral integrity is rarer and rarer in American society. People are increasingly dishonest, selfish, sexually immoral, morally indifferent and insensitive, without an active conscience, irresponsible, slothful, self-indulgent, and willfully ignorant and unaware.

If the culture continues down the path it is on, I predict that, over time, hostility toward the Good will become (i) more and more popular and acceptable to the American public, (ii) increasingly overt, (iii) more widespread, (iv) more aggressive and pro-active, (v) more intense, and ultimately (vi) more violent. Animosity toward the Good will grow, and as it grows, the haters of the Good will express their hatred in increasingly violent ways. In other words, the Beast that determines the direction of American society will become more and more ferocious in its hostility toward the Good.

Part One: Understanding the Beast

The Basic Concept of a Beast

As it occurs in Revelation, the symbol of the beast represents any satanically inspired opposition to God and to his purposes. It can symbolize any person, society, or institution that asserts itself as a superior power to God and opposes his purposes and seeks to defeat them.

In the story told in Revelation, one historical reality is identified as the primary manifestation of the beast as defined above. This beast—which is described as and entitled “the beast”—is the repeated, Satanically inspired opposition to God, his people, his purposes, and his promises down through history. Throughout the history of Israel, Satan inspired various attempts to defeat God’s people and to thwart God’s purposes. All of these various attempts are viewed in Revelation as an organic whole, as a single beast. Specifically, the beast in Revelation consists of a series of hubristic kings who came up militarily against Israel (most pointedly against Jerusalem and the temple of God) and defeated Israel (the people of God). The kings that constitute this beast would subjugate

the Jews in Israel and would assert themselves (as would-be “gods” themselves) to be superior to Yahweh, the God of Israel.

This beast has seven heads: the first head of this beast represents the king of Babylon’s conquest of Jerusalem, the second head represents the Median king’s dominance over Jerusalem, the third head represents Persia’s reign over Jerusalem, the fourth head the Egyptian Ptolemies’ control over Jerusalem, the fifth is the Syrian Seleucids’ rule over Jerusalem, the sixth is the Roman emperor’s dominance over Jerusalem, and the seventh head has yet to arise in history.

There is one person (“king”)—yet to emerge in history—who earns the primary right to the title, “the beast,” in Revelation. A time will come in the future when one individual political leader will be the latest and greatest manifestation of the 7-headed beast of Revelation 13. This Satanically inspired ruler will revive Satan’s attempts to defeat the people of God and to thwart God’s purposes for them. He will take those attempts to new heights. Before the present hour of this present age is over, it will appear as though this beast has defeated God. He will exalt himself as divine, as if he were an apotheosis of God himself. Therefore, by the end of Revelation, the identity of the beast has shifted. No longer is it the long, ongoing series of rulers who have acted antagonistically to God and to Israel. In the end, the beast denotes one supreme individual who, at the end of history, actively attempts to destroy Israel.

Let me summarize. With regard to the events described and predicted in Revelation, there is one particular individual who can claim the title “Beast.” He is the future individual who will prove to be the most powerful and effective enemy that Israel shall have ever faced. However, designating this individual the beast is intended to reflect the fact that he is part of a larger, ongoing effort by Satan—one that reaches way back into antiquity, beginning with Babylon.

This, then, is what the book of Revelation means by “the beast.” However, that is not what I shall mean by “the beast” in this paper. My use of the term is inspired by Revelation, but I do not employ it exactly as that book does. Rather, I revert to the essential meaning of “beast” as a symbol. As I noted above, the beast can symbolize any Satanically inspired opposition to God and to his purposes. Revelation focuses primarily on Satan’s efforts to subjugate or destroy Israel, Jerusalem, and the Jews. But it alludes to other and further hostilities by Satan. Satan has sought (and will seek) at various times and in various ways to oppose and persecute any and all who name the name of Jesus.⁷ In the arguments of this paper, I use the phrase “the beast” to describe ANY such effort by Satan to oppose God and his purposes—anywhere in the world and anywhere in history. So, the beast can designate any person, culture, institution, or society—anywhere in the world and at any time in the world—that seeks to thwart and defeat God and his purposes and that asserts its superiority to God. Unless I indicate otherwise, that will always be what I mean by “the beast” in this paper.

My contention in this paper is that American society has become a beast in exactly this sense. This American Beast is becoming more powerful and aggressive in our times, but

⁷ E.g., Revelation 12:17—“So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

it is not new. It was born over a century ago and has been controlling the direction of American culture for approximately 150 years. It is this beast that I want to try to describe and explain. Consequently, whenever I make reference to the “Beast” in this paper—unless I indicate otherwise—I will always have in mind the cultural power that came into its own in the 19th and 20th centuries and has been the force that has shaped American culture ever since.⁸

The imagery of the “beast” suggests cruel violence and vicious destruction. But here is the most remarkable feature of the American Beast. Unlike Babylon, Media, Persia, the Greek kingdoms, and Rome—kingdoms who opposed the people of God with violence, death, destruction, and subjugation—the American Beast employs an entirely different strategy. Its power does not lie in military might and the threat of physical harm, the power and control of the American Beast is by entirely different means. Its power comes primarily through seduction.

The American Beast opposes God by opposing the beliefs and values that come from God. The Beast opposes those beliefs and values that honor God and that, by all rights, should characterize the people of God. The Beast’s opposition to God, to his people, and to his purposes, therefore, takes the form of opposing the beliefs and values that God promotes. It does not oppose them by threatening violence against anyone who would embrace them. Rather, it opposes them by seeking to seduce people away from them. Exploiting mankind’s desire for significance (and especially his desire for intellectual or moral respectability), the Beast offers to grant moral, intellectual, and social respectability to anyone who is willing to embrace the anti-God (and, therefore, anti-biblical) values and beliefs that it promotes.

To summarize: here is the concept of a beast that I am using it is this paper:

*When the culture of a particular society is decidedly opposed to the beliefs and values that are taught in the Bible, the Satanically inspired **cultural power** within that society that shapes, determines, and propagates the opposing beliefs, values, and practices of that culture I will call “**the beast**.”*

Many different modern cultures or societies are subject to and shaped by such a beast. But that one that concerns me in this paper (and the only one I can speak to) is the American Beast. My purpose here in part one is to analyze the nature of this American Beast’s power and control. Only by understanding the nature and dynamic of its influence and control are we in any real position to resist it.

Understanding the Beast: Its Goal and the Dynamic of Its Influence

Sometime during the late 19th century and early 20th century three distinct, but interconnected cultural realities were born and became deeply integrated into the fabric of

⁸ In the argument that follows, it will readily seem that the Beast is Satan. That is not what I mean. The Beast designates the controlling sociological and historical power at the center of American culture. However, because that cultural power ultimately derives from and is inspired by Satan, the line between them will not always be readily discernible.

American culture: (1) the compelling, unavoidable sense that there exists a “superior” class of people in American society⁹, (2) the emergence of Contrabiblicism as a new, alternative religion of the superior class¹⁰, and (3) the development of propaganda as the means of propagating this new religion of Contrabiblicism.¹¹ In order to understand the Beast and its power in American culture, we must understand each of these three realities.¹²

The Superior Class

A tacit, never-explicitly-acknowledged, feature of American culture for more than a century is the existence of a two-class society. Or, perhaps more accurately, it is the

⁹ To whatever extent my observation here contains any genuine insight, I must credit Angelo Codevilla for its inspiration. Every now and then you read a book that analyzes something that you have known, experienced, and lived your whole life through, but you were never quite able to put your finger on what it was. Professor Codevilla’s book, *The Ruling Class* is one of those books for me. [*The Ruling Class: How They Corrupted America and What We Can Do About It* by Angelo M. Codevilla, Beaufort Books, 2010 (New York, NY)] His identification of the existence of a ruling class sheds a great deal of light on my own personal history and experience. I believe he is right on target. I do not adopt Codevilla’s exact analysis and nomenclature in this paper; but my analysis would not have been possible without the initial insight and inspiration provided by Codevilla’s book. I prefer to title the higher class of people the “superior class” rather than the “ruling class.” In my experience, my title more aptly captures who it is that belongs to this class of people. Very few of the “superior” class are in a position to actually “rule,” and few of them are even interested in the power to rule. But all of them, I submit, are interested in belonging to a superior class of human beings. Hence, “superior class” seems like a more accurately descriptive title than “ruling class.” For most (but not all) of this class of people, they are motivated less by power, and more by self-concept.

¹⁰ For reasons I will explain later, I will ultimately re-title “Contrabiblicism” as “Leftism.” Throughout the paper, I use the term “Leftism” synonymously with “Contrabiblicism.” Contra-biblicism is defined negatively; it is defined by what it opposes. Namely, it is a commitment to reject and oppose the beliefs and values taught in the Bible. For this understanding of American culture, I am indebted to a number of different thinkers. I am certain that I do not recall all that have proposed this analysis to me; but three come most readily to mind: (i) Norman Podhoretz (*Why Jews Are Liberal?*) (ii) David Mamet (*Secret Knowledge*) and (iii) Evan Sayet, in a speech he gave (The speech by Evan Sayet that influenced me can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS-qXbgJ5IM> [Evan Sayet: Understanding Modern Leftist Thought]. A later sequel to that speech can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xkyn3JaLrcw> [Evan Sayet—Hating What's Right: How the Modern Liberal Winds Up on the Wrong Side of Every Issue].) Each, in his own way, argues that the social-political left’s commitment to the values and beliefs of the left is a religious commitment. And some of them argue that the *defining characteristic* of what the modern left believes and values is its rejection of traditional, biblical values.

¹¹ While I do not follow his analysis exactly, and while I define propaganda in a somewhat different context, my understanding has been shaped dramatically by Jacques Ellul’s book, *Propaganda*.

¹² It is important to note right at the outset: the power of the Beast is utterly dependent upon and almost entirely explicable in terms of certain foundational realities of human experience—namely, realities like sin, rebellion against God, need for approval, etc. Therefore, to speak of the power of the Beast is not to speak of some kind of magical power derived from Satan. It is to speak of the dynamic interplay of different psycho-social realities that causes the effects we are analyzing. Or, at least, the effects we are analyzing are understandable in terms of these psycho-social realities if and when certain cultural conditions are already in place. The only truly mysterious fact is how these certain necessary conditions came to be realized in the first place. It is possible that this mysterious fact cannot be adequately explained in terms of purely natural (psycho-social and historical) causes. If not, then perhaps we see here—in the fact these conditions were ever put in place in the first place—the direct work of Satan.

perception of a two-class society. Unlike older European societies, where the upper class is defined by rather fixed attributes like inherited wealth, pedigree, or both, the *superior* class in American society came to be defined in a way that makes it more democratic. In America, one is not born into the superior class. He can be “baptized” into it. Anyone, from any background, can become a member of the superior class by simply meeting its membership requirements. And what are those? All one need do to belong to the superior class is to endorse, without reservation, the values, beliefs, and practices of the superior class. To the extent that one conforms his values and beliefs to its standard of orthodoxy, to that extent he “belongs” to the superior class. Or, at least, he can *feel justified in believing* that he belongs to it. Accordingly, anyone in America can belong to it. One can be poor and have no pedigree and yet still consider himself among the upper echelons of the superior class.

In what sense is the superior class “superior”? There are primarily three ways. They are intellectually superior to the lower class; they are morally superior to it; and they are superior in that very difficult to define quality of “coolness.” Someone who identifies himself with the superior class is just simply more “cool” (hip, with-it, non-square, sophisticated, etc.) than the people in the lesser, “un-cool” class.¹³

The attraction to membership in the superior class will be different for different people. Some will be most attracted to its intellectual superiority. Others to its moral superiority. Still others will be attracted by the “cool” factor. Some members of the superior class are highly intelligent, very learned, and quite academically successful, and they want to be duly acknowledged for it. Membership in the superior class allows them to believe that they enjoy respect for their intellect or intellectual achievements. Other members of the superior class have high moral sensibilities. Membership in the superior class allows them to believe that they are living in conformity to superior moral standards. Other members lack in both of the above areas—they are neither particularly intelligent nor particularly moral—but they can nonetheless believe that they are superior; for, by virtue of their membership in the superior class, they reflect the “coolness” that attaches to every member of the superior class.

One of the important features of the American superior class is its lack of any clear social demarcation. Unlike older European aristocracies where every aristocrat knew exactly where he stood—who outranked him and who did not—a member of the American superior class belongs by self-appointment. I belong because I believe I belong, whether anyone else acknowledges it or not. No one can deny me my rightful place in the superior class. I meet the qualifications; no one can rob me of my honor. Who determines whether I meet the qualifications for inclusion in the superior class? I do. I belong because I believe I belong; and I believe I belong because, by self-assessment, I meet the requisite qualifications—to be specific, I know of myself that I embrace the beliefs, values, and practices that qualify one to count himself a member of the superior class. This makes membership in the superior class quite easy. It is open to

¹³ Many times the “squareness” of the inferior class is perhaps even more obvious and pronounced than is the “coolness” of the superior class. The appeal of being a member of the superior class is sometimes more a matter of avoiding being “square” than it is a matter of actually being “cool.”

anyone; and initiation is a very private affair. One could be a member of the superior class secretly; no one would ever know. But that is alright, for the reward of membership is a very private reward. No public acknowledgement is needed. No one ever needs to know whether I belong to the superior class. The ultimate reward of belonging to it is *self-satisfaction*. Even if no one else ever knows, *I know* that I am intellectually, or morally, or otherwise superior; for I know that I belong to the class of people that bestows such a status.

From what I have said so far, it is easy to see how the superior class could, over time, become the majority of the population. Since there is no other qualification except simple conformity to the requisite set of values and beliefs, and since membership is self-assessed, and since the self-satisfaction of membership is great, it seems almost inevitable that, over time, the vast majority of the population would self-assess as members of the superior class.

Eventually, therefore, the superior class could have the power of a majority. With enough time, the power of a *large* majority. However, there is a further uncanny feature of the superior class. Historically, it has had much greater social and cultural power than its numbers can explain. Even when the superior class has comprised only a small minority of the population, it has wielded social, cultural, and political power as if it were the majority population.¹⁴

How can this be? How, in a democracy, can a minority wield the cultural power of the majority? Ultimately, I have no answer to this. But this much must be true: the same dynamic that created the perception of a superior class in the first place created the social illusion that the views of the superior class possessed a seriousness, a weight, a respectability, and an inevitability that the views and values of the lower class lacked.¹⁵ Because of this widespread, almost universal perception, the views of the superior class have a cultural power that far surpasses the number of its members.

