

SOCIOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

Executive Summary

Readers of this paper should understand that it builds upon more extensive, previously published material that can only be briefly cited here.¹ Christians today, particularly in the United States, are facing a rapidly-growing, comprehensive antagonism by pagan culture as that culture ever more consistently manifests itself through the public policies of all levels of civil government from local to federal. This antagonism challenges Christian family authority in education, Christian vocational freedom in public business and health care, Christian counseling in pastoral care (both civilian and military), Christian scholarship in academia and Christian political freedom in public policy decisions. Because it is the main tool involved, this paper explores the degenerate state of current public discourse in search of an effective overall strategy of response. It concludes that Christians must first become aware of how the suppression dynamic Paul spoke of in Romans 1:18-32 has worked out today in Western civilization. It further points out that simultaneously with the truncated ability of public discourse to handle fundamental truths of reality, truth, and conduct, there is a surreptitious and gradual establishment of a state secular religion that seeks to trump God's revelation. Two strategies to counter these threats are discussed, one aimed at challenging so-called "reasonable" public discussion and the other aimed at strengthening opposition to the state's expanding religious claims.

For Christians committed to a literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic (and thereby a dispensational perspective) the growing pagan antagonism is accompanied by criticism from covenant, post-millennial, theonomic brethren that dispensational theology is largely responsible for Christian impotency in the face of such sociopolitical antagonism. Criticism from these fellow believers charges that our view necessarily leads to defeatism, a purposeless Church age, and irresponsible passivity toward the challenges of earthly life. This paper answers those criticisms by pointing out specific features of dispensational ecclesiology and eschatology that guard the primacy of evangelism and missions while simultaneously offering detailed sociopolitical wisdom for Christian citizens. Included is an example of applying this wisdom to the reformation of Christian wedding services in those states that have delegitimized Christian marriage.

The Contemporary Socio-Political Threat to the Christian Faith and a Generalized Response

As I wrote in *An Introduction to the New Covenant (AITTNC)*:

"Do Christian parents capitulate to civil authorities who demand that all education, including home-school and Christian-school, conform to the anti-biblical enlightenment

¹ See *An Introduction to the New Covenant*, ed. Christopher Cone (Hurst, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2013), 271-364. In chapters 9 and 10 of this volume I develop the sociopolitical implication of dispensationalism through understanding the New Covenant as applying solely to Israel, not the Church. I also argue that in spite of anti dispensational criticism genuine progress is made during the Church age while the New Covenant and the millennial expression of the Kingdom of God awaits implementation.

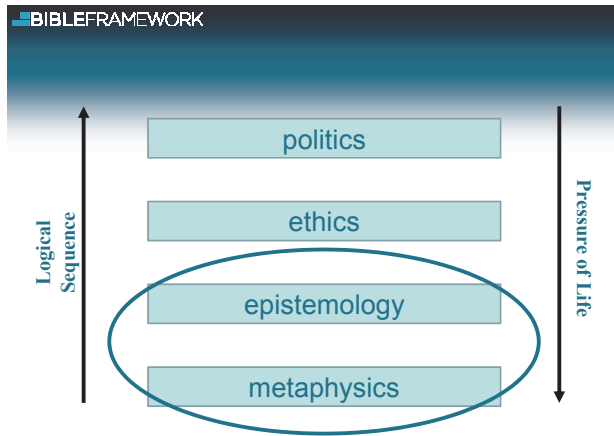
philosophy?² How do Christian graduate students cope with department requirements to deny the truth claims of biblical history and ethics or face expulsion? What about a Christian employee who is forced to pay union dues to further anti-biblical political agendas? How should a Christian medical practitioner respond to government requirements to participate in abortion and denial of parental notification? Since Christian citizens of modern states are legally part of civil governance, what biblical guidance for exercising this responsibility exists?³

This antagonism challenges Christian family authority in education, Christian vocational freedom in public business and health care, Christian counseling in pastoral care (both civilian and military), Christian scholarship in academia and Christian citizen into to public policy decisions. What is our response? Perhaps it is best to consider the response first from the general perspective of evangelicals who with us hold to the inerrant authority of Scripture. After that we can distinguish the unique details of our response from the specific perspective of traditional dispensationalism.

A Biblical Concept Map. It will be useful in working with opposing ideas, regulations, laws, and especially the contemporary secularized public discourse concerning these matters to have clearly in mind a roadmap through the ideological terrain. All discourse involves basic

² For example, consider these articles in prominent law journals that influence judges' thinking about adjudicating future cases: "If a parent subscribes to an absolutist belief system premised on the notion that it was handed down by a creator, that it (like the Ten Commandments) is etched in stone and that all other systems are wrong, the essential lessons of a civic education (i.e., tolerance and mutual respect) often seem deeply challenging and suspect. . . .Such 'private truths' have no place in the public arena, including the public schools." Catherine Ross, "Fundamentalist Challenges to Core Democratic Values: Exit and Homeschooling", *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal* 18 (May 2010): 1006; and from a professor at the Northwestern University School of Law a claim that there are legal and constitutional limits on the ability of homeschooling parents "to teach their children idiosyncratic and illiberal beliefs and values". . . [Government control must be exercised against] "parents [who] want to teach against the enlightenment. . . .Parental control over children's basic education flows from the state (rather than vice versa). States delegate power over children's basic education to parents. . . ." Kimberly A. Yurako, "Education Off the Grid...", *California Law Review* 96 (February 2008): 183, 132. The reference to "enlightenment" clearly declares total war by civil bureaucrats against the Christian faith by demanding universal replacement of the authority of the self-revealing Triune God of the Bible with man's imagined ultimate intellectual authority espoused for the past 300 years by the Enlightenment tradition.

³ *AITTNC*, 274f.



Explanation:

The notions of everyday public discourse are depicted here by the box "politics." When pressured to justify such notions, we appeal to some sort of normative ethical standard ("we ought to. . .") depicted here by the box "ethics." If pressured further to justify why this standard is normative, we have to resort to some sort of normative truth standard ("because it is true that. . .") depicted here by the box "epistemology" and/or we resort to a view of what reality is like ("because God created us this way. . ." or "because evolution has produced this state of affairs. . .") depicted here by the box "metaphysics." The two bottom boxes constitute the foundation of one's worldview which as Old Testament law warned can become idolatrous.

