

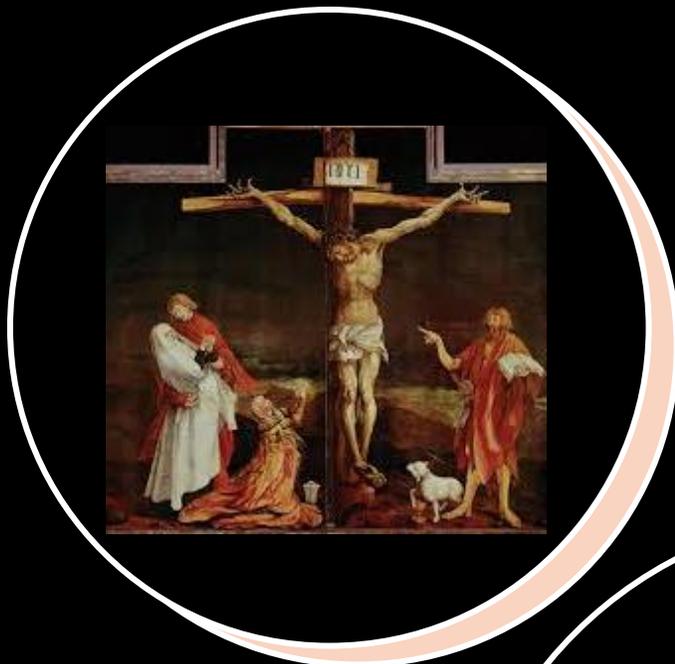


Living Lives Against the Grain week 2



“But We've a story to tell to the nations. A story of truth and mercy. A story of peace and light.”

Can we tell it without letting cultural wars and political partisanship unduly dictate the terms and contours of our ideas and conversations?





A People on the move literally, culturally, and intellectually.

1. The Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land, circa 1100 BC.
2. The Exile from Israel to Babylon, 600 BC.
3. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. The Jewish and Christian diaspora after the destruction of Rome, 70 AD.

Christians “conquered” the Mediterranean world for Jesus while being subordinate to Caesar.

“Let every soul be subordinate to the higher authorities. For there is no authority except under God, and such as exist are subordinated to God. So he who opposes authority has opposed God’s ordination; and those who have made opposition will invite a verdict upon themselves...”

- Romans 13: 1-2
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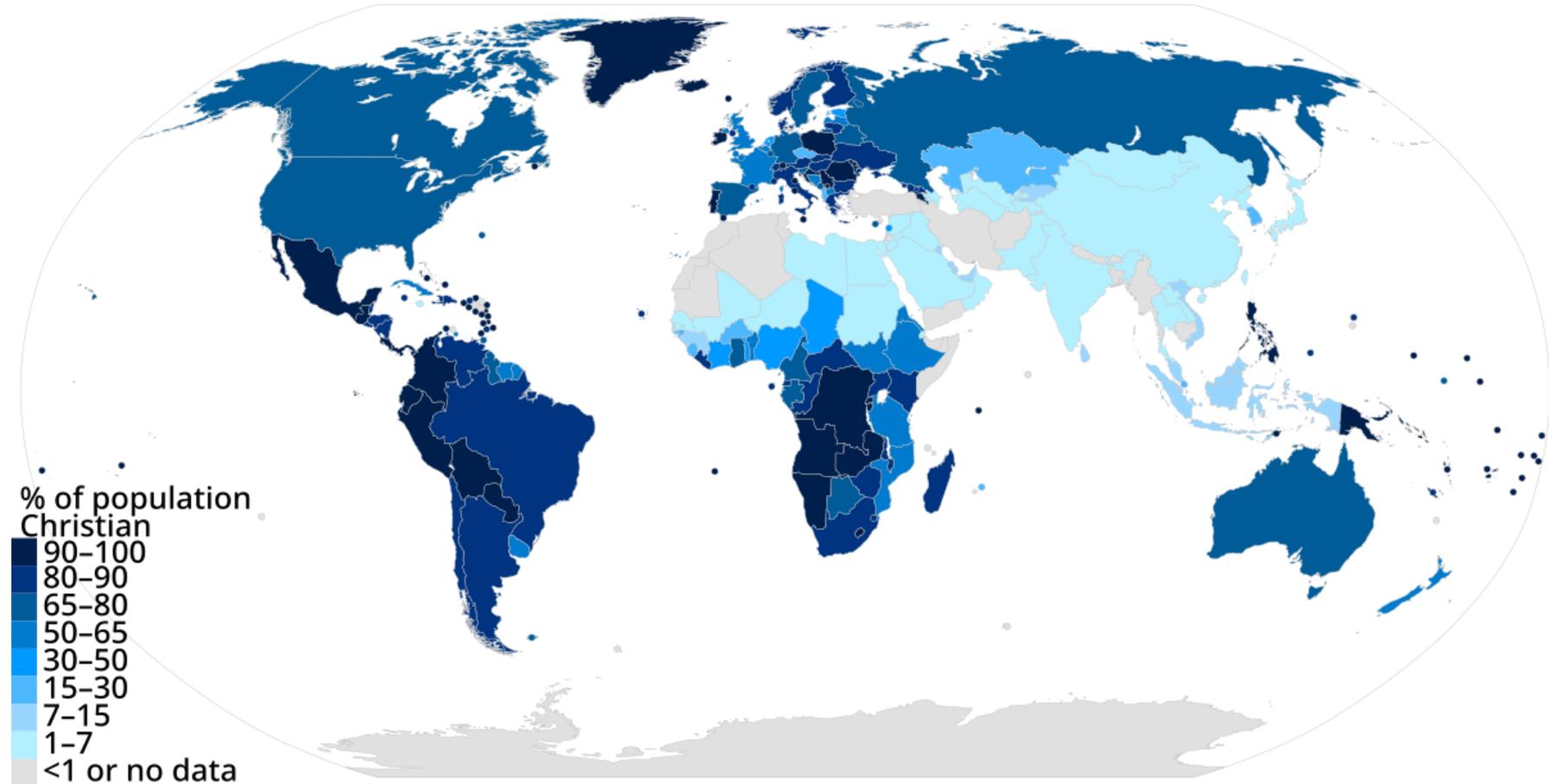


Western Civilization

The story of Western Civilization is the story of how three civilizations—the Greeks, the Hellenized Romans, and the Christianized Greco-Romans—laid the foundation of European civilization that has been, for good and ill, a dominant force in our world leading to the spread of the Christian church.



