

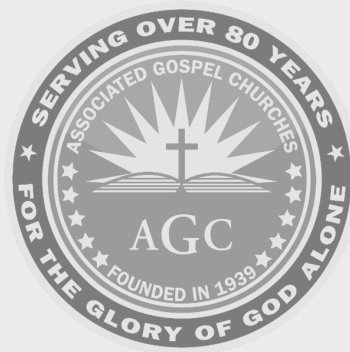
— The AGC —

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Rooted in the Great Commandment (*Matthew 22:36-40*) and the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*), and recognized by the federal government as an official ecclesiastical endorsing agency, the Associated Gospel Churches (AGC) exists to represent Biblically Christ-centered churches, for the purpose of recruiting, endorsing, educating and supporting ordained men to serve as chaplains—pastors in uniform—in publicly-restricted access institutions.

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## THE AGC JOURNAL

*Published by*

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## **FOR CHRIST AND COUNTRY**

*υποφέρουν από δυσκολίες μαζί μου, ως καλός  
στρατιώτης του Ιησού Χριστού*

*– II Tim 2:3*

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## **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

**W**elcome to another issue of the “AGCJournal!” This is a publication for military and other chaplains, pastors, history teachers and others who are interested in a Biblical perspective on ministry. Whether it’s preaching, Bible study, counseling, or ministering to a flock, this is a toolbox written expressly for you. The articles cover interesting aspects of ministry as well as including some of the latest in conservative theology which uplifts and glorifies God, instead of causing doubt. The books which are reviewed cover topics relevant to today. The reviews hopefully are important and thought provoking, so enjoy. Here is a short synopsis of each article’s content.

### **PROFESSIONAL CHAPLAIN ITEMS OF INTEREST**

*“The Officer and Military Oaths: A Promise and A Prayer” by Dr. Steve Brown*

Written by our fearless AGC president, Dr. Steve Brown. When you raise your hand to take the oath to defend the constitution, there is a whole lot more to it from God’s perspective.

*“Christian Spirituality” by Chap. Ron Benzing, COL, USA-ret*

Probably one of the most thoughtful and insightful Chaplains I’ve ever met is the AGC’s Vice-President Ron Benzing. As Solomon once said, “There is nothing new under the sun” and this article covers the renewed attempts of the military to re-define what spirituality is. Chaplain Benzing gives some insight and experience as to what Biblically minded chaplains should do as they minister in the liberal genre known as “military ministry.”

## **FEATURED BIBLE ARTICLES ON HISTORY**

*“Dating the Patriarchs” by Dr. Mike Grisanti*

Dr. Grisanti is head of the OT Department at Master’s Seminary and a first-rate Bible scholar. As a scholar who believes the inspiration of God’s Word, he uses the latest archeological and theological scholarship to give a “conservative” answer to the questions liberals have raised about the Patriarchs and the age they lived in, including why they had longer life spans.

*“Origins of Christian America: Part One” by Dr. Bob Freiberg*

This is the opening salvo in the conflict against history done wrong and is part of a 3-article series jointly written by Dr. Kurt Johnson (a former Navy JAG with a D. Min) and myself. There has been an academic movement which believes America disobeyed God and illegally started a war against England. However, the biblical and historical argument runs counter to this commonly held belief, as this article demonstrates.

## **BOOK REVIEWS ON CURRENT RELEVANT MINISTRY TOPICS**

*“We Will Not Be Silenced: Responding Courageously to Our Culture's Assault on Christianity” by Erwin W. Lutzer*

Reviewed by Dr. Stephen Kim. Written by Erwin Lutzer, the former pastor of the same church where D. L. Moody once preached. Interesting insight, godly advice and biblical thoughts of how Christians should handle themselves with the LGBT and transgender movements of the day.

*“God vs. Government: Taking a Biblical Stand When Christ and Compliance Collide” by Nathan Busenitz & James Coates*

Reviewed by Dr. Kurt Johnson. During the past Covid shutdown which affected local Churches, two Churches took a stand against the fiat tyranny of the government, and this is their story. One fought the government bureaucrats while another one went to jail. Find out how God used them both.

The theme for this volume of the AGCJournal is to ask the question about serving God during conflict with Caesar. Hopefully you will read and engage our authors with any thoughts or comments you may have. Feel free

to write me at [editor@agcjournal.com](mailto:editor@agcjournal.com). I will then give your comments or questions to the proper person if you so desire a response.

The theme for our next AGCJournal (March 1, 2023) will be about the sufficiency of Scripture in ministry for all kinds of life situations. However, for the present, enjoy this issue of the Journal and may God bless and encourage you in all your endeavors as you fight the good fight of faith for His glory.

In Christ,

*Bob Freiberg, editor*

*CDR, CHC, USN-ret, M.Div, Th.M, D.D., D. Min.*

## **THE OFFICER AND MILITARY OATHS**

### ***A Promise and A Prayer***

*Steve Brown*

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*Chaplain Steve Brown (CAPT, CHC, USN-ret) was granted an honorary doctorate for his work with the military and as the president of the Associated Gospel Churches. As a military chaplain, Dr. Brown had numerous billets during war and peace as the Command Chaplain of major commands. Under his leadership as the AGC President, he has worked tirelessly for evangelical and Biblically-minded Chaplains to have full religious freedom to preach and teach the Gospel to our military men and women*

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I, \_\_\_\_\_, DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR,  
THAT I WILL SUPPORT AND DEFEND  
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES  
AGAINST ALL ENEMIES, FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC;  
THAT I WILL BEAR TRUE FAITH AND ALLEGIANCE TO THE SAME;  
THAT I TAKE THIS OBLIGATION FREELY,  
WITHOUT ANY MENTAL RESERVATION OR PURPOSE OF EVASION;  
AND THAT I WILL WELL AND FAITHFULLY DISCHARGE THE DUTIES  
OF THE OFFICE ON WHICH I AM ABOUT TO ENTER.  
**SO HELP ME GOD.**



All US Military officers are required to recite this oath as part of their initial commissioning ceremony and then at every promotion ceremony thereafter. This oath is a succinct illustration of the Christian's responsibilities to government and to God. Holding in His hand a Roman coin bearing Caesar's image, the Lord Jesus summarized our responsibilities to government and to God when He said, *Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's* (Matthew 22:21b).

The officer commissioning oath is first a solemn promise (*I do solemnly swear*). The officer is promising two things. First, to bear allegiance; this involves a loyalty to something bigger than self. The officer's solemn promise is to *bear true faith and allegiance* to the US Constitution, not necessarily to a person or even to the country. This is the officer rendering *therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's*. It is the Constitution that directs the course of the United States. The US Constitution speaks of securing the *blessings* of liberty, the unalienable rights endowed by our Creator, as first enumerated in the Declaration of Independence.

The Constitution guarantees Christians liberty to practice their faith without harassment or discrimination. Military "pluralism" is the outworking of that liberty and has historically meant respecting *the right* of others to believe and practice their religion, not necessarily respecting *the content or execution* of those beliefs. For us, this means that we can freely exalt the name of Christ. The Gospel is inherently powerful and self-authenticating and will always efficaciously defend itself in the "Mars Hill" pluralistic philosophies of our day. The Gospel changes everything!

This promise to bear allegiance is deliberate and voluntarily. The United States does not impress its officers. The aim of this promise to bear allegiance is *devotion to duty*, to *well and faithfully discharge the duties* of the officer's office. At the heart of this first promise is **Honor**. Someone without Honor will not *well and faithfully discharge* their duties. They will not keep this first promise.

Second, in the oath, the officer promises to bear arms. This is implicit in the Oath's promise to faithfully support and *defend* the Constitution. The Constitution, which directs the course of the country, has *foreign and domestic* enemies that the officer must be willing to fight. This fight may require the ultimate sacrifice, one's life. This promise to bear arms speaks of **Courage**. Serving as an officer is not about exercising egotistical authority, a good paycheck, healthcare or educational benefits. Rather, it is about fully

embracing the hardships, dangers, fears, separations, and even the death that one's *devotion to duty* may require.

## CHAPLAINS AND THE OATH OF OFFICE

Although they are officers, chaplains are non-combatants and therefore do not bear arms. Their office, however, requires that they face the same dangers as the men and women they serve. The chaplain's ministry is especially crucial in hazardous duty zones, which may ultimately require one's *last full measure of devotion*. On August 30, 2010, Chaplain (CPT) Dale Goetz (43) was killed in action with four other soldiers near Kandahar, Afghanistan. Dale died in a combat zone bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to his Soldiers. There are some things worth dying for. As His Savior did for him, Dale laid down his life for those he loved and was called to serve.

Second, the oath's *So help me God* is a prayer! This is **Commitment**. We can and should fulfill both responsibilities, to government, and to God. In this phrase, *so help me God*, both the officer and government have rightly invited God to view the commissioning ceremony. God observes with great interest the commitment made in this oath.

What are some of the implications of this phrase *so help me God*? It first speaks of submission. Ultimate loyalty (submission) lies here – to God. The promise in the prayer, *so help me God*, becomes a *covenant*!

Next, it speaks of sovereignty (*and unto God the things that are God's*). The nation is admitting (though reluctantly today it seems) that God is superior/supreme to the nation, and has an interest in its affairs and the officers who run them. The Pharisees rightly admitted that Caesar's image was on the Roman coin in Jesus' hand. But in whose image was Caesar created? Governmental leaders are also responsible and accountable to God.

This phrase *so help me God* speaks of supplication. It is a prayer acknowledging that God's help is needed in the commitment made in this oath. The phrase speaks of sincerity. The military personnel and family members present are not the only witnesses to this oath. The new officer is calling upon God to witness as well. There is a fervent solemnity in this commitment. The officer expects God to hold him accountable for the promises here made. The greatest motivation to do right is the fear of God, not the fear of man (government).

Upon the death of President Paul von Hindenburg on August 2, 1934, Adolph Hitler assumed supreme power as Fuhrer in Germany. To consolidate his power, he intentionally changed (to the chagrin of his officers) the

German *Wehrmacht* Officer's Oath, making every Military Officer "swear unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler." Millions would die as a result of this misdirected fanatical governmental allegiance.

The phrase at the end of our Oath, *so help me God* is mandatory, required by law in all oaths of office taken by US Military officers and enlisted personnel. Asking God to witness the oath follows the pattern and form of ancient covenants, changing a promise into a covenant to act faithfully and loyally. It is quite chilling that the US Air Force Academy once altered their Honor Code making the last phrase optional, and further the US Air Force considered altering the Commissioning Oath, no longer requiring this last phrase.<sup>1</sup>

The Military Chaplain's office is to faithfully represent his local church and his endorsing agency to the military. There is no such thing as a generic chaplain, but the chaplain should beware that there are those in our government who will try to create such a thing. They do so in clear violation of the Establishment Clause.

So, the Christian Chaplain has every right and responsibility to be who they are in Christ, and not be ashamed of it! They are commissioned officers in the United States Military, but even more important, they have been *called by God* to serve Him and His body as a Christian Chaplain. The need in today's Military for Christian Chaplains to be who they are in Christ could not be greater! The US Constitution allows, yea requires this, but even if it did not, God *who is greater than the Constitution* requires it. Whether God gives the chaplain three years or thirty years to serve, the chaplain should rejoice in the stewardship that He gives, and be faithful *to Him* in the years and opportunities that He provides.

The faithful, fervent, fleshed out promulgation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is exactly what the men and women we serve still need. *Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. So help me God!*

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<sup>1</sup> See *Judicial Watch Sues DOD for Records about Removal of "So Help Me God" from Air Force Academy Written Materials*. Standard Newswire, September 24, 2013, <http://www.standardnewswire.com/news/367228657.html>.

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## **THE CHAPLAIN AND SPIRITUAL FITNESS**

*Ronald Benzing*

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*Chaplain (Colonel) Ronald Benzing (US Army-retired) served over twenty years on active duty in the U.S. Army as a chaplain. He is a veteran of the Vietnam War. Ron also has many years of service as a civilian local church pastor. He is currently the Vice President of the Associated Gospel Churches, and serves as a pastor in a small church in North Carolina.*

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**T**here is a growing confusion as to what a military chaplain can or cannot say as a minister in uniform. The purpose of this article is to raise the question, “Will Chaplains have freedom to express their seriously held religious belief when leading the current Army’s Spiritual Fitness/Health training?”<sup>1</sup> The answer should be positive given that the *National Defense Authorization Act of 2014*, Section 533, reads: “The Armed Forces shall accommodate the beliefs of a member of the armed forces reflecting the conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs of the member and, in so far as practicable, may not use such beliefs as the basis of any adverse personnel action, discrimination, or denial of promotion, schooling, training, or assignment.” (NDAA 2014).

