

# **Pantheism in Government and Social Policy**

## ABSTRACT

In today's political parlance, "liberals" are termed "progressives," and what drives them is generally considered to be either an ideology or a socio-political/economic philosophy. But ideology and philosophy fail to explain the intense commitment that progressives have. We argue in this paper that their convictions can best be explained as religious in nature, and we go further and identify that religion as pantheism. This underlying religion consists of two fundamental beliefs: natural or spontaneous progress in history (a corollary of evolutionary thought) and a denial of the existence of the Creator God of the Bible. We demonstrate that their view of the world and their vision for the future derive from Marxism, a pantheistic religion. Their efforts making policy and attempting to change society are directed primarily toward the fulfillment of their grand vision, which is a *faux*-Millennium. We argue further, using items culled from newspapers, that progressives are carrying out religious warfare not merely against political "conservatives" but against the entire Christian worldview that derives from the Scriptures—indeed against Christianity itself. (11,000+ words, 47 references, and 2 appendices)

## OUTLINE:

Introduction

I All societies and governments have a religious basis

II Progressivism, Marxism, and pantheism

III A religious war of extermination

IV Scripture's perspective

Conclusion

Appendices

## Introduction:

We live in confusing times. It seems impossible to attempt to reduce all that's going on around us to one or a few simple premises. Most people shake their head at the daily news and mumble something like, "crazy, what's going on." Some commentators term it "dysfunction," others a "culture war." Some see us as an effete society, others as a society in the throes of progress. What is going on?

In this paper, we argue that the most adequate explanation of today's tumult is religious warfare. It's not a clash of civilizations, nor of cultures, nor of world views, but of *religions*. In particular, it's the proponents of an almost invisible religion, pantheism, against Christianity. Our argument is developed first by explaining the necessary role of religion, then discussing what pantheism is, and then showing how pantheism accounts for so much of what is occurring in society. We invoke Scripture to provide the needed perspective that allows us to understand current political programs. We conclude by suggesting the significance of our thesis to the church and what Christians can do in response.

It would not be unreasonable to view the Enlightenment as a counter-Reformation, Satan's reaction to the spread of Protestantism.<sup>1</sup> Although

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<sup>1</sup> A recent, in-depth and highly biased account of the Enlightenment by a non-theist is Anthony Pagden's, *The Enlightenment: And Why It Still Matters*, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2013. In Pagden's view, the Enlightenment is when religious superstition was abandoned and civilization entered the age of reason and cosmopolitanism. He writes (scornfully) of fundamentalist religious beliefs and the "intellectual tyranny of the Church." In his view, religious authority needed to be transcended so that people could be enlightened, thereby to think altruistically and to build an ideal society based on virtue. It was the Enlightenment, Pagden claims, that inspired the pursuit of international peace and scientific progress. Harold Lindsell terms the Enlightenment "the new paganism" in his book by that

pantheistic ideas were expressed in antiquity, we view today's pantheism, the modern religious view that opposes Christianity, as having emerged from that Enlightenment project. It also would not be unreasonable to view Western Civilization as the outgrowth of the Reformation. So the on-going attack on Western Civilization is really religious in nature, pantheistic religion against Christianity and all the features of society that derive from Christianity. The warfare is not totalitarianism versus liberty.<sup>2</sup> Nor is it Science versus Christianity, nor is it reason or empiricism or naturalism or any other –ism versus Christianity. It is pantheism versus Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

Our assertion obviously cannot be proved. But we offer it as the explanation that best accounts for current affairs. Christianity is under

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title (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); see pages 44-89. To complicate our retrospective understanding of the Enlightenment, some theologians hold that evangelical theology is grounded in the Enlightenment. Garry J. Williams, for example, argues that the Enlightenment's focus on empiricism, rationalism and epistemology led to taking theology out of the church and into the academy ("Was Evangelicalism Created by the Enlightenment?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 53(2):283-312, 2002). But Protestant Scholastics were already constructing systematic theologies before Enlightenment ideas erupted. The Enlightenment can be used to argue different interpretations because it had no single essence or claim except perhaps the will to rethink everything freed of authoritarian constraints; the Enlightenment set reason above revelation. See also the Liberty University 2011 Senior Honors Essay by Nathan Hinkle, "A Critique of the Enlightenment Doctrine on Progressivism Through the Writings of Francis Schaeffer"

(<http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1268&context=honors>)

<sup>2</sup> It is commonly alleged that liberty is a concept that emerged from the Enlightenment, out of the struggle against a reactionary and oppressive Church. Not so, says Larry Siedentop in his recent book, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*, U.K.: First Harvard University Press, 2014. Siedentop argues that liberty is one of the defining features of the West and it developed out of Christianity, first out of Paul's writings, then subsequent canon law, and then the Reformation. Modern freedoms, he says, are Christianity's gift to human societies.

<sup>3</sup> Pantheism, as we use the term in this paper, is not popular New Age ideas, nor does it have anything to do with karma, reincarnation, transcendental meditation, yoga, or Eastern religions such as Buddhism or Hinduism. Nor does the term pantheism necessarily refer to a conscious worship of nature. We explain pantheism in Section I (*vide infra*).

attack as never before, and if we are unable to recognize the enemy, there's no hope of surviving the onslaught. Spiritual warfare of course cannot be seen, but it's a biblical truth and we must take it seriously and respond in faith and with reason, using the weapons at our disposal (Ephesians 6). Because the Church in America is not experiencing persecution, it mustn't assume that it is exempt from Satanic attack. That would be a colossal error. It is our hope that the argument of this paper will enable the Church to better understand the nature of the war being waged against it.

We have elsewhere documented our assertion that the conflict over origins is not Science's evolutionary view versus the biblical narrative of fiat creation, but is instead a pantheistic view held by such scientists versus Christian theism.<sup>4</sup> In this paper we attempt to show that the same spiritual warfare is using government and social policy against the Church.

## **I All societies and governments have a religious basis.**

All people are religious. Religion should be understood broadly as how humans view their existence, the nature of the world, and their relation to the world. Religion supplies the necessary assumptions that guide decision-making, thinking and behavior. These assumptions are deeply held convictions. Like geometry axioms they are un-provable, and they lie latent deep in each person's being. It is religion that answers the existential questions we all ask, such as, Where did I come from, and Why am I here? Does the world have meaning? Does life have meaning? Although it seems counter-intuitive to those steeped in organized religion, especially Christian theism, religion does not need to

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<sup>4</sup> See other articles on this website for a collection of essays that unpack this argument.

involve worship of a deity, nor ceremonies, or prayers, or a body of doctrine.<sup>5</sup>

Evangelicals should not be surprised at our statement that all people are religious. After all, Paul in Romans 1 divided all humanity into two groups, those who worshipped and served the Creator, and those who refused to do that, worshipping and serving that which is created, some other god(s). So there's true religion and there's untrue religion, but *all are religious*. Religion is either based on revelation, that is, Scripture, or it's made up, human speculation; it's either worship of the God of the Bible, or it's idolatry.<sup>6</sup>

Now, what is government? Let's define it as the aggregate of all efforts by certain persons who have authority to make and enforce laws and rules that order society. Government is not alive, and it isn't a thing; it is people doing something. So government itself is not and cannot be religious – but the people who do government certainly are religious. And it should be a given that all people, in one way or another, act in accordance with their particular religion. To a highly variable extent we all express our religion. So we could say that the religion of government is the religion of those who have the most authority or power in government.

The nation-states of ancient times were deeply religious or, more precisely, the leaders and people of those societies freely expressed their religious convictions. This is the context of the Book of Daniel, and it is

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<sup>5</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, in his essay, "Religion, Science and Truth in the School Curriculum" (*Theology* 91 (May):186-93, 1988) points out that Buddhism is a religion, yet it worships no deity. He writes, "But did not Tillich teach us that religion is ultimate concern? Does it not follow that whatever is your ultimate concern is your religion?"