Christianity around the world.



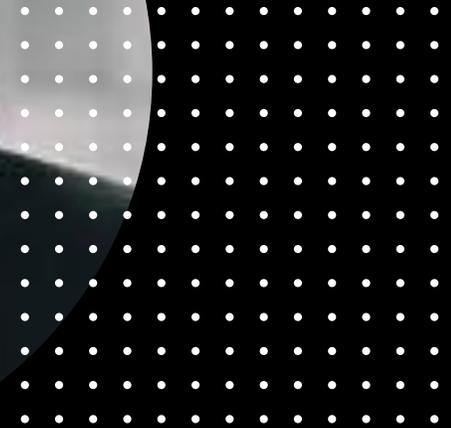
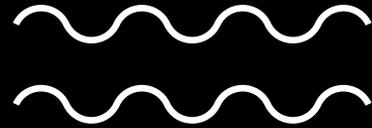
The church has survived in nearly every setting—tribes, clans, nations, empires—and thrived in most, but not in all of them. (Nigeria)





The church has failed
in every setting too.

God does
not leave us
alone.



A parenthetic word to
would-be assassins.

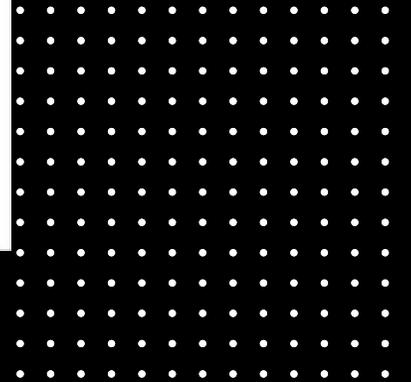
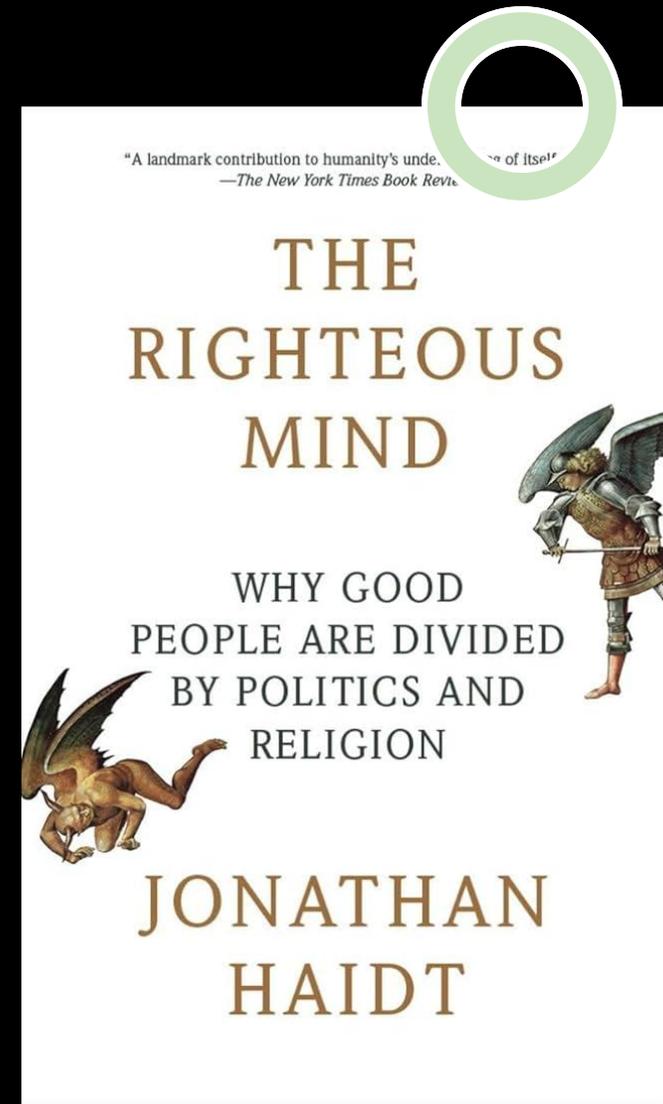
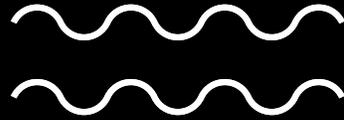
If you hate people
or their causes,
usually the worst
thing you can do for
you and your cause
is to kill them.