Commenting on the NDAA, the *Center for Religious Expression* writes, “It is essential to the notion of religious liberty that our military chaplains not be forced to engage in activities that cut against their deeply-held religious

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<sup>1</sup> Although the U.S. Army’s policies are here discussed, applications can be made to the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Air Force, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and other government and non-government chaplain agencies.

beliefs, like performing marriage ceremonies for homosexual couples. If a chaplain chooses not to participate in that activity, we must ensure freedom in making that choice.”<sup>2</sup>

“During consideration of the FY’15 NDAA, Congress again affirmed the spiritual leadership chaplains provide to service members as well as their role in facilitating the free exercise of religion. In the FY’16 NDAA, (Senator) Inhofe supported a report provision that would preserve this military culture and protect the freedom of expression and religion for military chaplains.”<sup>3</sup>

Associated Gospel Churches (hereafter known as the “AGC”) leadership recently learned from one of our Chaplains of a pilot program called, “What is Spiritual Health?” The first PowerPoint slide quotes a former General of the U.S. Army, George C. Marshall from his speech at Trinity College in June 1941, “The Soldier’s heart, the Soldier’s spirit, the Soldier’s soul is everything. Unless the Soldier’s soul sustains him, he cannot be relied on and will fail himself and his commander and his country in the end.”

While I appreciate and wholeheartedly agree with General Marshall’s insight and have used it on occasion, it is not a biblically complete statement. The Scriptures reveal more information about the soul of man and his condition before God. I agree that the Soldier is more than a body to be trained for warfare and if military leadership does not recognize this reality and provide for it, the Soldier will fail due to lack of internal strength. The Continental Congress understood this truth when they authorized one Chaplain for each regiment of the Continental Army on 29 July 1775.

I applaud Army leadership for developing policies and programs in which the Soldier’s spiritual life is recognized as important. I express concern because the Army today has redefined *spirituality* in a much broader concept and now expects Chaplains to instruct religious programs based on that definition. What if the Chaplain and his Faith Group do not agree on the new definition? Are they to be silenced? Why has reference to God been eliminated from the literature? Is the Army Chaplain leadership afraid of criticism from non-theological groups? Haven’t Chaplains historically been

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<sup>2</sup> Center for Religious Expression, Jan 7, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Chaplain Alliance for Religious Freedom, October 7, 2015

those who would “lead God to men and men to God?” Has “Wokeism” finally overtaken the Chaplaincy?<sup>4</sup>

At present the Army defines spirituality and religion in FM 7-22 Holistic Health and Fitness, October 2020, Chapter 10-2:

“Spirituality is often described as a sense of connection that gives meaning and purpose to a person’s life. It is unique to each individual. The spiritual dimension applies to all people, whether religious and nonreligious. Identifying one’s purpose, core values, beliefs, identity, and life vision defines the spiritual dimension.”

It explains further,

“Traditional Western understanding of spirituality consisted of the methods of exercising religious faith. They include spirituality, community, fasting, prayer, sacred text, service, and worship/sacraments. Current framework says every human is spiritual and religion may be one method of exercising spirituality. Spirituality offers meaning, purpose, identity and vision, physical training, connecting with others, nature, devotion, community service, religion, meditation, and journaling.”<sup>5</sup>

Notice however, there is no mention of God!

The *Army Website* illustrates the “Health Fitness Program” by showing a group of Soldiers sitting on mats in a Yoga position. Why not show a picture of Soldiers studying the Bible or in praying as well? What message is being sent? A picture is worth a thousand words!

The Pew Research Center found that “Religious diversity in the military is broadly representative of the U.S. population. Approximately 70% of active-duty military personnel consider themselves to be of a Christian denomination. Less than 2% of active service members identify with Judaism, Islam, or Eastern religions...”<sup>6</sup>

According to a recent study, the *Congressional Research Service* found that close to 73% of Active Military Service Members Identify as People of Faith compared to less than 3% percent who are atheist or agnostic. (Jul 26, 2019).

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<sup>4</sup> “Wokeism” is a contemporary phrase meaning to be awake or alert. A “Woke” person is sensitive to alleged inconsistencies and prejudices and seeks to remediate what they see as inequalities. Critics of Wokeism say the movement is itself discriminatory and intolerant of other viewpoints, especially Judeo-Christian perspectives.

<sup>5</sup> FM 7-22, Chapter 10-2

<sup>6</sup> America’s Changing Religious Landscape, Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015

Why has the Army moved from the traditional American Judeo-Christian understanding of spirituality to a more generic term? Chaplain (LTC) Joseph V. Ignazzitto II, in his research paper for the Army War College titled, “The Army’s Use of Spirituality in the Prevention of Suicide” (class of 2013), drew this conclusion when he writes:

“The Army’s apparent apprehension of referring to religion or God in their suicide prevention programs, as demonstrated by removing such references, should be alleviated when one considers 90 percent of the American public turns to God and religion in times of crisis, and approximately 93 percent of the adults in America believe in God. Research and studies show religion is a protective factor in the prevention of suicides.”<sup>7</sup>

Chaplain Ignazzitto cites Robin E. Gearing and Dana Lizardi, “Religion and Suicide,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 48, no. 3 (September 2009): 332-341. Ignazzitto further recommends:

“The Army’s spirituality training, in both the Master Resiliency Trainers (MRT) and Global Assessment Tool (GAT) training modules, should be rewritten not for any specific religion, or against non-religion, but should identify that one’s degree of religiosity can serve as a protective factor against suicide. Army chaplains should assist in training the spirituality block of MRT 20 instruction. Army chaplains have demonstrated for over two hundred years the ability to strike a balance between the establishment and free exercise clauses of the First Amendment.”<sup>8</sup>

Each Chaplain represents a Faith Group which has distinctive religious doctrines by which he receives Ordination and to whom he is accountable. Without the endorsement of a recognized Faith Group, he cannot serve as a military Chaplain. Will Senior Officers respect Ordination Vows and allow Chaplains to express their own “spiritual fitness” definitions? I fear there are Supervisory Chaplains who believe their position allows them to pressure younger Chaplains to teach the “Army Doctrine on Spirituality” and not allow seriously held Christian beliefs to be presented. “Chaplains are required

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph V. Ignazzitto II, ““The Army’s Use of Spirituality in the Prevention of Suicide,” (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2013), p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. pp 20-21

to follow military regulations and also the rules imposed by their respective endorsing agency in order to maintain the agency's endorsement."<sup>9</sup>

Upon my entry on active duty in June 1967, Chaplains were responsible to teach Character Guidance Lessons to Soldiers. FM 16-100, *Department of the Army Field Manual, Character Guidance Manual*, 1961, stated the purpose as:

“The whole intent of the program is to develop better Soldiers and better citizens by surrounding all personnel with ideals and wholesome influences that deepen their conviction of responsibility to **God** and country” (FM 16-100, Section II, p.3). Note the mention of God. One of the objectives was, “An Understanding of the Dignity of Man. Human beings have an innate dignity at the highest order of creation.”<sup>10</sup>

Monthly classes were mandated and taught by Chaplains; however, we had freedom to add our personal views and experiences as long as we did not proselytize. I took advantage of the training to stand before all my Enlisted Soldiers once a month. I used Christian movies titled, *The Moody Science Institute Series* (MIS). They were well done on some of the same topics as the Character Guidance Lessons. At the conclusion of the movie, I asked questions and provided teaching points consistent with my Christian Faith.

“As James Gilbert in *Redeeming Culture* and Heather Hendershot in *Shaking the World for Jesus* demonstrate, these films provided a religious interpretation for science, offering their viewers—in the church as well as in the American military, the public school system, and industry—a glimpse of a natural world so complex that it could only be explained, according to the films' narrators, through the existence of a higher power or an intelligent designer.”<sup>11</sup>

Of course, this was 1967 and our American society was still operating on past values, most of which were basically Christian. In 1950, Ken Hughes, writing for *The Chaplain*, commented that “here and abroad, almost a million people during one short year crowded into high schools, universities, and military bases as well as churches to glimpse the [MIS] films.”

Years later when I was assigned to Ft. Campbell, KY (1973-75) the Chaplains were mandated to teach *Personal Effectiveness Training (PET)* to our

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<sup>9</sup> Congressional Research Service, “Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity in the Armed Services: Background and Issues for Congress,” p.45. June 5, 2019

<sup>10</sup> FM 16-100, *Department of the Army Field Manual, Character Guidance Manual*, 1961, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *The Moving Image, The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 7(1):1-26.



Enlisted Soldiers. The instruction was based on the book by Thomas Harris, *I'm OK, You're OK* and the concept of Transactional Analysis (TA). Transactional Analysis is a psychoanalytic theory and method of therapy, developed by Eric Berne during the 1950s. Transactions refer to the communication exchanges between people.

I studied the material and explained some differences I had with the lessons and taught my Soldiers for about a month. I finally decided I could no longer teach and received permission from my Battalion Commander to stop. Unfortunately, when I explained my theological problems to the Installation Chaplain, he became irate and expressed great displeasure, "You will never be promoted," he shouted. He expected me to go along despite my theological differences based on my local church doctrine and endorsing agency.<sup>12</sup>

A brother Chaplain studied the material and decided not to teach at all but offered to perform counseling for other Chaplains in his unit to relieve their extra workload. This arrangement was accepted by his Supervisory Chaplain but overridden by the Installation Chaplain who reassigned the Chaplain to Stockade ministry (which turned out to be very successful, praise God!). A few months later the Chaplain received orders to a tour in Korea without his family.

The presumption of the Spiritual Health/Readiness training is that all men have enough spirituality to resolve their own eternal destiny. Their motto is, "My spirituality is as good as your Christianity." These ideas are not confined to the military. An article by the Barna Research Group appeared in the "Research Releases in Faith and Christianity," April 6, 2017, titled, "Meet the 'Spiritual but Not Religious.'" Military leadership must have copied the trends of the "Spiritual But not Religious" (SBNR) to develop their program.

Barna took a close look at the segment of the American population who are "spiritual but not religious." He wrote, "The broader cultural resistance to institutions is a response to the view that they are oppressive, particularly in their attempts to define reality. Seeking autonomy from this kind of religious authority seems to be the central task of the 'spiritual but not religious' and very likely the reason for their religious suspicion." Barna continued, "At the root of this refusal to put themselves under religious authority is idolatry that

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<sup>12</sup> Most organizations that utilize chaplains require that each chaplain be endorsed. An endorsement comes from a religious group recognized by the Department of Defense or some other agency. A chaplain is sent by his local church to do ministry, but an endorsement is required for many restricted access institutions, such as the military, prisons, and hospitals. An endorsing agency represents the local church that sends an individual into the chaplaincy.

is worship of self. Narcissism infects their lives. The expressions we often hear are ‘my truth,’ or ‘my lived experience,’ or ‘my body and my spirituality.’ It’s all about me.” So, as a retired Army chaplain and local church pastor, I ask, where has this taken us as a society?

This self-worship is nothing new. Satan is the Father of pride. What clever words he used to deceive Eve in the Garden when he asked, “Yea, hath God said?” The question raised doubts in what God said and why He said it. “Can you really trust His word? Why would He limit your access to the tree in the midst of the Garden?” To Eve’s response the Devil said, “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes will be opened, and he shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5).

Gods and goddesses claim to be fully autonomous. They do what they please and no man controls them. They expect to be worshipped. What the serpent did *not* say was that knowing evil would damage Adam and Eve’s relationship with God. Half-truths can be as deceptive as full-blown lies. Tim Thorton commented, “Man’s orientation is now self-centered. He is a hater of God, views God as his enemy, a suppressor of the truth about himself and God. This is only a small sampling of what biblically it means to be dead, to say nothing of the final sentence that all who are outside of Christ will endure.”<sup>13</sup>

To deceive Soldiers by making them believe they are OK because they are “spiritual,” by their own definition, is the worst kind of lie and a false Gospel. The Apostle Paul had some very strong remarks about this- “But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (Galatians 1: 8).” The Bible teaches that all men are sinners and need to be reconciled to God (Romans 3:23; 6:10). The only Mediator between God and men is the Man Jesus Christ (I Tim 2:5). True spirituality is the Holy Spirit living within us to produce new life and His fruit (Galatians 5:21ff).

Furthermore, Christians have a commission from Jesus to “disciple all nations” by preaching the Gospel, baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching all things Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). Leading Soldiers in training which either denies this message, replaces it, or marginalizes it is unacceptable to Evangelical Chaplains who desire to stand for the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It sends a disturbing message to Soldiers that the Chaplain has compromised his

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<sup>13</sup> Tim Thorton, “Got Questions Ministries,” online comments

prophetic ministry. He has become no more than another spiritually impotent social worker!

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not another message to consider among supposedly equally valid messages. If we can solve our own deepest spiritual problem of alienation from God by ourselves, do we really need Jesus and His sacrificial work on the cross? Leadership should allow, no, encourage Chaplains to express their views as a Religious Leader/Pastor in uniform. Do not exclude references to the God Who gave us life and liberty as citizens of the country we defend!

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*The AGC*

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## DATING THE PATRIARCHS

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One of the core issues relating to the history of ancient Israel involves the biblical chronology for each major historical period. Since the most recent articles on patriarchal chronology date back at least two decades and there have been a few archaeological discoveries that are relevant to the patriarchal period, an overview of key view and issues seems appropriate.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I will lay out some of the key factors a scholar must consider when proposing a chronological setting for the patriarchs. The antiquity of this period and comparative dearth of archaeological data provides unique complications to the question. Although I embrace an “early” chronology for this period (Abraham arriving in Canaan about 2091 BC), I will seek to interact fairly with the other evangelical view on dating the patriarchs.