<sup>6</sup> For this reason, that there's no middle ground, no spectrum, critics find Scripture offensive if not embarrassing. But upon honest reflection it should be evident that as God has spoken, our responsibility is to listen and not substitute alternatives. "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks" (Hebrews 12:25).

in the background of much of the Bible.<sup>7</sup> Gentile nations believed their king was either divine or was the agent of their deity. In the O.T. era, it was believed that one nation would be able to conquer another because their nation's god was more powerful or in some way superior to the god of the vanquished. The Roman emperor was considered deity (Matthew 22:20-21). A theme running through the period of the Monarchy was that Israel's king, as God's vice-regent on earth, had to be godly, "a man after God's own heart" to insure that the people under him were godly. Throughout history and in all places, in every nation or state, the religion of those in power was (is) the religion of the people from which the ruler emerged or the religion the ruler imposed on the people.

America's first colonies were theocratic. Religion was expected not only to guide daily life but to order society as well. With time, as generations passed and as new settlers arrived bringing different convictions, that arrangement had to be abandoned. So America developed as a secular state. A few other nations, England and her ex-colonies and certain European nations mostly, claim also to be secular states. But "secular" is a self-contradictory term. No one is or can be secular. All people are religious, intrinsically and pervasively religious. So "secular" is a euphemism, a mask, camouflage that hides the religion of those in power. America's government, as with all governments, has a religious foundation. It has to, because the people that govern are religious.

America's Founding Fathers, unable to anticipate the rise of a secular state and the widespread adoption of non-theistic religion, and unwilling to see here the state suppression of unwanted religion that tore apart Europe, crafted a Constitution that merely restricted government from prohibiting the religious views of the governed. The Constitution does not (and cannot) restrict those governing from expressing their particular

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel I. Block develops this theme in scholarly detail in the ETS Monograph, *The Gods of the Nations*, 1988.

religion; the courts can do that, but judges necessarily bring their religion to the bench as well. So America's system of government can (and does) express the religious views of those who govern, just as all other ruling systems have done throughout history.

Now let's ask, What are the religions of today? Based on Romans 1, there are only two, Christianity and everything else. As our focus in this paper is on government, let's limit the question to, What are the religions of those in civil authority? Adherents of Orthodox Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Mormonism have scant representation in government offices, and we exclude these from further discussion. Almost all those holding office today are either Christians, non-theists, or nominal Christians holding non-theistic worldviews.<sup>8</sup> And we classify the non-theists as pantheists.

### What's pantheism?

Pantheism is an *anti*-theistic religion. It rejects the transcendent God of the Bible, believing instead in a deity that is not a person and not a being, one that is in some way identified with the natural or physical world.<sup>9</sup> Precisely what the essence of the deity is can't be stated, because pantheism is not based on revelation as biblical theism is. It's a man-made religion, entirely the product of human reason. The pantheist deity is also described as "an all-inclusive divine Unity," because pantheists believe that all things are in some way linked. An essential

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<sup>8</sup> To those who profess Christian faith yet hold to liberal or progressive ideas, undoubtedly derived from their interpretation of Scripture, we plead for openness in thinking through the argument of this paper.

<sup>9</sup> We derive our discussion of pantheism from the following sources: Timothy Sprigge, "Pantheism" in *The Monist*, 80(2):191-217, 1997; Lewis S. Ford, "Pantheism vs. Theism: A Re-Appraisal" in *The Monist*, op cit, pp. 286-306; Peter Forrest, "Pantheism and Science" in *The Monist*, op cit, pp. 307-319; Paul Harrison, *Elements of Pantheism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Element Books, 2004; Michael P. Levine, *Pantheism: A Non-theistic Concept of Deity*, N.Y.: Routledge, 1994; and Robert Brow, *Religion: Origins and Ideas*, Chicago: InterVarsity Fellowship, 1966.

feature of pantheism is its belief in evolutionary progress. Creation is spontaneous, on-going, constantly occurring, resulting in progressively increasing complexity. Nature is imbued with the inherent, divine qualities of self-creating. That the world is always in the process of being created, that creation is ongoing, is central to pantheist thought.<sup>10</sup>

Pantheists don't have a body of doctrine. They don't gather to worship. They have no practices or rituals and they don't pray or sing hymns. Yet pantheism is a religion! If a set of pantheist affirmations or a pantheist statement of faith could be formulated, it would be, (1) there is no supernatural Being that is outside of nature; and (2) meaning can be found in aligning ourselves with the principle behind nature, namely evolutionary progress.<sup>11</sup>

We therefore identify as pantheists all those who reject the God of the Bible, who reject biblical creation and who instead hold to evolution as the explanation of origins. They may not be conscious of their deity, and they may even not be aware that pantheism is their religion. But a label needs to be affixed to their set of beliefs, and we believe that pantheism

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<sup>10</sup> Ford, op cit., at length emphasizes this aspect of pantheism. Darwinism claims creation is spontaneous and on-going in contrast to the Bible's fiat, completed creation. When Darwin wrote, "Natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing of every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good, silently and insensibly working at the improvement of every organic being" (Origin of Species, 1959 edition, p. 83) he is clearly ascribing divine attributes to that which is created. In Episode 8 of the new Cosmos TV series, when Neil deGrasse Tyson says, "Our ancestors worshiped the sun. They were far from foolish. It makes good sense to revere the sun and stars because we are their children. The silicon in the rocks, the oxygen in the air, the carbon in our DNA, the iron in our skyscrapers, the silver in our jewelry—were all made in stars, billions of years ago. Our planet, our society, and we ourselves are stardust," he reveals the belief in the unity of all that exists as well as the inherent evolutionary progress that is core to pantheism. Thanks go to Ken Ham for noticing this revealing statement.

<sup>11</sup> We derive these affirmations largely from the work of (now deceased) theologian Robert Brow, op cit, who worked in India for 20 years studying Hindu philosophy. Brow's work is available on the internet at <http://www.brow.on.ca/Books/Religion/Religion1.html>



is the most reasonable.<sup>12</sup> Romans 1, after all, classifies all people as worshipping either God, the Creator, or that which has been created. People holding to evolution, rejecting God, would be in that second category exhibiting a misplaced love, a love of the creation instead of the One who brought it into existence.<sup>13</sup> Paul correctly understands that if the transcendent God of Scripture is not one's deity, there exists no other choice but to locate deity *in* creation.

Pantheism is not atheism. Atheists say they reject the existence of any deity. But to the extent that atheists adhere to the above two statements, they are pantheists. Atheists believe that the natural, material world has the inherent ability to create, to bring new things progressively into existence— new stars, new elements, new life forms— so nature has divine qualities. Unknowingly ascribing divinity to nature, atheists are unwitting pantheists. Likewise, to the extent that agnostics adhere to the above two statements, they are pantheists. Agnosticism is a cover for atheistic beliefs. Humanists and existentialists also are pantheists. What about secularists? Neutrality regarding religion, regarding God, is a mirage.<sup>14</sup> Religion deals with ultimates, the cause, nature and purpose of

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<sup>12</sup> The term is appropriate. The “pan-” in pantheism encompasses the belief that all creation has attributes of deity; thus in the physical world deity in nature results in the evolution of the species, and in history deity results in the Marxist transformations (see below).

<sup>13</sup> An expositor might argue from Acts 17:23 that pagans, even those holding to evolution, can still believe in the God of the Bible apart from revelation. We instead hold that Paul in that situation used his reference to the altar to the unknown god as a rhetorical device by which to transition into his introducing God to those Gentiles. See Darrell L. Bock, Acts, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007, pp. 563-5. Scripture is both necessary and sufficient for faith. Indeed, in Acts 17:30-31 Paul makes one of the clearest statements, “God now calls all men everywhere to repent.”