**“The blood
of the Martyrs
is the seed
of the Church.”**

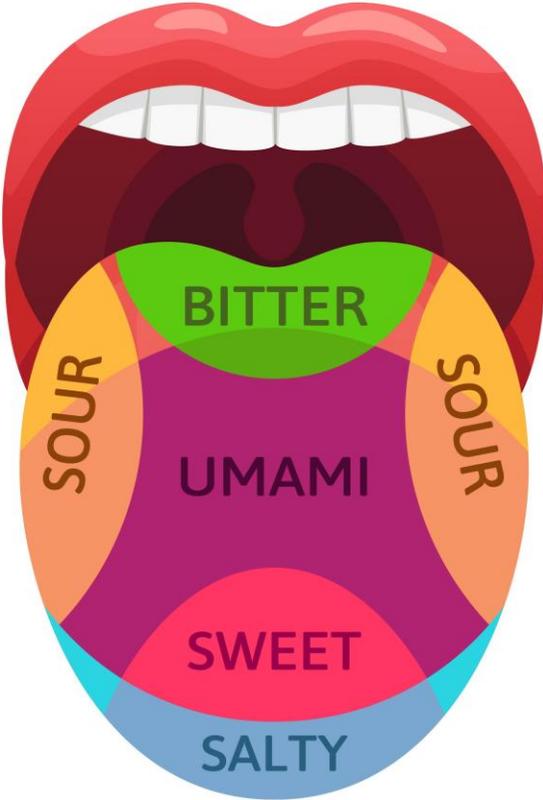
— Tertullian

Living Against the Grain

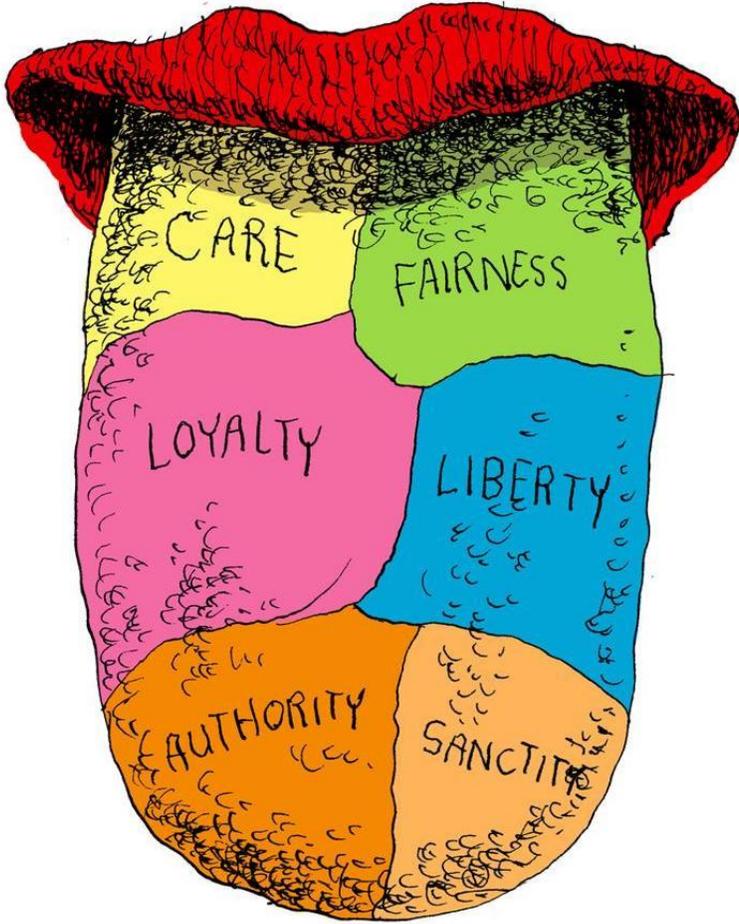
How does
God's story
come to us?



Taste Buds



Moral Taste Buds





Moral Foundations Theory

The Righteous Mind, what we value.