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of this article, I provide a summarizing chart of the two major evangelical views on patriarchal chronology, as well as a helpful chart from a recent work by Randall Price and H. Wayne House (see bibliographic information there). It might be helpful to look at those charts as you read through the summaries of the views provided in this article as well as other non-evangelical views.

## “CONSENSUS” EVANGELICAL VIEW: EARLY SECOND MILLENNIUM BC

(Patriarchs are historical figures; late date of the Exodus—ca. 1260 BC)

Proponents of this view regard the patriarchs<sup>2</sup> as historical people and that the events described in those narratives as historical. A thirteenth-century date of Israel’s Exodus out of Egypt is an anchor point for their dating of the patriarchs (and the patriarchal age) to the Middle Bronze period (ca. 1900–1600 BC, see below explanation).

### Historicity<sup>3</sup>

Proponents of this view have demonstrated that several parallels between those Middle Bronze archives and the book of Genesis have genuine value for grasping the general time frame of the patriarchs.<sup>4</sup> The fundamental point of these parallels is twofold. They demonstrate that the people and the customs described in the book of Genesis can be credibly regarded as historical and that those customs point to an early second millennium (or earlier<sup>5</sup>) setting for those narratives.

On the one hand, it is totally correct to regard the patriarchal narratives as theological—they reveal clear truths about God’s nature and his

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Hess (along with other scholars) prefers “ancestors” and “ancestral period” instead of “patriarchs” and “patriarchal period”. He suggests that this avoids the notion that men totally dominated women during this period. Richard S. Hess, “The Ancestral Period,” in *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 187.

<sup>3</sup> Critical scholars often claim that biblical references to camels are anachronistic before about 1100 BC., affirming that they played no role in “biblical” life before then (arguing against the historicity of those narratives). Even though there is no evidence of widespread use of camels in the third–mid-second millennium BC, there is clear evidence of the use of the Bactrian camel by the mid-third millennium BC. See Martin Heide, “The Domestication of the Camel: Biological, Archaeological and Inscriptional Evidence from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel and Arabia, and Literary Evidence from the Hebrew Bible,” in *Ugarit Forschungen* 42 (2010) (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2011), 367-69. Cf. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 338-39.

<sup>4</sup> Selman, “Comparative Customs, 91-139; Daniel E. Fleming, “Genesis in History and Tradition: The Syrian Background of Israel’s Ancestors, Reprise,” in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, eds. James K. Hoffmeier and Alan R. Millard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 193-232; Bill T. Arnold, “The Genesis Narratives,” in *Ancient Israel’s History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources*, eds. Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 23-45.

<sup>5</sup> The evidence for the historicity and the early second millennium setting for the patriarchs summarized here also has relevance for the conservative evangelical view considered next. This material will not be repeated there.

relationship with His creation. On the other hand, those narratives also present these theological truths as being given in the context of actual history. As Provan, Long, and Longman point out: “Theology is inextricably intertwined with actual events in the patriarchal materials. To state this concept in a different way, the genre we are dealing with here is theological history, but it is history nonetheless.”<sup>6</sup>

Waltke points out that:

The author of Genesis represents himself as a historian, not as a prophet who receives visions of events. He gives an essentially coherent chronological succession of events, using the Hebrew narrative verb form. He validates his material as much as possible by locating his story in time and space (e.g., 2:10–14), tracing genealogies (e.g., 5:1–32), giving evidence of various sorts that validate his history (e.g., 11:9), and citing sources (5:1).<sup>7</sup>

According to Brevard Childs, the narrator’s reference to the expression “until this day/” today” (19:38; 22:14; 32:32; 47:26) is “a formula of personal testimony added to, and confirming, the received tradition.”<sup>8</sup> It presents the related information as reliable and enduring. Selman correctly points out that several of the examples of parallel customs point to practices in *both* the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC. Regardless, these enduring social parallels “make the historical existence of the patriarchs more likely.”<sup>9</sup> Since a number of these parallels are unique to the early second millennium BC, they support a setting for the patriarchs in that time frame—according to their view.

### **Early Second Millennium setting for beginning of Patriarchal period (ca. 1900 BC)**

Numerous scholars have pointed to various parallels between ANE customs and those found in Genesis as evidence that the patriarchs lived in a Middle Bronze Age setting (at least early second millennium). In his

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<sup>6</sup> Provan, Long, Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 159.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 29.

<sup>8</sup> B. S. Childs, “A Study of the Formula ‘Until This Day,’” *JBL* 82 (1963): 292. Childs was not an evangelical scholar.

<sup>9</sup> Selman, “Comparative Customs,” 128.

examination of the Mari archive, Daniel Fleming points to various features in that culture (personal names and nomadic practices) that resonate with patriarchal narratives.<sup>10</sup> There are also several features in Genesis that do not occur later in the Pentateuch or the rest of the OT.<sup>11</sup> Here are just a few of them. Sarna notes that “the practice of accompanying oath-taking by the gesture of placing a hand ‘under the thigh’ of the adjurer (Gen. 24:2–3, 9; 47:29) never occurs outside of Genesis.<sup>12</sup> He adds, “of the thirty-eight names by which the patriarchs and their families are called, twenty-seven are never found again in the Bible.”<sup>13</sup> The patriarchs worshipped God under different names, such as El Elyon (Gen. 14:18, 19, 22, found again only in Pss. 78:35), El Olam (21:33) and El Shaddai (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; cf. 49:25; Exod. 6:3), that almost never reoccur in the Torah.<sup>14</sup> Finally, only in Genesis is Hebron called Mamre (Gen. 13:18; 14:13; 18:1; 23:17, 19; 25:9; 35:27; 49:30; 50:13), and only there is Paddan-aram (Gen. 25:20; 28:2, 5–7; 31:18; 33:18; 35:9, 26; 46:15; cf. 48:7) mentioned.<sup>15</sup> According to Sarna, the “cumulative effect of all this internal evidence leads to the decisive conclusion that the patriarchal traditions in the Book of Genesis are of great antiquity.”<sup>16</sup>

Kenneth Kitchen documents several other features in the patriarchal narrative that fit *only* the Middle Bronze Age horizon.<sup>17</sup> Joseph’s brothers received twenty shekels for their young brother (Gen. 37:28), approximately the right price in about the eighteenth century. As Kitchen points out, this represents the average price in the laws of Hammurabi (expressed as one-third of a mina there—§§116, 214, 252), exactly that amount in real-life

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel E. Fleming, “From Joseph to David: Mari and Israelite Pastoral Tradition,” in *Israel: Ancient Kingdom or Late Invention?*, ed. Daniel I. Block (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 84–86, 89–92.

<sup>11</sup> While this is not convincing for those who embrace a 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. composition of the Pentateuch, for evangelicals this demonstrates a life-setting *before* the time of Moses and his receiving the Law—first half of second millennium BC.

<sup>12</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), xiv.

<sup>13</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, xiv.

<sup>14</sup> For several others, see Sarna, *Genesis*, xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, xiv.

<sup>16</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, xv.

<sup>17</sup> For other examples, see Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1994), xx–xxv, xxx–xxxv

transactions at Mari, as well as in other Old Babylonian documents (within a 15 to 30-shekel range, averaging 22 shekels).<sup>18</sup> He also compares the form of the treaties found in Genesis with those that characterized Mari and Leilan in the early second millennium BC.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the setting for Genesis 14 points to the same early second millennium setting. Unlike the centuries before and after, the nonurban period, ca. 2000–1700 BC, involved a time when there were no major powers controlling large regions. This would allow for a coalition of smaller kings to control sections of Canaan as depicted in Genesis 14.<sup>20</sup> With emphasis, Kitchen writes: “Then—and at no other time, Mesopotamia teemed with alliances of rival groups of (four, five or even 15 or 20) kings. In this specific matter, Genesis 14 draws on a phenomenon known in Mesopotamia in the early second millennium BCE and at no later date, whether we moderns like it or not. To that fact we must bow, regardless of the consequences for our theories or prejudices.”<sup>21</sup>

Waltke and Fredericks also point out that these and other parallels are “supported by texts uncovered at Mari, Nuzi, Alalakh, and Ugarit from the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1950–1550 BC) and slightly later, though no text has yet been found mentioning the patriarchs. The social customs and legal procedures attested in these texts parallel those in the patriarchal traditions.”<sup>22</sup>

Having given attention to the historicity of and the general time setting for the patriarchs, let us move on to a brief summary of their view on patriarchal lifespans and the chronology of the patriarchs up to the reign of Solomon (big picture).

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 344. Kitchen provides a nice visual of this comparison in “The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?” *BAR* 21, no. 2 (1995): 53. See Isaac Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 117.

<sup>19</sup> Kitchen, “The Patriarchal Age,” 52–55.

<sup>20</sup> Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 316–18; idem, “The Patriarchs Revisited: A Reply to Dr. Ronald S. Hendel,” *The Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin* 43 (1998): 51–54.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, “New Directions in Biblical Archaeology: Historical and Biblical Aspects,” in *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Biblical Archaeology: Jerusalem, June–July 1990*, edited by A. Biran and J. Aviram (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 47. Idem, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 319–23.

<sup>22</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, 29–31.



## Hyperbolic Patriarchal Lifespans

Scholars who engage this issue and regard the comparatively high life spans as exaggerated generally ask, “What do the words mean in the language and culture in which they were written?” In other words, how should we understand these longer than normal life spans from the perspective of that ancient culture.

Numerous evangelical scholars have suggested that the significant life spans of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph) are hyperbolic.<sup>23</sup> These life spans do not match the normal life spans of later biblical figures. For example, Kenneth Kitchen writes that the “life spans and births are high...and this may be in part the result of long-term transmission of numbers, a matter subject to change through time.”<sup>24</sup> Gordon Wenham states: “Like the historical legends, the patriarchal stories are written centuries after the events recorded, but unlike them they lack the fantastic details, apart from the great ages of the patriarchs.”<sup>25</sup>

### Summary of Time Frame

Although numerous scholars could be cited, Kitchen’s presentation of the chronology of the patriarchs (in the larger picture through the Exodus) will primarily suffice. Richard Hess provides the broad parameters of the patriarchal period considering various lines of evidence: “On multiple levels, from a wealth of archaeological and textual evidence, the world of the ancestors as described in Genesis 12–50 is identical to the world of the Middle Bronze Age in the region of the Levant, ca. 2200–1600 BCE.”<sup>26</sup>

To that chronological setting, Kitchen adds that the overall date of about 1900–1600 BC for Abraham to Joseph is consistent also with the internal

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Duane L. Christensen, “Job and the Age of the Patriarchs in Old Testament Narrative,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 13, no. 3 (1986): 225-28.; R. K. Harrison, “From Adam to Noah: A Reconsideration of the Antediluvian Patriarchs’ Ages,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 2 (1994): 161-68; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, WBC (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1994), 2:xxii; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 709-10; Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 358-59.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 359; cf. 361, 366.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1994), 2:xxii.

<sup>26</sup> Hess, “The Ancestral Period,” 193.

data—2000–1500 at the outermost limits.<sup>27</sup> He dates Jacob’s entrance into Egypt by adding 430 years or so (Exod. 12:40-41) to his preferred date for the exodus—1260 BC, resulting in ca. 1690 for that transition from Canaan to Egypt. Working back from that entrance, he provides this overview of the key patriarchs: “Jacob was an old man in Egypt, born earlier in the eighteenth century at the latest; Isaac in turn would have been born in the middle to late nineteenth century, and before him, Abraham earlier in the nineteenth century at the latest.”<sup>28</sup>

All who embrace a credible chronology of the patriarchs (and who take all or most of the chronological statements at face value<sup>29</sup>) begin with 1 Kings 6:1 and Solomon’s 4<sup>th</sup> year (when he began building the Temple in Jerusalem)—generally fixed at 966 BC. Besides the evangelical consensus view regarding “480” years as a schematic number signifying three hundred years, most of the other chronological statements are close approximations. Just for the sake of comparison, the below table provides a chronological summary of most late date proponents alongside early date proponents (below on p. 12).

The primary chronological difference between this view and the next one involves the date of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt. Proponents of this view embrace a late date of the Exodus (ca. 1260 BC) rather than an early date (ca. 1446 BC) (held by proponents of the next view).

### **TRADITIONAL CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL VIEW: BEGINNING IN LATE THIRD MILLENNIUM BC**

***(Patriarchs are historical figures; early date of the Exodus—ca. 1446 BC)***

As stated above, the major difference between this and the previous view relates to the patriarchal lifespans and the date of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt. These variables trigger key differences on the dating of the patriarchs, the patriarchal period as a whole, the sojourn in the wilderness, and the conquest

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<sup>27</sup> Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 358.

<sup>28</sup> Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 359. Hess provides a similar summary of this chronological overview relating to the patriarchs (Hess, “The Ancestral Period,” 187).