Figure 1. A "map" of how the basic notions involved in all discourse are related. notions of proper conduct, truth, and reality. Let's examine the concept "map" in Figure 1 to see how these notions are interconnected. There is an inherent logical order to these basic notions which is exposed as one moves from the top level downward (see the accompanying explanation in the figure). At the bottom lie the interrelated categories of truth (epistemology) and reality (metaphysics). These are mutually interdependent because any attempt at defining what truth is and how we know it has to depend upon a concept of the true state-of-affairs to supply the norm used by any proposed truth test. Yet knowledge of the true state-of-affairs depends in turn on truth tests that determine what reality is!

From the unbelieving point of view this situation leads to a serious problem discussed by Bahnsen:

"If metaphysics and epistemology are interdependent, then indeed we are left with a subjectivist guessing game, and all philosophy begins with a 'leap.' . . . Only if Christianity were untrue (which it is not) would this dire conclusion follow. Because God has clearly revealed Himself to all men by means of nature, man's own constitution, and Scripture, men do not begin with a mere guess about reality. All men as creatures of God have the same true metaphysical information and moorings. . . . So their intellectual endeavors do not begin with a 'leap,' but rather they begin either in submissive obedience or rebellious disobedience. . . . All men begin with genuine knowledge--true belief about the state of affairs and justification for that belief--and then proceed to use it or misuse it. The beginning of philosophy is not a subjectivist guessing game but a matter of ethics."⁴

Everyone is thus confronted with a choice to create a view of truth and reality by a leap from man's finite and fallen mentality or accept the divinely revealed view of truth and reality seen in man's external environment, his internal musings, and the Bible.

What is particularly onerous about such a choice is that at heart it is the ethical decision to submit to the Creator or defy Him. All men, including unbelievers, start with a relationship with God, a relationship of antagonism or of harmony. Bahnsen continues:

"We must recognize that most philosophers do not want intellectual matters to reduce to a question of morality. . . . They hold that truth is obtainable and testable no matter what the

⁴ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended*, ed. Joel McDurmon (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press, 2011).

ethical condition the thinker is in. Hence they maintain that all disputes must be *rationaly* resolvable. . . . Whether most philosophers like it or not, Scripture assuredly tells us that the way a man uses his intellect *is* an ethical matter (e.g., rebellion against God leads to a darkened mind). Irrespective of the way men respond to it, God's clear revelation is the only escape we have from the skepticism that would otherwise result from the necessity of coordinating metaphysics and epistemology, and it is this revelation that provides *both* the epistemic ground and metaphysical content for the foundation of all of man's intellectual endeavors.⁵ [Emphasis original]

The choice everyone faces regarding their most foundational thought is thus a moral choice which is really a spiritual choice. This, I believe, is why the Old Testament insists that the fundamental sin is idolatry.⁶ All other sin is derivative because idolatry is the result of attempting to deliberately suppress one's God-consciousness (Rom 1:18-23). It is the attempt to build a worldview replacement, but it can never wholly succeed due to God's restraining grace. While that grace may be diminished (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), it remains effective enough for the moral conscience to be addressed (John 8:9; Rom 2:15; 2 Cor 4:2).

Journeys of Suppression. Paul noted that once men decide not to worship their Creator, they thereby decide to worship the creature (Rom 1:18-23). Their idolatrous construction project follows the concept map working its way upward from a foundational estimate concerning reality and truth to some sort of ethics, i.e., a view of how society "ought to be." We observe this process in Yahweh's prophetic address concerning the sixth century BC pagan fear of Cyrus's military advances westward:

*"The coastlands saw it and feared,
The ends of the earth were afraid;
They drew near and came.
Everyone helped his neighbor,
And said to his brother, 'Be of good courage!'
So the craftsman encouraged the goldsmith;
He who smooths with the hammer inspired him who strikes with the anvil,
Saying, 'It is ready for the soldering';
Then he fastened it with pegs,
That it might not totter."⁷ (Isa 41:4-7)*

In terms of figure 1 the political threat from Cyrus' advance toward the Mediterranean Sea in the eyes of the various pagan nations was "wrong" and "unjust" (ethical reaction). It appeared to violate their notion of nature and its gods and goddesses (concepts of truth and reality). So they sought to comfort themselves by reaffirming the religious expression of what moderns would call their epistemological and metaphysical notions in the form of physical images. With these in place and the various gods placated, they surmised, their ethical reaction and political actions would be strengthened.

Throughout history this journey from suppression of the ever-present revelation of reality and truth to the erection of a substitute has been sometimes viewed optimistically and at other times pessimistically. Perhaps the earliest journey buoyed onward with great optimism was

⁵ Ibid., 86.

⁶ The first three of the Ten Commandments link idolatry and loyalty to Yahweh.

⁷ All Scripture references are from the *New King James Version* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997).

Babel when it was declared that man could define his total existence and thus ensure his existence against all divine threats (Gen 11:1-4). It was a very short journey! Then along came the early Greek philosophers. A group of scholars of ancient near eastern thought describe the great optimism with which that sixth century BC journey began:

“[The early Greek philosophers] proceeded with preposterous boldness on an entirely unproven assumption. They held that the universe is an intelligible whole. In other words, they presumed that a single order underlies the chaos of our perceptions and, furthermore, that we are able to comprehend that order. . . . [They attempted] to reach a vantage point where the phenomena would reveal their hidden coherence. It was the unshakeable conviction of the Ionians, Pythagoreans, and early Eleatics that such a vantage point existed; and they searched for the road leading to it, not in the manner of scientists but in that of conquistadors.”⁸

Unfortunately for these optimists, this journey, too, came to an end. Intellectually the Pythagorean mathematicians ran into numbers that defied the neat categories of reason--the "irrational" numbers like the square root of two and the ratio of a circle's radius to its circumference. Politically the Greek city states suffered military conflicts and eventually Athens itself fell in 404 BC. Pessimism over how far reason could carry unbelieving man on his journey grew. Finally, a group of educators known as Sophists arose. With his customary wit Christian philosopher Gordon Clark describes them in terms that could be applied to today's education establishment:

"There appeared confident educators who claimed to teach ambitious young men virtue: not the old virtue, but the new--the power to succeed in business life. These men were not interested in natural science, nor. . . in the logical and epistemological problems it raised. . . . What the young man needed was vocational training. The Sophists could instruct aspiring politicians in the tricks of the trade, the devices of oratory, the knack of swaying audiences, the secrets of gaining votes, and how to make the worse appear the better argument. . . . Know then thyself; presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is man. Man is the measure of all things. . . . Life is a matter of willing a goal, and success is the standard of wisdom."⁹

Sophists emphasized rhetorical skill divorced from serious questions about truth and reality. It didn't matter whether persuasive oratory convinced audiences of something true. It mattered only that it convinced them.