<sup>14</sup> See Hunter Baker's, *The End of Secularism*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2009, for an extended analysis of the concept of secularism from a Christian point of view. Mary Poplin also discusses secularism (pp. 165-193) in her 2014 book, *Is Reality Secular? Testing the Assumptions of Four Global Worldviews* (IVP Books, Downers Grove, IL). She writes, “Secularism is not a positive, it makes no affirmations; rather it is a negative, it says, ‘If you're a Christian, keep your mouth shut,’ it says religion (Christianity) has no place or role in modern life. Reason and science and politics will suffice to guide us. Religion is pre-

life, indeed of all existence. Everyone has religious ideas and carries religious presuppositions in their thinking.<sup>15</sup> To the extent that secularists deny the supernatural and believe in evolutionary progress, they also are pantheists. All who hold to evolution, rejecting the Bible's creation narrative and the Bible's Creator, are religious—*necessarily* religious—and their religion is pantheism.

In his latest book, N.T. Wright suggests that the defining feature of Western society is Epicureanism.<sup>16</sup> The insight has merit. An Epicurean type of materialist lifestyle may indeed be prevalent in American society, a society that is prosperous and saturated with Darwinism, but it's not a religion. Epicureanism doesn't attempt to find meaning in life. It may be how pantheists choose to pursue their lives but it is surely not what lies at the core of their thinking and gives form to their beliefs.

Pantheism and theism are mutually exclusive.<sup>17</sup> In the West, pantheism is the alternative to theism, indeed, they are antagonistic religions.<sup>18</sup> Pantheism is the religion that underlies, or is the basis for, non-theistic

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scientific, supernaturalism, superstition, ignorance, a social construct, and we've evolved by now to go it on our own without religious rules and regulations." To Poplin's insightful observation, we would add that it's pantheist belief that underlies and empowers secularism. Poplin also writes, "[S]ecularism has created a new era that might be termed the *political age* [italics hers]. Here decisions are made on the basis of who has the most power in democratic or totalitarian governments. This political power trumps truth claims, which are seen as the partisan ones. Thus religion, in particular Christianity, must be suppressed because the political state can stand no competitors for our affections and allegiance" (p. 42). Poplin correctly identifies the hostility, but we here argue that the core conflict is that pantheists are using politics and the power of government to eradicate Christianity.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of our understanding of the role of presupposition and worldview, see Appendix A.

<sup>16</sup> N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues*, HarperOne, 2014, pp.6-22.

<sup>17</sup> Levine, *op cit.*, stated this repeatedly in his careful study of pantheism.

<sup>18</sup> A. J. Conyers, "Three Sources of the Secular Mind" in *JETS* 41/2 (June):313-321, 1998.

worldviews common in our culture. We submit that pantheism is the view of nature, indeed of all reality, that is prevalent in the West today.

## **II Pantheism, Marxism, and Progressivism**

As the Enlightenment developed in response to, and in opposition to the Reformation, Marxism emerged as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution --in particular, to what Marx perceived as the exploitation and oppression of the laboring class. Because Marx's followers have espoused a host of dissenting views, it is difficult to define Marxism, but following are its chief features.<sup>19</sup> The bourgeoisie (property owners) engage in capitalism, which results in alienation of the capitalists from the workers (the proletariat, wage-earners), who are exploited. Profit-seeking was why the bourgeoisie exploited laborers; and the laborer, just to live, had to work, which Marx regarded as being exploited. As class consciousness increases, including the awareness of being exploited and oppressed, class antagonism and class struggle result in a workers' revolution. The proletariat are empowered at the expense of the bourgeoisie. Socialism results, which includes the end of private ownership and private profits, and that eventually transforms into a state-less, class-less communist society. This progression from capitalism to socialism to communism is held to be an inevitable transition.

Socialism does not seek to abolish capitalism; it wants to outlaw capitalism for everyone except the state to engage in.<sup>20</sup> A necessary component of Marxism is an implacable opposition to "reactionary"

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<sup>19</sup> The review of Marxist thought here necessarily ignores Marx's now largely refuted economic theories. For a discussion of these, an excellent source is Friedrich A. Hayek's classic, *The Road to Serfdom*.

<sup>20</sup> The term socialism means that property, capital, the means of production, should be "socialized" (expropriated, conscripted), that is, owned by "society" and not by private persons.

forces, which consist of bourgeois structures and institutions (e.g., the rule of law, morality, Christianity) that maintain their interests, dominate the working class, and delay the coming revolution. Followers of Marx see no possibility of peaceful coexistence between people of the different classes; agitation and ferment are constantly needed to arouse the proletariat to take part in revolt. Rich people are the enemy, they are to be despised and eventually eliminated. Corollaries of Marxist thought include the ideas that the end justifies the means (so lies, deception, violence, and even genocide have their usefulness), and that the individual is subordinate to the collective and to the vision.<sup>21</sup> In Marxist thought, anything that a person does to advance class struggle and the inevitable resulting transformation is noble and just. Although the march of history is inevitable, the socialist Utopian vision is so grand that activity hastening its arrival is enjoined. And only what advances socialism is right.

It was probably unintentional, but Marx's theories, if realized, would have erased the social gains of the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of a large middle class, returning societies to the status of the Medieval period in which there was a small class of elites who ruled and controlled the wealth and the rest of the population that consisted of barely subsisting workers. Marx's ideas are counter to all that is cherished in the West today, including democracy, liberty, and the idea of God-given human rights that derived from the Reformation.

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<sup>21</sup> In the collectivist tradition, beginning with Plato and continuing thru Kant and Hegel, it is "society" that needs always to be improved. The focus on society rather than the individual also illustrates the impact of Darwinism on political theory: evolution sees no individuals, only races and gene pools. It is God who looks with tender regard upon the individual. Creation in the image of God, the incarnation and passion of Christ, and the Gospel give individuals infinite dignity and worth. Minimizing the worth and power of individuals, the state arrogates immense power to itself.

Democratic socialists and socialist democrats (“Fabian socialists”) reject Marx’s doctrine that socialism can come only by class conflict and a proletarian revolution. They hope to attain a socialist state by working gradually and purposefully through established institutions of government, rather than by violent means. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci advocated a steady replacement of a society’s ruling hegemony (politicians, educators, judges, commentators, etc.) by Marxists gradually taking control of all of a society’s institutions--a deliberate, top-down strategy instead of Marx’s spontaneous, bottom-up vision.

Marxism is no mere ideology. It’s not a worldview, and it’s not just an economic or a political philosophy. It’s a religion. Law professor Augusto Zimmerman writes, “In many respects Marxism is no less religious or dogmatic than the traditional religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As a matter of fact, Marxism contains in itself a complete worldview that includes an explanation of the origin of the universe and an eschatological theory concerning the final destiny of humankind.”<sup>22</sup> And theologian Robert Brow writes, “Marx declared that the principle behind history is the class struggle till the classless society is achieved. In making this universe the only reality Marx is a monist, and in calling man to live according to its discovered principle he is a Modified Pantheist...Marxism is basically religious, and many have found satisfaction in sacrificing their own interests for the greater end of its cause.”<sup>23</sup>

Marxism is materialistic and anti-theistic. It denies the existence of the God of Scripture. It’s also primarily based on Darwinian evolution, extending the idea of spontaneous progress from the physical (or

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<sup>22</sup> Augusto Zimmerman, “Marxism, law and evolution: Marxist law in both theory and practice.” *J. Creation* **23**(3):90--97, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Brow, *op cit.*, pp. 81-82

natural) realm to that of history.<sup>24</sup> In the same way that scientists view origins as a gradual, spontaneous, continuous and progressive process, Marxism views history as a spontaneous and progressive process.<sup>25</sup> And just as atheists are unwitting pantheists because they attribute divine qualities (creativity) to nature, Marxists are unwitting pantheists because they attribute divine qualities (morality and intelligence) to history. We are fully justified in labeling Marxism as a pantheistic religion.<sup>26</sup>

In today's political parlance, great restraint is exercised to avoid reference to Marxism or to socialism. Few political commentators, columnists or authors use the terms.<sup>27</sup> Marxism, as a subject of discussion, has retreated to university and college campuses. Instead, the

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<sup>24</sup> We acknowledge that Marx built on Hegel's dialectical method, but Marx rejected Hegel's idealism; Marx was an unwavering materialist. It was Darwin who provided the basis in natural science for his view of historical materialism, class struggle, and transformations. See the Wikipedia entry, "Influences on Karl Marx" (accessed 10 February 2016).