¹⁴ In the early part of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the American populace would have believed what the Fundamentalists believed at the time. However, the Fundamentalists acted and thought of themselves as a beleaguered minority. Why? Was it some kind of mass hysteria within the Fundamentalist sub-culture? I don't think so. The Fundamentalists were reacting to a social reality that was real and palpable. They had that same uncanny sense of the superiority of the superior class's views that I am describing here. It is an extremely odd position to be in, to KNOW that your views are right, and yet to simultaneously FEEL that they are inferior to those of the "superior" class around you. But I have personally experienced being in this position many times. So I understand the Fundamentalists' reaction, for I think I have been in exactly their position. It is actually quite remarkable to know that you are an intelligent person who has come to embrace intellectually valid and respectable beliefs and yet, at the same time, to feel keenly about yourself—based only on the content of those beliefs—that you are unintelligent, uneducated, and simple-minded. It is uncanny that any human being would ever find himself in that position. But it is commonplace in American culture. For the person who holds any version of Judaeo-Christian beliefs, it just is the modern American experience.

¹⁵ It must be remembered that my description of the superior class here is part of my analysis of the dynamic power of the Beast. Now the Beast is ultimately a Satanically-inspired reality. It may very well be, therefore, that the compelling illusion of the superiority of the values and beliefs of the superior class must ultimately be explained as Satanic deception. And, if Satanic deception is ultimately some kind of supernatural effect, then it must ultimately be explained supernaturally.

The existence of this superior class and its dynamic relationship to the inferior class will undoubtedly be clear to anyone who has lived in American culture. If one has refused to identify with the superior class in any respect, he will be keenly aware of all the ways in which he was subtly made to feel stupid, immoral, or square for his refusal to conform. On the other hand, if one has willingly identified with the superior class, he will be keenly aware—unless he refuses to be honest about his own attitudes—of how stupid, immoral, and contemptible he thinks the others are—that is, the ones who do not agree with his values and beliefs. Or, anyone who is wavering in his commitment to the superior class will be keenly aware of what the stakes are: if he does not knuckle under and conform to the views of the superior class, he will make himself appear contemptible. The existence of this class is an undeniable reality. It is an uncanny reality in many respects; but its existence, and the dynamic that gives it existence, cannot really be denied.

Contrabiblicism

Above, in my very definition of the Beast, I included an explanation of the Beast's agenda: to promote a set of values, beliefs, and practices that is entirely different from those taught by God. This very different set of values and beliefs promoted by the Beast has one characteristic feature: it is decidedly contrary to the values and beliefs revealed in the Bible. Therefore, I will use the label "Contrabiblicism" to designate this set of values and beliefs. The strategy that the Beast is currently using to oppose God and his purposes is to promote Contrabiblicism. His goal is to replace belief in the worldview, message, and teaching of the Bible with the values and beliefs of Contrabiblicism.

In order to understand the dynamics of Contrabiblicism in American culture, we must understand three outstanding facts related to it: (1) since it is determined solely by its rejection of Godly (biblical) values, the content of Contrabiblicism is a fragmented and incoherent set of beliefs and values that is, as a consequence, philosophically indefensible; (2) by the very nature of that to which they are committing themselves, the proponents of Contrabiblicism must necessarily make a religious (rather than an intellectual) commitment to it; and (3) propaganda is the most effective and important force at work in American culture to induce a religious commitment to Contrabiblicism. I will discuss each of these three facts in the discussion that follows.

The Philosophical Indefensibility of Contrabiblicism

Intrinsic to the very nature and role of Contrabiblicism, the content of its beliefs and values is determined negatively and reactively, not positively and constructively. Contrabiblicism, by its very nature, is a rejection of what the Bible teaches. It can be selective about which elements, in particular, it rejects. Hence, it may not reject absolutely every tenet of the biblical worldview. But its essential purpose is to stand in opposition to and as an alternative to whatever God recommends. Its agenda, inherent to its very existence, is to undermine and renounce the worldview, message, and system of ideas revealed in and taught by the Bible.

As a consequence, the values and beliefs that constitute Contrabiblicism are not elements of a philosophy derived rationally and coherently from certain observations

about human experience. It does not begin with certain fundamental insights and assumptions about reality and then move intelligently through rational inferences to construct an entire coherent worldview. Rather, it begins with a more-or-less arbitrary rejection of certain elements of the rationally coherent system of ideas taught by the Bible. Those elements of the biblical teaching that are rejected are then opposed by contrary values or beliefs. Those contrary values and beliefs are then loosely collected into one and the same “system” of ideas. In other words, the “system” of ideas that constitutes Contrabiblicism is not built from the ground up into a coherent philosophical worldview. Rather, it is what results when one has torn down the biblical worldview, rejected various of its pieces, and replaced them willy-nilly with pieces whose only real virtue is that they are contrary to biblical values or beliefs.

The result of such a process, understandably, is not a “system” at all. It is a loose collection of anti-biblical values and beliefs. Hence, Contrabiblicism is not a rationally coherent worldview from which rational inferences and judgments can be made. Rather, it is an incoherent, fragmented set of often-contradictory beliefs and values.¹⁶ As such, it is indefensible. No worldview or system of ideas can be defended that is rationally incoherent and inherently self-contradictory.

Religious Commitment to Contrabiblicism

Due to its intrinsic nature, it is not possible to make an intellectual commitment to Contrabiblicism. If one is to commit to it at all, he must commit to it “religiously.” But to understand this point, I must explain what I mean by a “religious” commitment.

Excursus on the Nature of Religious Commitment

A “religious” commitment is one way of being personally committed to a particular value or belief. When I use the concept, I intend to distinguish it from another way of being personally committed to that same value or belief—an intellectual commitment. An intellectual commitment to a belief (or value) is a personal commitment that one makes to hold or embrace that particular belief *so long as (and to the extent that) I am rationally and intellectually justified to do so*. A religious commitment—in contradistinction to an intellectual commitment—is a personal commitment that one makes to hold or embrace that particular belief *no matter what*.

In a religious commitment, I decide to be undyingly loyal to a belief, whether reason and rationality support me or not. If I am religiously committed to a belief, then no facts, no arguments, no evidence—not any “reason” whatsoever—will ever be allowed to move me away from embracing it. Contrary to that, if I am intellectually committed to that same belief, I will always be open to considering new facts, new evidence, and new arguments. If the new argument or evidence convinces me, rationally, that the belief is not intellectually sound, then I am ready and willing to change my mind and renounce it.

¹⁶ The rejection of any given element of the Bible’s teaching is typically “rationalized” in one way or another. Such rationalization is done on a belief-by-belief, value-by-value basis. There is no consistent rational basis upon which the biblical values are rejected. They are ultimately rejected because the intrinsic purpose of Contra-biblicism is to undermine the biblical teaching, not because there exists a more compelling system of ideas or worldview that excludes them.

When my personal commitment to a belief is an *intellectual* one, I will no longer hold as true what my intellect finds unconvincing. Exactly the opposite is the case in a *religious* commitment. When I am religiously committed to a belief, then, if new evidence suggests to me, rationally, that my belief is not intellectually sound, I will nevertheless hold on to the belief. I will not change my mind and renounce it. Even when I am faced with compelling evidence that my belief is not intellectually sound, I will loyally maintain its truth anyway.

A religious commitment, by its very nature, is a matter of loyalty to a belief. If one is religiously committed to belief B, then one has undying loyalty to belief B. An intellectual commitment, on the other hand, is a matter of being loyal to rationality. If belief B ceases to seem rational, then an intellectual commitment ceases to be justified. When one is intellectually committed to belief B, then—being undyingly loyal to reason—one is committed to belief B only so long as it continues to be rational to do so.

By its very nature, therefore, a religious commitment is a stubborn, dogmatic commitment to something. It is inherently irrational; it is inherently unreasonable. Yet, on the other hand, an intellectual commitment is an open and reasonable commitment to something. It is inherently and necessarily rational. It is impossible to be intellectually committed to something that is inherently irrational.

Inevitability of a Religious Commitment to Contrabiblicism

As we can see, then, it is not possible to make an intellectual commitment to Contrabiblicism. Contrabiblicism is rationally incoherent and inherently self-contradictory. By the very nature of an intellectual commitment, one cannot make an intellectual commitment to something that is inherently irrational. Accordingly, no one can make a lasting intellectual commitment to Contrabiblicism.¹⁷ The only thing that remains, therefore, is to make a religious commitment. If one is intent on making an abiding personal commitment to Contrabiblicism, then, inevitably, it will have to be a religious commitment. An abiding intellectual commitment to a philosophically incoherent and rationally indefensible system of ideas is not possible.

Propaganda

How it happened that Contrabiblicism came to be established as the official religion of America's superior class is perhaps something of a mystery. However, once it became established as such, there is no mystery about why it continues to grow in numbers, power, and influence. The engine that keeps it in place as the reigning religion of American culture is *propaganda*. To understand this claim, we need first to understand exactly what I mean by "propaganda."

Excursus on the Nature of Propaganda

¹⁷ Granted, if its irrationality is not yet evident to him, one could initially make an intellectual commitment to Contra-biblicism. But one could never persist in such an intellectual commitment. Once its rational incoherence and self-contradictory nature were to become apparent, he would either have to abandon his personal commitment to it, or transform his personal commitment into a religious commitment.

Propaganda is a difficult concept to analyze and define. But here is what I mean by propaganda: *propaganda is any set of concepts, arguments, or language that functions to "justify" a belief and/or value when that belief or value is incapable of being justified rationally.* By its very nature, therefore, propaganda is something that gives the appearance or illusion of warranting something when, rationally, it offers no real warrant whatsoever.

Propaganda comes into play when a person has made an inherently irrational religious commitment to something. A human being can never remain altogether comfortable with a mere religious commitment. Since religious commitments are inherently irrational (and hence, from a rational perspective, illegitimate), no human being can maintain a merely religious commitment to a belief or value without doing violence to his humanity. Human beings are inherently rational. To tolerate irrationality is intrinsically inimical to his very humanity.

Therefore, to remain comfortable with a commitment he has made, a person must believe that his belief is rationally warranted. When it becomes evident that the belief to which one has made a religious commitment lacks rational warrant, that person has a choice. He can further evaluate the grounds of his belief and determine that it is rationally justified after all. Accordingly, he can then transform his personal commitment into an intellectual commitment, abandoning his religious commitment. Or, he can persist in his religious commitment. But, in order to do so, he must give himself a basis for believing that his belief is warranted. To remain religiously committed to an *unwarranted* belief—by virtue of sheer dogmatism alone—conflicts too severely with human rationality for anyone to be able to do it. A person must be able to believe that he is rationally warranted in his believing. If no actual, legitimately rational warrant is available, then he must settle for the *illusion* of rational warrant. But, at the very least, he must have the illusion of warrant.¹⁸

This is where propaganda enters the picture. Propaganda is the human dynamic whereby human beings obtain or create "warrant" for their religious commitments when no rational, intellectual warrant is possible. By creating believable, specious "reasons" for holding a belief (even though those "reasons" do not actually offer real rational warrant for it), propaganda provides a basis upon which people can comfortably persist in a religious commitment to an otherwise unwarranted belief.

One of the most important features of propaganda is that people *want* propaganda. They "need" it. There are two kinds of motivations for a human being believing what he believes: there are rational motivations (that is, "reasons" to believe something), and then there are irrational motivations (that is, non-rational desires to believe something). Non-rational desires to believe something can often be much more compelling and determinative than are rational motivations. Born to be rational, sinful, rebellious human beings often nonetheless prefer to be irrational in their actions and choices, including in their choice of what to believe. When that happens—when the belief they want to believe is intrinsically irrational—belief must involve a religious commitment. A person chooses

¹⁸ The following is completely untenable: a person cannot simultaneously know that some irrational belief B lacks all rational warrant and yet persist in a religious commitment to B.

to be *religiously* committed to what he deeply *wants* to believe, even though that belief has no rational justification. When that happens, the person craves a basis for his belief; he craves the illusion of some sort of “warrant” for his belief. Hence, he craves propaganda.

Propaganda has different sources. There are professional propagandists. Professional propagandists are gifted at knowing what “reasons” for a belief will find wide acceptance among a person’s peers. In other words, they are good at creating specious arguments, arguments that will find social acceptance among one’s contemporaries. The professionals create “reasons” for believing specific beliefs and then they peddle those reasons to the public in the marketplace of ideas.¹⁹

But if no professionally produced propaganda is available to him, a person will create his own propaganda. Then, as he employs this self-created propaganda in a social interaction, he makes that propaganda public. Then, once it has entered the public domain, it can be picked up and used by others. In this way, the general public becomes one very important source of the very propaganda by which it, the general public, is propagandized.²⁰

Propaganda has a role to play in my personal, psycho-emotional experience—to stave off intellectual insecurity. But it also has a social role—to prevent others from exposing the intellectual inadequacy of my religious commitments. The latter role serves the former. If others can be prevented from exposing the intellectual inadequacy of my religious commitments, then I can better sustain the illusion that my religious commitments are justified. And the more I feel that my religious commitments are justified, the less intellectually insecure I feel. I will explain this further by describing the sort of circumstance where propaganda can be seen to serve its purpose.

Suppose that I have made a religious commitment to some particular Christian doctrine X. It is a religious commitment, not an intellectual commitment. I believe that I am being spiritually noble to embrace X and to be loyal to it no matter what comes. While on the one hand I feel good about the quality of my “faith,” yet I feel vaguely uncomfortable and terribly insecure about the intellectual integrity of my commitment. Am I being naïve, gullible, or intellectually irresponsible to embrace X? The question haunts me if I allow myself to think about it. Don’t I need to have some “good” reasons for believing X? I am in the market for some propaganda.

Fortunately, there are professional Christian propagandists who have created and are ready to provide those “good” reasons for believing X: if someone challenges your belief in X by saying Y, then point out that Z, and if he challenges your belief in X by saying

¹⁹ I say “specious” arguments and “reasons” (in quotes) because these “reasons” are not actually rationally compelling. If we evaluate them carefully, they do not give rational warrant to the beliefs they supposedly “warrant.” They are merely bases for “warrant” that are socially acceptable—that is, I will be able to pass them off at a cocktail party as such. The professionals who market such propaganda are to be found among political demagogues, talking heads on television, academics, various social commentators, opinion columnists, journalists, news reporters, etc.

²⁰ In the sense in which I am using the concept, to be “propagandized” is to be made to feel justified in believing beliefs and embracing values that I am not rationally justified to believe or embrace because I have been offered a “reason” that gives me the illusion that I am justified in doing so.

W, then point out that V, etc. Having been armed (and “edified”) by these Christian propagandists, I feel less insecure. I believe that I DO have reasons for believing X.