A similar thing has occurred in our modern Western culture. The so-called Age of Enlightenment began the era that included the founding of our nation. That reason "unaided" by traditions, especially Roman Catholic Church traditions, could be successfully applied to discover all the truths of the universe seemed to carry the day. At first this new journey seemed full of promise. Appearing to use "unaided" reason Descartes, Leibnitz, Newton and others developed mathematics which Galileo, Copernicus, Bacon and others then used for major scientific achievements. Natural explanations of reality gradually replaced supernatural explanations. Enlightenment thought hoped that the unrestricted use of reason would lead most everyone to agree on a common core of beliefs about reality, truth, and conduct.

⁸ Henri Frankfort et al., *Before Philosophy* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964 [original title, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, 1946], 251, 254.

⁹ Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), 49.

But then a funny thing began to happen along the way. Civil government, no longer seen as a divine institution as Augustine had taught, was now thought of as a social contract of man, by man, for man. The problem here was that the reality of European history with its conflicts and bloody wars didn't show much evidence that reason was successful in establishing social and political peace. That the problem of conflict arose from "unaided" reason working out from man's mind independently of any transcendent, normative information was discovered by Immanuel Kant. He concluded that all human knowledge is ultimately subjective. If all knowledge is ultimately subjective, however, then it must be no more than private opinion or a statistical depiction of such opinion. It's taken a two centuries or so for this conclusion to work out in practical ways throughout our Western culture, and it now permeates every area of our lives. Having suppressed divine revelation and taken a journey that has ended without a common core of beliefs, the travelers not only feel much like the ancient Sophists; they now act like them.

The Resulting State of Public Discourse. When those fleeing from God's general and special revelation eventually find themselves unable by unaided reason to erect a socio-politically unifying vision like that attempted at Babel, they fall into a society-wide pessimistic depression.¹⁰ This situation occupied the attention of a man considered by many to be the most important political philosopher of the 20th century, John Rawls (1921-2002). He recognized that the pluralism in Western societies is here to stay because the Enlightenment hope for reason has died. Law professor Stephen Smith comments:

"Clear thinking today must begin, Rawls maintains, by acknowledging that a pervasive pluralism in [religion, morality, politics, political philosophy] is and will continue to be our condition. No one expects that anything called 'reason' will dispel such pluralism by leading people to converge on a unified truth--certainly not about ultimate or cosmic matters such as 'the nature of the universe' or 'the end and object of life.' . . . So a central function of 'public reason' today is precisely to keep such matters *out of* public deliberation. . . . Citizens practice Rawlsian public reason when they *refrain from* invoking or acting on their 'comprehensive doctrines'--that is, their deepest convictions about what is really true--and consent to work only with a scaled-down set of beliefs. . . .that claim the support of an ostensible 'overlapping consensus.'"¹¹[Emphasis original]

Rawls calls this new conversational behavior "reasonableness" and is a mark of "reasonable" citizens acting in the socio-political sphere. Smith contrasts this new idea of "reasonableness" with the old Enlightenment idea of Reason.

"In the eighteenth century, a commitment to reason denoted a willingness to pursue truth and to follow the argument wherever it leads, with the confidence that reason will ultimately lead people to converge on the truth. In contemporary political liberalism, in stark contrast, "reasonableness" denotes a willingness *not* to pursue or invoke for vital

¹⁰ Bible students will see the irony here: modern Western culture has run up against the effects of God's judgment on Babel which Enlightenment skeptics have ridiculed as myth. This "myth" is precisely what continues to thwart all efforts to build a second Babel (Gen 11:6-9).

¹¹ Steven D. Smith, *The Disenchantment of Secular Discourse* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 14f. Professor Smith here cites specific passage from Rawls most famous book, *Political Liberalism*, in its 1996 edition.

public purposes what one believes to be ultimate truth--a willingness based on the judgment that reason will not lead to convergence but will instead subvert a civic peace that can be maintained only if people agree not to make important public decisions on the basis of arguing about what is ultimately true."¹²[Emphasis original]

So the three hundred year journey that began so optimistically with the Enlightenment flight from God's ever-present general and special revelation has now arrived at a place where it encounters a new Babelian confusion of language. This time the confusion isn't from formally different languages (after all, the English language is for all intents and purposes the global lingua franca); the new confusion is from profoundly different worldviews in the *same* language. Whereas the original Babel confusion of formally different languages resulted in the cessation of the Tower project (Gen 11:8), the new confusion of ultimate beliefs has resulted in the cessation of the capacity for full-orbed public discourse designed into man made in God's image--discourse that freely explores all levels of God's revelation.

Stevens continues discussing some of the observed effects of this new "reasonableness," "Given this lack of confidence in the efficacy of reason, is it any wonder that fewer people actually make the effort to engage in genuine reasoning in public discourse? Why *should* anyone invest time and effort in such a predictably futile project?"¹³ The wholly secular use of language amounts to living in what Stevens describes as an artificial "cage" that conflicts with our innate desire to speak seriously about ethics and its epistemological and metaphysical roots. The situation is pictured in figure 2. The "reasonableness" axiom cuts off socio-political discussion from a transparent connection with the ethical, epistemological and metaphysical features of one's worldview. Bible-believing Christians, however, realize that no man can wholly flee from God's revelation because he and his environment are designed to function in a particular way. God's restraining grace is never totally removed. So there lurks an ever present tendency to somehow justify political positions with ethical norms rooted in fundamental notions of truth and reality.