<sup>29</sup> There is no time or space to engage the discussion of the correct understanding of “480 years” in 1 Kgs 6:1 in this article.

of Canaan. The chart toward the end of this paper summarizes those differences between these two views (below on p. 12).<sup>30</sup>

### Late-Third Millennium Setting

This view suggests that Abraham arrived in Canaan ca. 2091 BC, not long before the end of the third millennium.<sup>31</sup> It seems that much of what was written for the previous section could apply here as well. The comparative evidence presented in the previous section caused Hess to write: “On multiple levels, from a wealth of archaeological and textual evidence, the world of the ancestors as described in Genesis 12–50 is identical to the world of the Middle Bronze Age in the region of the Levant, ca. 2200–1600 BCE.”<sup>32</sup> Even the political situation that Kitchen says points to a setting for Genesis 14, i.e., “the nonurban period, ca. 2000–1700 BCE,”<sup>33</sup> is not that far from ca. 2091 BC. The exact dates given for the Middle Bronze Age periods varies, but both evangelical views place the patriarchs in the Middle Bronze Age.<sup>34</sup>

Kitchen provides extensive evidence supporting the placement of the beginning of the patriarchal period in the early second millennium BC.<sup>35</sup> Only one example will be cited here to demonstrate the possibility that most

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<sup>30</sup> Just for the sake of completeness, here are a few proponents of the early date of the Exodus, who would also agree with the chronology of the Patriarchs presented here: John J. Bimson, “Archaeological Data and the Dating of the Patriarchs,” in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, eds. A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (Leicester: IVP, 1980), 85; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 83-85; Kaiser and Wegner, *A History of Israel*, 174-81; Carl G. Rasmussen, *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 89-90; Bruce K. Waltke, “Palestinian Artifactual Evidence Supporting the Early Date of the Exodus,” *BibSac* 129, no. 513 (Jan–Mar 1972): p 33-47.

<sup>31</sup> The fact that Abraham’s arrival in Canaan, beginning the patriarchal period, is 190 years earlier than that proposed by the previous view should not be surprising. The late date of the Exodus posits that 1 Kings 6:1 presents a 300-year gap between Solomon’s fourth year and the Exodus, while the early date view puts a 480-year gap between those two events, a 180-year difference.

<sup>32</sup> Hess, “The Ancestral Period,” 193 (emphasis mine).

<sup>33</sup> Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 316-18; idem, “The Patriarchs Revisited: A Reply to Dr. Ronald S. Hendel,” *The Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin* 43 (1998): 51-54.

<sup>34</sup> A. Mazar provides just one example of dates commonly given to the Middle Bronze Age: Early Bronze IV/Middle Bronze I (2300–2000 BC.E.), Middle Bronze IIA (2000–1800/1750 BC.E.)-Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000-586 BC.E.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 30. In this case, the first view puts the patriarchs in MBIIA and the second view places them at the end of MBI or EB IV.

<sup>35</sup> Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 333-71, esp. 358-60.

of the evidence he cites also *allows for* a late third millennium setting for the beginning of that period—the coalition of Mesopotamian kings described in Genesis 14.

As quoted above, Kitchen forcefully states that “there is one—and only one—period that fits the conditions reflected in Genesis 14—the early second millennium BC. Only in that period did the situation in Mesopotamia allow for shifting alliances.”<sup>36</sup> He correctly points out that Mesopotamia was dominated by a single power, the Third Dynasty of Ur, in the late third millennium BC. After Elam overthrew that dynasty, Mesopotamia swarmed with various smaller regional alliances for the next 250 years.<sup>37</sup> Kitchen proposes that the Genesis 14 coalition best fits in this period of petty alliances rather than a time when a dominant power ruled over the region—like the late third millennium BC.

Kitchen allows for Abraham entering petty alliances with Canaanite rulers from the time of the Early Bronze Age (third millennium BC) and later but discounts an attack by a coalition of Mesopotamian kings (Gen 14) in that same time frame.<sup>38</sup> He also grants that larger powers (Third Dynasty of Ur and Akkad) conducting military campaigns into the Levant from Mesopotamia are well attested from the late third through the early second millennium BC.<sup>39</sup>

Even though Kitchen is *adamant* about the early second millennium setting for the conflict described in Genesis 14, he recognizes that none of the kings named in Genesis 14 have been located in any cuneiform records of Mesopotamia and that scholars can only offer conjectures on their home regions.<sup>40</sup> He also writes elsewhere: “This is hardly surprising, given the *incompleteness* of data for most regions in the ancient Near East for the third, and much of the early second, millennia; even the great Mari archive covers only about fifty to seventy years.”<sup>41</sup> This agrees with John Bimson’s

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<sup>36</sup> Kitchen, “The Patriarchal Age,” 57; cf. idem, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 319-22.

<sup>37</sup> Kitchen, “The Patriarchal Age,” 57.

<sup>38</sup> Kitchen, “The Patriarchal Age,” 56. Of course, this implies that Abraham was living in Canaan in the early third millennium BC!

<sup>39</sup> Kitchen, *The Patriarchal Age*, 57.

<sup>40</sup> Kitchen, “The Patriarchal Age,” 56; cf. idem, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 319-20.

<sup>41</sup> Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 320.

observation: “Our knowledge of the centuries around 2000 BC is very small, and our ignorance very great.”<sup>42</sup>

Here are my key takeaways from the above summary. First, Kitchen has rendered a great service to the evangelical world through his summarizing the abundant evidence supporting an early second millennium setting for the patriarchal period rather than a late second or early first millennium setting for those narratives. Second, based on various resources authored by Kitchen, his strong emphasis on an early second millennium setting for the patriarchs may be primarily in contrast to a much later first millennial setting proposed by liberal scholars. Third, that evidence also allows for a late third millennium setting for the beginning of the patriarchal period.<sup>43</sup> Fourth, my above summary does not *prove* that the patriarchal period began in the early third millennium BC but allows for it. As made evident above and below, what a scholar does with the date of the exodus seems determinative for the approximate time frame they propose for the beginning of the patriarchal period.

### **Credible Patriarchal Lifespans**

As summarized above, various scholars debate the “face-value” significance of the patriarchs’ life span figures for diverse reasons. This discussion focuses on those who embrace the inspiration of God’s Word. Understandably, evangelicals want to interpret issues like this considering the ancient culture of the larger ANE world. Everyone who reads the lifespans of the patriarchs recognizes that the numbers point to lifespans much longer than our own experience. Various evangelical scholars look at a comparison of the patriarchal life spans with those of the surrounding ANE world. Quite often these scholars point to the extremely hyperbolic reigns of Mesopotamian kings recorded in the Sumerian King List (SKL),<sup>44</sup> dating to the period before and after the Noahic flood (generally third millennium BC). Others consider various lists of Mesopotamian and Egyptian royal reigns in the early second millennium BC, much shorter than the lifespans of the patriarchs.

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<sup>42</sup> Bimson “Archaeological Data and the Dating of the Patriarchs,” 60.

<sup>43</sup> I am suggesting that Kitchen has overstated the exclusivity of his evidence as pointing *only* to an early second millennial setting for Abraham and the other patriarchs.

<sup>44</sup> James Bennett Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. with Supplement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 265-66.

Some suggest that the lengthy life spans of the patriarchs represent an exaggeration as well. However, various scholars from different perspectives have delineated numerous differences in purpose, genre, as well as several other details when ANE king lists are compared with the genealogies of Genesis.<sup>45</sup> All the lists of royal *reigns* are not records of royal *life spans*—whether referring to the hugely hyperbolic reigns of the SKL or the relatively short reigns of second millennium Mesopotamian and Egyptian rulers. The different purpose and information provided—along with other key differences—preclude a tight parallel between the two list genres. Many issues argue against the idea that the Genesis lifespans represent the borrowing of exaggerated lifespans from the SKL. Finally, both the SKL and the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 demonstrate a massive reduction in the length of reigns (SKL) and lifespans (patriarchs)—72% and 85% reduction respectively—after a great flood event.<sup>46</sup>

Beyond that, the contextual point of Abraham's and Sarah's age emphasizes Yahweh's miraculous keeping his covenant promise of providing Abraham with descendants—leading toward making a nation out of him. Abraham departed from Haran, heading to Canaan, at 75 years of age. He later receives Yahweh's assurance that he and his wife, Sarah, would have a son when he was 100 years old (Gen. 17:17; 21:5) and when Sarah was 90 years old (Gen. 17:17)—a confirmation of Yahweh's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:19-21). The narrative of Genesis states that Abraham and Sarah were old and advanced in years (v. 11) and that Sarah was past the age of childbearing (cf. Heb 11:11).<sup>47</sup> The Genesis narratives emphasize that Abraham and Sarah are much older than anyone would expect for a couple who will enjoy the birth of a son.

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<sup>45</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 and their Alleged Babylonian Background," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 16, no. 2 (Autumn 1978): 361-74; Richard S. Hess, "The Genealogies of Genesis 1-11 and Comparative Literature," *Biblica* 70, no. 2 (1989): 248; Raul E. Lopez, "The Antediluvian Patriarchs and the Sumerian King List," *CEN Technical Journal* 12, no. 3 (1998): 347-57.

<sup>46</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, "The Lifespans of the EB–MB Patriarchs: A Hermeneutical and Historical Conundrum," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 57, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 269. Whatever was the exact cause of this drastic reduction in length of reigns or lives, for both the SKL and the pre-Abrahamic patriarchs, the fulcrum is a "Great Flood" in the ANE flood account and the Noachic flood in Genesis 9. To visually present this information, consult these tables in Merrill's article (ibid.): Tables 1 and 2- p. 269; Table 7- p. 272-73; Table 9- p. 276; and Table 10- p. 277. This concrete reduction of length of reigns and years suggests that something different than symbolism, multiplication factors, etc., are the reason for these numbers (esp. for the biblical patriarchs).

<sup>47</sup> Abraham and Sarah describe themselves as "old" three times in Gen 18:11-13.

According to Deuteronomy 34:7, Moses was 120 years old when he died. Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin—when he was falsely accused of blasphemy—refers to three segments of forty years for Moses' life. He spent forty years as a prince in Egypt, under the care of Egyptian authorities (Acts 7:20-23). He then became an outcast from Egypt and sojourned in Midian for the next forty years (Acts 7:29-30). Soon after he returned to Egypt—obeying Yahweh's command (Acts 7:30-34)—he challenged the Pharaoh to let God's people depart from Egypt. The Egyptian pharaoh eventually allowed the Israelites to leave Egypt—exodus—after Yahweh brought the Ten Plagues against them (Exod 5–12).<sup>48</sup> Stephen then refers to the last forty-year phrase of Moses' life and leadership of Israel, when he led God's chosen people from Egypt to Mt. Sinai and then from there to the brink of the land of promise (Acts 7:36).<sup>49</sup> These forty-year segments of Moses' life do not simply provide a statement of Moses' lifespan but serve as time periods that are anchored in Israelite history at various junctures and cultural setting (OT and NT).<sup>50</sup> Considering these two examples of key biblical individuals with a longer than normal lifespan *anchors* that lifespan *in a biblical narrative* that gives weight to that longer lifespan.

There are several evangelical scholars who embrace the face-value meaning of patriarchal life spans. For example, Mathews writes: "At 175 years (v. 7) Abraham lived a long period by traditional standards (Ps 90:10); he resided in Canaan for a century (12:4). Verse 8 entails the author's evaluation of the patriarch's life; his longevity signals divine blessing."<sup>51</sup> Waltke adds that "Abraham lives exactly one hundred years in the Promised Land (cf. 12:4). Isaac is now seventy-five years of age (see 21:5) and Abraham's grandsons fifteen (cf. 25:26)."<sup>52</sup> Merrill offers numerous supportive arguments for regarding the life spans of the genealogies and the patriarchal life spans as

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<sup>48</sup> Exodus 7:7 states that Moses was 80 years old when he led Israel out of Egypt.

<sup>49</sup> Numerous other passages refer to this 40-year segment of Moses' life: Exod 16:35; Num 14:33-34; 32:3; Deut 1:3; 2:7; 8:2, 4; 29:5; Josh 5:6; et al.

<sup>50</sup> Of course, scholars who regard "40" as a symbolic or schematic number in 1 Kgs 6:1 would regard all these occurrences of 40 in the same way.

<sup>51</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 356.

<sup>52</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 340.

reliable rather than symbolic or schematic figures (not useful for chronological purposes).<sup>53</sup>

## Chronological Considerations

Both these evangelical views regard Scripture as divinely authoritative and infallible. The interpretive differences with their understanding of patriarchal chronology do not involve the acceptance of chronological errors, but variations in interpretive conclusions. A brief summary of essential considerations for correctly handling chronological statements deserves brief consideration—relating to both views.