<sup>25</sup> To a pantheist, the flow of history is like a train rolling along its track, unstoppable; anyone who gets in its path is crushed. It's "primitive" religious belief that is thought especially to impede progress toward a more rational and peaceful world. Another affinity between Marxism and Darwinism is both require struggle: Darwinian natural selection involves struggle for survival and Marx's dialectic depends on struggle.

<sup>26</sup> Because deity (somehow) resides in creation, as pantheists believe, it inexorably guides history to a *faux*-Millennium, substituting for God sovereignly guiding mankind toward His Millennial Kingdom. In his 25 November 2008 column, "Behind the Bias: A Drive for 'Social Justice,'" Dennis Prager wrote, "[T]he left is a religion, a substitute for the Christianity it seeks to displace." When LGBT people assert, "We're on the right side of history," they are ascribing divine attributes (morality and intelligence) to that which is created. Likewise, when journalist Jeffrey Goldberg wrote of President Obama, "he consistently and with apparent sincerity professes optimism that the world is bending toward justice" ("The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April 2016) he reveals pantheistic belief in spontaneous historical progression.

<sup>27</sup> Marxist ideas are often (deliberately) obscured by lofty and euphemistic language. The 2015 Paris Climate Treaty, for example, contains the following: "This agreement will be implemented to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances." This is bureaucratic code for Marxism ("from each according to his ability..."). See "Global Tyranny Just Getting Warmed Up" by Daren Janescu, in *American Thinker*, December 19, 2015.

two camps of opinion that regularly recur in political commentary are “conservative” and “liberal.”<sup>28</sup>

### Politics in America

Many writing political commentary now prefer to use the term “progressive” instead of liberal. A precise definition of each of these terms is difficult because these are concepts, and people use the terms according to their understanding of the concept. What is “liberal” today is certainly not what “liberal” was a century ago. Conservatives often use “liberal” as an epithet, referring to those with “leftist” political (or social) views. Similarly, “progressive” has a range of meanings—and even when used in a political frame, it can have different meanings depending on the user. Increasingly, “progressive” is being used by conservatives as a synonym for liberal (although liberals dispute this use). Because those who identify as liberals and as progressives have common values and concerns, we see little point in distinguishing between the two. Both strongly favor an expanded role for government to effect social change; both anticipate that a better society can be achieved by enlightened social policy. Both are concerned with and promote the awareness of inequality between rich and poor (“social justice”), the redistribution of wealth, and the empowerment of workers by promoting unions. Both are deeply concerned about equal rights and environmental issues. Regarding economic matters, both favor Keynesian policies. And both view the Constitution as out-dated and in need of reform.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> In previous decades it would have been necessary to qualify use of these two terms, but the hyper-polarization of current political life means they no longer can be viewed as stereotypes. For the argument of this paper, the authors prefer these terms to political party names, the use of which would add an entire layer of murkiness to the discussion.

<sup>29</sup> Liberals also reject notions of America’s “exceptionalism” because, according to the Marxist view, America embodies capitalism and “reactionary” values.

On the other flank, the “right,” are the “conservatives” who are content with the status quo of things. Their concerns are their families, their work, their church, and myriad other activities by which they engage and enjoy life. Many (not all) favor a limited role for government and closer adherence by office-holders to the Constitution. But unlike aroused liberals, for whom political activism is the air they breathe, conservatives prefer to live at peace with others within the bounds set by received tradition.<sup>30</sup> Conservatives’ interest in policy focuses mostly on social issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage. In addition to the above two camps in America today, there is a large political “center” consisting of people who tend to be politically unengaged, disinterested in politics, disillusioned with and even indifferent to government policies. The apathy of this last group has emboldened the left to more aggressively seek to fulfill its agenda without needing to make compromises.<sup>31</sup> Progressives in office of late are increasingly intolerant of conservative attempts to attenuate their project. They are intensely committed to fulfilling their vision.

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Sowell discusses these and other patterns in his insightful, *A Conflict of Visions*, New York: Quill, William Morrow, 1987. Liberals don’t merely entertain liberal thoughts, they put them into action; they are activists. Judges in courtrooms, teachers in classrooms, reporters in their newsfeeds, all are obliged by their convictions to effect social change, if only by raising consciousness of social injustices. Art “for art’s sake” is “reactionary,” art today also must be a means to an end. Even science must be transformative (think global warming). These intense commitments indicate that it’s a religion that underlies political and cultural views, the religion we identify as pantheism. Most conservatives eschew such activism. Because conservatives, desiring to “conserve” a certain status, are politically passive, activist liberals would inevitably win the conflict.

<sup>31</sup> Compromise in politics today is nearly impossible. That’s because liberals believe they occupy the moral high ground, having compassion for the down-trodden and prizing supremely the values of equality and justice. They are passionate to make society better. To the liberal, the conservative is greedy and contemptuous. These stereotypes abound on college and university campuses as well. The convictions with which these views are held betray their religious origin.



Politics in the United States for at least the past century can be roughly characterized as the continuous effort by progressives (liberals) to create the society they envision. They have a goal and an agenda that they are intent on carrying out. The role of conservatives has largely been to resist or slow the liberals' march. Any goal or agenda conservatives might formulate would simply be attempting to reverse whatever progress liberals have made.

Progressive social policy has given us the graduated income tax, a central bank (the Federal Reserve), public education K-12, Social Security, Medicare, Obamacare, innumerable government welfare programs, and a massively powerful central government that seeks to regulate if not control finance, banking, transportation, communication, commerce, education, and health care. All these gains were identified by Marx as essential to the fulfillment of his vision. So we can easily connect the dots: progressives (liberals) are using the levers of government to fulfill the Marxian dream of a socialist Utopia. They are doing their duty to aid and abet the transformation of society. Progressives in Washington wield their power effectively!

Further evidence that today's liberals are enacting a Marxist agenda includes unconcealed contempt for conservatives ("reactionaries") in political discourse; the promotion of envy and resentment toward the rich; the heavy-handed regulation of businesses and minimum-wage laws that inhibit profit-making; designating property as "wet-lands" thereby blocking the private use of land; practice of judicial activism on the bench, thereby mitigating the rule of law in society; community activists fomenting a sense of grievance among urban poor; and liberals co-opting the faculties of colleges and universities across America to instill socialist ideas. Capitalists are regularly referred to in the media as

“greedy,” they are the enemy of the people. Much more evidence could easily be adduced.<sup>32</sup>

Marx was inspired by Darwin’s evolutionary ideas. His concept of class struggle parallels evolution’s struggle for survival and natural selection. Thus we should view Marxism along with Darwinian science (both pantheistic) as components of the Enlightenment promulgated to vanquish Christianity. It appears that contemporary politics is perpetuating that conflict.