Contemporary public discourse is confined to the "political" level by the imposition of the "reasonableness" criterion. However, God has made man in His image with a need to have normative standards of conduct ("ethics") based upon a sense of truth ("epistemology") and knowledge of reality ("metaphysics"). So the pressures of life continue to exert force to justify socio-political discourse by references to the 3 lower layers, and the mental demand of reason continues to punch upward through the "reasonableness" barrier with ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical norms disguised and perverted in such empty slogans as "fair", "equal", "consensus" and "real."

Figure 2. The "map" of basic notions under the "reasonableness" constraint.

¹² Ibid., 15
¹³ Ibid., 17.

If this unnatural confinement of conversation restricts our public discourse to the most trivial of levels, how can society, filled with men and women living as creatures made in God's image, continue to function which it obviously does? Stevens explains how it does:

"Our modern secular vocabulary purports to render inadmissible notions such as those that animated premodern moral discourse--notions about a purposive cosmos. . .or a providential design. But if our deepest convictions rely on such notions, and if these convictions lose their sense. . .when divorced from such notions, then perhaps we have little choice except *to smuggle such notions into the conversation--to introduce them incognito under some sort of secular disguise. Such smuggling is, I happen to think, ubiquitous in modern public discourse.*"¹⁴ [Emphasis added]

To see how this smuggling works, how ethical, epistemological and metaphysical criteria pop up through the reasonableness barrier depicted in figure 2, let's observe how in the same sex marriage (SSM) debate the term "equality" has been used. The homosexual community (it could have just as well been the polygamous or pedophilic communities) needed to appeal to some ethical base for their alleged "right" to marry but could not appeal to the ethics of the orthodox Jewish, Christian or Muslim worldviews. Somehow they had to override the danger of stirring up these antagonistic worldviews more than they already were stirred up. Thus they could not afford to expose themselves by presenting a coherent line of reasoning from first principles. They knew that once they had done so, they would have erected a target that would immediately invite refutation by critics from alternative worldviews. They would have been put on the defense.¹⁵

Instead, they wisely maintained the momentum of their SSM offense by employing the term "right" over and over again. This maneuver smuggled into the SSM debate the sense of justice which they needed but avoided any direct appeal to a specific worldview. It also deflected public attention from the institution of marriage with its connection to the designed differences in the anatomy and psychology of men and women. It paralleled the way a magician deflects his audience's attention from the trick's crucial actions to irrelevant peripheral actions. To illustrate what is going on here Stevens considers the case of blind citizens. Do blind citizens and seeing citizens have the same rights? If we think of voting rights, our first inclination is to agree. But suppose we look at the matter of granting an automobile license. What about blind citizens' rights then? Voting and driving an automobile are two different instances for which the blind citizen must be evaluated as to whether he or she can function in the situation. Quoting Peter Westen's article in the *Harvard Law Review* called "The Empty Idea of Equality," Stevens writes:

"As a normative value, equality is a formal notion meaning simply that 'like cases should be treated alike' and 'unlike cases should not be treated alike.' Those propositions are hardly controversial; what *is* controversial is whether particular instances actually are alike in relevant respects. That question cannot be answered by invoking equality. . . .Blind people are like those who are not blind for some purposes (voting, for example) because blindness is not relevant to the substantive criteria governing voting. But blind

¹⁴ Ibid., 26f.

¹⁵ For a specific treatment of SSM and why it necessitates changing the wedding service in those states that have capitulated to SSM, see the Supplement "A Proposal to Reform the Wedding Service in Bible-Believing Churches" at the end of this paper.

people are not like those who are not blind for other purposes (for example, driving a car) because the ability to see is relevant to the substantive criteria that govern the ability to drive. Westen suggested that if we know what the relative substantive criteria are, we do not need the idea of equality; we can simply treat each case as the relevant substantive criteria dictate. . . .Conversely, if we do not know what the relevant substantive criteria are, the idea of equality is no help. . . .When we observe an advocate placing a great deal of weight on 'equality,' we have cause to suspect that something sneaky is going on."¹⁶

The State of Public Discourse Illustrated. Over the past year my son and I have executed a number of probes against civil government and gay activists advocates of SSM. In carefully studying the responses to our probes, we have discovered that Stevens and Rawls are exactly right about public discourse.

1. The Pentagon "Gay Pride Month" Challenged. What triggered this probe was the way in which the Pentagon publicized its full acceptance of homosexuals throughout the Department of Defense compared to the way it publicized other special monthly emphases such as Afro-American Month, Women's Equality Month, etc. After investigating which office was responsible, my son wrote the following email:

Subject: LGBT Pride Event publicity
Ms. _____,

Good morning, the Pentagon Building Management Office referred me to your office with a concern about the LGBT Pride event posters that are hanging in the Metro entrance and the LGBT splash screen on the Pentagon Channel website. If your office is not the correct one to field this note, please disregard.

The reason for my inquiry is that I am concerned about the potentially hostile atmosphere they create towards those Pentagon employees who do not necessarily endorse the celebration of lifestyles that run contrary to the traditional value systems of most faith groups and cultures (including the military until two years ago).

I fully understand that Congress passed the repeal of DADT in 2011, that the President has directed this recognition, and the Secretary is sponsoring this particular event, but it would seem appropriate and respectful to exercise some sensitivity towards those who may be legitimately uncomfortable with the concept of such a celebration. Acceptance or tolerance for a given lifestyle does not imply unqualified endorsement by the workforce or welcome triumphant festivity on its behalf. Perhaps the office responsible could consider taking a less confrontational approach to the placement, size, and distribution of such media.

As currently configured, the displays are somewhat "in your face" (i.e. the first thing that greets one upon arriving at the top of the Metro entrance; the prominent placement at the TPC website). In the interests of respect for the diversity of our workforce, including the majority who hail from a more traditional value system, may I suggest a less overt, less triumphal approach. There are any number of alternative and respectful means to make such announcements. Take for example the more subdued media campaign used to announce the National Day of Prayer here back on 3 May 2013.