Chronology fundamentally deals with the time elapsed between events to assign accurate dates to those events (and people involved). When working with the chronology for biblical narratives, which involve actual history, that chronology provides key contextual elements for that history. Biblical chronology has *qualitative* rather than simply *quantitative* concerns. It seeks to “to detail the relation of a people to its God and to show the inevitable effect *in history* of the character of that relationship.”<sup>54</sup>

Consequently, on the one hand, OT writers only had a secondary interest in chronological details. Their primary concern was tracing theological history—God at work in and through his chosen people. However, that does not signify that biblical chronological data is *without value*. Oswalt provides

<i>1 Kgs 6:1</i>	<i>ca. 966 BC Solomon's 4<sup>th</sup> yr. of reign</i> + <u>480 yrs.</u> <i>Yrs. between Solomon's 4<sup>th</sup> yr. &amp; Israel's Exodus from Egypt</i> <i>ca. 1446 BC Date of Israel's Exodus</i>
<i>Ex 12:40-41</i>	+ <u>430 yrs.</u> <i>The length of Israel's sojourn in Egypt</i> <i>ca. 1876 BC Beginning of Israelite sojourn in Egypt</i>
<i>Gen 46:6;</i> <i>47:9</i>	+ <u>130 yrs.</u> <i>Jacob's age (130 yrs.) when he stood before Pharaoh as he led all his family from Canaan to Egypt</i> <i>ca. 2006 BC Year of Jacob's birth</i>
<i>Gen 25:26</i>	+ <u>60 yrs.</u> <i>Isaac's age when Jacob was born</i> <i>ca. 2066 BC Year of Isaac's birth</i>
<i>Gen 21:5</i>	+ <u>100 yrs.</u> <i>Abraham's age when Isaac was born</i> <i>ca. 2166 BC Year of Abraham's birth</i>
<i>Gen 12:4</i>	- <u>75 yrs.</u> <i>Abraham's age when he entered Canaan</i> <i>ca. 2091 BC Year Abraham entered Canaan</i>

two reasons that chronological statements possess interpretive significance.

<sup>53</sup> Merrill, “The Lifespans of the EB–MB Patriarchs, 265–80.

<sup>54</sup> J. N. Oswalt, “Chronology of the OT,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 1:673.



First, being of secondary value does not mean that biblical writers gave no concern to the accuracy of that information. He states that the “very claim of the Hebrews that they had met God in history would suggest that they took a very careful attitude toward historical data.”<sup>55</sup> Second, chronological data has ongoing value. Repeatedly over the past several decades, archaeological discoveries have confirmed chronological details found in biblical narratives. Oswalt points to the work of E. R. Thiele on the chronology of the Divided Monarchy.<sup>56</sup> Although that Divided Monarchy data seemed to defy harmonization, Thiele presents several principles that provide a credible resolution to that enigma. The accuracy of that chronological data laid the foundation for a correct interpretation of those historical narratives. Finally, the use of round numbers in various passages, particularly, would suggest some degree of approximation rather than precise chronological data points in every passage.<sup>57</sup> In some passages, chronological statements could involve exact numbers while others involved round numbers. Taken together, these principles provide impetus for a key starting point: “that the statements of Scripture shall—until proven otherwise—be regarded as correct and as being capable of harmonization with the data from other spheres of investigation.”<sup>58</sup>

Building on that starting point, biblical scholars must wrestle with the complexity of juxtaposing biblical, chronological, historical, and archaeological data. Here is a key question: If there is tension between any of these realms, which should be given interpretive priority?<sup>59</sup> Beyond that, there is no exclusive priority list that governs all interpretive junctures. Regardless, the way a scholar answers these chronological realities impacts their interpretive decisions.

## CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

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<sup>55</sup> Oswalt, “Chronology of the OT,” 1:673.

<sup>56</sup> Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, new rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994).

<sup>57</sup> Oswalt, “Chronology of the OT,” 1:674.

<sup>58</sup> Oswalt, “Chronology of the OT,” 1:673.

<sup>59</sup> J. H. Walton, “Exodus, Date Of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 268–69.

The following table provides a visual presentation of the chronology of the patriarchs according to the conservative evangelical view.

**\*\*The dates in the middle column are close approximate baseline dates. The chronological data could involve reliable round numbers. Patriarchal lifespans are accepted at face value. The Patriarchal period begins in Middle Bronze I (or Early Bronze IV) and ends during Middle Bronze II.**

## CONCLUSION

Proponents of these two evangelical views enjoy many shared interpretive perspectives. Significant agreement exists concerning the solid historicity of the patriarchs as well as an early second millennium rather than a first millennium setting for the patriarchs (or at least much of the patriarchal period). As I affirmed above, Kitchen’s evidence supporting an early second millennium setting for the patriarchal period also would apply to a late third millennium locale for the beginning of that period.

The date of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt represents the main difference between these two views. For example, based on the dates in the chart after the paper’s conclusion, the difference between the date of the exodus for these two views (“consensus evangelical view”- 1260 BC, conservative evangelical view- 1446 BC) involves ca. 186 years. The approximate beginning date for the patriarchal period for both views (“consensus” evangelical view- ca. 1900 BC, conservative evangelical view- 2091 BC) involves a very similar time span, about 191 years. The date of the exodus provides the key foundation for the way a scholar dates the patriarchal period.

The hyperbolic understanding of the patriarchal lifespans does impact which part of the years given to the patriarchal period by the “consensus evangelical view”. In other words, the exact placement of the number of years represented by the non-exaggerated lifespans—according to the “consensus evangelical view”—“floats” within the broader time frame Kitchen and others allow for the patriarchal period (ca. 1600—1900 years). The total of the life spans of the patriarchs<sup>60</sup> according to the conservative evangelical view (2091-1876) amounts to 215 years, less than the three hundred years allotted for that same period by the “consensus evangelical view”. This allows some flexibility for the exact dates a scholar would assign for each of the patriarchs.

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<sup>60</sup> Regarded as credible numbers whether exact or genuine round numbers.

Hopefully, my summaries and the charts I created for the evangelical views will help others grasp the key issues and conclusions.<sup>61</sup> Having a clearer understanding of the chronology of the patriarchs will also enable students of Scripture to better engage resources and scholars that take various perspectives on this issue. Both of the chronological options in the chart below START with Solomon’s 4th year and work backward to the patriarchs.

**Consensus Evangelical View**  
(e.g., Kitchen, Hess)

**Conservative Evangelical View**  
(e.g., Merrill, Kaiser/Wegner)

Person/Event	Time frame involved	Date	Person/Event	Time frame involved	Date
Abraham <i>beginning of patriarchal period (Gen. 12:4)</i>	<b>Patriarchal period</b> <i>stated length = 215 years; probably lasted 150–200 years</i>  Exaggerated lifespans  Jacob’s descent to Egypt- ca. 1690/1680	ca. 1900 BC	Abraham- beginning of patriarchal period (Gen. 12:4)	Patriarchal period —stated length = 215 years  Face value lifespans  Abraham: born 2166 Isaac: born ca. 1991 Jacob’s descent to Egypt: 1876	2091 BC
<b>Overall dates for Patriarchal Period (Abraham–Joseph): ca. 1900–1600 (2000–1500 at the outermost limits) BC</b>			<b>Overall dates for Patriarchal Period (Abraham’s entrance to Canaan to Jacob’s entrance to Egypt): ca. 2091–1876 BC</b>		
Jacob entering Egypt (Gen. 47:9 and Exod. 12:40-41)	Jacob was 130 years old	Ca. 1690 BC ca. 1260 + 430 or 400 yrs.= ca. 1690/1680 BC	Jacob entering Egypt (Gen. 47:9 and Exod. 12:40-41)	Jacob was 130 years old	1876 BC 1446 + 430 = 1876

<sup>61</sup> On the next pages, I provide two charts. I created the first one drawing on various sources. I borrowed the second chart from the archaeology volume published by R. Price and W. House (see source info there).

Exodus from Egypt	300 years before 4 <sup>th</sup> yr. Solomon's reign- 966 BC; 480 is a <b>schematic number</b>	ca. 1260 BC 966 + 300 = ca. ca. 1260 BC	Exodus from Egypt	480 years before 4 <sup>th</sup> yr. of Solomon's reign- 966 BC 480 is a <b>face-value or round number.</b>	ca. 1446 BC 966 + 480 = ca. 1446 BC
Conquest and Judges		ca. 1230–1025 BC	Conquest and Judges		Ca. 1406–1050 BC
Solomon's 4 <sup>th</sup> year (1 Kgs. 6:1)		ca. 966 BC	Solomon's 4 <sup>th</sup> year (1 Kgs. 6:1)		ca. 966 BC
<p><b>Key interpretive features:</b> exaggerated patriarchal lifespans; Egyptian sojourn a legitimate round number (400/430 yrs.); 1 Kgs. 6:1 (480 yrs.) a schematic number (= ca. 300 yrs.)</p>			<p><b>Key interpretive features:</b> face value or reliable rounded patriarchal lifespans; sojourn length and 1 Kgs. 6:1 face value or reliable round numbers.</p>		

**PROPOSED DATING FOR THE PATRIARCHS<sup>62</sup>**

EARLY DATE I—Late 3rd, Early 2nd Millenium BC						
BIBLICAL PERSON/EVENT	PERIOD	DATES(S)	PROPOSERS	STANDARD	FIRST WRITTEN	EVIDENCE
<b>Abraham</b> Entrance into Canaan (Genesis 12:4)	Middle Bronze I Middle Bronze II	2166–1991 2091	Archer Barker Waltke J. Davis (Fundamentalist/ Evangelical schools)	Internal Biblical Chronology	Moses	Antiquity of Accounts (Genesis 14) Nomadism-migration Personal names, places Excavations at Ur, Ebla Amorities (20th-18th centuries B.C.) Geopolitical conditions (MB IIA) Climate of region in MB I
<b>Isaac</b> Offered on Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22)	Middle Bronze I Middle Bronze I	2066–1886 2051				
<b>Jacob</b> Entrance into Haran (Genesis 28:5)	Middle Bronze IA Middle Bronze IA	2006–1859 1929				
EARLY DATE—Late 2nd Millenium BC						
Patriarchal Events	Middle Bronze II A	2000–1800	Glueck Albright	Archaeology	Monarchy	Pottery in Negev Beni-Hasan mural (1890 BC)
Patriarchal Events	Middle Bronze II A-B	1991–1786	Kitchen Millard	Egyptian Chronology	Moses	Egyptian backgrounds (Middle Kingdom) Geopolitical conditions (Genesis 14)
Patriarchal Events (remembered traditions)	Middle Bronze II B-C	1750–1550	A. Mazar	Archaeology	Court of David & Solomon	Mari/Nuzi archives Prosperous urban culture Hyksos Dynasty
LATE DATE—1st Millenium BC						
Patriarchal Events (remembered in monarchy)	Iron IA	1250–1150 (settlement period)	Aharoni Z. Herzog	Archaeology	United Monarchy	Excavations at Beersheeba (no MB) Anachronisms in Genesis accounts
EXTREME DATE—Exilic–Post-Maccabean						
Patriarchal Traditions (created as religious history)	Persian/Greek	400–165	T. L. Thompson Van-Sectors	Form Criticism Structural Analysis	Exilic/Post-Exilic	Literary tradition/Oral tradition Use of folklore JEDP theory

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<sup>62</sup> J. Randall Price and H. Wayne House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology: A Book by Book Guide to Archaeological Discoveries Related to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 77.

## THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN AMERICA

### Part One: Seeds of the American Revolution

*Bob Freiberg*

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**T** rue American History is under attack! For about 70 years, the truth has been hidden and like the proverbial frog in hot water, it has died a long, slow death, due to a philosophical difference of presenting history known as “reception history.” This is where the reality of how America came to be a nation has been distorted and explained by using simple Marxist categories like economic, social, and political categories. Using nefarious academic and philosophical means, American history has been changed and it’s just a matter of time before our true history will be completely wiped out. This is dangerous because it only leads to totalitarianism.

A good example of how bad “reception history” is can be found in the current “soup de jour” known as “The 1619 Project.” While getting accolades from our media, its message is racists and anti-America. Using race as the only measuring stick of truth, it distorts reality and makes outlandish statements which only tell a portion of the real story. So egregious is the work that a cadre of left-leaning Ivy league historians wrote a response to it by stating: “it’s a replacement of historical understanding by ideology.”<sup>1</sup> The imminent danger is if one destroys the foundational truths of our history, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Wood and four others, Letters to the editor, *New York Times* Editorial Page, Dec 20, 2019.

easy to replace the truth of American history with whatever the “receptive” historian wants to put into its place. In doing so, most American historical facts are ignored and only the part of the story which fits the current narrative of society is received.

For instance, one of the big hurdles in our national academic consciousness is our nation’s history of slavery and the fact that many of our Founding Fathers were slave owners. Rather than go back into the original documents of our history, such as letters, abolitionist speeches and sermons of the day on slavery, reception historians broadly condemn early America as evil and wicked because of slavery. If the 1619 project properly examined American history, it would find that slavery was accepted universally all over the world at the time and all races of people were enslaved by other cultures. Further research would demonstrate that Christian America was the first in history to challenge and then eradicate the institution, even at great cost of money and blood.

This is just one of many examples of current reception history. To better understand current issues, it would be fruitful to understand our nation’s true history and the foundation on which America was conceived and built. We are a nation conceived in liberty, and that liberty was first and foremost found in the choice of worshipping God and the collective conscience of those who settled this country. It is a story which was commonly understood a few generations back, but because of Marxists ideologies permeating our academic institutions, the true story of our Christian origins has been slowly changed and forgotten. This is the first of three articles documenting the fact that we indeed, are a special nation born out of a love of God and God showering His favor on us.