Marxist progression includes the elimination from society of religion. Marxism is pantheistic, and pantheism is an anti-theistic religion. In pantheistic thought, religion is mere superstition; it’s a vestige of primitive, pre-scientific societies, so religion has no place in the current age of reason and modern science. The natural progress of history means humanity must abandon religion as it advances toward its Utopian fulfillment. This assertion of course is unprovable, but we suspect that the overwhelming majority of those in office in Washington identify as agnostics, atheists, or secularists, in other words (as discussed above), pantheists. To the extent that progressive government office-holders reject Christianity and hold to evolutionary explanations of origins, they are pantheists.<sup>33</sup> We contend that many of these pantheists in

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<sup>32</sup> “Market capitalism is a dangerous tool, like a machine gun or a chainsaw or a nuclear reactor” declared Alice Rivlin, President Clinton’s budget chief, to a Congressional committee. Capitalism, liberals say, with its profit motive, is selfish and immoral, in contrast to the altruism that seeks the welfare of society. Government’s role, in their view, is to enforce “fairness,” which essentially means punishing the wealthy. Obviously, the only way the rich will relinquish their wealth is by force; thus socialism is centralized power.

<sup>33</sup> Not all pantheists are necessarily progressives; indeed, conservatives can be pantheists as well. But those pantheistic conservatives have no use for religion and probably wouldn’t care if Christianity disappeared from earth. Too, not all pantheists necessarily have an interest in politics, economics or social policy, just as not all theists have such interests. But the problem nevertheless is pantheism because it rejects God and motivates those who hold to it to adopt anti-theistic policies.

government are using their authority not only to realize their socialist vision but to neutralize--if not eradicate--Christianity from our country.

### **III A religious war of extermination**

In 2013, our Defense Department prepared a PowerPoint slide show for use in training U.S Army reserves. One slide contained a list of “Religious Extremists” in the United States. At the top of the list was “Evangelical Christianity.” Evangelicals are on the same list as Hamas, al Qaeda, and the Ku Klux Klan! The text of this presentation stated, “Extremism [is] anyone who believes their own religion is the correct one, anyone who accepts the words of Jesus Christ as they are recorded in the Bible.” And, “Extremists are not welcome in the armed forces.” In the face of complaints this presentation was removed from training sessions.<sup>34</sup>

Why this misrepresentation? And why the animosity? We have already argued that all people, including those in government, are religious. And we hold that the main religion among progressives is pantheism. We therefore contend that people holding government office are using their positions of power to carry out the pantheist project of extirpating Christianity from American society. We marshal the following evidence (in no particular order) to support our assertion:

-- Washington does not allow nuns the right to refuse to cover contraceptives in their health insurance.

Washington requires that homosexuals have the right to marry, ignoring the biblical significance of marriage. Emblems of Christianity such as crosses, crèches, and statues of the two tablets of stone bearing the Ten

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<sup>34</sup> Alex Newman, “Christians are Extremists Like al-Qaeda, U.S. Army Taught Troops,” *The New American*, Monday, 8 April, 2013; available on the Internet at [www.thenewamerican.com/culture/faith-and-morals/item/15028-Christians-a](http://www.thenewamerican.com/culture/faith-and-morals/item/15028-Christians-a)

Commandments by regulation may not be placed on public property. Washington routinely blocks the states from limiting access to abortion, cynically ignoring Christian pleas to save the lives of the unborn; Congress willfully continues federal funding of Planned Parenthood. Federal workers are forbidden to celebrate Christmas using any religious symbols in their workplaces. Three individuals who were openly in favor of abortion were deliberately sent as ambassadors to the Vatican in an act of profound disrespect.

-- The President in his speeches deliberately omits the word “the Creator” when he quotes the Declaration of Independence. Recent non-discrimination laws do not contain hiring protection for religious groups, and healthcare regulations now forbid physicians to refuse contraception or abortion for religious reasons. President Franklin Roosevelt’s famous D-Day prayer is not permitted in the WWII memorial. Washington will forgive college student loans in exchange for public service provided that the public service is secular. In 2015, the mayor of Houston attempted to monitor the sermons pastors were preaching in city churches.

-- References to God and to Jesus are forbidden at burial ceremonies at Houston National Cemetery. Rules forbid Air Force servicemen from being apprised of services by military chaplains. In the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, visitors to patients may not use, read from, or leave a Bible. The Air Force Academy constructed a Stonehenge-like center for pagans, druids and witches to use in their worship. In February of 2012, Army general and war hero William (“Jerry”) Boykin was disinvited to speak at West Point because he is an outspoken Christian.

-- Washington refuses to fund abstinence-only sex education but funds “comprehensive” sexual education; this is but one of many examples of the contempt it has for biblical values. In April 2010, Billy Graham’s

son, Franklin, was disinvited to speak at the Pentagon's National Day of Prayer. In February 2012, the White House apologized for the U.S military burning copies of the Koran, but the deliberate burning of Bibles was said to be the right thing to do. In recent years, bakers, florists and photographers in different jurisdictions have been punished by the courts for refusing for religious reasons to participate in gay marriages.<sup>35</sup> And then in 2015 the nation was shocked to learn that a Kentucky county clerk was actually jailed because she refused for religious reasons to issue a marriage license to gays – as if the federal judge who sentenced her had no other option!

But the contempt for theistic religion is evidently not limited to Christianity. When Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu visited the White House, he was dismissed out the back door past garbage cans.

Peggy Noonan, columnist for the Wall Street Journal, recently wrote, “There is something increasingly unappeasable in the left. This is something conservatives and others have come to fear, that progressives now accept no limits. We can't just have court-ordered legalized abortion across the land, we have to have it up to the point of birth, and tax-payers have to pay for it. It's not enough to win same-sex marriage, you've got to personally approve of it and if you publicly resist you'll be ruined. It's not enough that we

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<sup>35</sup> For refusing two lesbians a wedding cake because of their Christian beliefs, Aaron and Melissa Klein, who owned Sweet Cakes by Melissa Bakery in Gresham, Oregon, had their business shut down and were fined by the court \$135,000, the funds going to the lesbians for “emotional, mental, and physical suffering.” Would a black man similarly be required to serve a Ku Klux Klan affair? The project apparently is to label Christians a “hate” group [hating gays], which would portend state-enforced persecution. To value certain things necessarily devalues others. As un-Christian values, ideals and attitudes become valued, Christianity correspondingly is devalued.

have publicly funded contraceptives, the nuns have to provide them.”<sup>36</sup>

Sociologists George Yancey and David Williamson document anti-Christian hostility in their recent book, “So Many Christians, So Few Lions.”<sup>37</sup> Their research shows that politically progressive and well-educated people hold not just negative sentiment but sometimes brazen hatred toward evangelical Christians. The authors document such responses from people with masters or doctors degrees as, “They should be eradicated without hesitation or remorse,” “I want them all to die in a fire,” and “They make me a believer in eugenics...they pollute good air...sterilize them so they can’t breed more.”<sup>38</sup> Some respondents viewed Christians as weak and immature individuals who are manipulated or brainwashed by deceptive and power hungry leaders (“authoritarian scum”). One respondent, who had a doctor’s degree, said of Christians, “...they’re lemmings that despite factual evidence to the contrary, will usually follow the guidance of their pastors and church leaders.”<sup>39</sup> The authors observed in a national study done in 2012, nearly three-fourths of political progressives with at least a bachelor’s degree hold animosity toward fundamentalist Christians.<sup>40</sup> Attitudes such as this

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<sup>36</sup> *The Wall Street Journal*, Saturday, 20 February 2016, p.A11. similarly, columnist Nicholas D. Kristof wrote in the *New York Times* (April 24, 2004), “One of the most ferocious divides today is that between evangelical and secular America...the left seems more contemptuous than ever of evangelicals.”

<sup>37</sup> George Yancey and David A. Williamson, “So Many Christians, So Few Lions,” Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD, 2014. The authors observe that, among academics, religious intolerance even trumps political intolerance.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.75.