Thank you for your consideration.
v/r _____

¹⁶ Ibid., 29.

This email respectfully presented a reasoned appeal using the common contemporary human relations vocabulary (e.g., workforce diversity, workplace hostility) and gave a proposed solution to the problem. The Pentagon Equal Opportunity Office responded with the Rawlsian truncated discourse that avoided delving into specific ethical criteria with the necessary supporting truth claims.

Subject: RE: LGBT Pride Event publicity
Greetings Mr. _____:

Your email was forwarded to AF/A1Q, Equal Opportunity, for a response. We appreciate your willingness to voice your concerns regarding the LGBT posters and the messaging.

Overall, special observances are designed to recognize groups for their contributions to society and the workplace. Although we (AF and DoD) understand, individuals may not support each special observance, we are charged with ensuring all groups are treated equally and fairly. The emphasis is on diversity and inclusion, valuing and respecting all people. It is mission essential and AF gives equal endorsement and support to those observances supported by the DoD.

According to the Director of DoD Diversity Management, the publicity and messaging (posters and InfoNet system banner) for Pride Month was consistent with other similar observances, recognition and publicity. The approach is consistent across all federal agencies and coordinated through the Office of Personnel Management.

Just as we respect the rights of the LGBT community, we equally respect the right of employees to choose not to attend certain events or support various causes. Therefore, if you feel that you have been exposed to a hostile work environment, you may contact your local servicing Equal Opportunity Office. If we may be of further assistance regarding this matter, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Respectfully,

This reply falsely stated that it was not true that there was a significant *difference* between how Gay Pride Month observances were publicized and how other monthly observances were publicized regarding quantity and quality of publication. Moreover, it used the Rawlsian approach of employing the abstract "equality" term to all groups when, of course, there are only 12 possible months in the annual special observance cycle. So my son responded to their response.

Ms. _____,

Thank you for taking time to read and respond to my concerns and explain AF/A1Q's position on the matter.

I think it's important to clarify a couple points, however, because it's not clear from your response that I communicated the nature of my concerns effectively. While I certainly realize my attendance to such an event is optional, my exposure to the media campaign surrounding it was not optional, and that was the genesis of my note. So, if you'll indulge me for a moment, below is more complete delineation of my concerns, after putting my thoughts together over the weekend.

First, I think it is fair to say that as a matter of practical necessity, no office or organization can treat "all groups equally and fairly" with respect to special observances. There are too many groups and only a finite calendar to accommodate them all. So, in reality, particular groups are singled out for special

recognition at the exclusion of others. Within DoD, the roster of Presidential proclamations appears to govern which groups warrant such special observances. So, I think we must acknowledge up front that we're not really talking about equitable treatment here when it comes to special observances. That is not to say that there aren't perfectly legitimate reasons to have such events, because there certainly are.

With that understood, the next point is that the essence of the specific group in question (LGBT) differs fundamentally from the others on the special event calendar, as does the nature and intent of its particular celebrations. And that uniqueness can place the objectives of "valuing and respecting all people" in competition with "ensuring all groups are treated equally and fairly" unless one exercises particular caution.

The LGBT community is unique in that its identity is inextricably linked to behavioral norms that run contrary to nature and to the historic moral codes and doctrinal tenets of most major religious groups and cultures around the globe. In contrast, there has never been a sound rational basis to claim that simply being a woman or being of Asian-Pacific ethnic heritage, for instance, is morally wrong or a sin.

The second distinctive is that the nature and history of LGBT celebrations are unique. All one has to do is peruse the list of Special Emphasis Observances implemented by Public Law or Presidential Proclamation to see that only one prominently employs the term "Pride" in its title. And that term, as you know, is pregnant with historic significance and specific meaning. It's origins in the aftermath of the Stonewall riots and the exploits of Brenda Howard (the "Mother of Pride") and L. Craig Schoonmaker are no mystery. So, it's certainly no revelation to your office that the "pride" referred to there is not the run-of-the-mill satisfaction in a group's historical achievements, but rather a reactionary and rebellious glee in simply being LGBT. The term was chosen as a direct and deliberate affront to the exponents of traditional morality, as were most of its flamboyant manifestations in public "Gay Pride" events.

So, within the panoply of specific groups the Federal government has determined warrant special recognition, the LGBT community stands out with particularly counter-cultural attributes that stand in direct and deliberate conflict with historical morality and the orthodox faith groups that espouse it. That is to say, one of these groups is not like the others.

In light of that reality, it would seem reasonable to me that an organization such as your own, chartered to "Foster a Positive Human Relations Environment" (AFI 36-2706, para 1.6), would be sensitive to this potential for friction between the "respect for all" and "equal treatment" objectives when it comes to the military and DoD culture, and that DoD and the USAF would strive to chart a course more closely aligned with the "respect" side of the equation when it comes to publicizing such events.

And as I mentioned in my original note, the publicity around last month's National Day of Prayer might provide a useful point of reference. Although it also had a Presidential Proclamation behind it, there were no three-foot banners heralding the event at the top of Metro Entrance; there were no colorful splash screens on The Pentagon Channel's home page; there were no mass distributions of SECDEF-signed invitations to the event, and no major DoD figures attended. Yes, there were announcements and postings, to be sure, but arguably nothing akin to the fanfare this LGBT emphasis seemed to receive.

Those perceptions aside, my point is that I believe it is most reasonable and in the best interests of the USAF and the Pentagon community to take a less overt, less confrontational, and less triumphal approach when publicizing future LGBT Pride events, out of respect for the majority of us here in the workplace that hail from one of those more conservative, traditionally-minded, and/or religiously-informed communities.