Now, along comes an unbeliever who begins to ask some challenging questions about my belief in X. “What about Y?” he asks. I say, “Z.” “So?” he responds. “I don’t think Z really justifies believing in X because ... (and here he spells out his reasoning).” How do I respond? Assuming that my belief in X is not actually rationally justified, and assuming that the unbelieving critic of my belief has put his finger on where and how it lacks rational warrant, I will not have an intelligent answer to this critic. Now what will I do? I will probably get terribly defensive and use various attempts to intimidate the challenger in order to get him to end his challenge to my belief.²¹

In the scenario I just described, the propaganda failed to do its job. The role of propaganda is not to *convince* or *persuade* another person. Its role is to keep a potential critic of my religious commitments at arm’s length. It is supposed to stop the challenger from criticizing my belief. When another person issues a challenge to my belief in X, propaganda is supposed to satisfy the other person that I have a “good” reason for believing in X. That, in turn, is supposed to put an end to his challenge. “I have my ‘good’ reason for believing X, so back off and shut up.” If the challenger does not back off and shut up, then propaganda has not had its desired effect. If, in effect, he asks, “what makes you think that Y is an adequate justification for believing X?” then (unless I am equipped with further propaganda to be used in just such a circumstance) I am at a loss to meet his challenge.

And why should that be a problem?²² Let me explain. Remember, I am *religiously* committed to X. By definition, then, to cease believing X is not an option (that would violate my religious commitment to it). But my challenger has made it impossible to remain comfortable with my *rationally unjustified* religious commitment. My new awareness that X is rationally unjustified (thanks to the challenger) is in conflict with my desire to have intellectual integrity in what I believe. So the challenger has jabbed his finger right in the tender sore spot in my psyche— my insecurity about the intellectual integrity of my belief in X. It is very uncomfortable; and I will likely respond as anyone does to pain—violently. I will respond to the challenger’s challenge with highly energized defensiveness. Where propaganda has failed me, volume, non-verbal intimidation, etc. must pick up the slack.

So, why do I use and need propaganda? In order to avoid the discomfort of intellectual insecurity—a discomfort that must inevitably accompany any and all religious commitments. To avoid such discomfort, I must avoid thinking too deeply about the reasons for my religious commitments. I must allow myself to be deluded about them, believing that I have rational justification when I do not. Propaganda is helpful in creating the illusion that I have adequate justification. But other people can be a threat to

²¹ With my inability to adequately answer the critics’ last challenge, all of my insecurity about the intellectual validity of my belief will come flooding back. My highly emotional, defensive response is a natural symptom of that intellectual insecurity.

²² Of course, it is not a problem for one who is truly interested in arriving at a belief that is rationally justified. If I want to be rationally justified in what I believe, I will welcome having the rational shortcomings of my beliefs exposed.

that illusion. They can come along and invite me to take a deeper look at the basis for my commitments. By challenging the adequacy of my “reasons” for my commitment, they face me squarely into my original insecurity. Their challenge breaks the spell of my self-delusion. Effective propaganda, therefore, is propaganda that stops the challenge of another person at its initial stage. If the other person can immediately accept as valid that “reason” P is a respectable reason for believing X, then all I have to do is recite P and the spell of my illusion will never have to be broken. I can go right on believing that I am justified in believing X because of P, for no one is calling it into question. Only when the other person questions the legitimacy of P’s serving as a basis for X has propaganda failed to serve its function.

I have explored the nature of propaganda in the context of belief in Christian doctrine. Exactly the same dynamic occurs in the context of political beliefs. Today, more and more people have made a religious commitment to their political beliefs. To encounter someone who has made an intellectual commitment to his political beliefs is becoming rarer and rarer. Therefore, I could have outlined an argument over political beliefs that would have looked exactly like the sketch I drew of the argument over religious doctrine.²³

Propaganda and Contrabiblicism

As I maintained above, Contrabiblicism is a rationally incoherent system of ideas to which one must make a religious commitment if he chooses to be committed to it at all. Accordingly, it is of such a nature that no rational justification can be offered for it. Believing what Contrabiblicism teaches can have no warrant. So how can any rational human being embrace Contrabiblicism comfortably? Only by employing propaganda. If he accepts the specious arguments offered in pro-Contrabiblicist propaganda, an intelligent person can delude himself into believing that his embrace of Contrabiblicism is justified. No other path is open to him. Since Contrabiblicism is inherently irrational, he can never justify his beliefs through rational argument. Hence—if he is unwilling to forsake his irrational belief in Contrabiblicism—he must resort to propaganda to ease his mind, to reassure himself that he is acting in keeping with intellectual integrity.

As greater and greater numbers of people make a religious commitment to Contrabiblicism, there are more and more people intent on creating the propaganda necessary to sustain such a commitment. The culture becomes filled with propaganda on every side. Today, Americans are totally immersed in a whole ocean of propaganda that supports their belief in—their religious commitment to—the values and beliefs of Contrabiblicism. The propaganda is so ubiquitous that it is difficult to resist its spell. It is the powerful engine that is driving more and more people toward a commitment to

²³ That is why it is virtually impossible to have any real dialogue about political values. When either party to a confrontation is religiously committed to his political values or beliefs, dialogue is impossible. When facts, arguments, and evidence cannot cause one to change his mind (as is the case with any religious commitment, by definition), then there is little point in discussing facts, arguments, and evidence. In other words, there is little point in dialogue. Accordingly, political conversation typically turns into a shouting match where volume and intimidation takes the place of evidence and argument.

Contrabiblicism.²⁴ Over time, propaganda will insure that a greater and greater portion of the American population embraces Contrabiblicism. Eventually, unless something unforeseen should intervene, the vast majority of the population will accept it. It is propaganda that shall have brought this about.

The Relationships Between the Above Three Realities

To complete the picture, I must trace the interconnections between the above three realities.

The agenda of the Beast is to promote religious commitments to the set of beliefs and values that constitute the “religion” of Contrabiblicism. Of what does that set of beliefs consist? And who determines it? The set of beliefs that constitute the religion of Contrabiblicism is determined organically by the superior class. Whatever the superior class says one must believe, that is what one must believe, if one opts to be an adherent to Contrabiblicism. Why might one want to adhere to Contrabiblicism? Because adherence to Contrabiblicism qualifies a person to think of himself as a member of the superior class. To state it differently, it is the superior class that determines what one must value and believe in order to consider himself a member of the superior class.

Since the content of Contrabiblicism is determined organically and informally by its own adherents, its exact content changes over time. As generations come and go, the content of Contrabiblicism changes with the generations. What one must believe today may no longer be necessary tomorrow. Contrabiblicism today is a very different belief system from the Contrabiblicism of tomorrow.

Why, again, is embracing Contrabiblicism desirable? Because it permits inclusion in the superior class. If one does not embrace the values and beliefs that constitute Contrabiblicism, then he cannot consider himself a member of the superior class. And if he cannot consider himself a member of the superior class, then he cannot experience the rewards of such membership. Namely, will not be permitted *to view himself as morally, and intellectually, and socially superior*. As we can see, then, the inextricable link between the “religion” of Contrabiblicism and membership in the superior class is what gives Contrabiblicism its greatest personal appeal.²⁵ Exactly this is what makes commitment to Contrabiblicism compelling.²⁶

²⁴ Because they are rebels against God, most people actually want to make this commitment to Contrabiblicism anyway. But they need an excuse. Propaganda does not cause a person to make a personal commitment to Contra-biblicism; his own sinful desires do that. Propaganda simply gives him a socially-acceptable excuse to do so, for it allows him to follow his sinful desires without feeling intellectually irresponsible in doing so.

²⁵ This is not to deny that Contra-biblicism is already inherently interesting and attractive to sinful rebels because of their rebelliousness toward God. Precisely because Contra-biblicism is *contra* the things of God, it is, by its very nature, appealing to someone whose very nature and being is *contra* the things of God.

²⁶ The appeal of belonging to the superior class (by embracing Contra-biblicism) exploits a human being's inherent desire for intellectual and moral respectability. Such a desire is God-given, natural, and good. The Beast offers to grant intellectual and moral respectability to anyone who embraces the beliefs and values of Contra-biblicism. But objective moral and intellectual respectability in the eyes of God is quite different from moral and intellectual respectability in the eyes of other sinful men. One cannot replace

Propaganda, as we saw earlier, significantly enhances the appeal of Contrabiblicism. By embracing Contrabiblicism, one can reap the rewards of membership in the superior class; but it comes at a cost. One must sacrifice one's intellectual integrity to do so. For some, this could be too steep a price. Propaganda serves the purpose of removing the cost—or, at least, it creates the illusion that the cost has been removed. By offering what appear to be acceptable "reasons" (however tenuous) for embracing the beliefs of Contrabiblicism, it creates the illusion that one can have the rewards of membership in the superior class while not sacrificing his intellectual integrity. It is the best of all possible worlds. One can have his cake and eat it too.

Understanding Leftism: The Worship of the Beast

Leftism

Until now, I have identified the "religion" that the Beast seeks to promote as Contrabiblicism. While that is a very apt and accurate description, it is not a particularly familiar one. From now on, I will identify the orthodox, established "religion" of the superior class (the one the Beast seeks to promote) as "Leftism." My purpose in this section is to define and describe Leftism. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Leftism and Contrabiblicism, as I am using those terms, are exactly synonymous. Everything I have said about Contrabiblicism applies exactly to the concept of Leftism.²⁷ I introduce the term "Leftism," not because it captures a new and different concept, but because it suggests connections to our experience that "Contrabiblicism" does not.

Leftism is a way of describing the set of values and beliefs that the Beast has desired to promote in American society from the middle of the nineteenth century until today. Having been birthed earlier in Europe, Leftism began to emerge in America in the post-Civil War period of the 19th century. It was a value system and mindset that rejected biblically based values and beliefs in favor of values and beliefs it considered intellectually and morally superior. It embraced the theories of Darwin over the creation accounts in Genesis. It embraced Freud's view of man over the biblical view of man. It gravitated toward Marxist theories and eschatology and rejected biblical theories and eschatology. It rejected the traditional view of biblical authority, and replaced it with a perception of the Bible that was developed by "higher criticism."

The beliefs and values of Leftism have changed over time. They are not static. A Leftist in 1890 did not hold the same values, beliefs, and priorities as a Leftist in 1970; and a Leftist in 1970 did not yet believe what the Leftist of 2013 believes. The Left that

the former with the latter, as if they were of equal value. Sinful human beings will be inclined to settle for the latter (respectability in the eyes of other men); but the former is what they should seek and desire. There is an important implication that follows: the Beast will have no power over a man who is not sinful in his desires and lusts. If a man seeks only the approval of God, and is willing to forego the approval of man, the Beast will have no power over him. The only thing the Beast has to offer is the approval of men. If that is not good enough for a person, then that person is immune to the seduction of the Beast.

²⁷ As I argued earlier with respect to Contra-biblicism, Leftism—while not being a formal religion—is most certainly a religion in the sense that its adherents make a religious commitment to it.

embraced the “color-blind” vision of Martin Luther King did not, at that time, evidence the perspectives of the racially hypersensitive Left of 2013.

But all Leftists hold one thing in common: they firmly believe that the values, beliefs, and priorities that they hold (as Leftists) are morally and intellectually superior to the values and beliefs taught in the Bible. “Contrabiblicism,” therefore, is a very apt title for Leftism. But, throughout all of modern history, Contrabiblicism has always manifested itself in and through the social, political, and religious Left. As a consequence, it is equally appropriate to us the label “Leftism” to describe this official religion of the superior class.²⁸

For the reasons explored above in our discussion of Contrabiblicism, Leftism is not an intellectually and philosophically coherent set of beliefs and values. Its beliefs and values cannot be deduced from foundational principles. On the contrary, it is open to and will (potentially) embrace anything that opposes the biblical beliefs and values. Hence, the content of its beliefs and values is always, incoherent, fragmented, self-contradictory, and generally crazy making to anyone who tries to make sense of them.

At any given time in history, Leftism’s values, beliefs, and priorities are determined by a religious authority. That authority is the consensus of “the superior class.” A true Leftist will be religiously committed to whatever values, beliefs, and priorities are being embraced and promoted by the contemporary superior class.²⁹

Leftism—for its own reasons and for its own purposes—has embraced (and will at various times embrace) biblical values and beliefs. But its ultimate goal has always been (and always will be) to undermine biblical values and beliefs and replace them with its own superior values and beliefs. When biblical beliefs or values overlap with those of Leftism, it is never because Leftism shares any common core commitments with the teaching of the Bible. Even when it is embracing some element of biblical teaching, Leftism is always inherently at enmity with biblical beliefs and values. To speak of a “Biblical Leftist” would be an oxymoron.³⁰ It is not possible to be a Bible-believer and a Leftist at the same time. They are in fundamental contradiction to one another.³¹

²⁸ There is no logically necessary reason why Contra-biblicism would have had to take the form of Leftism. There are many beliefs and values that one could adopt that would constitute a rejection of biblical values. But, as it happened, Contra-biblicism took the route of Leftism. In the place of biblical values, it created, embraced, and promoted those values and beliefs that we have come to identify as the social, political, economic, and religious Left wing. It is outside the scope of this paper to develop this point here, but it is worth noting that the political and economic doctrines of Leftism are elements of its belief system that contribute to its essential purpose to oppose biblical values. Marxism, socialism, and statism are no innocent inclusions in the Leftist religion. They are just as inimical to the values and beliefs of the Bible as anything else included among Leftist beliefs.

²⁹ That is why Leftist beliefs and values change over time. As the “superior class” changes its beliefs and values, so change the core beliefs and values of Leftism.

³⁰ There are those who identify themselves as Christian Leftists. But that, I submit, is because the category Christian does not have to include any real commitment to the Bible.

³¹ This may strike some readers as controversial. But the fact that it seems controversial is evidence of one of the basic theses of this paper: the Beast’s promotion of Contra-biblicism (Leftism) has powerfully and effectively transformed American culture. Some who consider themselves to be Bible-believing Christians are, in fact, Leftists in their actual, working beliefs. Others, who may, in fact, be Bible-believing Christians themselves, have become unwitting mouthpieces for Leftist propaganda. American culture has

Leftism is broad. It allows its adherents to believe virtually anything they want, so long as it does not interfere with their commitment to Leftism itself. That is why, from the very beginning of Leftism, there has always been a Christian Left. Leftism is quite content to allow a Leftist to call himself a Christian and to identify himself as an adherent to the Christian values and worldview, so long as his Christian commitments do not prevent him from embracing Leftism itself. A Christian can be a *bona fide* Leftist so long as his Christian beliefs do not interfere with his allegiance to the superior class, Leftism's true authority.³²

Leftism has always been accompanied by a very tangible sense of its own inevitability. One has always had the sense that Leftism is on the side of history; or, rather, that history is on the side of the Left.³³ This, in part, explains the otherwise inexplicable fact that, while throughout most of modern history the majority of the population has not been Leftist in its commitments, yet that majority has always felt that they were the "weaker," less influential portion of (if not the minority of) the population.

Many historians of Christianity have chided and criticized the Fundamentalists of the early twentieth century for their "fortress mentality." Allegedly, they thought of themselves as a group under siege by a superior force. Though they were not a minority, they thought of themselves as a minority. In the mid-twentieth century, someone coined the term "silent majority" to identify those people in American culture who were not committed to Leftist beliefs. At about the same time, a Christian minister formed a group that he titled "the Moral Majority." (The title reflects his confidence that the majority of Americans shared his group's moral values.) And, yet, the population as a whole dismissed the Moral Majority as a small, fringe group of hate-filled quacks. From personal experience, my whole life as a Christian has been marked by a very keen and palpable sense that I was part of a very, very small and insignificant minority.