<sup>40</sup> Yancey and Williamson suggest reasons for the animosity include a fear that Christians seek to impose their anti-gay and anti-abortion views on society and a resentment that Christians eschew liberal values including, of course, the practice of sexual freedom. Another possible explanation is the concern that fundamentalist Christians are anti-science and anti-reason. Such reasons may explain the views of some respondents; they seem inadequate however to account for the hatred and the vehemence that’s expressed. The argument of this

among constituents surely embolden those elected to civil government to aggressively pursue their progressive agenda.

In 2005 federal judge John Jones III rendered his decision in the *Kitzmiller versus Dover School Board* trial. He found that intelligent design was religious and that evolution was science, and he required that only evolution be taught in science classes. No other explanation of origins was permitted. Did the judge not realize that *any* explanation of origins is a religious belief? The plaintiffs' assertion that there is no God is a profoundly religious statement! The judge evidently failed to realize that *any* decision would necessarily favor one religion over the other. He unwittingly chose the non-theistic religion, pantheism, as the religion that must be taught in schools. Pantheism is becoming the established religion of the United States under cover of "secularism," so that Christianity either disappears or becomes a totally private matter.

Early in 2015, Hillary Clinton said in a speech to LGBT people at the UN headquarters, "Deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases have to be changed."<sup>41</sup> This is not just rhetoric! Progressives have a deep-seated conviction that their views are right, and it's that commitment to their worldview that betrays their underlying religion. The pantheists in government fully intend to transform society, and that includes excising Christian values – if not Christianity itself—from America. What better word to use than warfare? The hostility government directs toward Christianity is

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paper is that the animosity is due to a clash of *religions*. The hatred directed at Christians is really against God and His Christ. Yancey and Williamson write, "These findings [their analysis of the responses] indicate that they [the progressive respondents] perceive themselves as waging a cultural war against a powerful, evil foe [evangelical Christians] whom they dare not allow to win" (p. 58). It's no exaggeration to refer to a war directed at Christianity, but it's a religious war, pantheism against biblical theism.

<sup>41</sup> The text of the speech is on the Internet at [www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/12/178368.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/12/178368.htm)

precisely because those in power have their own religion, and it's an *anti*-theistic religion that requires battle against theism.

#### IV Scripture's perspective

The persecution of godly people is one of the themes of the Bible. It is implied in the curse announced in Genesis 3:15, and it erupts in Genesis chapter 4. The slaying of Abel is proleptic of the murder of godly persons throughout biblical history. The accompanying chart (Appendix B) surveys this persecution of the righteous in the Bible. It is evident that most persecution occurs at the hands of rulers, of governmental powers. Throughout church history, persecution has been primarily carried out by the nation-state. It was Roman policy that all must worship the emperor, and Christians who refused for religious reasons were persecuted or martyred. Even today around the world, except for isolated instances of persecution in shame/honor cultures, most persecution of Christians is ordained by the state. It's the ruler's policy.

Why is religious persecution top-down? Why are the most powerful persons in a society hostile toward theists? Is it simply because their religion is different and they are being intolerant? Scripture suggests another reason.

The following discussion is adopted from two papers presented at the 2005 ETS Annual Meeting by Michael S. Heiser, academic editor of Logos Bible Software.<sup>42</sup> In the early chapters of Genesis, we find that the sons of Noah gave rise to 70 nations. Those are all named in Genesis 10. The nation Israel did not yet exist. Israel, "the nation born in a day" didn't come into existence as a nation until the Book of Exodus when God delivered them from Egypt. In Exodus 19, God led the nation to Mount Sinai where he entered into covenant with them. He would be

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<sup>42</sup> See for example, Heiser's article, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God" in *Bib Sac*, **158** (Jan-Mar):52-74, 2001. Michael Heiser's material is also available on his website, <http://drmshe.com>.



their God, and they would be his people. That's why the 10 Commandments begin by saying, "I am the Lord your God ... you shall have no other gods before me." Jehovah, the Creator God, took Israel, as His own nation. Why? Were there other gods for all the other nations? Evidently so.

In Deuteronomy 32:8-9 we read something startling. "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance" [this occurred in Genesis 10, there are 70 nations there], "when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of God." [The scribes who gave us the Masoretic text couldn't bring themselves to write "the sons of God," so they substituted the word "Israel" for "God." The Septuagint translators and the Dead Sea Scrolls however say, "the sons of God" (*b'nai Elohim*). The translators of the NIV (and other translations) likewise couldn't bring themselves to put "sons of God" into the text, so they use instead "sons of Israel," following the Masoretic text. [But the NIV does put "Sons of God" in the margin as an alternate reading.] "But" [not "For," as the NIV reads] *But* the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob, his allotted inheritance."

Then in Psalm 82, we read, "God resides in the divine council" [the NIV translates this as "great assembly," which is OK, but it is probably better translated, "the divine council"], he gives judgment among the gods." The thread continues with v. 5 and especially v. 6: "I said, you are gods, you are all sons of the Most High, but you will die like mere men, you will fall as one of the princes" [the NIV's, "like every other ruler," should better be translated, "as one of the princes"]. "Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance."

Putting this together, evidently God created 70 “gods,” who were supernatural beings probably placed under Satan’s authority.<sup>43</sup> These “gods” constituted the “divine council,” some kind of assembly in heaven of supernatural beings. These must be the “principalities and powers” of which Paul writes. When the nations were constituted after the Genesis Flood, one of these “gods” was given authority over each nation. But when Israel came into existence, God himself took Israel to be his own nation. These “gods” all rebelled against God, perhaps at the same time that Satan did, and all 70 of these fallen “gods” will be judged just as sinful men are judged. This is why the Gentile nations were in spiritual darkness and in rebellion all during the times of the Old Testament – because they all had a fallen “god” over them. But Psalm 82 ends with the wonderful phrase, “for all the nations are your inheritance,” which I take to mean that one day in the future, after the “gods” are judged, God will take the people of the Gentile nations also as his own, just as he has Israel as his own.

So top-down persecution of Christians, persecution at the hands of nation-state rulers, is best explained as the outworking of these über-governing spiritual beings acting thru their vice-regents on earth, the human ruler. The reason almost all religious persecution comes from government is because these “gods” exercise rule through human government. These “gods” are in rebellion against God, which is why they incite persecution of the godly. These “gods” also incite rebellion in their territories.

Evidently Karl Marx was a Satanist. Richard Wurmbrand, the Romanian Lutheran pastor who passed 14 years in prison because of his faith,

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<sup>43</sup> In Matthew 4:8-10, Satan offered “all the kingdoms of the world” to Jesus, as if they were his to give, and Jesus’ reply was not, “you lie, they are not yours to give.” By His answer, He implicitly validated Satan’s claim.

suggests this by disclosing poetry that Marx wrote.<sup>44</sup> For example, in one poem, there's the line, "I wish to avenge myself against the One who rules above." Marx believed in God, but hated Him. He hated not only God, for we read this line in a drama he wrote, "Soon I shall embrace eternity to my breast, and soon/I shall howl gigantic curses on mankind." In another poem, we read:

So a god has snatched from me my all,  
In the curse and rack of destiny.  
All his worlds are gone beyond recall.  
Nothing but revenge is left to me.

I shall build my throne high overhead,  
Cold, tremendous shall its summit be.  
For its bulwark – superstitious dread.  
For its marshal—blackest agony.

Who looks on it with a healthy eye,  
Shall turn back, deathly pale and dumb,  
Clutched by blind and chill mortality,  
May his happiness prepare its tomb.

And in another poem, Marx wrote,

Then I will be able to walk triumphantly,  
Like a god, through the ruins of their kingdom.  
Every word of mine is fire and action.  
My breast is equal to that of the Creator.

