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The Return of Roman Religion

The West is increasingly anti-Christian. Recent opposition is not secularist or rationalist, nor is it merely political. It is deeply religious.

How do Christians face this competing religious system? It may help us to realize how similar our own culture is to that of the ancient Roman Empire. A serious academic study, *Pagans and Christians in the City: Culture Wars from the Tiber to the Potomac*,^[1] traces the re-emergence of ancient Roman culture in contemporary Washington, D.C.

Like ancient Rome, our culture is full of corrupt politicians, many of whom seek to prolong their stay in Washington for financial kick-backs from foreign governments and for insider-trading privileges on Wall Street. In one poll, 51% agreed with the statement, "U.S. democracy is at risk of extinction."^[2] A resounding 85% of respondents were concerned about the rise of political extremism in the United States.

Like ancient Rome we have weak generals, appalling moral decay and porous borders. Many of the foreigners crossing our borders have no knowledge of American constitutional history or Western traditions of human rights. Like Rome, we are experiencing a pervasive sense of moral decay. A growing LGBTQ+ ideology, so typical of ancient Roman culture, is redefining civil rights. This situation doomed ancient civic Rome and is currently taking down America and Western culture in general. If our culture does not hear a full-orbed version of the Christian gospel, it will degenerate into total lawlessness.

Killing the Image

Such extremism is easy to spot in Western culture. "In October 2019, a British court ruled against Dr. David Mackereth in a case that epitomizes our modern culture wars. In a job interview, Mackereth—a doctor with 30 years of experience—wished to reserve the right not to refer to, in his words, 'a 6-foot-tall bearded man as "madam."'" The doctor sought to make a profound witness to his faith, based as it is on a fundamental affirmation of the dignity of God the Creator in Genesis 1:27. On the other hand, the judge, using his own sense of the dignity of his office, ruled that the biblical text was "incompatible with human dignity," and declared that this dedicated and experienced doctor was unworthy of his official appointment. Mackereth was promptly removed from his profession. This conflict represents a massive cultural change. In the name of "rights" the courts are rejecting a fundamental understanding of the nature of the human being that has been recognized as authoritative in the UK for hundreds of years—the belief that all human beings are made in God's image.

In the United Kingdom, the monarch, Elizabeth II, is the sovereign head of state. In her coronation oath of 1953 she vowed to defend the Protestant gospel. The Archbishop of Canterbury asked her to take the following vows: "Will you to the utmost of your power cause Law and Justice, in Mercy, to be executed in all your judgements? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion?"^[3] To all of these, the young Queen replied "Yes." Since then, she has stuck by her commitment.

Clearly Western culture in Great Britain is locked in a Oneist/Twoist confrontation. Either God is the Creator, totally other than us (though revealed in Jesus), or there is no creator. If the latter is true, then there are no ultimate distinctions, such as male and female (or even animal and human, rocks and babies). We define our own creation, making Paul's ancient statement most applicable to us:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse... Claiming to be wise, they became fools (Romans 1:19–22).

Human beings, the image-bearers of God, know that God exists and they also know that a 6'2" bearded man is not a woman. To hold the contrary is foolishness, not wisdom. There is no honest atheist. Our culture needs to hear and understand such truth.

Killing God

Such idolatry is reflected in recent versions of Critical Race Theory, now imposed on our school children in a form of ancient religious paganism. In a new definition of the CRT "oppressed," California's descent into madness speeds ahead. Its bizarre Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) now encourages public school students to pray to bloodthirsty Aztec deities. This anti-Christian depravity is painted in the most vivid colors.^[4]

The California State Board of Education approved the almost 900-page ESMC in March 2021, arguing that it has never been more urgent to teach children about the systemic racism that plagues America.^[5] Frank Xu, president of Californians for Equal Rights Foundation, said in a lawsuit against the state:

The curriculum's unequivocal promotion of five Aztec gods or deities through repetitive chanting and affirmation of their symbolic principles constitutes an unlawful government preference toward a particular religious practice.