The majority, non-Leftist population has always had a sense that it must play defense. This is so, in part, simply by the nature of Leftism. The Left is mounting an attack against their core beliefs. Certainly they will and must play defense. But it is also true that the majority has been put on the defensive by the very strong sense that the Left is a superior force. They have felt like a minority, even though they are not.

What accounts for this paradox? How can the majority of American culture feel like a small minority under siege? Part of the answer, of course, is that the gatekeepers of ideas and information (notably, the media and academia) are predominantly committed Leftists. But that does not fully account for this paradoxical phenomenon. Does Leftism have the greater cultural influence because the gatekeepers are Leftist? Or, have the

been so thoroughly captured and transformed by Leftism that even many followers of Jesus, who do not ultimately embrace Leftism, nevertheless espouse Leftist values. They have been so thoroughly acculturated that they do not even notice the contradiction.

³² Such a "Christian," therefore, cannot be a Bible-believing follower of Jesus. No authentic Bible-believing follower of Jesus can grant greater authority to the superior class than he does to the Bible.

³³ This may very well be a simple intuition of what is, in fact, true. In one very important sense, history is ultimately on the side of Leftism. Namely—if I understand the book of Revelation rightly—at the end of the present time, God's script calls for Leftism and the Beast to reign supreme over the whole earth until Jesus finally returns and puts an end to the Beast's reign. The sense of inevitability that we have even now may very well be an intuition that this is where history is headed in the present "hour" of this age.

gatekeepers all become Leftist because Leftism has the greater cultural power? Something has to account for WHY the vast majority of the gatekeepers are Leftists to begin with. The fact that the majority population can feel so strongly that they are a weak and powerless minority has an almost supernatural feel to it. I cannot identify an adequate historical or sociological cause. Perhaps we are seeing directly the work of the Deceiver.³⁴

American Reactions to Leftism

From its very beginning, Leftism has mounted an imperialistic attack against traditional Judaeo-Christian values and beliefs. By definition, that is what Leftism is; that is what Leftism does. By its very nature, Leftism is an aggressor ideology.

There have been a variety of different responses to the attacks of Leftism. Some, of course, have embraced it wholeheartedly. But others have sought to defend some or all of the values that Leftism is attacking. Those who have chosen to defend traditional American culture against the attack of the Left have typically been called Right wing. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, I will define a "reaction from the Right" as any reaction to the imperialistic aggression of the Left that seeks to defend and preserve *some element of Judaeo-Christian culture that Leftism has placed under attack*.

By its very nature—indeed, by definition—a reaction to Leftism "from the Right" is *reactionary*. That is, it is a reaction to the aggressive self-promotion and attack of Leftism. Leftism promotes its values and beliefs as morally and intellectually superior alternatives to any and every bible-based, Judaeo-Christian belief, value, or practice. Virtually every society that belongs to Western Civilization has been based, to some extent, on a Judaeo-Christian worldview and value-system. As a consequence, every Western society will experience the claims of Leftism as an affront to its traditional culture and values. If an individual within such a society rejects the claim that Leftist ideals are superior to bible-based, Judaeo-Christian ideals, then he will *ipso facto* be a defender of the traditional values of his society. He will be perceived as "conservative"—as one who desires to conserve the traditions and values of his culture.³⁵ And so he does, for he embraces the Judaeo-Christian values that lie at the core of his society.

³⁴ I do not insist that this is not natural explanation. The phenomenon may very well be explainable in merely historical and sociological terms. I am simply saying that, at this point, I don't know what that explanation is. I am open to the possibility that know strictly natural explanation ever can be or will be adequate.

³⁵ But notice how misleading such a perception is. Just because someone desires to preserve something fundamental to the traditions and values of his culture does not mean (a) that he is "conservative" by temperament, disposition, or psycho-emotional constitution, nor (b) that he is committed to "conserving" all things traditional. A person who is decidedly NOT conservative in his psycho-emotional constitution might—for intellectual, philosophical, and spiritual reasons—believe that the Leftist attack against biblical values and beliefs is wrong and seek to defend those values and beliefs against the aggression of Leftism. The fact that his defense of those values and beliefs is tantamount to defending traditional culture says nothing about how "conservative" he is in his psycho-emotional constitution. He is not motivated to defend those values *because they are traditional*. It is a coincidence that what he wants to defend happens also to be traditional. Similarly, a person who prefers change and ever-new things (and, hence, could never be accused of being a "traditionalist") might very well—for intellectual, philosophical, and spiritual

By definition, then, **a reaction from the Right** is a rejection of the notion that Leftist ideals are superior to bible-based, Judaeo-Christian ideals. Because he is persuaded of the goodness and truth of Judaeo-Christian ideals and belief, the Rightist's reaction involves a defense of the Judaeo-Christian foundation that underlies the traditional values of his society against the attack of the Left—against the new, more modern ideals of Leftism.

Clearly, a reaction from the Right is a "reaction"! The Right wing is always "reacting" to the attack from the Left. If there were no Left, the Right would not even exist. In other words, by definition, the Right will always be *reactionary*.

The Leftist would have you believe that "being reactionary" is some sort of character flaw. But, in the sense in which it is true of the Right wing reaction I am describing here, it is clearly NOT a character flaw. It is a perfectly valid existential choice in the particular historical context in which we find ourselves. Whenever, true to its nature, the ideologically-imperialistic Left plays the role of cultural aggressor and seeks to undermine and sabotage the existing values of a Western society, anyone who is existentially committed to a Judaeo-Christian value system will and must necessarily "react" against such imperialistic aggression. It is simply the rational and moral response to make.

Types of "Right-wing" Reactions

Throughout modern American history, there have been several different kinds of reactions from what is typically labeled the Right. But, in terms of how I have identified the "Right," these reactions could be classed into two distinct categories: (1) reactions from the Right, and (2) reactions from the Pseudo-Right.

As I am using the term, when a reaction to Leftism rejects the essential, fundamental core of makes Leftism what it is, then it is a reaction from the Right. What do I consider the essential, fundamental core of Leftism? Its antagonism toward the Bible; its rejection of the Bible's message, worldview, and teachings. If, in reaction to the Left's attack, one desires—to a substantial degree—to defend the Bible, its message, and its worldview, then I am defining that reaction as a reaction from the Right.³⁶

There are other kinds of reactions that I would class as reactions from the Pseudo-Right. These reactions are popularly labeled "Right wing," but—as I am defining the term—they are not authentic Rightist reactions. Why? How do they not qualify as Rightist? They are not genuinely Rightist because these reactionaries are not interested, to any substantial degree, in defending the Bible and its teachings. Rather, they are only interested in defending some particular valuable element of traditional American culture. In Leftism's attack against bible-based, Judaeo-Christian values, the Left has placed under attack an element of American culture that is near and dear to these individuals. The reaction of a Pseudo-Rightist is to defend that particular element of American culture

reasons—believe that the Leftist attack against biblical values and beliefs is wrong and seek to defend those values and beliefs against the aggression of Leftism. He does not seek to defend those values and beliefs because they are "traditional." Rather, he seeks to defend them because he believes them to be right and true.

³⁶ I am including a defense of the moral values and fundamental worldview of any Judaeo-Christian tradition as a desire to defend, *to a substantial degree*, the Bible, its message, and its worldview.

that it holds dear; the Pseudo-Rightist has no particular interest in defending the Bible and its teachings *per se*.³⁷

I will briefly characterize below the more important reactions to the Leftist intrusion into American culture.

Reactions from the Right

The following are six different reactions from the Right to the Leftist advance against the Bible and Judaeo-Christian culture:

(1) Some people have an intellectual commitment³⁸ to a radically and exclusively biblical worldview and value system. They reject the Left's opposition to that to which they are committed. This is the Radical Biblicist reaction.³⁹

(2) Some people have a religious commitment to a particular Protestant interpretation of the Christian faith that has had widespread acceptance throughout much of American history. They reject the Left's opposition to that to which they are religiously committed. This is the reaction of a certain kind of Fundamentalist or certain kinds of Evangelicals.

(3) Some people have an intellectual commitment to a particular Protestant interpretation of the Christian faith that has had widespread acceptance throughout much of American history. They reject the Left's opposition to that to which they are intellectually committed. This is the reaction of another kind of Fundamentalist or Evangelical.

³⁷ For example, the Pseudo-Rightist might hold dear an element of American culture like individual responsibility, individual freedom, freedom of conscience, etc. Typically, these desirable elements of traditional American culture are derived from and have their basis in biblical values and ideas. But the Pseudo-Rightist's reaction is not an interest in preserving the biblical worldview and teaching as such; it is only an interest in preserving that other value or idea that has been derived from the Bible and its teaching. I call it a reaction from the Pseudo-Right because, when it comes to the core antagonism of the Left (namely, its hostility to the Bible and its teaching), the Pseudo-Rightist reaction does not necessarily reject that antagonism. Indeed, the Pseudo-Rightist may even be sympathetic to that antagonism. Sometimes the Pseudo-Rightist will oppose the Bible just as surely as the Leftist does.

³⁸ In all of the various reactions from the Right described here, I assume that the commitments underlying their reaction to Leftism are authentic existential commitments. Even where the commitment is religious rather than intellectual, I assume that the commitment is a vital, personal, "existential" commitment and not a merely nominal commitment arising out of acculturation and inertia.

³⁹ This is the reaction that I recommend. It is the one I believe to be the true, good, and right reaction; the response that a true follower of Jesus should have. Radically Biblical belief is unique in the universe of "religious" beliefs in that it does not involve a religious commitment. One can only make an intellectual commitment to Radical Biblicism. A religious commitment would do violence to the very essence of what makes Radical Biblicism what it is. This is what distinguishes Radical Biblicism from various forms of Fundamentalism, Evangelicalism, and Protestantism. Although followers of Jesus may be found among any one of those (as well as among other) groups, the Radical Biblicist maintains that only purely and exclusively biblical belief captures the true, uncompromised teaching of Jesus.

(4) Some people have a religious commitment to some other version of the Christian religion. They reject the Left's opposition to major portions of that to which they are religiously committed. This we could call the Christian Religionist reaction.⁴⁰

(5) Some people have a personal commitment (either an intellectual or a religious commitment) to the moral values and ideals of the Judaeo-Christian cultural tradition. They reject the Left's opposition to the core moral ideas that, having been derived from the Bible, are embedded in Western Civilization. This is the Cultural Conservative reaction.

(6) Some people have a personal commitment (either an intellectual or a religious commitment) to the entire fabric of traditional American culture (its religious worldview and practices, rooted in biblical Christianity, its moral values and ideals, its political ideals and practices, and its distinctive cultural character). They reject the Left's opposition to core biblical ideas and values insofar as that very opposition necessarily involves opposition to and rejection of traditional American culture itself. This is the American Loyalist or American Patriot reaction.

All of the above reactions are distinct from one another in a variety of ways. But most (or perhaps all) of them share significant common ground. Because of their shared common ground, they can easily be confused with one another in the popular perception. But, to be fair, each of these would need to be distinguished from the others and evaluated on their own terms.

Reactions from the Pseudo-Right

All of the following are different sorts of reactions to the Leftist advance that, while typically being taken as "right-wing" reactions are, in truth, not right-wing at all (by my definition):

(1) Some people have a personal commitment (either an intellectual or a religious commitment) to the values, ideas, and institutions of the American constitution and the political realities it seeks to put in place. They reject the Left's *de facto* opposition⁴¹ to and rejection of those things to which they are personally committed. In most other respects, they have no problem with the Left's opposition to the Bible and its teaching. Accordingly, this is not a reaction from the Right. Rather, it is a dissenting faction within Leftism itself. It takes issue with the accepted orthodox values of Leftism, but it does not take issue with Leftism (Contrabiblicism) itself. This is the reaction of the Constitutionalist, or the strictly Political Conservative (in contradistinction to the Cultural Conservative).

⁴⁰ The Christian religion in view here could take the form of Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Episcopalianism, or virtually any denomination; or it could take the form of any sect that could loosely be classed as Christian.

⁴¹ Nothing in the essence or logic of Leftism *per se* requires it to oppose the political ideals of the American constitution. The fact that it does oppose them is more or less an accident of history.

(2) Some people have a personal commitment (either an intellectual or a religious commitment) to the ideal of individual freedom. They reject the Left's opposition to and rejection of that ideal of individual freedom to which they are personally committed. In all other respects, they are in complete agreement with the Left's opposition to the Bible and its teaching. Accordingly, this is not a reaction from the Right; it is a dissenting faction within Leftism itself. It forcefully rejects the accepted Statism⁴² of Leftist orthodoxy, but it does not take issue with Leftism (Contrabiblicism) itself. This is the reaction of the Libertarian. (Ayn Rand's Objectivism is a particularly thoughtful form of this Libertarian reaction.)⁴³

(3) Some people have a personal commitment (either an intellectual or a religious commitment) to the ascendancy of the Republican Party in America. They believe that the Republican Party will guide America into a better way of life than the Democratic Party will. Hence, they are committed to its political victory. This is the reaction of the Republican Partisan. This is the least "Right-wing" of all the Pseudo-Rightist reactions. Many Republican partisans are thoroughly and unqualifiedly Leftists. They are a dissenting faction of Leftism, but they do not dissent from any of the values and beliefs of Leftism. They only dissent from the opinion that the Democrats should be in power.

Because the concerns of each of the above can overlap significantly with the concerns of the reactions from the Right listed above, it is very common for all these groups (Rightist and Pseudo-Rightist) to be lumped together in the public's perception. But this is completely mistaken. The reactions of the Pseudo Right are not authentically "right-wing" at all. To maintain clarity of perception, it is important to have a clear understanding of the specific differences that exist between these various reactionaries.

Where Does the Follower of Jesus Fit?

So where does the follower of Jesus fit within all of these categories? As I briefly mentioned above, it would be impossible to be a Bible-believing follower of Jesus and a Leftist. However, there does exist a "Christian Left" in America that would, in all

⁴² Statism is the view that it is the government (the state) that should be granted responsibility and authority to care for and meet the various needs of individual citizens. The ideal of individual liberty is that the individual citizen should be allowed to be free to take care of himself and meet his own needs in whatever way seems right to him. Clearly, statism and the ideal of individual liberty (Libertarianism) are incompatible views. Nothing in the essence or logic of Leftism requires that it embrace Statism. The fact that it does is mostly an "accident" of history. It is true, however, that the most philosophically sound basis for individual liberty is the Bible and the biblical worldview. Accordingly, if you reject the Bible and its teaching, you have rejected the most compelling basis for individual liberty. For that reason, it is probably no accident that Leftism adopted Statism.