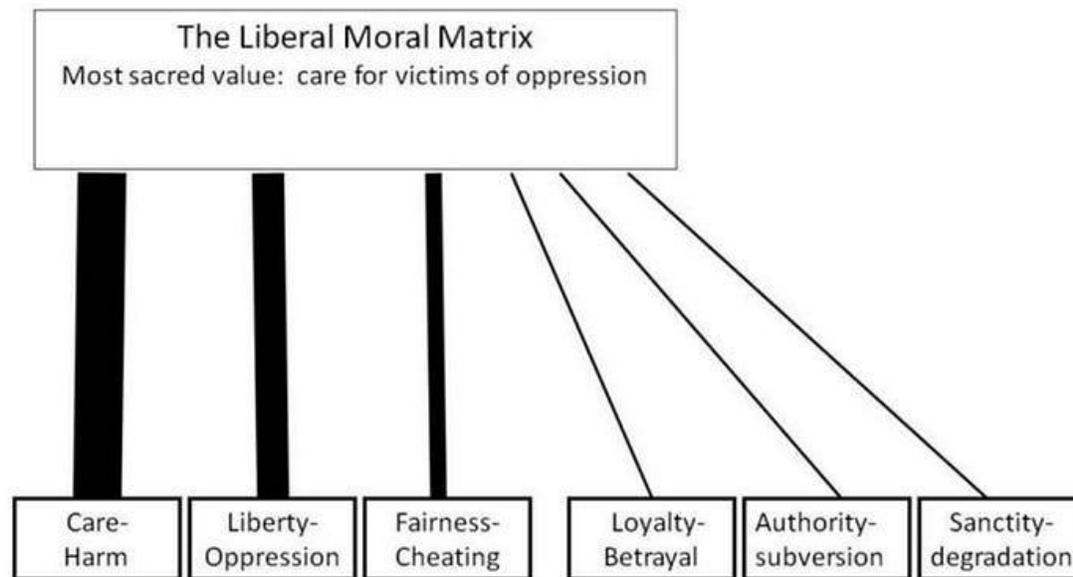


Figure 12.2. *The moral matrix of American liberals.*

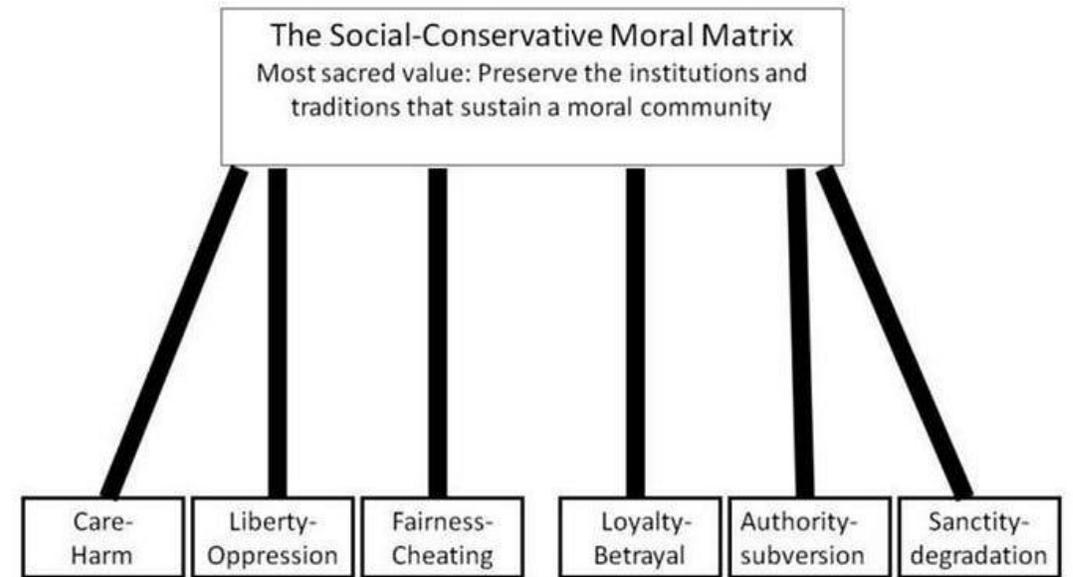


Figure 12.4. *The social conservative moral matrix.*

To illustrate,
Haidt, there
are two,
equally
Catholic sides
in the debate
over
immigration.

One side thinks that the imperative to welcome the migrant is what most needs emphasis today. (Care/Harm; liberty/oppression)

The other side thinks that preserving law and order, and the economic wellbeing and cultural identity of the nation is what is currently most urgent. (loyalty, authority, sanctity)

Both can appeal to the moral premises rooted in the Catholic tradition.

Their dispute is about how best to balance the various relevant considerations under contemporary circumstances—a matter of prudential judgment about which reasonable people can disagree.”

Edward Feser, “The Catholic Fight over Immigration,” *Unherd* 10.25.25



What's Your Individual or Family Story?



Who is the person that God's call came to where you were? And who is that person now?

Romans 12: 2: Who am I and where do I stand?

“What am I doing and by what am I compelled? How is it with me? How is it with the clarity of the ...seriousness of my seeking the will of God, of my asking after that good and well-pleasing and perfect thing which is ascribed and applied to me here and now?”

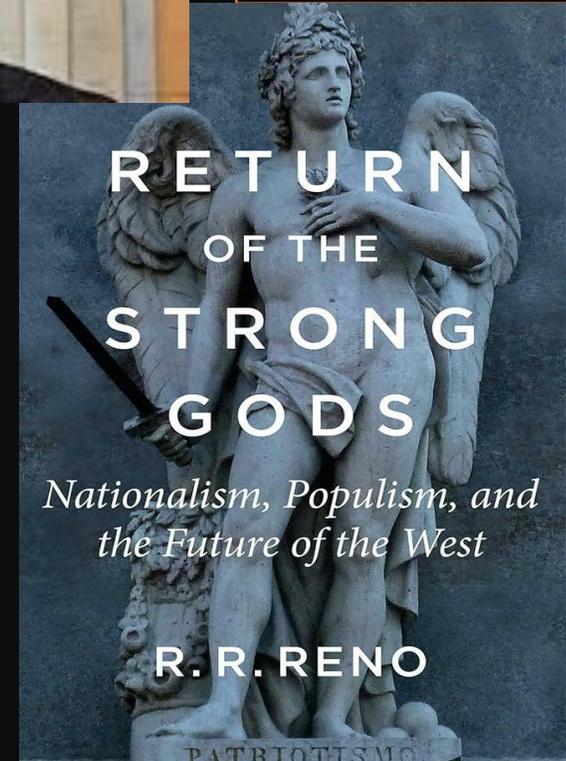
Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, p. 497.



3. How does your story fit with the larger Christian story in our city, country and world?



Where are we in
history?



The Open Society

After the staggering slaughter of back-to-back world wars, the West embraced the ideal of the “open society.” The promise: By liberating ourselves from the old attachments to nation, borders, clan, and religion—the strong gods that had fueled centuries of violence—we could build a prosperous world freed from dogmas and managed by experts. It worked pretty well for many of us.





Sports over
war.



The Open Society's favorite song: *Imagine*

- Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us, only sky.
 - Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too.
 - Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man.
-



“Your country and family are to die for;
restaurants are for eating.”



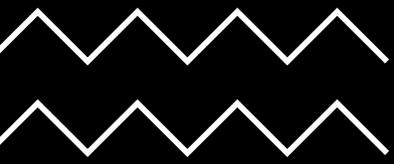
Fears and Loss

Despite many gains in areas like the rights of women and civil rights, as well as the diminishment of groups like the Ku Klux Klan, our political, cultural, and financial elites promoted open borders, open markets, and open minds all designed to lessen the power of the strong gods.

This never-ending project of openness has hardened into a set of dogmas which continued to eat away at the social solidarity rooted in family, faith, and nation.

While progressives worry about the return of fascism, our societies are dissolving from an assault on the things many hold most dear.