A recent community paper opposed the curriculum:

This public endorsement of the Aztec religion fundamentally erodes equal education rights and irresponsibly glorifies anthropomorphic, male deities whose religious rituals involved gruesome human sacrifice and human dismemberment. These gods certainly remind us of the blood-thirsty gods of Rome.^[6]

The program came about after the board of education named R. Tolteka Cuauhtin, a co-author of the 2019 book *Rethinking Ethnic Studies*, to head a committee tasked with developing it. In his book Cuauhtin demonstrates an animus towards Christianity—claiming that Christians committed "theocide" (i.e., killing gods) against indigenous tribes.^[7]

In March 2021, the board of education went further, approving the "Ashe Affirmation," and invoking the divine forces of the Yoruba religion, to help children seeking assistance in their school day. Yoruba is an ancient philosophical concept that is at the root of many pagan religions, including voodoo. CRT reappears when California State Board of Education president Linda Darling-Hammond (a leftist who headed the Biden-Harris regime's education transition team) stated: "We must understand this history if we are finally to end it. We are reminded daily that racism is not only a legacy of the past but a clear and present danger." The site goes on to say that "[t]he California curriculum is intended to educate high school students about the travails of historically marginalized peoples which are often untold in U.S. history courses."^[8]

The five gods included in the curriculum are Tezkatlipoka, Quetzalkoatl, Huitzilopochtli, Xipe Totek, and Hunab Ku. An example of the religions being taught is seen in Tezcatlipoca. This god was celebrated annually when a young man—typically a prisoner of war—was chosen to represent Tezcatlipoca ... and [this] *ixiptla*, or impersonator ... was treated with great respect and trained to speak in a courtly style. He was also taught to play the flute, the sound of which was thought to be the voice of Tezcatlipoca. A month prior to the festival of Toxcatl, he would be wed to four young women impersonating the four goddess wives. The high point of the festival was when the *ixiptla* walked up the steps of a pyramid to have his heart cut out. The next annual impersonator was chosen and given his predecessor's skin to wear as a cloak.

CRT is supposedly atheistic, yet we see that this movement is actively inculcating a religious agenda in the hearts and minds of our young children. The Apostle Paul's words ring true today: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:18). We are not really in a political conflict. We are in a battle between God and the "gods." As Elijah said: "Choose you this day whom you will serve."

Killing Children

Those who ignore God and the morality he requires often become active in their rebellion. Abortion is a perfect example of this. Christians in the medical profession feel the horror of the calloused killing they see around them. They are sorely tried in their commitment to truth. Says one doctor:

I cannot take the life of a child in one room and guide another child into this world in the next. Nor can I care for one elderly woman while helping another end her life. That would not only undermine my most deeply held religious beliefs and my medical judgment, but also the oath I took as a medical professional.^[9]

Though most Americans believe medical workers should not be forced to help with abortions, a court recently struck down a new conscience protection rule. Twenty states filed to overturn such protections, putting pro-life doctors and nurses at risk of being forced to do abortions. The time will come when Christians will lose their jobs if they refuse to abort a baby. In November, a group of pro-abortions Democrats in Congress introduced a national bill to eliminate any such conscience protection rules.

Killing Distinctions

A major change has just taken place in our neighbor to the north, Canada. Known for the strong Christian heritage it inherited from the British Crown, Canada has been committed to democratic civil rights. But a shocking and shameless betrayal of all Canadians who hold conservative values occurred in the House of Commons on December 1, 2021. Bill C-4, known as the "Conversion Therapy Ban" was passed and is the law of the land since January 8, 2022. The Bible's teaching on sexuality and gender is now officially defined as "myth" under Canadian Law. The bill makes the promotion and sharing of biblical teaching about the distinction of the sexes a criminal, jailable offence. Even mothers and fathers who offer biblical wisdom to their children in their own home could be threatened with five years in jail. The Bible is redefined as "hate speech." Shockingly, Conservative leader O'Toole and his Party agreed with the Liberal party to dispense with either debate or Committee review of the bill. Instead, it was sent directly to the Senate for approval.^[10] Not a single MP objected to it.

My dear colleague, Rev. Dr. Joseph Boot, president of the Ezra Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Grimsby, Ontario, courageously stated:

In Canada, Bill C-4 (anti 'conversion therapy' legislation) has just sailed through the House of Commons and Senate, criminalizing anyone—parent, pastor or therapist—who would dare counsel anybody to obey God's law with regard to human identity and sexuality. I will not comply with this law as a Christian leader, I cannot comply!^[11]

Rev. Dr. John MacArthur, a well-known Evangelical pastor from the U.S., reacts to the same event in Canada, asking American pastors and priests:

Will you stand with me and our Canadian brothers and confront, in a spirit of love and mercy, the damning sins legalized in our culture? And will you join the nationwide effort to preach on a biblical view of sexual morality on January 16, 2022 and proclaim the gospel of salvation that is now criminalized? If we all stand strong in this conviction together, the governmental forces of evil will be put on notice that divine love and sovereign grace compel us to be faithful to proclaim radical transformation at any cost.^[12]

YouTube has removed a recent sermon by John MacArthur preaching against the Canadian law, C-4, in which he asserts that God made humans as "male and female." The big tech oligarchy in the United States is not merely political but goes to the heart of who we are as human beings, denying the very notion of the Creator's will, thereby denying the fundamental right to speak and to exercise religion.^[13]

Not so fast. It is not just Canada!