⁴³ The difference between the Libertarian and the Constitutionalist comes to this. The Libertarian's highest ideal is individual liberty. He is for the political realities embodied in the American Constitution insofar as those ideals and institutions were intended to secure individual liberty. But the Libertarian is not committed to the American Constitution directly and primarily. The Constitutionalist (Political Conservative) is committed to the American Constitution directly and primarily.

likelihood, take issue with my claim. They want to maintain that one can be a Christian and a Leftist at the same time.

What makes that seem possible to them is the fact that, at times, Leftism has espoused values that overlap with biblical values—love, compassion, justice, etc. However, there are two significant problems with concluding from this overlap in values that there is common ground between the bible-believing Christian and Leftism:

(1) The actual concepts of “love,” “justice,” “compassion,” etc. as they are used and understood within Leftism are different from those concepts found in the Bible. Leftism uses the same words as the Bible, but it fills those words with significantly different content.

(2) Even where the concepts themselves are close enough to the biblical values, the values of Leftism are immersed in, and colored by, the essential antagonism of the Left toward everything that is central to the biblical worldview. No aspect of Leftism is ever very far removed from its hatred of God and its rejection of biblical truth.

Accordingly, if a “Christian” throws his support behind a Leftist agenda, it calls into question his commitment to Jesus and to biblical truth. He may very well have a nominal, cultural affinity to Jesus and the Bible. But does he have a true, authentic existential commitment to the truth taught by Jesus? If so, how can he throw his eager support behind an agenda that is explicitly and purposefully hostile to Jesus and what he taught? Admittedly, many such Christians do not believe of themselves that they are supporting an agenda that is explicitly and purposefully hostile to what they believe.⁴⁴ But, I submit, that is because they are naïve, ill-informed, not paying very close attention, or—all too often—willfully and purposefully blind⁴⁵ to the social and political realities.

The follower of Jesus must also understand the important ways in which his response must differ from the more typical Right-wing reactionary. The more typical Right-wing reactionary does not trust in the gospel and in God. He trusts in human ideas, institutions,

⁴⁴ Typically, they rather believe that they are simply attempting to advance some moral cause that they believe in and care deeply about (world hunger, environmental stewardship, peace, economic justice, etc.). [Is it not suspicious, however, that the causes that I find I believe in deeply just so happen to be causes that will clearly justify my inclusion in the superior class?] But how serious and authentic can my commitment to the truth of the Bible be when, at the same time that I am supporting a particular cause and policy that I do agree with, I am throwing my support behind a global agenda that is antagonistic toward the Bible, the biblical worldview, God, Jesus, and everything that I say I believe? How do I think that such support is helping to make America (or the world) a better place, when the agenda I support, in its hostility to God and biblical truth, is hostile to everything beneficial to human beings and human existence?

⁴⁵ If there is a person who claims to be existentially committed to the teachings of Jesus, but who, for reasons explored above, has made a religious commitment to Leftism (so that he can reap the benefits of membership in the superior class), he will have to protect himself from any awkward facts that will call into question the intellectual and moral integrity of his commitment to Leftism. One of the strategies such a person might employ is to willfully blind himself to the facts. If he doesn't know the facts, then they cannot call his integrity into question.

and devices. A true biblical believer is one who trusts in God and in his truth and is seeking to defend that truth against the lies and myths that are putting it under attack.⁴⁶

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 state. The biblical believer 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 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 state; but his passion is not for individual liberty⁴⁷, his passion is for the TRUTH.

To summarize: Leftism has been established as the official “religion” of the superior class in America. There have been a wide variety of right-wing reactions to this Leftist take-over of American culture (reactions that are from the true Right and reactions that are from the pseudo-Right), but largely to no avail. Leftism has apparently prevailed, and there is no compelling evidence that that will be reversed any time soon. Indeed, the indications are that Leftism will grow in strength and dominance in the future.

Understanding the Power of the Beast

We are now in a position to appreciate the power that the Beast has in American culture and society. Its power stems from the dynamic interplay of five human and cultural realities:

- (1) Due to the fundamental depravity of human beings, Americans manifest a lust for the affirmation of other human beings. They long to be viewed as important, significant, and respectable in the eyes of others.
- (2) The Beast has somehow created the widespread social perception that there exists a superior class of people in America, people who are morally, intellectually, and/or socially superior. (This perception exists even among people who do not actually believe that the members of this class are, in truth, superior.)
- (3) There exists a set of Satanically inspired values, beliefs, and practices among this superior class that functions as a religion to them.

⁴⁶ In this sense, because the Leftist is an enemy of the follower of Jesus, the follower of Jesus must be an enemy of the Leftist.

⁴⁷ Indeed, he understands that, due to mankind’s sinfulness, individual liberty will prove not to be a particularly good thing for most of mankind. Most human beings will exercise their individual liberty in such a way that it will lead to their personal, eternal destruction.

(4) The values, beliefs, and practices that constitute the religion of the superior class is promoted among the entire American population through the creation of a widespread belief that anyone who adopts this religion of the elite can count himself as a member of the superior class.

(5) Rational reservations that an individual might have with regard to embracing the self-contradictory and irrational system of ideas that constitute this official, elitist religion are removed through the effective propaganda that is readily available in America today.

It should be apparent that the interplay of these five realities creates a powerful, almost irresistible force that compels more and more Americans to adopt the system of values and beliefs that the Beast works to promote. Unless some counter-force intervenes, it will only be a matter of time until virtually the whole population conforms to the Satanically inspired values and worldview of the superior class. The courage, wisdom, independence, and discernment required to resist this Beast is exceedingly rare. Eventually, all must serve the beast (except those whose names are “written in the book of Life”).⁴⁸

Part Two: What Ought We Do?

In the introduction, I described the moral and spiritual collapse that is happening before our very eyes in American culture. In part one, I sought to explain the dynamic influence of the Beast—that cultural power that transcends individual Americans and, having a life of its own, effectively controls the direction of our culture, morally and spiritually. The question that follows directly from these realities is this: what should we do about it? As followers of Jesus, what sort of response are we obligated to make to our current situation? Must we do what we can to save America from its collapse? Are we to simply stand back and watch it fall apart? What are we to do?

The Options

My contention so far is that, humanly speaking, the Beast cannot be beaten. So far as *our* efforts are concerned, it is indefeasible, for it is too powerful. God could defeat the Beast, of course.⁴⁹ But will he? That is the question. Or, to express it differently, there appears to be nothing we can do to reverse the cultural trends. If the momentum of our slide into darkness is to be stopped at all, it must be God who stops it. Nothing we could

⁴⁸ There are ultimately three kinds of responses to the Beast. (i) Some people embrace the values and beliefs promoted by the Beast. These are akin to those, in Revelation, who receive the “mark” of the Beast “on their forehead and on their hand.” They are the ones who “worship” and serve the Beast. (ii) Other people, being existentially committed to knowing and serving God, refuse to embrace the values and beliefs promoted by the Beast. These are authentic followers of Jesus. They purpose instead to remain committed to the values and beliefs taught by God. (iii) There are still others who, out of personal and cultural inertia, refrain from making any kind of existential commitment to the values and beliefs promoted by either God or the Beast. However, their lack of commitment can only be temporary at best. They will eventually be forced to make a choice. In any event, it is just as Jesus taught, “he who is not for me is against me.”

⁴⁹ The final beast in Revelation will be utterly destroyed by God. So, clearly, God could destroy the American Beast as well.

think to do will ever be effective in turning the direction of our culture around, unless God sees fit to act.

So what does God will? Perhaps he has determined that the American experiment will continue on. Perhaps he has not. Either way, we face the question of what it is that we—the followers of Jesus—are supposed to do. It would seem to me that there are five important options that must be considered:

Option 1: God DOES intend to save America from its current collapse and the role he expects us, his followers, to play is strictly personal. He wants us to be examples of godliness and a force for good in our everyday personal interactions. God will use our personal lives as an influence to transform our culture.

Option 2: God DOES intend to save America from its current collapse and the role he expects us, his followers, to play is cultural (but not political). He wants us to proactively work in and through the various institutions within our culture to bring about a transformation in the hearts and minds of the American people.

Option 3: God DOES intend to save America from its current collapse and the role he expects us, his followers, to play is political. He wants us to proactively work in and through the political institutions and within government to transform the laws and institutions of America.

Option 4: God DOES intend to save America from its current collapse and the role he expects us, his followers, to play is to be ready, as necessary, to take up arms and use force to wrest control of our government away from the Leftists.

Option 5: God does NOT intend to save America from its current collapse and the role he expects us, his followers, to play—in the darkness that lies ahead—is strictly personal. He wants us to be examples of godliness and a force for good in our everyday personal interactions.⁵⁰

Evaluating the Options

In evaluating each of these options, it is important to note at the outset that Option 1 and Option 5 come to virtually the same thing. Whether God intends to save America or not, our role as followers of Jesus according to both of those options is the same. For the purposes of this paper, then, if we can eliminate Options 2, 3, and 4, then we have the answer to our question: *we must strive to be examples of godliness and forces for good in*

⁵⁰ In the event that God does not want to save America from collapse, this is the only viable option. While it is not impossible that God would want us to proactively, but futilely work against the Beast through cultural, political, or military means, I don't think it is likely. Jesus and Paul did not work to defeat the godless Roman Empire. Why? At least one of the reasons, I think—though likely not the primary one—is that God did not purpose to bring down the Roman empire just yet. If God does not now purpose to bring down the American Beast, it is not our task to work toward it.

our everyday personal interactions. But can we eliminate Options 2, 3, and 4? That is the question. It is not immediately obvious that we can.

To compare the actions of early believers in the Roman Empire to believers during the American "Revolution" will be instructive. The followers of Jesus in the time of Jesus (and the apostles) did nothing whatsoever to oppose or reform Rome. Rome was Rome; and they were intent on simply living their lives. If and when Rome didn't like how they lived their lives, then Rome might punish them. So long as they did not compromise what they believed and did not disobey God, they would do what they could to protect themselves from harm. But, strikingly, they did not think in terms of undermining the power of godless Rome; and neither did they think in terms of reforming its institutions.

Christians in colonial America are a stark contrast. At least some of the believers in colonial America were active participants in the creation of an entirely new state and in the creation of an entirely new set of political ideals. They were perhaps a minority. But clearly some colonial believers participated in the creation of the United States. There are noteworthy examples of American revolutionaries who took part in the American revolution precisely on account of their faith.⁵¹ These believers, it would appear, took up arms and fought against the armies sent by England. They wrote pamphlets and gave speeches. They consulted with others to plan, to create, to organize, and to implement. They preached sermons in support of independence. Finally, they helped organize and structure a whole new government. In other words, they engaged culturally, politically, and militarily to gain independence from the English throne's interference with their lives as they sought to serve God as their consciences dictated.

Why the difference? Why did the early believers in the Roman Empire not engage culturally, politically, and militarily against the influence of Rome while in colonial America believers were engaged at every level? The answer, I think, might be really quite simple. The early believers in Rome had no reason to believe that God intended to eliminate the power and influence of Rome over their lives. The believers living in colonial America had perhaps good reason to believe that God intended to eliminate the power and influence of the English monarch over their lives. Or, to say the same thing differently, perhaps the cultural momentum in early America was against the throne and for independence. The cultural momentum in the time of Jesus and the apostles was clearly with the Roman emperor. Defying the Roman emperor was, beyond question, a futile act of suicide.

I cannot propose that the above be taken seriously as historical analysis. I know too little about American history or Roman history to presume to know the cultural attitudes and perceptions at either time. Historically, therefore, the above is only a conjecture.⁵²

⁵¹ Some might argue that their active participation in the American Revolution is proof that their belief in Jesus was not authentic. Some would maintain that a true follower of Jesus would never participate in such a revolt. Or, even if their belief was authentic, their participation in the revolt was a disobedient act that was not consistent with their belief in Jesus. I believe that this perspective is too facile. It is no more *intrinsically* wrong for a believer to engage in revolt (armed or otherwise), than it is for King David to go to war against the Philistines, or for Jesus to destroy the enemies of God at Armageddon.

⁵² Based on what I do know biblically and philosophically, I have tried to imagine what possible perception and/or judgment would lead the colonial believers to engage. And, alternatively what

And yet, while, historically, it is only conjecture, it is meant to be a serious proposal, philosophically and biblically.

It makes sense to me that a person can make a rational assessment of his current situation and thereby anticipate God's will for history. That is, just as a rational person can anticipate where a story is going, it seems reasonable that we rational human beings are intrinsically capable of anticipating where history, God's story, is going. Not infallibly, of course. But while we cannot know with any certainty, I believe we are capable of making a good and reasonable guess.⁵³ Is that not likely what the believers in colonial America did? They read the winds and currents of history and had a pretty good idea of what God intended to do. Then, in keeping with their intelligent surmise, they made responsible (and obedient) decisions to get on board with what it looked like God was doing. They preached sermons. They wrote political tracts. They attended constitutional conventions. They went to town meetings and voted. They fully engaged in the birth of a whole new political—and more importantly, spiritual—experiment. We have been the benefactors of their courage, obedience, and wisdom.

On the other hand, Jesus and the apostles read the currents of history in their time very differently. There wasn't anything happening. For them, the times, they weren't a changin'. The obedient and responsible thing for them to do was to sit back and wait, to learn to be content, as they lived under the thumb of Rome. Their only task was to strive to believe, act, think and respond in each and every situation in a manner pleasing to the Lord.

Which sort of situation are we in? If we are in a situation comparable to the believers in early America—if we can discern from the winds of history that God intends to bring the modern American Beast down—then Options 2, 3, and 4 are on the table, and it behooves us to become proactive in fighting the Beast. Obedience would involve doing what we can to save America. But if we are in a situation comparable to the earliest believers under Rome—if we see no evidence in the currents of our time that God intends to bring the Beast down—then Options 2, 3, and 4 are off the table. Only option 5 remains. In that case, the task before us is to prepare ourselves to live under the thumb of the Beast, to choose to be content and to strive to be examples of godliness and a force for good in our everyday personal interactions. Our simple task is to strive to believe, act, think and respond in each and every situation in a manner pleasing to the Lord.

I may very well be wrong, but as I read the winds of our time, the times won't be a changin' any time soon. No evidence suggests that God intends to stop the American Beast and eliminate his influence. In fact, it seems possible that we are approaching the very end of the present age itself. If so, the Beast may continue to grow in power and influence until Jesus returns and defeats it once and for all. In any event, I believe it

contrasting perception and/or judgment would lead the early Roman believers not to engage. What possible state of colonial American culture could have led the believers in that time to feel at liberty to take up arms against the crown and not view it as disobedience toward God, when no such liberty existed among the early Roman believers?

⁵³ See Appendix A for a more extended discussion of whether it makes sense to presume that a person could know what God wills for the future.

would be naïve to think that the current direction of America is going to change any time soon.