Fears and Loss



To double down, progressives have continued the open society project by promoting mass migration and celebrating racial diversity, multiculturalism, globalism, and pansexualism, including transgenderism and men in women's sports. They reject borders between men and women and between nations. They reject western culture as colonial and subject to a return to barbarism. Diversity, not unity, is our strength. Progressives have replaced the family with the individual as the core unit of human life, all with the goal of keeping the strong gods at bay.

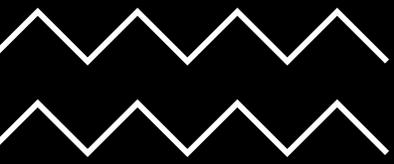


Fear and Longing

Progressives fear the pendulum will swing back in the direction of fascism and are doing what they can to keep the pendulum pushing against the strong gods.

Conservatives, who have no interest in fascism, are desperate to free the institutions –family, nation, and faith—that give life meaning.





Is there room for mutual understanding?

- If there is nothing to kill or die for, is there anything to live for?

- Fear of losing all that gives meaning in life versus a fear that some sort of fascism will take it all away.



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Inevitably the pendulum will return.

People will not tolerate social dissolution indefinitely. They long to be part of a “we”—the fruit of shared loves—which gives life meaning. The strong gods will return in one form or another.

Our task is to attend to those that, appealing to our reason as well as our hearts, inspire the best of our traditions. Otherwise, we shall invite the darker gods whose return our open society was intended to forestall.



Populism

Populism is a contested concept for a variety of political stances that emphasize the idea of the "common people", often in opposition to a perceived elite. It is frequently associated with anti-establishment and anti-political sentiment. Wikipedia



Latin mass



The Tridentine Mass is the form of Mass found in the Roman Missal of the Catholic Church codified in 1570 and published thereafter with amendments up to 1962. Progressives fear it symbolizes the overturn social gains made in the Catholic Church since the Vatican 2 Council in the 1960s.





Pushback on open borders

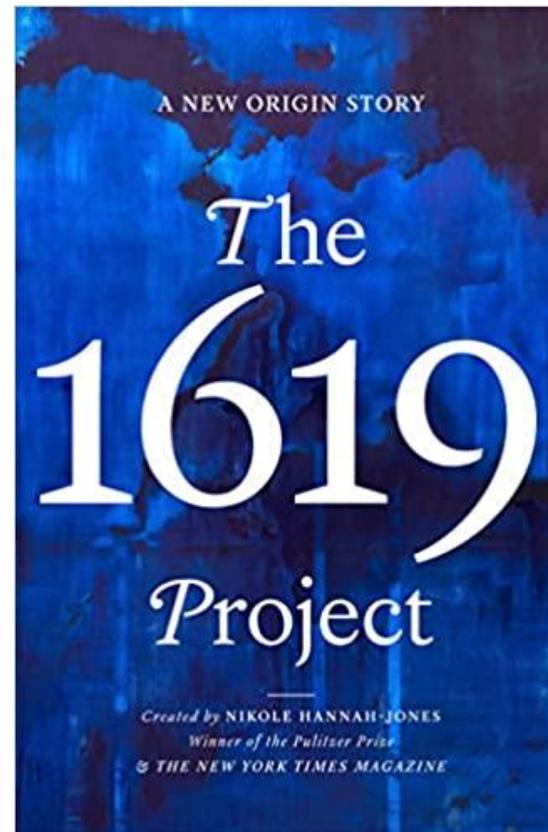
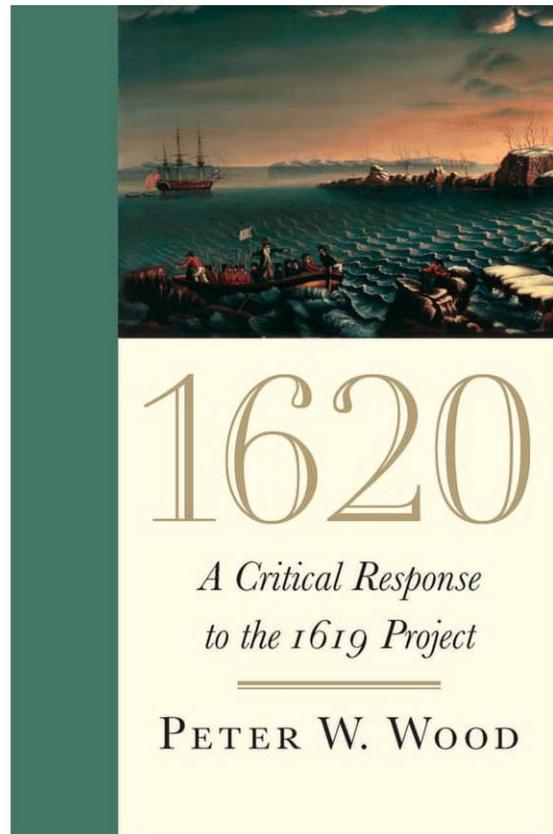
Despite large numbers of legal immigrants who come here every year, progressives turn conservative concerns about borders and taking care of American citizens first before others as xenophobic, racist, and selfish.



Pushback
on “men” in
women’s
sports.