Thank you once again for your consideration.

v/r,

The emphasis here was to squeeze the abstract notion of "equality" with the facts of normative ethical standards known to have justified truth and reality claims. The smuggling into Department of Defense publicity of a mere feeling of morality through the use of a totally empty and logically useless term illustrates how ubiquitous is the truncation of public discourse and reason at the federal level. It is as Stevens said, "A civic peace that can be maintained only if people agree *not to make important public decisions on the basis of arguing about what is ultimately true.*"

2. Gay Activists' Tweets. In the following exchange see if you can find anywhere that the gay activities articulate a reasoned argument. My son in this case had commented favorably on a pro-one-man-one-woman argument. This attracted a bunch of gay activists. Here again we see avoidance of referencing any justified ethical standard. It is noticed frequently in these sorts of encounters.

Gay Activist #1: *That "argument" has lost time and time again in courts of law. . .gonna have to do better.*
Son: *Easy for you to say, not having made a single counter-argument.*

Gay Activist #1: *It's more than obvious you aren't interested or couldn't comprehend. I'll pass thank you.*

Gay Activist #2: *Gay Activist #1 makes a good point. It's an argument that has been refuted. That's a matter of record.*

Son: *OK, so again, if you guys aren't able to make the argument then please point me to this refutation that's on record.*

Repeated requests to produce their argument went unheeded.

3. Anti-Creationist Rants. There is a rich source of dialog between Dr. Jason Lisle who worked for Answers in Genesis at the time and his anti-creationist critics in two appendices of his book, *The Ultimate Proof of Creation*.¹⁷ The dialog repeatedly shows the inability of secular critics to use reason and to be aware of the role of underlying views of truth and reality in interpreting observed facts. Here is a sample.

Critic: *Your denial of basic science will in the long run discredit you and your cause. The empirical evidence is available for all to consider. . . .*

Dr. Lisle: *We do not deny science, we embrace it! In fact, as creationists we expect the universe would be understandable, and operate in a uniform, logical fashion since it was created by a logical God who constantly upholds it. But, on your belief system, why would you expect that the universe should be understandable? If biblical creation were not true, how would science be possible? . . . We embrace the same empirical evidence you do; the issue is not the evidence per se, but rather how such evidence should be interpreted. We interpret evidence in light of biblical history, which you seem to arbitrarily dismiss. . .*

The critic in this case did at least mention the epistemology issue of observational data but then had not thought through how speechless (mute) data can 'speak' to us.

The Resultant Rise of an Undiscussed *de-facto* Secular State Religion. The socio-political threat to the Christian faith doesn't stop with the decay of public discourse below the level needed for easy gospel evangelism. The resultant situation where public conversation uses terms like "equal" and "fair" to smuggle in an illusion of providing an ethical substratum allows despotic politicians and regulatory bureaucracies to easily establish a *de-facto* secular state religion. Citizens without some exposure to clear ethical norms based upon God's created designs can be so manipulated that they don't notice the encroaching pagan tyranny.

¹⁷ Jason Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof of Creation* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009).

When the federal government can dictate to private business owners that they must provide health insurance to their employees even if it includes fetus-killing drug availability, when the federal government demands that military chaplains perform SSMs while at the same time forbidding them to pray in Jesus' Name, when state governments grant "exception" clauses to local churches to refuse SSM requests, when state governments forbid counselors to help homosexuals leave their sinful behavior, when local government public education requires all students to attend sex education classes that include aberrant behavior, when all levels of government inaugurate policies in the name of environmentalism that impose higher value upon nature than upon man, when these things happen, the state is establishing a religious belief system of its own. And its belief system has higher priority than anyone's personal religious beliefs.

This should not surprise biblically informed Christians. The decay of public discourse such that substantive norms based upon God's revelation are eclipsed by various speculations, throws society back to the Babel situation. In the supplement to this paper using biblical history I trace the tendency for political leaders--Gentile and Jewish alike--to try to solidify their power through using a common-denominator religious belief system.¹⁸ We must never forget that *all Government regulations unavoidably impose some value system upon society whether it is transparent or clandestine.*

Christian Response to the Threat. The present socio-political threat to the Christian faith is strong, comprehensive, but subtle. It is the effect of a society-wide suppression journey away from God's general and special revelation that has ended badly. The once optimistic hope that reason freed from the fetters of tradition--a tradition that contained significant biblical elements--would lead to unified truth respected by all has died. Reason has been replaced by a counterfeit cousin called "reasonableness" which is characterized by a fear that asking deep questions about the metaphysical and epistemological justification of ethical judgments will lead nowhere and only deepen social divisions. A fog now limits the visibility of all public discourse in politics, education, and business only to immediate problems and the pertinent policies and regulations, nothing more, a sort of mechanical Pharisee-like behavior. Low visibility fog, however, doesn't change the terrain; it only makes it more dangerous because it is not seen. The God-created terrain of life--man's conscience and mind, his social institutions of marriage, family, and civil government, and man's relationship to nature--continue to exist whether seen or not in the fog of post-modern public discourse. With his flesh energized the Evil One, man is more prone than ever before to construct unwittingly a tyrannical secular (pagan) religion that encompasses all social life in response to the fuzzy images of "equality," "fairness," and "justice." Political speech reeks of renewed Sophist rhetoric that seeks only to persuade, never to present a coherent argument and never to focus on what is the real truth of a matter.

Counter-Strategy #1. For Christianity in general there are at least two biblical counter-strategies. One has to do directly with the speech problem and the other has to do with strengthening some critical institutions that form the terrain hidden by the fog. When we face the developing state secular religion being crammed down our throats in judicial decision after judicial decision, regulation after regulation, and when we do have opportunities to converse with authorities, we first need to listen to and/or read carefully how they are using words.