In my judgment, therefore, here is the task that lies before us: to live under the pressure of the hostile purposes of the Beast, to strive to remain faithful followers of all that Jesus taught us, to seek to be good in all that we do, say, and think, to learn to be content in our adverse circumstances, and to learn to live in joy and hope, knowing that, even when it is uncomfortable for me, it is good and right that God's will unfold in history. Since we cannot kill the Beast, we must focus first and foremost on saving our own souls by persevering courageously in the truth, and must focus, secondarily, on inviting those around us to save their souls in the same way.

Part Three: Living Under the Beast

In keeping with the conclusions I reached in the discussion above, I assume in this part of the paper that, by the determinative will of God, America as we have known it is coming to an end. Further, I assume that the world itself will sink further and further into darkness. The only way I can be wrong about this is if God has scheduled another major, unannounced Reformation. Nothing short of a widespread spiritual renewal could possibly "save" America, culturally and politically. In any event, whether spiritual renewal is in the script or not, the Beast is here to stay for a significant while into the future. We have no real option but to prepare to live under the Beast. We are already doing that now; but the severity of its control will certainly increase in the days to come.

Since we cannot kill the Beast—since I cannot expect its power and influence to end—how ought we to prepare for the life that lies ahead? I offered a partial answer to that in part two, describing in general terms what our role ought to be in contradistinction to what it need not be. Here I want to explore more fully, more specifically, and more concretely what the future might require of us.

Our Priorities In the Days Ahead

As I stated in part two, saving American culture is likely out of the question.⁵⁴ Therefore, my focus must revert to saving myself and to saving others. Fundamentally, then, these must be the top priorities for the times that lie ahead: (1) we must save our own souls, and (2) we must seek to save the souls of those around us, by persuading them to join us in embracing the hope of the gospel.

Neither task will be easy. If I am right, the hostility, deception, seduction, and spiritually destructive influences of the Beast will become increasingly powerful and intense. Before it is all over, the power of the Beast will become so great that few indeed will be able to resist its control and influence. If we care to save ourselves from eternal destruction, therefore, we will have to *guard our hearts and minds*.

⁵⁴ If I am right that saving our culture is not a realistic possibility, then we must unburden ourselves of that responsibility. If God chooses to save America, America will be saved. But, as I discussed above, nothing suggests that God expects us to work toward that goal in the current circumstances.

The culture and society that has already begun to emerge is an environment that is corrosive to belief; it is capable of destroying the belief that is required for salvation. One will be able to save himself (and others) only through the most diligent effort and close attention to his own heart and mind. In the America of our past, saving faith was relatively easy. It is much more difficult to attain it and continue in it today. In future America, it will be even more difficult to maintain.⁵⁵

Excursus on How a Cultural Environment Can Be Corrosive to Belief

Perhaps it seems problematic to think that one particular cultural environment might be more conducive to saving faith than another cultural environment. Is it harder to commit to the gospel (and the Bible) in one environment over another? Isn't belief in the gospel ultimately an inward, spiritual matter? What possible difference, therefore, does one's cultural environment make? If a person has been sanctified by God—and is, thereby, made inwardly open, receptive, and friendly toward God and the things of God—will he not then embrace the truth of the gospel, regardless of the environment he is in? If God has not sanctified a person, and he remains hardened, antagonistic, and resistant to the things of God, nothing can make him embrace the truth of the gospel, no matter what environment he is in. So isn't the inverse true? If a person has been sanctified, won't he necessarily come to embrace the gospel, regardless of his cultural environment?

Certainly this is true. It is exactly how the Bible describes the nature of belief—as a supernatural miracle wrought by God. If all belief in the gospel is ultimately a miracle—a supernatural work of sanctification occurring in the inner depths of a person's being—then why should it matter whether the person exists in a culture of darkness or a culture of relative light? To suggest that the days that lie ahead will be less conducive to saving belief would seem to ignore the ultimately supernatural origin of belief.

While it is certainly true that belief is ultimately supernatural in its nature and origin, that is not the full story. As is true of so many elements of the biblical worldview, the supernatural does not exclude the natural. In many cases, what is supernatural is, at one and the same time, embodied in the natural elements of ordinary experience.

God's parting the Red Sea for Moses was unmistakably supernatural—that is, it had the fingerprints of God's personal care for Israel all over it. Yet, at the same time, it is highly likely that that supernatural act was mediated through the natural phenomena of weather (wind) and ocean (tides). If the wind had not blown just so, and the tides had not been just so, the sea would not have parted.

It is important, therefore, that we not take the supernatural origin and nature of a phenomenon to conclude that there are no natural conditions for it. God, who controls the natural conditions around us, does many "supernatural" things in and through those natural conditions. What is true of the parting of the Red Sea is true for the human heart. God who parted the Red Sea so that the people of Israel might march through it is one

⁵⁵ The most loving gift we can give to our children is to equip them to keep the faith, to educate them in such a way that they might be able to see past the many false perceptions and illusions that American culture will conjure up for them.

and the same God who parts the hardened rebellion of our hearts so that truth might march into it. But just as the wind and ocean were part of the Exodus miracle, arguments, evidence, understanding, and clarity are part of the Faith miracle.

When we recognize the above, we see how important the cultural environment can be. Certain cultural environments allow for the "natural" conditions that lead to belief more readily than do other environments. Historically, in America, it has been easier to come to a genuine, authentic saving belief in the gospel than will likely be the case in our future. In the America of our past, it has been easier (relatively speaking) to persist in belief as compared to how difficult it will become in our future. We need to explore the reasons for this further.

What is belief (faith)? The belief that saves us is an authentic existential commitment to the truth taught by Jesus and recorded in the Bible. It is a deeply, inward passion to have my whole life and existence defined by my embrace of and commitment to that truth. It is more than a mere intellectual acknowledgement that is true. It is an inward, passionate commitment to live my life in conformity to its truth. But here is the important point: while saving faith is more than intellectual, it is not less than, or other than, intellectual. If I have saving faith, I am no less committed to the truth and rationality of Jesus' teaching than I am to the necessity of obedience to it. Indeed, the latter follows from the former. Why am I willing to make an existential commitment to define my life by obedience to Jesus' teaching? *Because I am utterly convinced of the truth and rationality of Jesus' teaching!* No person can make a valid and authentic existential commitment to the gospel who is not intellectually convinced that the gospel is, in fact, true.⁵⁶ Exactly the same thing can be said for the moral integrity of Jesus' teaching. No person can make an authentic existential commitment to the gospel if he is not convinced that the gospel is completely morally sound. I would submit that no one can make an authentic existential commitment to anything unless and until he believes that it is morally and intellectually unobjectionable.⁵⁷

Granted, being convinced that belief in the gospel has rational, intellectual, and moral integrity does not automatically compel one to commit his life to it. If a person does not want to commit his life to Jesus and his teaching, it would not matter how much moral and intellectual integrity belief in it might have. A person who is unwilling to believe and

⁵⁶ One can, certainly, make a religious commitment to the gospel without being confident that it is true. But a religious commitment, as I have already suggested, is a categorically different sort of thing from saving belief. Biblical belief is not a religious commitment. It is an intellectual commitment leading to an existential commitment. There is no validity whatsoever in turning belief in the gospel into a religious commitment.

⁵⁷ It is possible to make an existential commitment to something based on a merely religious commitment to it. However, this is only possible *if I can deceive myself* into also believing that it is not morally or intellectually objectionable. It is wholly unthinkable that anyone could make the following claim: "I am existentially committing my whole life to X even though I find X to be intellectually (or morally) objectionable." From this it follows that a religious commitment is not a particularly sound and enduring basis for an existential commitment (for saving faith). While one can base an existential commitment on a religious commitment, his existential commitment can endure only so long as his religious commitment endures, and that will typically not be very permanent. Time and the right sort of pressures can easily wear down dogmatism.

commit can never be made to believe and commit by arguments, evidence, and reason. Taking Kierkegaard's "leap" into belief requires something more than being convinced that the gospel is true and good. One has to also *want to leap*!

Therefore, the intellectual and moral integrity of the Bible does not compel a person to commit his whole life to it; but they do make it *morally and intellectually possible* to make such a commitment. And, indeed, not to have confidence in the intellectual and moral integrity of the Bible makes it **impossible** to make an existential commitment to it. Confidence in the moral and intellectual integrity of the Bible and its teaching is a natural precondition for the supernatural miracle of making an existential commitment to it (that is, for the miracle of saving faith).⁵⁸

So where does this lead? If I live in a culture and environment that creates the perception that the gospel of Jesus is intellectually and morally objectionable, then authentic belief (the requisite existential commitment) cannot possibly arise in a person's heart unless and until he is able to overcome the false perception that belief in Jesus is morally and intellectually objectionable.⁵⁹ In other words, the "perception" that the gospel is morally and/or intellectually objectionable is a very substantial obstacle to a person coming to saving faith. It is not an insurmountable obstacle. By the grace of God, those to whom God wills to grant it will overcome that obstacle. But it is an obstacle. That much should be clear.

Therefore, a culture that is sympathetic to the gospel and takes its truth for granted will be a very different environment than a culture that is hostile to the gospel and assumes that it is false and objectionable. The first culture creates an environment that is conducive to one's making an existential commitment to the gospel. The second culture is corrosive of saving faith. It makes the requisite existential commitment appear to be morally and intellectually impossible.

It is this latter kind of culture that is quickly developing in America. The religion of Leftism seduces people into making a religious (irrational) commitment to a certain set of values and beliefs. Among the beliefs to which the Leftist must swear allegiance are these: (1) he must embrace moral values that are inimical to the moral values taught in the Bible, and (2) he must believe that the Bible and all that it stands for is intellectually contemptible. To the extent that a person is religiously (albeit irrationally) committed to such things, an existential commitment to the teaching of the Bible will be both morally and intellectually impossible. The culture created by the Beast creates the false, *prima facie* perception that no person can—with *his moral and intellectual integrity intact*—commit himself existentially to follow Jesus. In other words, in the environment of the

⁵⁸ Confidence in the moral and intellectual integrity of the Bible is a natural precondition of the miracle of saving faith just as certainly as the wind and tide were natural preconditions of the miracle of God's parting the Red Sea. To be clear, I am NOT saying that God cannot perform the miracle of imparting saving faith to a person until *somebody else* establishes the natural precondition of that person's having confidence in the Bible's moral and intellectual integrity. Rather, this is what I am saying: God cannot perform the miracle of imparting saving faith to a person until *he himself* also, at one and the same time, established the natural precondition of that person's having confidence in the Bible's moral and intellectual integrity.

⁵⁹ Just like God could not have parted the Red Sea if the wind had not blown, the believer cannot be brought to an existential commitment to Jesus if his objections are not overcome.

coming America, saving faith will be morally and intellectually impossible. Unless and until, by the grace of God, a person can get past the VERY COMPELLING PERCEPTION that belief in Jesus is contemptible, he will not be able to authentically commit to it. And, if, seemingly, he has made an existential commitment to it in the past, unless he can get past this very same cultural perception, he will not be able to continue in that existential commitment. One cannot legitimately stake his whole existence on something that appears to him to be morally and intellectually contemptible.

This is the challenge that awaits followers of Jesus in the future. Rather than living in a culture and environment that allows me to remain open to belief, letting me choose for myself, without prejudice, whether I choose to commit myself, existentially, to follow Jesus, I will be living in a culture and environment that has prejudiced my choice by creating a powerful illusion in advance: you are a contemptible fool if you choose to commit yourself, existentially, to follow Jesus.

Essentials for the Preservation of Our Souls

If the salvation of my own soul is my top priority, how do I go about caring for my soul? Much could be said in answer to that. What I shall say here is certainly not exhaustive. I have tried to note the most important things that come to mind, given the state of our current culture and the likely circumstances that await us.

In a word, the most important objective toward preserving our own soul is to seek to forge a *pure* and *uncompromised* discipleship to Jesus. The follower of Jesus can seem to get away with being double-minded when the pressure is not on him. But when the pressure comes down, double-mindedness is fatal. If I am less than resolved, less than committed, less than clear about what I ultimately want, then my interest in Jesus will evaporate, when the Beast turns up the pressure. Why follow Jesus when it costs too much? If I wasn't clear that I wanted to follow him anyway, why would I follow him when the cost becomes too great?

At least five imperatives come to mind as essential elements of becoming a pure and uncompromised disciple of Jesus:

(1) We must make our commitment to Jesus everything.

Jesus, in a parable, compared the kingdom of God to a pearl of such inestimable value that a pearl merchant sold everything he owned in order to buy it. That is the value of knowing and following Jesus. In order to know and follow him, I should be willing to give up everything I have. Discipleship to Jesus must become everything to us. It must become everything I am. If I want to be a true and authentic disciple, knowing and obeying Jesus is not just one of the things my life is about. It is everything my life is about.

I must make my relationship to Jesus my very identity. "I am a follower of Jesus" must become the most central, defining reality of my life. My self-identity must not be as an artist, or an athlete, or a musician, or an architect, or a Gen-X-er, or a Baptist, or anything. I must be a follower of Jesus, fundamentally. Being a disciple of Jesus must become so all-important to me that no other identification matters.

Any other claim to follow Jesus is not serious; it is a casual, disposable relationship. Only if it is the defining feature of my existence is it true, authentic, and serious. Only this sort of serious commitment to follow Jesus will be able to survive the difficult challenges ahead.

(2) We must rid our lives of other allegiances.

Nothing else in our lives must be able to lay claim to our time, energy, and affections. Jesus must be our master. We must serve him and no other.

There are many competing allegiances. It would almost be trite to mention many of them (sex, money, pleasure, family, work, success, etc.). We all know that these realities can compete with our obedience to Jesus. But, in our current context, perhaps two are worth mentioning: recreation and entertainment. Each has its rightful place, certainly. But when the demands of recreation or entertainment interfere with our obedience to Jesus, there is something wrong. We do not live in a time for rest and celebration; we live in a different sort of time. Beyond the grave, a Sabbath Rest awaits us. But now is the time to work. Our task in the present time is to fight against, to strive against, and to resist evil in ourselves. It is also to labor to serve the purposes God has for evil age. When we allow our devotion to entertainment or recreation to interfere with our work to serve God and his purposes, we are fully and faithfully following Jesus.

In the days that follow, can the commitment of anyone with such divided allegiances survive?

(3) We must decide to fear God rather than man.

One of the most striking characteristics of the true child of God is that he has no regard for what other humans think. He will live to please God. If that does not please the people around him, oh well!

As we saw earlier, it is one's desire to have the approval of other men that gives the Beast power over him. If I don't need men's approval, if I have no need to belong to the superior class, the seductions of the Beast will lose their power over me. But if I do fear man, the Beast will suck me in and eventually destroy my faith.

Being clear on this point is critical for the dark days ahead. I will not have the approval of man—that much is certain. The same ones who hate Jesus will hate me. I will be despised, mocked, rejected, treated with contempt, perhaps even physically harmed. If I am not clear that I want God's, *and only God's*, approval, I will not be able to persist in believing and obeying Jesus.

(4) We must anchor our lives in the Bible.