## **THE MODERN EPOCH OF TIME FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

In a busy Paris Street of Aug 22, 1572, on the orders of the Catholic Queen mother, Catherine de Medici, sentinels of the royal guard came to assassinate Admiral Gaspar II de Coligny. As he was walking over the bridge crossing the river Seine, an assassin’s bullet missed him and grazed his hand. There is to this day a placard marking the event and spot. Two days later, while he was recovering at home, Catherine again sent her agents to finish the job, this time, Coligny was murdered in his own bed and his body was unceremoniously mutilated by an angry mob outside his house.

His crime? He was the leader of a growing group of French Protestants known as the Huguenots whose only crime was to preach salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ- something the Roman Catholic clergy and the French

Catholic King Charles IX could and would not tolerate. Protestantism was dangerous to the status quo because by using Biblical arguments, it destroyed the age-old hegemony of church and state where nobles kept the power due to their favored status given to them by the Roman Catholic Church. In contrast, Huguenot protestant doctrine based on the Bible showed the king had to be not only accountable to God, but also to his subjects.

Soon after de Coligny's death, a prearranged, pre-dawn signal on Aug 24, 1572, given from the church bell tower of the St. Germain l'Auxerrois church rang out, ushering in a horrendous event which would change the course of western history. At the peal of the bell, all Catholic military forces in Paris were to create havoc and destruction upon the unknowing and defenseless Huguenots. The goal was to wipe out and eliminate all of them, as the dawn approached the morning sky, Protestants were hunted like animals, killed where they slept in their beds or dragged out into the streets to be shot. Those who escaped this fate were cut with daggers and swords and butchered like chickens. The tragedy in Paris alone accounted for the death of over 6,000 Protestant men, women, and children, this happened not only in Paris, but also throughout France. This event would eventually become known as "The St. Bartholomew Massacre."<sup>2</sup>

The final death count varies from 10,000 to 50,000 for this day, but there is no question or debating what happened and who were the perpetrators, this was all out genocide against the French Protestants simply because they had a different faith. They were defenseless and in a quandary about what to do next in the face of a hostile civil government and state church. The stakes were never higher and the resolution for this conflict was bleak. It was in this crucible of violence God started something that lasted for the next two hundred years and would find its resolution in the formation of the United States of America.

In His Providence, God raised up men from this and other conflicts who understood the Scriptures and lit a match to illuminate Europe after centuries of darkness without the Gospel of Christ. This simple, Biblical concept of preaching and living by God's truth became the cornerstone of western government and laid the future foundation for freedom for countless millions. Although its precepts have been modeled by numerous countries around the world, it found its greatest and most lasting expression in the

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Woodbridge and Frank A. James III, *Church History: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day, The Rise and Growth of the Church in its Cultural, Intellectual and Political Context*, V.2. Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, Mich., 2013. 180.

Declaration of Independence as the United States of America came into existence.

## IGNITING THE MATCH

In 1517, an Augustinian monk struggled with his relationship with God because of his sin. He was taught God was vindictive and punished sinners in the eternal damnation of a fiery hell. However, it was when Martin Luther finally went to the Bible, eschewing religious tradition and discovering that while its true God hates sin, He does provide a way for sinners to be reconciled fully to Him. Luther discovered this when he realized and embraced the truth of “The just shall live by faith.” It was a passage in Romans 1:16-17 which explained that it’s not by works or acts of contrition which bring a right relationship with God, but a simple faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as full payment for our sins before a holy and forgiving God. In other words, salvation is not achieved by going to a church, baptism or through a priest, but simply faith in Christ as the payment for one’s sin as the way to God, furthermore, “there is no mediator between a person and his God” (I Tim 2:5), except the Lord, Jesus Christ. No priest, or some work like baptism or communion will save a person’s soul, but simply a faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Through faith in this, a person can claim favored status with the Creator of the Universe.

This new message, directly from the Bible, was preached to the masses and was incredibly well received, it spread like fire to dry kindling in a forest of parched timber; in more descriptive terms, it spontaneously combusted! God did a wonderful work, and many were converted and embraced the Gospel of a living and loving Jesus Christ instead of a vindictive and angry works-loving idol. People were excited and were hopeful for their present lives as well as their eternal souls. Just like the early church in Acts 2-4, God was doing a wonderful work and people’s lives were changed as it gave hope for the present, some enterprising souls took a good hard look at the Scriptures and realized it had a lot more to say about other aspects of life besides salvation, gaining a better understanding of the doctrine of sanctification. From this, people realized God was also concerned how one lives the Christian life. As a result, people started to question the status quo of the old relationship between Church and State, specifically, Divine Right Monarchy.

Since the time of Charlemagne, the relationship between Church and State was sacrosanct, because the belief was the King was put on the throne by God and all subsequent civil entities were under his authority. The King



was supposed to protect the institution of the Church, in this case, Roman Catholicism. It was an accepted practice that God through the Catholic Church gave the authority to the King's rule while the King as God's representative put down any direct challenge to the role of the Catholic clergy. It was a symbiotic relationship which suffered from corruption because there was no accountability from either institution. Neither institution was forced to follow the Biblical mandates of their responsibilities before God. Given the human nature of sin and in the presence of false piety and some semblance of religiosity, both institutions devolved into corruption and greed which abused the people they were supposed to serve.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

Although this is a topic with a rich history going back to Biblical times as well as within the church, this article focuses on the relationship of Church/State from the beginning of the Reformation. However, some added history is needed to demonstrate that this new way of looking at Christianity and government had deep historical roots. Since the time of Charlemagne, there were times where the church and state were at odds trying to find out how this relationship should work. The Magna Carta, Philip IV of France's arrest of Pope Boniface VIII, and Henry II's humiliation after the death of Becket all produced many royal treatises and Papal decrees delineating this relationship of Church and The State and attempting to prescribe the authorities and powers of each.

Insights from the theological and legal works of medieval thinkers such as John of Paris, William of Ockham, and Peter Martyr Vermigli shed an early light on the appropriate relationships between Church and State. As Harvard trained lawyer George Gatagounis states:

The Reformation did not originate the political theories that dominated the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it did accelerate and intensify the growth of theories that existed already<sup>3</sup>... A variety of theorists argue for the sovereignty of the people in contradistinction to the sovereignty of a Monarch—[people like] Marsilius of Padua [*Defensor Pacis*—refutes Papal power], Occam, Bartholomew of Lucca [*De Regimine Principum*—On the Government of Rulers], Bartolus de Saxoferrato [*Legitimacy of City Governments*], Gerson [and] d'Ailly [of the University

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<sup>3</sup> George J. Gatagounis, *Calvin the Magistrate: His Political and Legal Legacy* (Religion and Law Series, Vol. 1). Available from Logos Bible software, Wipf and Stock, 2021. 129-130.

of Paris]. Each of these teaches that under natural law people's sovereignty is protected by a political contract that binds both ruler and subjects.<sup>4</sup>

These and others guided Reformed thinking and for the first time in history, Reformed theologians helped form a more consistent view of government from a Biblical context. The first to do this was Luther's colleague Melancthon in his *Loci Communes* which he first wrote in 1521. More on this topic later, but even in a so-called Christian Catholic society, the official late medieval Church and State positions took a dim view of Luther's revelation of Salvation through faith in Christ alone, for a peasant to have salvation by faith alone was a dangerous concept because it leveled the playing field with the nobles and the officials of the Catholic Church. For instance, in the papal declaration of 1302 called "*Unam Sanctum*" (Holy One), by total fiat, the Pope gave himself total authority and power in all matters dealing with spiritual issues and it was made part of Catholic canon law in the *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (Body of Canon Law):

This authority although granted to man and exercised by man, is not human but divine, being given to Peter by the voice of God and confirmed to him and to his successors in him, the rock whom the Lord acknowledge when he said to Peter, "Whosoever thou shalt bind, etc." Whoever, therefore, resists this power ordained by God resists the ordinances of God.<sup>5</sup>

This papal declaration by Pope Boniface VII was used to give the Catholic church complete dominance and jurisdiction over anything Christian and still exists to this day, although it's been modified several times since. Its overarching point is that salvation cannot be achieved outside of the Catholic church.

The Reformers disputed that authority with Biblical references and the battle lines were drawn over how sinful man could become right with God. The masses, armed with the rediscovered truth of God's power and forgiveness through the finished work of Jesus Christ, reacted against the same institutions which had held this truth from them for centuries. When the Word of God was made known to the general population in various places and times throughout history, three things generally followed:

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<sup>4</sup> Gatagounis, 135.

<sup>5</sup> **Catholic Church.** *Corpus Iuris Canonici.* Graz : Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959. Electronic reproduction. Vol 1-2. New York, N.Y. : Columbia University Libraries, 2007. *Columbia University Libraries Electronic Books.* 2006.

- 1) An elevated interest in Spiritual things and evangelism;
- 2) A realization of people's individual sins and the holiness of God followed by repentance and conversion;
- 3) A general rebellion against the established Church/State relationship in the area.

These historical realities are demonstrated by such events as the Lollard movement of John Wycliff in the 1300's which in turn gave rise to the Watt Tyler riots. John Hus' preaching of the Gospel, leading to a social and political movement in Prague against the established Church and State, ending with the defeat of the protestants at White Mountain. Martin Luther and the Peasants Revolt. The Huguenots of Calvin and Beza, and the subsequent French Wars of Religion. The Puritans against the Stuarts during the English Civil War ending with the Glorious Revolution, and finally, the American Great Awakening leading up to the American Revolution.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONAL SALVATION**

Unfortunately, most historians do not take religious movements very seriously because they do not understand how true religion moves and motivates people. David Hackett Fischer mentions these types of historical explanations with a lot of scorn. In what he calls "the Status Fallacy," he asserts it is wrong to "see past events in terms of a slow and unfolding of a preordained divine plan."<sup>6</sup> In the "fallacy of the holistic analogy," he does say something interesting about empiricism when talking about doing history, "Empiricism fails, however, in the face of holistic problems and the analogy alone is left to carry the weight."<sup>7</sup> In other words, according to Fischer and other historians like him, it is erroneous to talk about conversion and other types of "metaphysical" experiences of people. It is just not logical and therefore, it is forbidden to historians. Ironically, the atheist Fischer (and others like him), nevertheless claims the right to make up the rules of how to do history.

I remember a conversation I had with my brother-in-law years ago. He was not a Christian nor did he ever confess to be a Christian, yet he did admit there was "something there" because enough people believe it and

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<sup>6</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, NY, 1970. 153.

<sup>7</sup> Fischer, p. 255.

while he was never convinced of it nor did he believe it, he was honest enough to say some were “into it.” Even Fischer admits that in his “fallacy of the negative proof,” if there is no negative proof of something, it doesn’t negate the fact that something does exist.<sup>8</sup>

There are somethings in this world which cannot be empirically demonstrated. Love, hate, jealousy and other emotions are real, but cannot be proven with empirical data. I remember eating lunch with a Navy doctor while serving as the Force Chaplain with the Navy SEALs. In the conversation, he told me that while he liked me personally (?), he thought what I stood for was just “smoke and mirrors.” He said he could not believe anything he could not see and touch with his senses and outside of that, there is no reality. I then asked him if he was ever in love, and he said “yes.” I told him since his love for someone else was real, but it couldn’t be rationalized or measured, did that make it unreal because he couldn’t see it or use his senses?

I say all of this because men like Fischer, my brother-in-law, and my doctor friend, who only rely on empiricism and logic to interpret the world around them will never understand the subjective and non-materialistic spiritual world which does indeed exist because it’s easy to live in an artificial academic University or College glass house where one can ignore other realities at the stroke of a pen. Too long have academicians who work and thrive in a bubble dismissed the historical reality of God and His workings in the lives of real people with real life experiences.

While some historians tolerate Christianity and speak in generally favorable terms when doing history, many do not, mainly because of their own biases about God and religion and project these biases when doing their history. This is the curse of our age because of anti-Christian biases are found everywhere in our society, especially at our formerly beloved colleges and universities. Over the years there has been a noticeable shift from tolerating those with religious convictions to downright hostility towards them. I noticed this personally as a military chaplain for 27 years while serving the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. Those experiences are for another venue and time but let me give just one example not as a military chaplain, but as a researcher who includes the possibility that Christianity did indeed affect the formation of our nation. I have been collecting and researching articles and books for the past year about Christianity during the Revolutionary War. Typically, most writings about the causes of the American Revolution are defined and reduced to by catch phrases like “taxation without

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<sup>8</sup> Fischer, p. 47.

representation,” “the Founding Fathers were slave owners” or “America is an evil country.”

As an example of what I found in contemporary scholarship, I collected information on college level academic courses about the American Revolution. Only two of the sixty-four course topics covered anything remotely related to religion or faith and one of these just focused on someone who influenced America after the Constitution was written. Likewise, when I visited the book section at George Washington’s Mt Vernon home last spring, I noticed their bookshop had at least 50 of the latest published books on Washington. After perusing almost all of them, I concluded that references to religion or faith were superficial and/or brief.