¹⁸ See infra, _____

Proverbs 18:13 warns us: "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him." Then we need to raise awareness of obscured God-created terrain. In terms of figure 2 we need to push the conversation downward through the discourse barrier into the ethical level with together with its supports of truth and reality.¹⁹

For example, in educational courses involving environmentalism, we might ask why we should be concerned at all. Haven't the other courses taught us that the evolutionary process naturally selects those who are fittest to survive? As atheist logician Bertrand Russell wrote back in 1903:

"That Man is the product of *causes which had no prevision* of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hope and fears, his loves and beliefs, are but the *outcome of accidental collocations of atoms*; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, *can preserve an individual life beyond the grave*; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius are *destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system*, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be *buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruin* – all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy that rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, *only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.*"²⁰ [Emphasis supplied]

Russell wrote before public discourse became so sloppy and shallow. He followed in the old Enlightenment tradition where reason led him from the starting point in the materialist evolutionary cosmology so rampant in his day to these logically-consistent conclusions. Note what they are: our origin is meaningless; our achievements are but the accidental collocations of atoms; nothing we do affects our existence beyond the grave; and all mankind will eventually be reduced to ashes in a universe in ruin. This is a truly logical argument. It involves no explicit religious input. And it ends with the practical implication for everyday life. So in an educational situation we need, when appropriate, to press the point: is that your worldview? If it is, then you need to behave like you mean it. And so I ask again, on this basis, why should I care about my environment? If they don't "get it", then we keep on pressing their inconsistencies to force them to examine their heartfelt convictions about ethical judgments, truth, and reality.

Politically, when we run into conversation using "equal rights" terminology, we need to do similar questioning once we understand how they are using words. Recall the blind man illustration of Professor Stevens. It's not a matter of equality. It's a matter of the substantive criteria that specify "voting" and "driving a car." Equality by itself is an abstract notion that is useless to decide an issue. The term "discrimination" is another vacuous term. Every standard, whether a rule of conscience, a law, or a choice involves discrimination. Changing a law like the marriage law from one-man-one-woman to SSM does not eliminate discrimination. It only changes who is being discriminated against. SSM laws still discriminate against polygamists and pedophiles, do they not? And they led to further discrimination against Christian businesses that

¹⁹ Although this paper is focused on everyday social and political conversation, there is an expectation that the Lord can use thoughtful and gracious efforts aimed at getting into the deeper levels of figures 1 and 2 to eventually open hearts to the gospel. A very handy guide on how to do that is Norman Geisler and David Geisler, *Conversational Evangelism: How To Listen and Speak So You Can Be Heard* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009).

²⁰ Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Religion" (1903) essay in *Mysticism and Logic* (1917) pg. 45-46.

refuse to recognize SSM. Does it take time, effort, energy and risks to try to clear the fog? You bet. But unlike Christians in other times and places, in this country we have citizen status and thereby are part of the civil government whether we care, whether we realize it or not.

Another common axiom in contemporary dialog, whether in education or in politics, is that by avoiding substantive conversation, we can maintain a common "neutrality." This, too, is an illusion. Thankfully, years ago Vern Poythress showed that the neutrality notion can't even be applied in any meaningful way to as neutral-appearing study as mathematics.²¹ Mathematicians are divided by varying worldviews of ethical motive, logical truth tests, and reality as different worldviews divide any other social group. The "neutrality postulate" can't escape making dogmatic metaphysical and epistemological claims. Poythress pointed out, "This postulate says that the knowledge and structure of a science. . . is not influenced by religious belief. . . [It makes an ethical claim:] "science ought not to be influenced by religious belief."²² The neutrality concept refutes itself. Thus Christian citizens have solid reasons for questioning common slogans of discourse in every area.

Paul gives us several examples of skillful interaction with the public discourse of civil government. In Acts 16:35-40, he forced the colony of Philippi city managers to admit that they violated Roman law. Philippi had special laws because it was a Roman Army retirement community. The city authorities had violated that law when they arrested Paul and his friends and administered corporal punishment. Paul could do this because *he was very familiar as a Roman citizen with Roman laws*. To force the dialog, Paul and his companions staged a "sit-in" and refused to leave the jail until the head city authorities personally had met his demand. So much for Christian passivity toward civil authorities.

Thankfully, today Christian citizens have trained lawyers ready and able to intervene and carry serious dialog to the highest authorities, organizations like Alliance Defending Freedom, American Center for Law and Justice, Rutherford Institute and others. Judicial debate is an important part of public discourse in spite of its poor quality in recent times.²³ Christian citizens have a right and a responsibility to engage in such debate if they are to meet the threat they face. The good news is that as the culture degrades into ever more limited and crude conversation, there is increasing opportunity to stand out as gracious, courteous and respectful people. Merely acting as civilized gentlemen and ladies attracts attention of our foes as Peter reminded his readers in 1 Peter 2:13-3:2.²⁴ I suggest that Counter-Strategy #1 impliments Colossians 4:6 ("*Let*

21 Vern Poythress, "A Biblical View of Mathematics," ed. Gary North, *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vellecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1976), 158-188.

22 Ibid., 160.

23 Stevens cites many comments from legal scholars on recent poor judicial discourse. Daniel Farber: "[Supreme Court opinions are] increasingly arid, formalistic, and lacking in intellectual value. [They] almost seem designed to wear the reader into submission as much as actually to persuade." Robert Nagel: "to a remarkable extent our courts have become places where the name-calling and exaggeration that mark the lower depths of our political debate are simply given a more acceptable, authoritative form." Deborah Rhode: "too much [legal scholarship] is trivial, ephemeral, unoriginal, insular, pretentious, or simply irrelevant."

24 After my son had written a courteous but firmly logical letter to his state senator questioning the man's position on SSM, he received a telephone call from the senator's chief of staff requesting a time when the senator could call him to discuss his letter. In that 20 minute conversation the Senator told my son that he was the first opponent of SSM that didn't call him names and use foul language. My son and I concluded that the reason for the call probably had more to do with his demeanor than to the SSM issue!

your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one [who is outside the faith]").

Counter-Strategy #2. The fog of post-modern discourse hinders perception of the God-designed terrain all around us. Just as wind generally clears fog, so the "wind" of the Spirit can, if He so chooses, clear some of the foggy notions of those we encounter. We've already discussed the tool of confrontational dialog. There is another tool: bringing readily observable features of biblically functioning marriages, families, and churches more clearly into the field of public vision. Surely this strategy is taught in the 1 Peter passage just cited and has been the centuries-long modus operandi of the Holy Spirit working through the Church.