Pushback on *The 1619 Project*



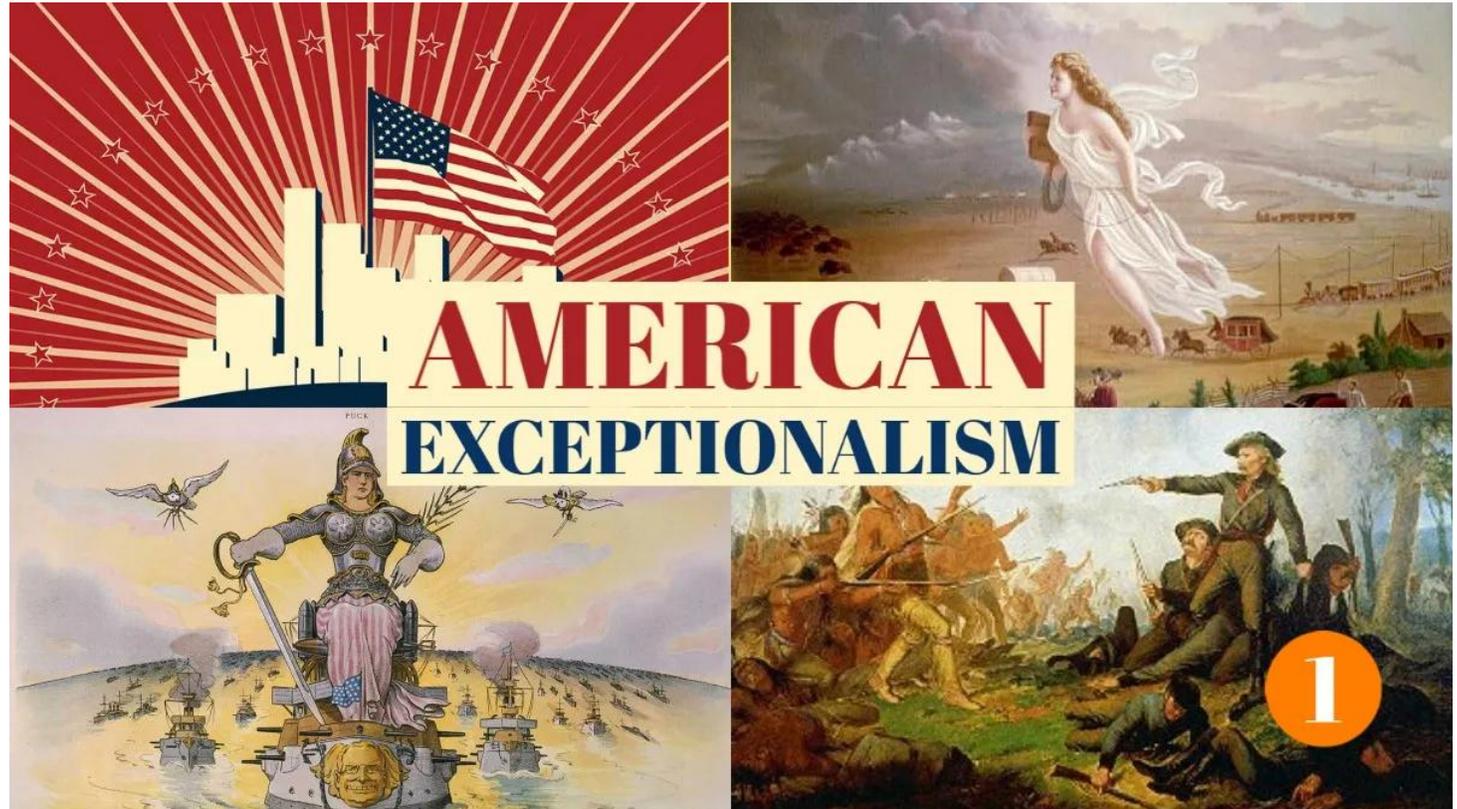
Fears of emerging strong gods, i.e., the things people love most deeply, lead to deep concerns.

- Nation
- Borders
- Race
- Religion
- Family
- Individualism
- History and Culture



What is American exceptionalism?

- America has been “uniquely” blessed by God.
- America is “uniquely” favored by God.
- America has a “unique” role to play in history.



How is American exceptionalism true? How is it not true?

TRUE

- America has been “uniquely” blessed by God. (Yes, but every nation and people has been blessed uniquely by God.)
- America is “uniquely” favored by God. (Yes, but all nations are favored by God in unique ways.)
- America has a “unique” role to play in history. (Yes, but all nations have their own unique role to play in history.)

NOT TRUE

- **Only** America has been blessed by God.
- America is the **only** nation favored by God today.
- America is the **only** nation playing a special role in history.

Every nation is exceptional by virtue of its resources, history, and calling, but how are they best governed?



Globalism

Globalism, a descendent of the old idea of empire, believes the world is best governed when nations surrender significant portions of their autonomy, e.g., economic, legal, and geo-political concerns, to a responsible body.

Common complaints about globalism are that it reduces cultural distinctives to tourism , e.g., “ethnic” food; it leaves the “little man” without recourse when it comes to taking land, etc.; and it concentrates power in multinational corporations.



How Christians are globalists: the Kingdom of God—the outworking of God’s redemptive plan—is global if not galactic. .



Our sisters and brothers in Christ live in every part of the globe. The New Testament teaches that our obligation to them is strong.



Nationalism

- Nationalism is a principle that regards the world as best governed when nations—descended from clans—are free to chart their own courses, cultivate their own traditions, and pursue their own interests without interference.
- The common critiques of nationalism are that nationalists pursue paths at the expense of other nations, and the world is too complicated and interdependent for nationalism to work.
- Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*



How Christians are nationalists....

“Thus says the Lord of hosts to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Build houses, plant gardens, take wives, and have sons and daughters....Seek the welfare of the city, [clan, nation, and empire] where I have sent you into exile; and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” Jeremiah 29:7



Christians are subject to civil authorities who rule particular nations and empires.

“As servants of God...live as free people...Honor everyone. Love the family of believers, Fear God...Honor the emperor.” 1 Peter 2: 16f.