Of course, these examples were just extemporaneous and not scientific, but I mention those experiences only to show that the trend in doing history of the causes of the American Revolution is to narrowly focus on Marxist categories only, i.e., social, political, and economic subjects in writing history instead of a holistic and complete view. Our culture has allowed atheist and agnostics to make the rules on acceptable academic practices in writing history. I have found in real life that driving God out of American history has distorted the truth and importance from those who do the dying and fighting in combat, past and present. Not the sterile environment of a professor’s academic sanctuary.

As a military chaplain who has been in combat zones and done counseling with combat vets from WWII to Iraq and Afghanistan, the reality of God is always present. I’m sure there are exceptions, but the saying “There is no such thing as an atheist in a foxhole” rings true. Military training can only take the Soldier, Sailor or Marine so far. It is the courage and inner determination that gives a man (or woman) the determination and wherewithal to fight while bullets fly and one’s adrenaline flows freely. Something that cannot be proven empirically, but the internal will to fight in a dangerous situation is present, nonetheless. This is a life and death situation, and the possibility of death is real. This is where the questions of eternity become very real and personal. Faith does have an impact here.

It is this “inner man” discussion that an individual questions their relationship with their Maker and Savior. Noting there was hardly anything currently written about faith and its relationship with the American Revolution, I searched the articles and documents of original sources from Pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary war times instead of those written within our academic institutions from the last 60-80 years. What I found was interesting and exciting because many of these original sources spoke of a

much different world view which incorporated not only a belief in God, but constant pleas for His help.

To fully appreciate the scope of what was said through the published written word accounts of newspapers and published sermons that thundered from the pulpits of America's clergy back then will the subject of parts two and three. The American Revolution didn't happen in a vacuum and the purpose of this study is to demonstrate how faith, as well as the current theological trends would cause them to actively go against the English Crown.

Perhaps a little discussion about true religion is in order at this point to demonstrate how important the new birth in Christ can be for a new convert to Christianity. Unfortunately, many who claim to be a Christian simply use it as an identification. It is just a preference for them. These claim their faith, but there is no evidence in their daily and life walk. There is a disconnect between what they say they are versus how they live their faith. Often, it's a racial or cultural declaration like being Hindu or Muslim.

It's like the Jewish leaders in John 8 where despite many proofs that Jesus was the Messiah, they refused to believe Him. They claimed to be God's people because they were Jewish, but refused to believe who Christ was, despite his declarations and miracles. They all claim to be God's chosen through Abraham (vs. 39-41), but Christ tells them they are not (vs.42-45).

Think of it another way. Many who "identify" as Christian, most of them look at their religion as something convenient. They are "on the edge believers" or are confused about what Biblical Christianity really means. Why is it that the most attended service in the Christian calendar is Christmas and Easter, but only the faithful attend Church the rest of the year? For the "Chresters" (those who only go during Christmas and Easter), once the convenience wears off, there is a tendency to drop the preference. However, there are some who believe, and it makes a big change in their lives. Christ describes this in Matthew 13:1-8 in the parable of the Sower. There is a lot of seed, but only those who produced fruit are really believers (vs. 23).

In the original language of the Bible, true conversions to Christianity are worded in the perfect tense. This means there is a state of past unbelief, then a present time of conversion, with future and permanent changes after the point in time where a person becomes a believer for eternity. In stark contrast with ongoing faith is faith that is described in the Imperfect tense, which has a momentary "belief," but is soon extinguished and that person goes back into the previous state, never to change again. While some may claim to be a believer, as cited in Matt 7:21-23, It is very clear that "not everyone who

claims to be a Christian, is a Christian. The proof is in the changed life of the person who has the new life in Christ.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE NON-ABSOLUTE RESISTANCE THEOLOGICAL TREATISES

With centuries of oppression from the existing church/state status quo, the new group of biblical believers during the Reformation approached the importance of the Scriptures through new eyes. This first started with the doctrine of salvation, but soon bled over into other aspects of life, namely socially and the politically. It was born out of pragmatism, but also in the totality of Scripture. It made sense for the welfare of the common person. No longer would there be a reliance upon the traditional fiat dictates of the Popes and Kings. Instead, the common person read for themselves ALL of Scripture and how it correlates with the human condition of salvation and the state. The more people searched the Scriptures, the more they questioned the “cherry-picked” version of interpretation of the Scripture given by centuries of those who held the reins of power.

Even though they used Scripture, the Catholic Church and those who held the absolute power of the State by adhering to Divine Right Monarchy had no desire for change because they enjoyed a system of power and convenience for the few elites. Since the Word of God was now available to all, theological and legal treatises which challenged the Divine/Legal hegemony became popular all over Europe. These works questioned the interpretation of absolute power of the established church and state and replaced it with a sounder theological exegesis based on the rules of inductive and deductive reasoning.

It was currently that theologians’ new critiques of old treatises on legal and theological law, such as *The Magdeburg Confession* (11 Lutheran Pastors against the might of the Holy Roman Empire-1554), *The Rights of Magistrates* (Beza against the St. Bartholomew Massacre-1574), *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (unknown author against the St. Bartholomew Massacre-1574), *Lex Rex* (Samuel Rutherford Presbyterianism against the Church of England-1644) and many others.

It should be noted that each of these and other treatises like them were often quoted by those who were oppressed both politically and religiously by those who followed Divine Right Monarchy claims. These works began during the Reformation but became more frequent during times of conflict with Church/State affairs later. When the Puritans were persecuted by the

Stuart Kings of England via the Anglican Church, these works and others like them resurfaced and were even prevalent during the English Civil War (1642-51). Puritan preachers in English churches thundered many a sermon against the corruption of the Church of England. These in turn gave rise to other sermons and treatises like the ones written under religious persecution during the Reformation. It was no surprise then, that our founding fathers were well aware of these works and used them as sources of authority.

This is evident as they wrote the Declaration of Independence and used the same arguments found in Reformation and Puritan Anti-Absolute works. If one were to go through the Federalist Papers and personal letters from Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, and Adams one would find they were very familiar with the corpus of Anti-Absolute literature of the time.<sup>9,10,11</sup> While it has been discussed that personal salvation has historically motivated the rank

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, V 38, 1 July-12 Nov 1802, ed. by Barbara B. Oberg, Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2011. pp. 550-559. In this letter from Thomas Cooper to Jefferson, he mentions how the corrupt vices of rulers of the French government have caused the people to rebel against them. He then goes into a long list of people who have written or given speeches throughout history against the government (*Lex Rex, Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, speeches of Falkland, Pym and others and the writings of Milton and Sydney), which if it had not preceded John Locke, his works never would have come about. Most interesting in Cooper's mind is that without all these works, the "Glorious Revolution" would never have happened and been the harbinger of the Revolutionary War.

<sup>10</sup> John Adams. *The Works of John Adams: Second President of the United States with the Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations by his grandson, Charles Francis Adams*. Vol. VI, Boston: Charles, Little and James Brown, 1851. In this volume, John Adams used the pseudonym Marchmont Nedham and discussed the various forms of government. Covering government from ancient Rome and Greece to modern times. Of special note is his references to the St. Bartholomew's massacre and other government atrocities towards its people. On page 146, Adams writes: if the divine theory upon which most of Europe still rests, it is not only treason, but impiety and blasphemy to resist any government whatsoever. If the sovereignty of a nation is a divine right, then there is an end to all rights of mankind at once; and resistance to the sovereignty wherever placed, is rebellion against God.

<sup>11</sup> Display article on the life of James Madison, located at the James Madison Museum at Orange County, VA. 129 Caroline St, Orange, VA., Visited April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Numerous articles covered different aspects of Madison's life. Madison was educated at a boarding school where he was taught by Donald Robertson, a Scottish scholar. Robertson talked Madison, an Anglican to attend Princeton College, then called College of New Jersey in 1769. The college's President was a Scottish immigrant who participated in the Scottish revival and was a leader and author of anti-Anglican and Royal Resistance and literature. He was also a new-light preacher who also just happened to be a signer of the Declaration of Independence... his name is Rev. Jonathan Witherspoon. Madison went there and was affected all his political career against the tyranny of government against those who wanted simply to worship God. He has numerous letters from his friend in college William Bradford discussing egregious occurrences to religious groups such as Quakers, Baptists, and Presbyterians at the hands of the English clergy. As a representative he wrote: "Memorial and Remonstrances Against Religious Assessments" and many other articles which are sympathetic to religious freedom.



and file of society to rebel against tyrannical church and government entities, the Scriptural reasons have yet to be discussed. To do this, ground zero for this is found in the conflict between obeying Caesar and God. Romans 13:1 tells us “Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities.” To obey the government no matter how bad or tyrannical they are, is known in historical writings from the Reformation, English Civil War and Revolutionary War as the “The Absolutist” position. In other words, those who hold this position believe the Scripture is clear and “absolute” and that no matter what, a Christian should never go against the secular government or State.

In stark contrast, those who hold to the “Resistance,” or “Non-Absolutist” position believe that if the State is tyrannical, then there is Biblical authority to resist it and in extreme cases, to overthrow it. The modern concept of civil disobedience is based on the same concept, albeit not always with a Biblical foundation. The article covers the causes and outcomes of the events which preceded the American Revolution, starting from the Reformation. The next article will cover the Revolution itself and its Scriptural underpinning.

## **PERSECUTION AND THE CONTINUATION OF NON-ABSOLUTIST WRITINGS**

The same conflict between believers and Church/State relations came up again during the centuries old conflict of the English Puritans and successive sovereigns. This conflict finally came to a head during the English Civil War where Charles I tried to control the dissenting Puritans with his belief in “Divine Right” privileges. He tried to control the Puritans and their religious dissention through the acts of the Archbishop Laud, the second highest religious figure in the Church of England. Seeing no other recourse, the Calvinistic Puritans rebelled. Tellingly, the appearance of the same non-absolutist resistance literature of Reformation times found its way into new theological treatises which protested the spiritual and political abuse of the king and his magistrates and was well circulated before and during the English Civil War.<sup>12</sup>

It was during this religious persecution in England that many Puritans and Dissenters (Non-conforming Calvinists such as The Pilgrims, Anabaptists and Quakers) came to America for the sole purpose of having religious

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<sup>12</sup> Gary L. Steward, *Justifying Revolution: The American Clergy's Argument for Political Resistance, 1750-1776*. Oxford University Press, NY, NY, 2021. 19-20

freedom and escaping the tyranny of the Anglican Church. Meanwhile, England had its own political problems with Church and State with the death of Oliver Cromwell and the end of the Protestant protectorate. With Cromwell's death, the government was in shambles, so the people asked Charles I's son to come and rule over them as king. Charles II came back and ruled as the king as well as the head of the church. As head of the Church of England, the very corrupt Charles II reinstated many of the formerly oppressive policies typically found in a tyrannical church/state relationship. A small example can be found in his sanctioned revised "Book of Common Prayer of 1662," with this warning found in the introduction:

...and that if any manner of Parson, Vicar, or other whatsoever Minister, that ought or should sin or say common prayer mentioned in the said book, or minister of the Sacraments from and after the feast of the nativity of St. John the Baptist next coming refuse to use the said common prayers or to minister the sacraments in said Cathedral or Parish church or other places, as he should use to minister the same in such order and form as they be mentioned and set forth in the said book... shall lose and forfeit to the Queens Highness her heirs and successors, for his first offense, the profit of all his spiritual benefits or promotions, for the next year: and also that person so convicted, shall for the same offense suffer imprisonment...<sup>13</sup>

In other words, anyone caught not being an ordained clergy of the Church of England using this book for worship will be prosecuted. The punishment for the second and even third offense was more severe, to the point that the offender stood to lose, job, property, family and faced life imprisonment. Small wonder that many who disagreed with the church immigrated to America.

## THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN LOCKE

Unfortunately, many of the problems that plagued England with the Stuart kings came back once the Puritans invited Charles II to restore the monarchy. Soon, it was totalitarianism all over again as Charles II was corrupt and without morals. His younger brother James II wasn't any better and had overt Roman Catholic sympathies as the Head of the Church of England.

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<sup>13</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer, 1662*. From the Original Manuscript attached to The Act of Uniformity of 1662, and preserved in the House of the Lords., Eyre and Spottiswoode, Printers to the Queens most excellent Majesty, London, Great New Street, 1892. P. 4-11.

James II and his wife both converted to Catholicism once they were in power. This was the final straw for the Puritans. It was during this time John Locke wrote his two treatises “On Human Government” which advocated resistance to tyrannical government and its overthrow.

Locke ended up running from James II and his royal court in 1683 to Holland when James II sent his royal spies to find and kill him. He came back after James II was deposed in what is now called “The Glorious Revolution of 1688.” This was a bloodless coup where James II was deposed and replaced with a Constitutional Monarchy form of government. His daughter Mary II became queen and married the Protestant King William of Orange from the Netherlands. While they ruled as William III and Mary II as King and Queen consorts, many of their monarchial powers were curbed by the new Constitution. This new Constitution of England contained a “Bill of Rights” to protect some of the rights of Englishmen, but still maintained the right of the King or Queen to remain the head of the Church, as well as the State.