Perhaps the most important practical step we can take to guard our heart is to commit ourselves to truly understanding the Bible. Aside from sinfulness itself, nothing has contributed more to the moral and spiritual collapse of America than our failure to know and accurately understand the Bible. A true existential commitment to understanding and

inculcating the Bible's message is the most important prophylactic to spiritual collapse and unbelief that there is.

Modern Christians have developed very bad habits. If we approach the Bible at all, it is as a source of entertainment, not a source of education. We must change our habits. Education, not intellectual stimulation, is the critical thing to be gained from the Bible. Education is not always interesting. Sometimes it is tedious. One pursues an education because it is valuable, not because it is always interesting. That is how we must learn to approach the Bible. We must do more than have occasional stimulating conversations about it; we must seek to master its message and content. We must seek from it an education in the most important and vital truth in all of human existence. If we don't begin to take the Bible with this kind of seriousness, we will be unprepared for the challenges that lie ahead.

If the Bible is to be the source of my education in Truth, then I must commit myself to learning it and mastering it.⁶⁰ Part of understanding and mastering the message of the Bible is to understand the background to the biblical text. Having a good, broad based, general education is an important way to attain the background necessary to understand the Bible. Therefore, being committed to gaining an education in the Bible involves a commitment to continuing one's general education as well. One cannot attain the one without the other.

Furthermore, it is not enough to commit myself to mastering the content of what is in the Bible. I must commit myself to truly understanding that content. It is one thing to be able to "recite" what the Bible says; it is another thing to have a genuine comprehension of what it says. The Bible exists that I might acquire its wisdom and knowledge, not that I might memorize its words and phrases.

Another aspect of anchoring our lives in the Bible that is of utmost importance is this: I must be *radically* biblical in the way I approach the Bible. I must explain. Given that I grant authority to the Bible in the first place, there are fundamentally two different ways that I can approach it: (i) I can seek to understand its message and teaching as that exists in and of itself; or (ii) I can interpret its message and teaching through the lens of—and in the light of—a set of values and beliefs (doctrines) that are supplied to me from some other source.⁶¹ The latter is the more typical approach to the Bible. The former is what I call radical biblicism.

Most of Christendom has allowed their churches, traditions, or cultures to put boundaries on what they can conclude the Bible teaches.⁶² Radical biblicism, on the other

⁶⁰ It is tragically ironic that Christians in our culture will typically expend much more time and energy on, and give much more serious attention to, their various classes in college than they ever will to their Bibles.

⁶¹ Typically, the "other" source is a creed, confession, doctrinal statement, or informal Christian tradition. Ostensibly, the purpose of the set of beliefs and values established in one of these "sources" is to safeguard the faith and keep me, the individual, safe. Lest I stray into falsehood and deception in my inexperienced or arrogant study of the Bible, boundaries are established in advance. So long as my interpretations stay within the boundaries supplied for me, I will not fall into dangerous and deadly falsehoods. As well-intentioned as this mindset is, it is ultimately counterproductive to true belief and authentic discipleship.

⁶² Study your Bibles to learn what it says. But just make sure that you conclude that it says THIS when you study it.

hand, makes a commitment to study the Bible with no pre-established boundaries. The radical biblicist wants to know what the Bible itself actually teaches, to hear the message that was being conveyed by the original authors of its text.⁶³ And it makes no difference too him whether the message he hears falls within some pre-established boundaries.⁶⁴ The radical biblicist does not read his Bible through the lens of a preferred orthodoxy; he allows the Bible's teaching to correct and challenge any and every preconception, whether it is required by some orthodoxy or not.

Why is it so vital that I be radically biblical in my approach to the interpretation of the Bible? There are two major reasons:

(1) Anything other than a radically biblical approach actually undermines and nullifies the authority of the Bible.⁶⁵ In the more typical, traditional approach, it is not actually the Bible that functions as an authority, rather, what functions as an authority is the set of orthodox values and beliefs to which I am already committed.

The Bible—insofar as I grant it authority—could play a very distinctive role in my life. It could educate me and correct me. But under the more typical approach to the Bible, it can do neither. If I read the Bible through the lens of some pre-established system of beliefs (as is more typically done), then the Bible cannot educate me. It cannot tell me anything significantly different from what I have already previously believed. My orthodox beliefs have dictated to the Bible what it can and cannot teach me. And certainly the Bible cannot correct me. My prior assumptions weave their way into the very fabric of what I read the Bible to be saying. As a consequence, the Bible could never challenge my prior beliefs and correct them. They will always be affirmed and supported by my interpretation, for they have given birth to it.

The potential value of the Bible is as a corrective and challenge to the lies, myths, and falsehoods that I might have already embraced. As I study and understand the Bible, I could come to realize all the ways in which my thinking does not conform to its truth. I could then discard my bad beliefs and ideas and replace them with the good and right beliefs I have been taught from the Bible. But, in order for the Bible to serve such a valuable purpose, I must be committed to dealing straight with my Bible. I must approach it as a radical Biblicist. If I have trained myself to bend my reading of the Bible to conform to some set of preconceived ideas and beliefs, then the Bible itself has been

⁶³ If I study and interpret the Bible in order to “discover” a set of pre-established doctrines and beliefs in it, I am not seeking a true and accurate understanding of what the Bible itself teaches. Rather, I am mining the Bible for data to justify a set of beliefs to which I am already (religiously) committed. I am not actually interested in having the Bible itself educate and correct me.

⁶⁴ To read the Bible through the lens of some pre-established system of beliefs is the more typical approach to the reading of the Bible. If I this is how I read the Bible, it does not educate me; for the set of values and beliefs I already embrace are dictating to the Bible what it can and cannot teach me. Neither can it correct me, for my prior understanding weaves its way into my interpretation of the Bible in such a way that the Bible is always made to support and reinforce what I already believe.

⁶⁵ The more typical approach to the Bible employs a confession, a set of creeds, or some system of orthodoxy to set the boundaries for one's interpretation of the Bible. Herein lies a true irony. This very approach to the Bible, an approach that is intended to safeguard the Bible's authority, has the exact opposite effect. It undermines and nullifies its authority by supplanting it.

muted. It cannot teach me. It cannot correct me. It can never offer me its corrective truth if I insist on substituting the pre-recorded message of orthodox doctrine in place of its own voice.

So, if I do not approach the Bible as a radical Biblicist, then where does my true authority lie? Not in the Bible. Rather, it is my prior set of beliefs that, in fact, functions as my true authority. And if the Bible does not function with any actual authority in my life, then it has been muted. It will be unable to correct any of my false preconceptions, even those instilled in me by the Beast.

(2) Anything other than a radically biblical approach habituates a person to dangerous habits that ultimately make him vulnerable to the lies of the Beast. But the radically biblical approach insulates a person from the influence of the Beast.

Note that under the typical approach to the Bible, one has accepted and embraced the principle that how one understands the Bible must be controlled and directed by a system of values and beliefs extrinsic to the Bible—a system that he has already accepted to be true. Initially, the extrinsic system of values and beliefs extrinsic to the Bible is some system of Christian orthodoxy. But, logically, it would not have to be. Therefore, once I have accepted this principle, what will prevent me from reading my Bible through the lens of any other system of beliefs? It is no less justified than the approach that most Christians take.

Indeed, what will prevent me from allowing my interpretation of the Bible to be controlled and directed by the Beast? On what basis could I disallow it? I could not object in principle, for the logic of the latter is identical to the logic underlying what the typical Christian interpreter does—just with different results. On what basis can I argue that to “bend” the meaning of the biblical text to conform to Christian orthodoxy is somehow valid but to “bend” the meaning of the biblical text to conform to the assumptions of some secular worldview is not valid? Both are “bending” the meaning of the text. Why is one legitimate when the other is not?

The answer that Christians would give, of course, is that Christian orthodoxy is true while every non-Christian worldview is false. Granted. And so long as a Christian can persist in believing that, he will reject the prospect of “bending” the meaning of the text to conform to Beastly assumptions. But how long will he be able to maintain his Christian beliefs? Not that long when the Beast begins to exercise its control.

Karl Barth describes the problem that arose in Hitler’s Germany. The Nazis managed to convince the churches in Germany to reinterpret their Bibles (to reinterpret Christianity) in the light of Nazi assumptions. It was not that difficult. Because they had already accepted, in principle, that truth could arise outside of, apart from, and extrinsic to the “Word of God,” the Bible, they were primed and ready for the Nazis to suggest that the Bible was to be interpreted in the light of what history had revealed through the German people and experience as that was encapsulated in Nazi propaganda.

In the same way, when the Beast, in the coming future (and now?), makes an assault on certain elements of orthodox Christian belief, they will not endure. The typical Christian remains Christian by dogmatic religious commitment, not by intellectual conviction. His religious commitment can endure only so long as his resolve to remain dogmatic. That is not all that long. Dogmatism can eventually be worn down. People can

be shamed out of their religious commitments.⁶⁶ When that happens, making a religious commitment to Leftism becomes plausible—for it is no less viable, in principle, than their religious commitment to Christian orthodoxy.

In other words, what I am saying is this. Only by being committed to (and practiced in) a radically biblical approach to the Bible can a person find himself on solid ground to resist the seductive influences of the Beast. The radical Biblicist, in principle, listens to no other voice except the voice of the Bible itself. He does not accept the Bible read in someone else's voice. He does not allow his reading of the Bible to be controlled and shaped by ideas, beliefs, and values that are extrinsic to the Bible itself. In his approach to the Bible, corrects and adjusts his prior beliefs, he does not bend its reading to conform to them. For the radical Biblicist, therefore, if the Beast extols something that contradicts the teaching of the Bible, the Beast will not get a hearing. For him, therefore, the Bible can protect him from the influence of the Beast.

For the reasons discussed above, it is vital that, in the days that lie ahead, we adopt a radically biblical approach to the interpretation of the Bible. And, additionally, that we commit to the absolute authority of the Bible. I must have an uncompromised and unqualified commitment to the truth that I find there. I must be committed to the fact that the Bible teaches what is true and only what is true. I must understand that nothing, from any other source, is true, if it contradicts the Bible. If any other system of values or beliefs conflicts with what the Bible teaches, then, to that extent, it is wrong and must be rejected.⁶⁷ Only then do I have an enduring basis for rejecting the influence of the Beast.

(5) We must become practiced in discerning the lies of the Beast.

I have explored in this paper, the nature and dynamic of the Beast's ability to influence us. Every day brings new evidence of how incredibly powerfully able to deceive it is. If, in the future that lies ahead, we are to avoid being deceived by the Beast, it behooves us to understand the nature and dynamics of its deceptions. The better I understand how it deceives, the better prepared I will be to recognize its lies when I am confronted with them. It is through practice that we learn to discern good from bad, true from false. We have plenty of opportunities for practicing today. It is not too late to start.

Requisite Changes in Our Expectations and Relationships

We cannot expect our lives in America to go unchanged. If the power and influence of the Beast increases in the way I predict, our lives and culture will change dramatically. We must adjust our expectations accordingly.

⁶⁶ It is both difficult and embarrassing to be irrationally and religiously committed to something. One is eventually overcome by sheer weariness or beaten down by shame.

⁶⁷ The less committed I am to believing that what the Bible says is true, the more open and receptive I am to the idea that what some other belief system (e.g., Leftism) says is true. The longer I stay open to the notion that what Leftism says is true, the less clear it becomes to me that what the Bible says is true. The softer and less real the "truth" of the Bible becomes for me, the less possible it becomes for me to make an existential commitment to it. (See pp. 34–36.)

In the comments that follow, I assume that God has no intention of reversing the course that America is on. Accordingly, we can expect America to become increasingly corrupt morally and significantly transformed politically. The America we have always known will eventually cease to exist.⁶⁸

The same can be said for the course America is on spiritually. We should not expect any spiritual renewal. Gone are the days that we could imagine transforming our culture through evangelism. Evangelism will become increasingly less fruitful. America no longer has ears to hear.

Neither should we expect to enjoy the same material and professional success that America has afforded believers in the past. The Beast will likely have a detrimental effect on our lives economically. We must prepare to live with less and to live less productive and respectable lives. We may very well be reduced to the poor about whom James writes. It is important that we take what James says to heart, "the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his HIGH position; and the rich man in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away." (James 1:9–10)

Furthermore, we should not expect our social relationships and experience to remain unchanged. We should expect increased persecution. There will be greater and greater hostility. There will be increasing resistance and opposition to everything we value and to everything we base our existence on. We should expect rejection. People who accept us and respect us today will reject us tomorrow. We should expect to live with greater danger and risk.

We will have to learn different and perhaps unfamiliar ways of relating to people and institutions. We must cease to be naïve and trusting in our relations to our fellow human beings. We must learn from Jesus. John tells us that at a high point in his popularity, "Jesus, on his part, was not entrusting himself to them (the crowds), for he knew all men, and because he did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for he himself knew what was in man" (namely, sin). (John 2:24–25) Jesus, did not entrust his well being to sinful human beings because he knew how unreliable, fickle, and treacherous they could be. We must learn not to entrust ourselves to men any more than Jesus did. The friend today can be a Judas tomorrow.

True followers of Jesus must be realists about their fellow human beings. It seems so accepting and right to "see the beauty in every human being." In truth there is beauty in every human being. But that is not the whole story. Every one of those beautiful people out there is in active rebellion against God; and insofar as he is in active rebellion against God, he is dangerous. He would betray me in a second. He is not interested in my being rightly related to my creator. He wants me to join him in believing the lies that "justify" his rebellion and unbelief. If the occasion should arise, he will hate me for not joining him. So, like Jesus, it is prudent to not entrust ourselves to unbelieving sinners.

Furthermore, we will have to learn a different way of relating to the government. The government can be expected to become more and more vicious in its opposition to what

⁶⁸ Unlike some of the more optimistic members of the Tea Party, we should have no expectation that America can be saved.

we believe. We will need to make adjustments in our lives that allow us to fly under the radar of official, governmental scrutiny.

This will be particularly relevant when it comes to evangelism. We can no longer expect to engage in open, public evangelism. Increasingly, evangelism will be construed as “political” and will receive a negative, punitive response from the government. It will be regulated out of existence—at least open, public evangelism will. We will have to limit ourselves to person-to-person evangelism (and then only when someone takes initiative toward us, asking for an account of the hope that we have). We must have diminished expectations as well.⁶⁹ Because the American population lacks any openness and receptivity to the truth, evangelism will be increasingly fruitless. It will eventually become necessary to reserve our evangelism for only those who come asking. We must be content to know that God will effectively call everyone who belongs to him. No one will be lost.

Necessary Changes in Our Support Structures and Institutions

In the years ahead, we who are followers of Jesus will want to find ways to nurture and facilitate authentic belief in one another. It seems clear to me that, in order to be able to do this, there are a few things of note that we must anticipate and work toward. These are measures that I believe will enable us to better support and encourage one another as we face the challenges to our belief that the Beast will raise against it.

(1) We must create new and different communities of support.