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Wurmbrand, *Marx & Satan*, Bartlesville, OK: Living Sacrifice Book Co., 1986. Marx also wrote, "In the signs that bewilder the middle class, the aristocracy, and the prophets of regression, we recognize our brave friend, Robin Goodfellow, the old mole that can work in the earth so fast – the revolution" (p. 111). Wurmbrand explains that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Robin Goodfellow was a name used of the Devil.

In another, Marx refers to a “sword” that Wurmbrand explains was important in Satanic cult initiation rites, supposedly to provide success:

The hellish vapors rise and fill the brain,  
Till I go mad and my heart is utterly changed.  
See this sword?  
The prince of darkness  
Sold it to me.  
For me he beats the time and gives the signs.  
Ever more boldly I play the dance of death.

Wurmbrand concludes, “For Marx, socialism was only a pretense. His aim was to ruin mankind for eternity, a diabolical plan.”<sup>45</sup> Wurmbrand’s views regarding Marx as well as of others who were involved in spawning socialism such as Hess, Heine, Mazzini, Bakunin, and Proudhon, are based on primary quotes in this well-researched book. There should not be surprise at this revelation, after all, “the whole world lieth in the evil one” (1 John 5:19b). Yet Wurmbrand’s research demonstrates that the entire progressive project, although its Marxist origin is concealed, appears to be sourced ultimately in Satan.

Paul clearly has these governing spiritual beings in mind when he writes, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4), and “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>46</sup> We could add Colossians 2:8, “See to it then that no one makes a captive of you with the worthless deceit of human wisdom, which comes from the teachings handed down by men, and from the ruling spirits of the universe, and not from Christ” (TEV).

## Conclusion:

Comments heard on the street such as, “Our country is going down the drain,” and “everything is coming unglued” reflect an inadequate understanding of current affairs.<sup>47</sup> The perspective needed by which to understand events is the religious warfare we discuss in this paper. In America today, two religions are in conflict: Christianity and an anti-Christian religion that is best labeled pantheism. It is no mere ideology or philosophy that drives public policy, it is a *religion* as evidenced by the deep conviction with which progressive (liberal) ideas are held. Adherents of pantheism, energized by demonic spiritual forces, are attempting to usurp control of all sectors of American society. And they now have their hands tightly on the powerful levers of government. They have grown government to such massive proportions that it now reaches into previously untouched areas, almost influencing everyday life. We see this as deliberate, so that rulers can control thought, the direction that society takes in the future, the neutralization if not elimination of all opposition to their rule and, most importantly, the extirpation of belief in God.

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<sup>47</sup> In every generation, in public life there exists confusion and perplexity, as exemplified by the title of Carl F. H. Henry’s 1988 book, *Twilight of a Great Civilization* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway). Harold O. J. Brown similarly attempted to document a loss of hope for the future in his 1996 book, *The Sensate Culture* (Dallas: Word). But today the confusion regarding social policy is compounded by economic stresses: Americans see their purchasing power declining, decreased job opportunities and stagnant wages, aggravated by ever more government programs and regulations (more than 80,000 pages of new regulations were published in the Federal Register in 2015, and that doesn’t include Washington’s issuance of “notices” and “guidance”). The Wildlands Project wants to re-wild 50% of our nation, and Agenda 21 seeks to reduce human population by 85% because earth is overcrowded! Can we be aware that elites are planning such madness and retain our composure? Today’s uncertainties regarding the future cause the public unimaginable anxiety.

Further research analyzing the effect of pantheistic religion on the media and the entertainment sectors would be especially helpful.<sup>48</sup> Pantheism's reach into educational institutions and non-profit foundations likewise must be extensive and should be explored.<sup>49</sup>

Christians in America sadly suppose that God's manifest blessings on this country mean they are immune from persecution. Persecution of Christians is so foreign to American believers that few realize the extent and severity of it in other parts of the world. Yet persecution of followers of Christ is *normal* for this age. After all, Christ said, "all men will hate you because of Me" (Matthew 10:22a) and "If they persecute Me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20b).

There exists no reason the church in America should be exempt from persecution except that God seems to have other purposes for it. Church leaders should reflect deeply on what specific and unique role the church in America has played in the world and should continue carrying it out in the will of God. We should consider, for example, that no other country has extended world-wide missionary outreach like the American church has in decades past. One cannot avoid the observation that chronologically parallel to the church's recent diminishing interest in

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<sup>48</sup> In his book, *Left Turn: How Liberal Media Bias Distorts the American Mind* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 2011), political science and economics professor Tim Groseclose documents a deliberate left slant in the reporting of news. He further demonstrates by statistical analysis that the news outlets' liberal slant affects Americans, making them more liberal. On his website, Groseclose attributes the liberal bias to selection, that is, a liberal is more likely to choose a career in journalism than a conservative. But we simply have to assume that liberals do this intending to advance their own personal presuppositions or values. We interpret the effort as a strategic component of the religious war pantheists wage against Christians and conservatives.

<sup>49</sup> Yancey and Williamson, *op cit*, document that the hatred against conservative Christians expressed by respondents was often by those who had masters or doctors degrees. This association between level of education and anti-Christian sentiment is possibly due to progressive faculty influencing students, so that the more prolonged the exposure, the greater the influence.

missions is increasing hostility toward the church. As spiritual darkness descends upon much of the world, it is uniquely the American church with its abundant resources that is able to shine abroad the light of the Gospel—if only it will be obedient to Christ. That the God of heaven would humble Himself and enter His creation so as to suffer and die and be raised so that we sinful creatures can have His gift of eternal life . . . that’s worth sharing with others!

Paul instructed the church how to respond to persecution in Ephesians chapter 6:10-11, “Put on the full armor of God...” and in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “...for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal” [i.e., they are spiritual]. We can suggest that heightened efforts to evangelize our neighbors and grow the church would be one way to fulfill Paul’s admonitions. Another would be prayer that God might restrain the evil that could erupt (assuming that we are serving Christ according to His commands). Another would be to focus our voting so that only like-minded men and women—that is, believers—are elected to government offices, because, as we’ve demonstrated in this paper, it is government that initiates and carries out persecution.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, just because the church in America is not experiencing the type of persecution that is occurring elsewhere in the world doesn’t mean the church has been untouched by evil spiritual powers. The barrage of distractions offered by modern culture, the ease and luxury we can all afford with our surplus disposable income, the loss of effective leadership due to uncritical adoption of liberal ideas, indifference to the needs of others because government has usurped the role of the church, unconcern over the destiny of others generated in part by the modern “tolerance” movement and to avoid the appearance of

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<sup>50</sup> This recommendation may seem politically naive, but we make it on the basis of 1 John 4:4b, “...greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” It’s only a believer filled with the Spirit who can resist the influence of demonic spirits; unbelievers in office cannot withstand them (apart from the restraining work of a sovereign God).

bigotry, all these (and more) have resulted in an impotent and apathetic church. Satan probably doesn't need to bring persecution to the church in America, other strategies having been so effective.<sup>51</sup>

The argument we present in this paper should warn theologians and church leaders to exercise great caution in adopting political views espoused by liberals. Careful thought is needed before promoting social policy that doesn't derive in some way from Scripture. Welfare, for example, can be beneficial but it also can be a curse.<sup>52</sup> The main reason for prudence is that much modern liberal policy is the enactment of a false Utopian vision, one that is in essence idolatrous.<sup>53</sup>

Further, youth in the church should know that as they go off to college they will be exposed not only to new ideas and philosophies, but to an alien religion, a made-up religion, pantheism. Pantheism is an anti-theistic religion, one that seeks to prevent people from believing the Gospel. Young people need to be aware of this religion and its out-workings in the worldviews and ideologies they encounter so that they remain rooted in the faith that their church taught them.

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<sup>51</sup> A vibrant church once flourished in North Africa along the southern Mediterranean coast. For some reason it disappeared and never returned, as if its "lampstand [had been] removed from its place" (Revelation 2:5). The church in America needs to assiduously heed the warnings to the churches in Revelation 1-3.