Many historians credit Locke’s work as the impetus for the enlightenment version of how America came to be because he is the center of philosophical enlightenment ideology. By using Locke, historians would have us believe that our Founding Fathers were solely moved by reason as defined by those who promoted the “Enlightenment” philosophy, rather than by a reliance on God. This view is prevalent in scholarly circles because like the “1619 Project,” this reception history shows the anti-religious biases of the historian rather than going to original primary documents and letters to find what drove and motivated them. Next to Locke, a hero amongst these academic ideologues is Thomas Jefferson who by association claim his work on the American Declaration of Independence was an outworking of his “Enlightenment” beliefs.

While it is true that Jefferson had enlightenment proclivities, it only tells part of the story, nevertheless, only this part of the story has been told for the cause of the American Revolution taught in universities and academia for the past hundred years. The narrative for this ideology goes something like this: those Founding Fathers who went against the crown were influenced by enlightenment reasoning and John Locke and his treatise on “Human Government” provided the philosophical reasoning. In short, it has become the main explanation based on reason for the American Revolution.

On the surface, that was the story embraced by respected American historians. However, an examination of what people of the time read and talked about reveals that very few people knew about the time of Locke and

Jefferson. This can be demonstrated by a review of what was available to be read by the public before the Revolutionary War. For instance, in pre-war Boston and New York (1760-1773), there were 258 books and pamphlets published. About half of them dealt with religious issues ranging from published sermons to theological topics. Others dealt with almanacs, thirty dealt with slavery and only twelve dealt with rationalism and of those, most of them covered topics about natural science.<sup>14</sup> In Boston, newspapers covered and published Jonathan Mayhew's and Bishop Hoadly's sermons against the English Crown and Church. As Gary Stewart writes: Mayhew and Hoadly did not have to choose between a "Lockean" argument for resistance and a Protestant argument for resistance, for Locke's arguments are similar to the arguments used previously by Reformed theologians developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>15,16</sup> Furthermore, Locke and others like the Philosophes who are given credit for the Enlightenment were supposedly read by the Founding Fathers and influenced them in their decision to go to war with England. While there is some proof of this, this article demonstrates there was a Christian ideological tradition which challenged religious and civil tyranny going back centuries before the American Revolutionary War. It is significant that Jefferson's original library contained not only Locke's works, but also a copy in Latin of the Reformer Theodore's Beza's work, "the Rights of Magistrates."

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have tried to re-create the world of religious resistance writings from the time of the Reformation to the beginning of the Great Awakening. For this subject, this journey begins with Martin Luther and the question of salvation and its effect on Church/State relationships. Starting with the Reformation, continuing through the English Civil War, and ending

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<sup>14</sup> Bob Freiberg, while doing my Th.M. work at Trinity Evangelical Divinity Seminary (TEDS), the author had access to every published document both in newspapers, books, pamphlets, and everything published in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia and while it took over 2 months to do it, felt it was as thorough a study as could be undertaken for the time (2001). I got this idea from the Harvard Historical Scholar Alan Heimert who did the same type of study, only his was more comprehensive for the entire 13 colonies. His project took him well over 20 years.

<sup>15</sup> Stewart, Gary, *Justifying Rebellion*. P. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Zuckert, *The Natural Rights Republic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996); and William T. Reddinger, "Political Thought in Political Sermons of the American Founding Era" (PhD diss., Northern Illinois University, 2010).

with America right before the Great Awakening of the American colonies. The Biblical and legal precedents from Scripture were discussed from the earliest part of medieval times, but it wasn't until the Gospel of Christ was preached and taught in any society that the idea of religious freedom was championed to challenge the Catholic church and the Divine Right of king's concept of government.

The future cohortative indicative "The just shall live by faith" expresses a command in Romans 1:17-18.<sup>17</sup> Luther turned the world upside down with this Biblical truth. It was a spark which turned into an ember, and then into a flame fueled by the bellows of Biblical theology. To use another metaphor, the seed of the Gospel under the right conditions, matured into full rebellion for the American Revolution. However strained these metaphors might be, it cannot be denied that theological truth underpinned the American Revolution. However, the journey was not an easy one because it involved exchanging Divine Right/Catholic Church hegemony for religious freedom and a type of egalitarianism which elevates highlights the status of normal men and or women as children of the living God.

These religious truths were prevalent throughout the lives of people in the American Revolution epoch. It has only been in the past few generations that this truth has been neglected, covered up and changed. Our Founding Fathers were influenced by the non-Absolutist religious truths of liberty and freedom from the Reformation to the beginning of the American Revolution. How much will be discussed in the next two articles. This article demonstrates that the origins of our struggle for freedom originated in the pages of Scripture and not from the infertile soil of human reason. Subsequent articles will further support this view with ample primary documentation from the original sources of our Founding Fathers' pens. Unfortunately, for various reasons, this part of the story has been forgotten. The next article will show how the Founding Fathers used Biblical truths to forge a government, "by the people and for the people" in the sight of God. Amen.

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<sup>17</sup> H.E. Dana and Julius Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, The Macmillan Company: Toronto, Ontario, 1955. P. 168-169. The use of this type of Greek syntax is sometimes used to express a command, like Matt 27:24 where it tells us to "love your neighbor as yourself." It is not the normal way of saying a command, but it is a command, nonetheless. The Scriptural passage is the Apostle Paul's way of saying "your faith is something that has observable parts to it." It's not just an ethereal idea, but something that has tangible results in this world.

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The AGC

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*Book Review:*

**WE WILL NOT BE SILENCED:  
RESPONDING COURAGEOUSLY TO OUR  
CULTURE'S ASSAULT ON CHRISTIANITY**

*by Erwin W. Lutzer*

*Review by Stephen Kim*

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Pastors, military chaplains, and church leaders are at a watershed moment in American history. Never before, has the American Church faced abdicating to the fervent dual pressures of transgenderism and the homosexual's redefinition of marriage. Never before have young children been subjected to watching the vile commercials of homosexual couples and the insidious systemic programming of cartoon homosexual characters. As progressive constitutionalism has weaponized the homosexual agenda, military chaplains are now tempted to help strong bond gay persons at marriage retreats in order to retain their rank and pay. Christian ministers are tempted to forget Jude 1:7, which taught us that what happened to the homosexuals of Sodom was divinely set "for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." In an effort to win an increasingly "unaffiliated" generation, many churches have already given up on the Bible's teachings regarding human sexuality and the narrow road to eternal life has seemingly become narrower.

BLM, CRT, and LGBTQA. Volatility is often accompanied by confusion and hence, Erwin Lutzer's work is a welcomed measure of clarity. "Who would have ever believed the day would come when men would say that they too can bear children and menstruate and thus must fight for 'period equity'? Or that drag queens would be allowed to read fairy tales to very young children in public libraries?" (p. 20). With such words, Lutzer begins *We Will Not Be Silenced*, an examination of the volatile cultural environment dominating our national consciousness. Not without its weaknesses, the book's strengths and its main motivation mirror that of the author's. Erwin Lutzer is pastor emeritus of The Moody Church, where he served for 36 years as its senior pastor. With the book containing chapters such as, "Sexualize the Children", it is helpful to know that he and his wife Rebecca have three grown children and eight grandchildren. Troubled by the change around him, Lutzer writes as much for the next generation as he does for the present one. Lutzer's ultimate call is a good one: "We dare not abandon the Bible's teaching about sexuality despite personal and cultural pressures" (p. 256).

Lutzer does an admirable job in opening up with what he calls "cultural Marxism." Although the book was written in 2020, so much of what we see in America today resembles Lutzer's initial observations. From presidential candidates like Bernie Sanders to the call for a universal wage, many of the current American cultural principles of the left's socialism resemble the "cultural Marxism" that Lutzer alludes to. Interestingly, Lutzer believes that America's "feminine upheaval" was derived from Marxism: "Mothers have to be encouraged to leave their children for others to raise; after all, stay-at-home moms live in servitude to their husband and are too easily satisfied" (p. 23). According to Lutzer, when mothers leave the home, then the state can come in to educate the children as "cultural Marxists" seek to capture five key cultural institutions: "the social, political, educational, religious, and most importantly, familial life of a nation" (p. 22). Whether or not you believe this is the reason we are now where we are, Lutzer does at least provide us with his ideological perspective. What is true is that our nation overwhelmingly mocks the inherent values of a working father and a stay-at-home mother. The strengths of complementarian male headship are not heralded by either major political parties.

The book is broken up into ten easy to read chapters. Collectively, the work attempts to bite off more than its reasonable share and would have certainly benefitted from a more focused scope. While chapter one covered Marxism; in chapter three we were in Critical Race Theory; in chapter five we studied Hitler; by chapter six we were informed about the pedophilia of

Alfred Kinsey; chapter eight was dedicated wholly on the inherent harm of Islam (with which I concur); and by chapter nine, the focus shifted to the alliances of the LGBT movement. Rather than an academic work, Lutzer's book often reads more like a social commentary as Lutzer regularly references headlines from newspapers to argue his thesis. With regard to free speech, Lutzer takes the logically faulty position which argues that Christians must fight for the rights of all religions and ideologies. He quotes the old adage, "I may disagree with what you say, but will fight to the death for you to have the right to say it" (p. 123). Ironically, Lutzer rightly notes later in chapter eight, that groups like Muslims utilize this gross misinterpretation of free speech for their own agenda: "We will use the freedoms of the Constitution to destroy the Constitution!" (p. 207).

*We Will Not Be Silenced* does make insightful contributions to fighting the ongoing onslaught against Christianity, human sexuality, morality, and Western civilization. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a precious, but exclusive message. As such, there is a need for Christian courage during our postmodern era. Lutzer has the right heart when he says,

"It is time for the church to step to the plate and seize the high moral ground. Those of us who have been witnesses to the rapid transformation of our country—we who are members of the church—have been strangely silent. And with good reason. To our shame, we are afraid of the secular left" (p. 34).

It is time for us to speak up and steward our positions for the glory of the Lamb.



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*The AGC*

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***Book Review:***

**GOD VS. GOVERNMENT: TAKING A  
BIBLICAL STAND WHEN CHRIST &  
COMPLIANCE COLLIDE**

***by Nathan Busenitz & James Coates***

*Review by Kurt Johnson*

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**T**his excellent work addresses the heretofore unthinkable dilemma faced by churches across North America in 2020 as COVID-19 spread. Federal, state/provincial, and local governments in the United States and Canada restricted their citizenry in increasingly unprecedented ways, including limiting and forbidding the physical gathering of church congregations. With few exceptions, churches complied and many resorted to “virtual” gatherings of their faithful. Two notable exceptions were Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California and GraceLife Church in Spruce Grove, Alberta, both of which defied government mandates to shutter their doors. Their stories of perseverance in the face of heavy-handed government tactics are recounted by Nathan Busenitz for Grace Community Church, led by John MacArthur, and James Coates for GraceLife Church.

As the authors detail, Jesus famously answered the Pharisees’ ill-motivated question about paying taxes with “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17). Scripture

generally teaches that earthly authorities are put in place by God, and we are to submit to such authorities (1 Peter 2:13–14). And yet, the Book of Acts recounts two instances in which the apostles intentionally and notoriously disobeyed the authorities of their day. When Peter and John were ordered not to speak of or teach about Jesus, they replied: “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20).

Lying at the heart of this work is where “assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25) falls on the continuum between what is Caesar’s and what is God’s. The author of Hebrews admonishes: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25). Two premises must be accepted to reach the authors’ conclusions. First, “assembling of ourselves” is a biblical *mandate*. Second, “assembling” refers exclusively to *physically* gathering. Both authors clearly view “the assembling of ourselves together” as a biblical mandate for Christians to physically gather together. Busenitz asserts that, “the Christian life is not designed to be lived in isolation, but in community. Believers are members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–26). No part of the body can survive on its own; it requires fellowship with the other members of the body to function, grow, and thrive.” Coates, who spent 35 days in a Canadian jail for his beliefs, insists that “it is impossible to be obedient to Christ and not be active in the local church. So, what is the church? The church is the universal body of believers that gathers into local assemblies to accomplish the Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18–20).

Were government mandates prohibiting the physical gathering of church members in response to the COVID-19 pandemic more like a requirement to pay taxes, or akin to a mandate to deny God as Peter and John were commanded by the authorities of their day? And if they fall into the latter category of what is God’s, what is the proper biblical response for a Christian church? Together, Busenitz and Coates make a strong biblical case that government oversteps its authority – in the same manner that the Apostles experienced in Acts chapters 4 and 5 – when it inhibits or denies the longstanding practice of the Church to physically gather its members.

This book is highly recommended for critically thinking Christians who face a disturbing trend of government overreach into church practices, and search for a biblical balance between submission to earthly authorities and obedience to God. Jesus forewarned his followers of persecutions against the

Church, sending them out as “sheep in the midst of wolves” and cautioning them to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16–17). Busenitz and Coates strike a biblical balance between serpent and dove by thoroughly and clearly outlining the biblical parameters with which Christians should evaluate and respond to government actions against the Church.

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