**Christians honoring
the emperor and
seeking the good of
the American nation.
What are they
supposed to do?**



THE CASE FOR
CHRISTIAN
NATIONALISM

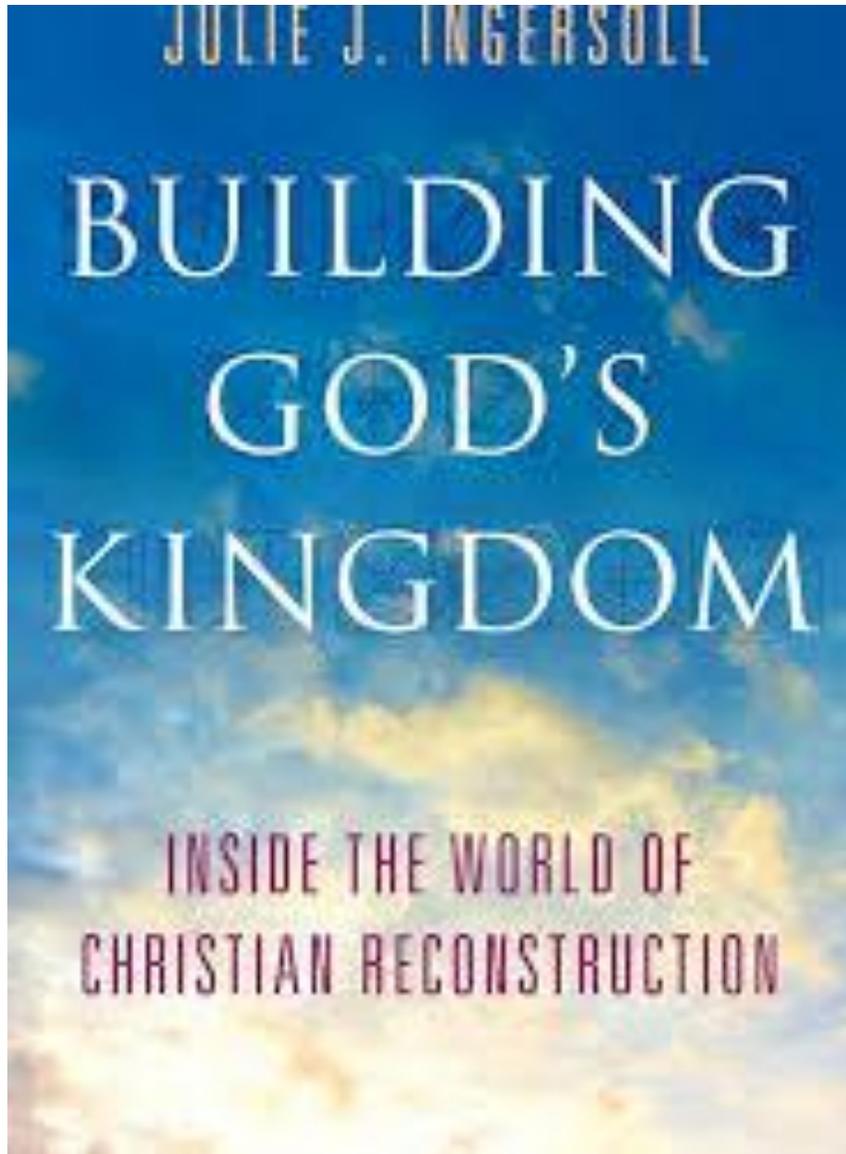


STEPHEN
WOLFE

"A PIONEERING WORK... RELENTLESSLY INNOVATIVE." — YORAM HAZONY,
AUTHOR OF CONSERVATISM: A REDISCOVERY
AND THE VIRTUE OF NATIONALISM

“Christian
Nationalism”
(minus the
“white”) or
Nationalists who
are Christians?





Christian Reconstructionism:

According to people like Rousas John Rushdoony any return to Biblical law in American society depends on the power of the Holy Spirit in history to open human hearts and minds to God's law revealed in Scripture and then depends on democratic means to create biblically-inspired laws when possible.



Billy Graham's 1957 NYC Crusade and Reinhold Niebuhr's Critique.

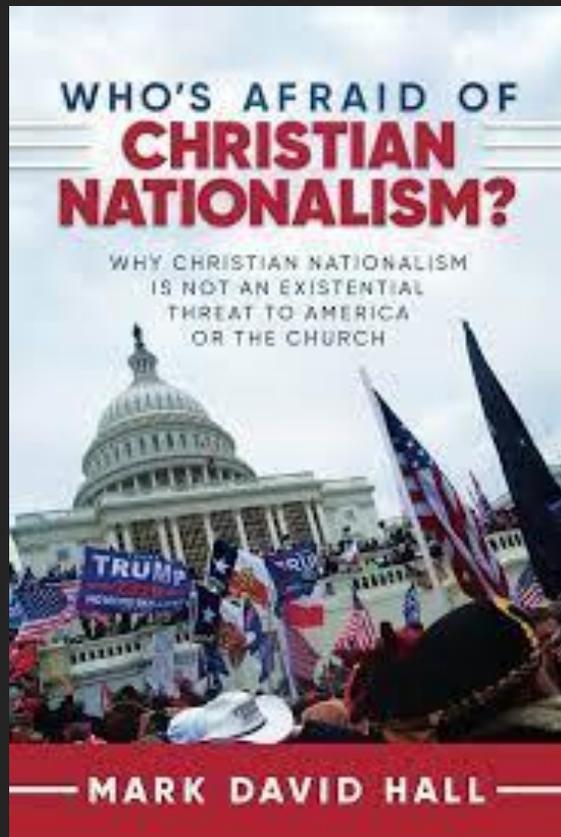
"Gripping. . . Required reading for anyone who wants to map the continuing erosion of our already fragile wall between church and state." —*THE WASHINGTON POST*

THE POWER WORSHIPPERS

*Inside the Dangerous Rise
of Religious Nationalism*

I not only want you to do something, I want you to do it my way!