<sup>52</sup> It is possible to do great evil while sincerely believing that one is doing good. Leaders of Nazi Germany, for example, believed they were serving the ultimate good of the German race. The recent extension of benefits to American unemployed workers has resulted in many people permanently leaving the workforce. And welfare benefits to single mothers have been shown to result in social dysfunction, the destruction of low-income black families, and the prolongation of poverty. Transfer payments have the additional effect of devaluing work and diminishing a sense of personal responsibility. Social policy powerfully influences behavior! What seems to be compassionate social policy too often has unintended consequences; government policy should be based on analysis and demonstrable benefit, not sentiment.

<sup>53</sup> Is it benevolence or idolatry when the government presumes to provide education, health care, and the support of elderly people, disabled people, the poor, widows and orphans? This arrogation of providential care deifies government and emasculates the church.



Does it matter what kind of government America has? The objective of this paper is not to promote government by conservatives as opposed to government by those with Marxist or socialist ideas. Certainly, conservative government would be more propitious for the sake of the free course of the Gospel and for the “pursuit of happiness” by our posterity. But Christians need to be faithful regardless of the type of government we have or the restraints it imposes – as indeed Christians are in other parts of the world today. No one wants persecution to come to our country, and measures to thwart it should of course be taken, but loyalty to Christ and to His will is primary.

Like the prophets of OT times, we, the church, live in a nation of rebels, and to our nation we must boldly speak truth. The God of Israel is the God of all the nations, of all people. He demonstrated His authority over the Egyptians in Exodus, over the Canaanites in Joshua, over the nations surrounding Israel in Samuel and Kings, over the Assyrians in Jonah, over the Persians in Esther, and over all the coming empires (prophetically) in Daniel and Zechariah (and others of the writing prophets). The God of the Bible has authority over all people in America, indeed, over all people in the world, today as certainly as in previous eras.

Americans today have no right to be secular, to be agnostic, to be atheists, whatever, and they have no right to impugn or ignore the Bible. Christianity is not merely an option among many choices. It is the only means by which to be rightly related to our Creator—and we *must* be rightly related to Him. Just as our unbelieving neighbors have no right to choose fantasies and human wisdom rather than the salvation freely made available by Christ, we in the Church have no right to be smug in our salvation, pursuing personal interests rather than the responsibilities of salvation.

Christian authors say the great priority in this age is for Christians to enjoy the loving relationship they have with Jesus; we know and sense the love God has for us and we return the love—and that is the Church’s great privilege. True enough. But we can’t ignore the imperative of the Gospels: “As the Father sent me [into the midst of rebels to proclaim God’s eternal truth, regardless the risk and the personal cost, so that they might be converted and experience eternal salvation and blessing], so send I you.” Christ has chosen us to be His agents (“servants”) to proclaim truth to a nation under the illusion that there is no God and no accountability. Let us be faithful.

## APPENDIX A

### The Role of Presuppositions and Worldview

Augustine pointed out, “We must believe something before we can know anything.” All rational people, *everyone*, has presuppositions about where we came from, how we got here, and where we’re going. We normally aren’t aware of our presuppositions in thinking about things; they are hidden from our consciousness. Presuppositions are *prior, non-rational* commitments; reason is used to legitimate these prior, initial presuppositions. (In the statement, “Evolution proves that there is no God,” what was assumed, the presupposition, becomes the consequent.)

Our religious beliefs inform or frame our presuppositions. It’s difficult to distinguish religious beliefs from presuppositions. Everyone has presuppositions about God: He exists, or He does not exist. The presupposition that God exists, for example, either leads to or is associated with the beliefs that He created, that He revealed Himself to us in the Bible, that there are absolutes, that He redeems, that He judges, etc. The presupposition that God does not exist leads to or is associated with different beliefs, for example, one that exalts reason and speculation over revelation, one that exalts nature and its processes.

Thus in the matter of origins, science is not a neutral, detached objective activity; it’s a tool of pre-existing presuppositions. So the creation-evolution debate is not objective science *versus* irrational faith, rather, it is two different sets of pre-existing commitments, two different sets of presuppositions vying for acceptance. Reason can be used to validate either set, because reason can be used to validate *any* presupposition, *even evil ones*. There exists no compelling or persuasive reason why the

worldview of pantheistic scientists, for example, should be preferred to that of creation.\*

Presuppositions are usually passionately held. When we confront ideas alien to our own beliefs, we tend to reject them summarily, because faith commitments are involved; presuppositions are unproved and unprovable. Thus non-theists cannot tolerate any alternative to evolution in the science curriculum (although they don't realize the role their own presuppositions or faith commitments play), and it's why many Christian parents home-school, because they don't want non-theistic ideas and values taught to their children. And that's why political liberals either mock or ignore conservatives.

Worldview derives from our religious beliefs. Worldview is a grid or filter formed by the (unprovable) presuppositions that we consciously or subconsciously hold, through which we understand the world we live in. Worldview is the framework of ideas and beliefs by which we interpret reality and interact with it. A theistic worldview, for example, holds that, because we believe that God has forgiven us, we therefore should forgive others. As we believe that Christ died for the sins of the whole world, believers should share that good news so that others also may believe and receive the benefits of Christ's redemptive work. A non-theistic worldview, in contrast, building upon the belief that there is no transcendent God, might be an Epicurean worldview, a humanist worldview, or a Marxist worldview (or a hybrid form of these).

\* Newbigin wrote (op cit., ref 4), "Both science and religion claim to give a true account of what is the case, and both involve faith commitments... There is left only the will—the will to power."

## APPENDIX B

### Instances of Persecution in the Bible

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Persecutor</b>	<b>Bible Reference</b>	<b>Nature of Persecution</b>
Abel	Cain	Genesis 4	Personal animosity
Ishamel & Hagar	Sarah	Genesis 16	Personal animosity
Tribes of Israel	Egypt	Exodus 1-14	State-sponsored
Tribes or the Nation	Surrounding Tribes or Nations	Book of Judges	State-sponsored
Tribe	Tribe	Judges 20	Personal animosity
Nation of Israel	Philistines	1,2 Samuel	State-sponsored
David	Saul	1 Samuel	Personal animosity
Nation of Israel	Surrounding Nations	1,2 Kings	State-sponsored
Israel's prophets	Jezebel	1 Kings	State-sponsored*
Naboth	Jezebel	1 Kings	State-sponsored*
Israel	Surrounding peoples	Ezra, Nehemiah	?
Exiled Jews	Persia	Esther	State-sponsored

Jeremiah	Israel's leaders	Jeremiah 36-38	State-sponsored
3 Jews	Babylon	Daniel 3	State-sponsored
Daniel	Babylon	Daniel 6	State-sponsored
Zechariah (priest)	King Joash	2 Chronicles 24	State-sponsored
John the Baptist	Herod	4 Gospels	State-sponsored*
Jesus	Jewish leaders, Rome	4 Gospels	State-sponsored
Peter & John	Israel's leaders	Acts 4,5	State-sponsored
Stephen	Israel's leaders	Acts 6,7	State-sponsored
Early Church	Israel's leaders	Acts 8	State-sponsored
James	Herod	Acts 12	State-sponsored
Paul	Philippian magistrates	Acts 16	State-sponsored
Paul	Israel's leaders	Acts 17	Personal animosity
Paul	mob	Acts 19	Personal animosity
Paul	Israel's leaders	Acts 21-23	State-sponsored
Paul	Rome's rulers	Acts 24-26	State-sponsored

\* In many instances, it's difficult to ascertain the nature of the persecution. For example, because of Jezebel's status as queen, the nature is regarded as an act of State, although the text indicates the motive was personal animosity (her religion). Similarly, Herod's persecution of John was motivated by personal animosity, but in view of his status, it is regarded as an act of State.