South of the Canadian boarder, a similar ordinance was passed in the small town of West Lafayette, Indiana, in late December, 2021. The city council intends to penalize anyone who talks with minors to help them overcome unwanted same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria. The Proposed Ordinance 31-21 prohibits unlicensed persons from practicing "conversion therapy" with children under the age of 18, with the penalty of up to \$1,000 per day for violators. It defines conversion therapy as "any practices or treatments that seek to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, including efforts to change gender expressions or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings towards individuals of the same gender."^[14]

Al Mohler, the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, identifies this as a crucial moment in Western history. "Right now in this turning point between 2021 and 2022, we see the shape of the challenge coming to the Christian church even more clearly, or even more ominously. We are about to find out where the biblical Christians are on both sides of the Atlantic, and as you and I know, on both sides of the American/Canadian border."^[15] He goes on to say:

The LGBT movement, if it is successful in its campaign to persuade governments to restrict what is said about the same-sex agenda, eventually it will target even the gospel of Jesus Christ as told in the Bible.^[16]

This ideology is promoted in American foreign policy. The U.S. State Department is accepting applications from LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups for grants totaling \$2.5 million. The deadline is February 4, 2022, for funding from the new Global LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Democracy and Empowerment Fund.^[17] This project embeds liberal culture-war ideology in U.S. foreign policy, which should be promoting U.S. national interests, including democracy and historic human rights, not transgenderism, LGBTQIA+ advocacy, and abortion.^[18]

None of these policies can be identified as merely political. Rather, in the once "Christian" West we are faced with direct opposition to biblical truth, and encouragement to worship pagan gods and condone their practices. We respond as the Apostle did in ancient Rome two thousand years ago, with a courageous and full-scale defense of biblical truth. Paul wrote this programmatic face-off in his epistle to the Romans—worship of God or worship of the earth:

They exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

May we stand firm for the gospel of Jesus Christ and for the Creator's definition of his creation and of his creatures, male and female—no matter the cost.

[1] Steven D. Smith, Emory University Studies in Law and Religion, 2018.

[2] <https://nypost.com/2022/01/15/americans-believe-us-democracy-at-risk-of-extinction-poll/>

[3] <https://www.royal.uk/coronation-oath-2-june-1953>

[4] matthew-vadum, California Pushes Kids to Worship Aztec Gods: Welcome to the enlightenment of "Ethnic Studies." <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/2022/01/california-has-kids-worshipping-aztec-gods-matthew-vadum/author/matthew-vadum>

[5] <https://www.foxnews.com/us/california-ethnic-studies-curriculum>

[6] https://www.theepochtimes.com/mkt_app/california-requires-aztec-prayer-in-schools-and-civil-rights-group-sues_3984497.html

[7] <https://www.city-journal.org/calif-ethnic-studies-curriculum-accuses-christianity-of-theocide>

[8] <https://canadafreepress.com/article/california-pushes-kids-to-worship-aztec-gods>

[9] <https://www.lifenews.com/2020/01/14/obgyn-refuses-pressure-to-do-abortions-i-cant-give-birth-in-one-room-and-kill-babies-in-another/>

[10] "A Shocking and Scandalous Development," Real Women of Canada Ottawa, Ontario, Dec 6, 2021.

[11] Private communication.

[12] <https://www.gracechurch.org/news/posts/2307>.

[13] <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/milton-quintanilla/youtube-removes-john-macarthur-latest-sermon-on-biblical-sexuality-labels-it-hate-speech.html>.

[14] https://wng.org/roundups/conversion-therapy-ban-threatens-indiana-church-ministry-1642524571?utm_source=Albert+Mohler&utm_campaign=efb7188635-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_04_08_09_12_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b041ba0d12-efb7188635-307157638&mc_cid=efb7188635&mc_eid=6371877c8f

[15] <https://americanfaith.com/christian-leader-warns-lgbt-agenda-is-targeting-the-pulpit-itself/>

[16] Art.cit.

[17] <https://www.state.gov/statements-of-interest-requests-for-proposals-and-notices-of-funding-opportunity/drl-fy2021-global-lgbtqi-inclusive-democracy-and-empowerment-glide-fund/>

[18] <https://providencemag.com/2022/01/u-s-foreign-policy-lgbtqia-advocacy/>