Something to fear?

“Most of the literature Christian nationalism is written by activists and journalists who clearly have axes to grind [against the idea]. The concept is ill-defined, often amounting to little more than the idea that Christians are bringing their faith into the public square for positions disfavored by the authors.” Mark David Hall

Which is it?

“Thus, the literature [against Christian nationalism] usually portrays Christians fighting to end abortion or defend religious liberty as religious nationalists, but understands Christians motivated by their faith to pursue civil rights legislation as laudable political activists.” Mark David Hall



Christian Nationalism: a movement, a conservative political party, or a destructive force?

- **Christian Social Democrats**
- **European Christian Political Party**
- **Christian Democratic Union of Germany**
- **Christian Democrats**
- **Evangelical People's Party of Switzerland**
- **Christian Nationalist (Party)?**



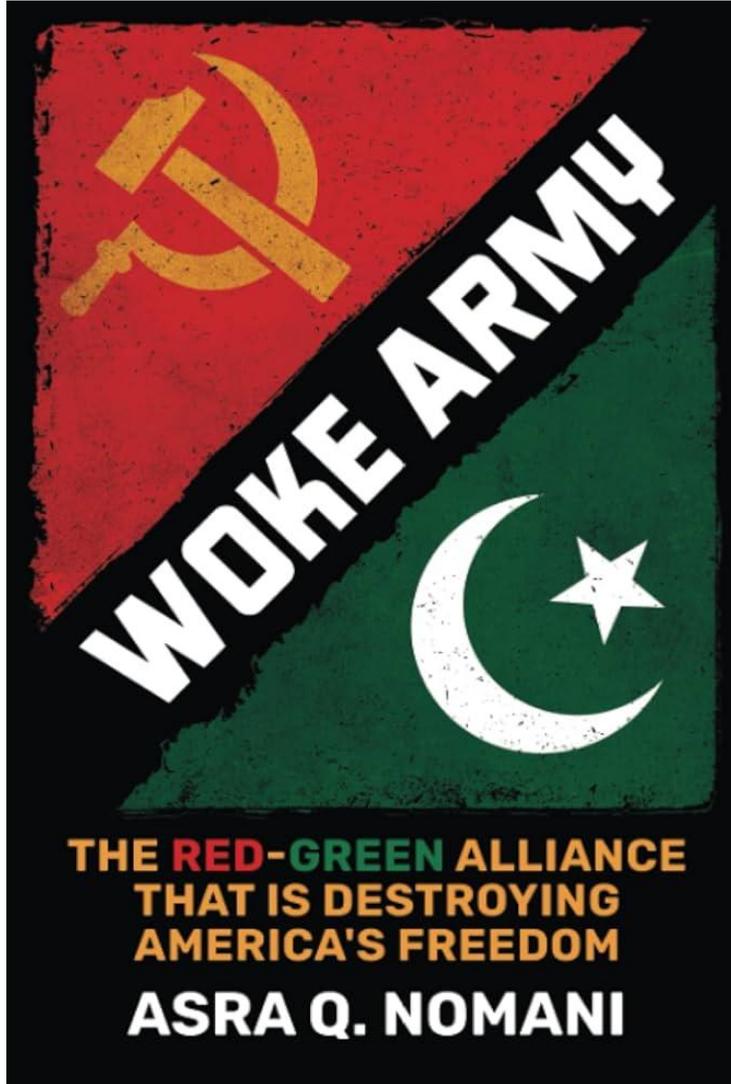
Keeping an eye on extremists of all sorts.



What enlightened advice—what books of scholarship and activism—can Presbyterians offer to those seeking to revitalize America against the excesses of the open society program short of scolding them?

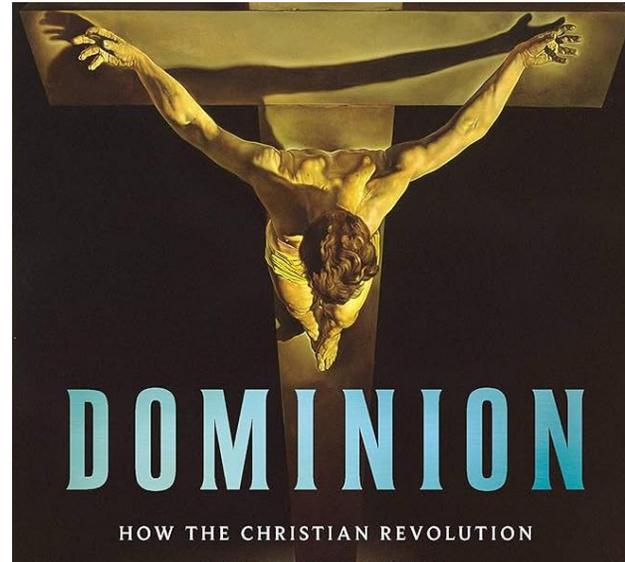
The New Future:
Christian
“civilizationalism”
Versus International
Anarchism, Islam, and
Chinese-style
Communism





What do the radical red and the radical green have in common? A desire to stand up to and/or overcome the West and control or replace it with a non-Western ideology.

Ayan Hirsi Ali, Tom Holland, and Jordan Peterson as well as other intellectuals are turning to Christianity to prepare for civilizational struggle.



The future?

Will the reinvigoration of Christianity in the West lead to the emergence of the strong gods of nation, family, faith, and nation?

Or have other strong gods already emerged, though this time from directions other than Western European culture, to which Christianity is a response?