No longer can we rely on “churches” to be our support. Churches have come to cater primarily to social needs, not spiritual ones. That will not suffice in the years ahead. The center and focus of the communities we create must be the task of accurately understanding the Bible and what it teaches. These must be radically biblical communities—radically biblical in what we believe and in what we do.⁷⁰ We can no longer want and expect to be intellectually stimulated—or worse, entertained—with various forms of Bible talk, we must pursue and insist on learning and mastering the teaching of the Bible. We need to use the Bible to *educate* ourselves, in the fullest sense of that term.

Unlike our current churches, we must form communities and networks of support that no longer exist hand-in-hand with the state. The state is becoming an enemy of everything we stand for. It will not be possible to be yoked to the state in any way and still be faithful to the gospel. As a consequence, we must forge small, informal,

⁶⁹ We must learn from the experience of Tim Tebow. His efforts to be a faithful witness to Jesus by publicly and openly symbolizing his faith have not had the effect he desired. We can expect more of the same in the future. We will not be respected for declaring our faith; we will be despised for it.

⁷⁰ Note my discussion of Radical biblicism above. As I suggested in part one, followers of Jesus are not called to be conservative. We are called to be radical—radically obedient to Jesus, our master, and ready to challenge every institution and every tradition in our pursuit of following him. As I argued in part one, in our present cultural and political context, we must necessarily be conservative in the sense I defined it there. However, we will be such “conservatives” because we are *radical*, not because we are conservative.

unofficial, under-the-radar communities.⁷¹ It may be that participation in such communities will have to be shifting, dynamic, and spontaneous rather than fixed, regular, and routine.

Since everything else in American society is and will be arrayed against our belief and commitments, our participation in such communities will be all the more important. With all the pressure that the Beast will exert against our faith—issuing forth compelling illusions, specious arguments, propaganda, lies, etc.—we must rely up one another to keep our eyes clear and our heads straight. To stay focused on our true goal and passion, we will need others around us to point out the way when our vision has become blurred and the lies seem more real to us than the truth.

(2) We must intentionally set out to create a new counterculture with alternative practices and institutions.

Vanishing are the days when we can explicitly confess an existential commitment to Jesus and yet still “blend in” with all our fellow Americans. We march to the beat of a very different drum. We will no longer be able to do that in the midst of mainstream American culture. Inevitably, we will have to create a distinctive counterculture, with a way of life that distinguishes us from our fellow Americans.⁷²

Undoubtedly there will be many elements to this distinctive counterculture, but three stand out as essential to me in the context of our present circumstances:

(a) We will have to forge and practice faithfully an entirely “new” set of practices concerning the relationship between the sexes. We must promote amongst ourselves entirely different attitudes toward sex—an entirely different understanding of the nature and purpose of sexual intimacy, entirely different “dating” or “courtship” practices, entirely different expectations toward the role of sex in marriage, a renewed understanding of the need for marital faithfulness, the validity and necessity of celibacy outside of marriage, the illegitimacy of homosexuality, the sin of sensuality, etc. In brief, we must establish a counterculture that expects and takes for granted sexual purity. This “new” sexual ethic is a decidedly old-fashioned sexual ethic. But restoring biblical attitudes toward sexual purity is absolutely critical in our current climate. Sexual temptation is one of the forces most destructive of saving belief. We need a counterculture that fortifies us against sexual temptation, not a culture that fosters it.

(b) Directly related to the above, it seems necessary for this counterculture to replace the existing institution of marriage with an entirely new institution—one that embodies what the Bible teaches that God intended for marriage. The current institution of marriage no longer does that. It has been compromised by increasing sensuality and widespread marital infidelity. And, most recently, it has been compromised by the increasing insistence of the superior class that we accept certain homosexual pairings as “marriages.”

⁷¹ Probably quite similar to what many Chinese Christians have had to do.

⁷² See Appendix B for a note about what a radical change of perspective this is for me.

(c) This new counterculture must create entirely new and different educational practices and institutions for our children (as well as for us as adults). Education is critical to our ability to learn from the Bible. We cannot read the Bible if we cannot read. We cannot think critically, objectively, independently, and insightfully about the meaning of the Bible if we have never learned to think critically, objectively, independently, and insightfully about anything. Hence, a good education is absolutely essential to the counterculture that we must strive to create.

It is quickly becoming time to abandon the public schools. It is becoming increasingly apparent that they have become agents of propaganda for the superior class agenda. They are religious schools promoting the official religion of Leftism. They teach and promote *religious* commitment. They do not promote, nor even understand, *intellectual* commitment. Followers of Jesus must make an intellectual commitment to the teaching of Jesus. How can they do that if they have never been taught what a valid intellectual commitment looks like? That should happen in a good education. We must create educational systems, networks, and/or institutions that do that.

The focus of education in our counter-culture must be different. We believe that our priority is the saving of our own soul. Accordingly, education must aid that goal. As American education becomes more and more focused on vocational training and "making a living," it becomes less and less able to meet the needs of the Jesus-believer.

(3) Out of love for our neighbor, we must intentionally set out to create new forums for interacting with non-believers that have a maximal potential for transforming their perspective on the gospel.

That which has the greatest potential to impact our neighbor for good, to render him more open and receptive to the truth of the gospel, is to educate him in that gospel and to reason intelligently with him about it. We must create forums in which that can happen. Given my present assumptions, we do not do that to change America; rather, we do it to snatch a few souls away from the grip of the Beast. If anything will change America, it is through the transforming of unbelief into belief. But that is not the reason to create these forums. Our goal is to save individual people, not America. These forums can have one of two foci:

(a) One possible focus could be on understanding the Bible. Here the goal is to get past the misconceptions the non-believer has about the Bible and its message and to educate him in a true and accurate understanding of its worldview and message.

(b) The other possible focus could be on a good general education. Here the goal is to teach the non-believer to think intelligently. If he is to come to saving faith, he must learn to discern the difference between a religious commitment and an intellectual commitment and he must learn to know the difference between a valid intellectual commitment and an invalid one. He must be able to discern good ideas from bad ideas. It is through a good, solid education that that can be taught. The counter-culture we create needs, I think, to find a way to make such an education available to our non-believing neighbors. They will find it more and more difficult to get such an education within the American universities of the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I will simply summarize what I have argued in the paper. I observed that the America of today has become, and is increasingly becoming, adverse to goodness. The cultural hostility to God, Jesus, the Bible, the gospel, righteousness, and everything connected with any of these things is becoming more and more intense. I then offered an analysis of how we have arrived at this point. A Beast arose in America—that is, a cultural force that controls and shapes beliefs and values in American culture. It is this Beast that has swept American culture toward this anti-goodness. I suggested that the power of the Beast results from the dynamic interplay of four cultural realities: (i) the existence of a superior class, (ii) an official religion of that superior class that requires allegiance to it in order to belong to the superior class, (iii) Leftism as the prescribed system of values and beliefs that constitutes this official religion of the superior class, a system of values and beliefs that is an irrational, incoherent collection of beliefs and values whose only feature is that they oppose the values and beliefs taught in the Bible, and (iv) the existence of and ongoing creation of propaganda to reinforce adherence to Leftism. Resulting from the interplay of these four realities is a compelling and virtually irresistible cultural power (the Beast) that is sweeping America along toward a more and more intense opposition to goodness. I then argued that this direction is irreversible. We should not expect America to change its course. Accordingly, I ended by briefly noting what our priorities must be in the hostile environment that most certainly awaits us in American culture. I added some suggestions for what I believe will be noteworthy essentials in our working to fulfill these priorities. Finally, I finished by adding a miscellany of changes that we should expect to make—both personal and communal changes. These are just some of the noteworthy changes that I believe will be necessitated by the future that awaits us.

Appendix A: Can One Anticipate God's Will for History?

In this paper, I have maintained that we should not expect America to depart from the downward path it is currently on. In order to maintain such a thing, I must presume to know what God's will for America is. In history past, God has orchestrated amazing, unexpected things. There have been some spectacular moral and spiritual turnarounds. To maintain that America will not change course is tantamount to my knowing that God does not intend to introduce another spiritual awakening into American history. How can I know that, unless I know God's will for history?

This is, of course, perfectly true. Strictly speaking, because I do not have some special knowledge of God's will for history, I do not know that America will not reverse the course it is on. But, having conceded that, I want to explore further the possibility whether it is possible to know God's will for history.

It is important to understand and acknowledge the narrative structure of history. History is a story told by a storyteller. God, the author of this story, is a rational being who creates this story in much the same manner as, and for much the same reasons that, any storyteller creates a story.

Here, then, is the question: is it possible to know the direction a story is going from some particular spot in the midst of it? I would argue that it is. At least, it is possible to make a rational and reliable guess at where the story is going. I certainly cannot know infallibly where a story is going; for there can always be an ironic reversal that I was unable to anticipate. But while I cannot know infallibly, I might very well be able to guess accurately. Exactly the same is true of God's will for the future.

If history is a story, it is the product of a rational mind. As such, its "shape" is the product of a rational mind and is, in principle, knowable to another rational mind. If and when another rational person has grasped the form and shape of the story, then it is possible, in principle, for that person to have a sense of where history is going from where we are right now. Just as I can rightly surmise how a novel might end from what I have read so far, could I not rightly surmise where God is taking history from what has transpired thus far? I know that it is God's to "tell" the story he is creating. To bring to pass what the form and shape of that story requires. So, to the extent that I know the shape of that story, to that extent I can have a good idea of what the future holds.

Now, to claim to "see" what is coming in the sense I have just described, one need not be able to analyze, articulate, and explicitly identify how he "sees" the shape of what is coming. One can legitimately know something at a tacit level without being able to articulate and analyze how he knows it. Here, then, is what I am contending: it seems intrinsically possible that a person who adequately understands both the Bible and the current condition his culture is in might very well be able to "see," tacitly, where God intends to take things in the future.⁷³

⁷³ I believe that I can account for several interesting facts of American history by this observation. The fundamentalists of the early twentieth century seemed to "see" that they were on the losing side of history. They withdrew from mainstream culture and its institutions and tried to create something of a counter-culture. Were they right or wrong? It seems to me that history has vindicated them. They saw rightly. The

This describes the nature of my prediction. I certainly do not know, infallibly, that God will not create an ironic reversal in the story of America. But I don't believe that is his intention. I cannot prove it. I cannot articulate why I think that is true and "prove" it. But, tacitly that is what seems to me to be the case.

God has revealed to us (e.g., in the book of Revelation) how God's story is to end. Before Jesus returns to finally secure victory for God over his enemies, Satan—in the form of a Beast—will appear to have gained the victory over God and Jesus. It appears to me that we are, in fact, on the lead-up to that final event. Things are being put in place that will allow that final Beast to gain complete supremacy in the world before Jesus returns and puts an end to him. God may surprise us. Perhaps he has another Reformation up his sleeve. But I'm not thinking so.

Appendix B: But Aren't We Supposed to Be Salt and Light?

That I recommend (in part three) that we build a distinctive counterculture is a marked change in perspective for me. To many who, like me, have spent many years in American Christendom, this will seem like a terribly wrongheaded direction.

Down through the decades, we American Christians constantly reminded one another that we were to be "salt and light" to the world. By that, we meant that we were to practice authentically obedient, uncompromised discipleship. Why? Because, according to our reading of Jesus' teaching, we would thereby have a positive impact on American culture. Through our obedience, we could transform American culture, morally and spiritually. If we would simply be "good Christians," the others around us would be moved to emulate our commitment to truth and goodness and they would be transformed. And ultimately, as a consequence, the culture and every institution in it would be transformed.

In the mid-twentieth century, that viewpoint seemed totally plausible. It has ceased to be plausible. The experience of the last two decades has reminded us of a very important truth that our previous perspective had failed to take into account: for a person (and a culture) to be impacted, he has to be willing to be impacted. My life of obedience could never move a person to emulate truth and goodness if he was not interested in truth and goodness. That is becoming all too clear as time marches on.

To a person who is already committed to serving the Beast, no matter how faithfully and obediently I follow Jesus, he will not become interested in following Jesus. The

moral and spiritual decay that they predicted has continued, without significant interruption, right down to our day. What we usually fail to see, when we see the direction of the future, is the time scale. The collapse of American culture was not nearly so quick and immanent as they "saw" it to be. The same thing can be said of my parents' generation. They predicted that the 1960's would be the death of America. They saw its collapse coming. Were they wrong? Not really. The collapse we are observing now is very much the collapse that they thought they "saw." Granted, they expected it sooner than now. But a straight line can be drawn between the beliefs and values of the 1960 counter-culture and the beliefs and values of the Beast today. The original Fundamentalists and the parents' of hippies were right in their predictions; they were wrong in their scale of time. What they predicted did not occur nearly as quickly as they would have predicted. It seems likely that the same thing will be true of my prediction. My prediction may very well be right, but likely it will not come to pass nearly as quickly as I think.

servant of the Beast will not choose to emulate my obedience to Jesus; he will hate me for it. The naïve assumption that has prevailed in American Christian culture is that everyone fundamentally wants the Good; they simply need an example to follow. So, if we will set that example, they will follow.⁷⁴ Now we know all too clearly that that is not the case. (We should have known it all along.) Now we realize that, unless God puts repentance into the heart of a person, he will not be changed; he will remain a faithful servant of the Beast. Once we have taken that stark reality into account, it no longer makes sense to expect that our faithful obedience to Jesus will necessarily transform America. More likely, it will be met with hostility, contempt, and persecution.

Our task, therefore, is NOT to transform America. Our task is to support one another. We must not worry about saving America from destruction; we must worry about saving ourselves from destruction. And to do that, we must create systems of support for one another.

But you might object, Jesus says, “Let your life shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). He teaches us explicitly to influence others to respond to God through the lives that we live.

Yes, he does teach that. But what exactly is he saying there? Ought we paraphrase it this way: *live lives as authentic disciples, in a manner that pleases God, because that will necessarily cause anyone and everyone who observes you to praise God and want to live in a manner that pleases him as well?* That is exactly the paraphrase that was implicit in what I was always told. But that is not what Jesus is saying there. Rather, his statement should be paraphrased more like this: *live lives as authentic disciples, in a manner that pleases God, so that it will be possible for some men (those whom God has called), when they have observed your life of godliness, to respond to the example of your life by seeking to emulate you and seek to live in a manner that pleases God as well.* Jesus is fully aware that some (indeed, most) men will persecute you when you “let your light shine before men.” That is Jesus’ primary point in this context. (Cf. Matthew 5: 10–16) Even though *you can expect to be persecuted*, do not let that fact deter you from letting “your light shine before men.” Jesus is not suggesting (as I was always so quick to assume) that there is a necessary causal relationship between me “letting my light shine before men” and those men “glorifying the Father in heaven.” Such *may* be the result—and I should be obedient to God in hopes that that will be the result—but there are no guarantees.

⁷⁴ Hence, it seemed plausible that being “salt and light” meant transforming the world through our example.)