This strategy works because the biblically-directed way of life fits with how God designed our bodies, our minds, our conscience, the division in the image of God between men and women, the role of the family in propagating culture, the need to labor for wealth and property, the capacity to impute value for economic decisions, the need for justification, regeneration, sanctification, empowerment, resurrection, and the role of civil power to restrain evil. Failure to comply with His designs always exacts a price. That price may be premature death, ill-health, psychological damage, divorce, dysfunctional families, poverty, depression, suicide, and the twin political evils of anarchy and tyranny. These are the problems when a flight from seeing His designs in us and around us ends in a society-wide, spiritual, foggy depression.

Essentially this strategy recapitulates that used by Daniel when as a young prisoner-of-war he was surrounded by pagan culture imposed upon him by one of the greatest tyrants of all time. Confronted with the government's public educational effort to alter his Jewish identity linguistically and diet-wise, he respectfully requested a carefully designed 10-day dietary experiment--the Jew's diet versus the pagan government's diet (Dan 1:3-16). The Jewish Kosher diet produced superior results (Dan 1:17-20). Daniel's strategy was a pragmatic one based upon the simple truth that conformity with God's design works out better than man's foolish concepts of reality. Faced with an increasingly imposed pagan culture, we Christians can do similar pragmatic demonstrations.²⁵ Of course to make this strategy work, we have to start with bringing our own lives, marriages, families, work ethics, etc., into conformity with the Word of God. It is especially important to do so at precisely those areas most under attack today. As the culture erodes, this strategy will be more and more successful at becoming visible to a fog-bound society.

Let's look at the powerful role of the family. Several months ago, Dr. Al Mohler, ethicist and public spokesman for the Southern Baptist Convention, interviewed on his radio program, "Thinking in Public," Mary Eberstadt.²⁶ Dr. Mohler was discussing her new book *How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization* published by Templeton Press. She has shown

²⁵ Helpful materials can be found from organizations like Focus on the Family, Family Research Council, and others. One group that provides key statistics and actual dollar cost comparisons is the Institute American Values (www.americanvalues.org). In their publication, for example, "The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing," we find resulting costs in each state that add up to \$112B nationally. Other publications discuss the social costs of government approved casinos, of neglecting children's need for a dad and a mom, and of families failing to save money.

²⁶Mary Eberstadt is a sociologist and a Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a research fellow to Hoover Institution. Years ago she was a member of the policy planning staff of the United States State Department.

that the usual sociological explanations for the rise of secularism in Western culture such as the rise of better education do not fit the facts. Eberstadt states, "it is not the lower classes that are populating the churches. In fact the upper third of the socioeconomic ladder is more likely to be found in church than the bottom third, and is more likely to profess religious belief. And you see this across the country."²⁷ This flies in the face of the oft-cited claim that Christianity is something for those who are uneducated and therefore easy to command and easily led.

From her studies Eberstadt discovered a direct correlation between the degree of secularization of a society and the lack of family structures. So instead of blaming secularization upon a decline in committed churchgoers she blames changes in family structure causing the decline of Christian influence, almost a reverse conclusion from the usual one. She says to look at,

"the kind of family changes we see around us – more broken homes, more divorce, more out of wedlock birth, etc., more families not forming in the first place – these changes I argue are driving religious change. So when you look at those empty churches and you wonder about what's going on in them, you don't have to believe like the New Atheists are insisting, that what's going on is that people have come to their senses and abandoned God. No, what you can believe and what I think the evidence shows is that once people stop living in families, or stop living in effective families or competent families, they have fewer things driving them to church. They have *the transmission belt of belief and tradition that has been interrupted in such a way that many of them are no longer Christians*. . . . Many more people now live in open defiance of Christian teaching, especially about the family."²⁸ [Emphasis supplied]

She relates how in the illiteracy of the Middle Ages one still could understand Christian doctrine because you had what she calls familial literacy. When, therefore, the family institution is destroyed, there is an interruption in understanding biblical beliefs. Eberstadt gives an example of family destruction and its effect on Christian doctrine:

"A lot of people may be perfectly literate about book learning, but they are illiterate about family. Let me give you just some examples. If you grow up in a home as many of millions of kids do in the Western world today without a father figure, and we all know homes like this, we all are related to people with homes like this, then how are you supposed to understand the idea of God that has been handed down since Judaism and Christianity began, of God as an eternally loving Father? In other words, if you haven't seen a father up close, don't you have a little more of a conceptual leap at understanding what's meant by that idea?"

She continues:

"If you look at the most secular region of the world right now, it looks to be Scandinavia. In Scandinavia something like only 1 in 10 people even believes in hell anymore, just to give one snap shot. But what else is going on in Scandinavia? It is also, one could argue, the least familial and the most atomized of Western societies. In Scandinavia today almost half of all households are households of one person. That is to say people aren't even living in families. They're no longer even cohabitating."²⁹

²⁷ Thinking in Public, 9/9/13.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Eberstadt points to another feature of family life crucial to the understanding of core biblical doctrine:

"In a world where very few women have babies, for example, also the case in Scandinavia, if you've never had a baby, if you've never held a baby, you might have a little more trouble understanding what is so all-fired important about a religion that starts with the birth of a baby, that has the idea of a sacred infant right at its very core. And how the Holy family protects that baby at all costs, and flies to Egypt, etc. This whole story just might not make very much sense to you if you are living in an apartment by yourself without sacrificing for other people. The whole sacrificial message of Christianity, too, I think, makes more sense to people who live in families because to live in a family is to know you sacrifice day and night, or at least you're supposed to sacrifice your time and your leisure and your money and other things for other people. The idea of a religion based on sacrifice, the ultimate sacrifice, the sacrifice of one life for others, makes more sense to you if you live in a family. If you're a rugged individualist and you're on your own out there and you don't have people to take care of who see why you should, then that part of the Christian message, again, falls on ground that is a lot less fertile."³⁰

What has Eberstadt found for us? It's the central role of the family as designed by God as the central training ground for the culture. Throughout the Bible the family is central: Adam's family as the locus of the federal headship of the human race; Abraham's family as the origin of the Gentile-Jewish culture-break; Jacob's family as the tribal core of Israel; David's family as the vehicle of the coming Ideal King-Messiah. The Torah placed educational responsibility upon parents and gave instructions on executing that responsibility. The Incarnation came through a family. The apostle John repeatedly refers to his pastoral relationship with believers in familial terms.

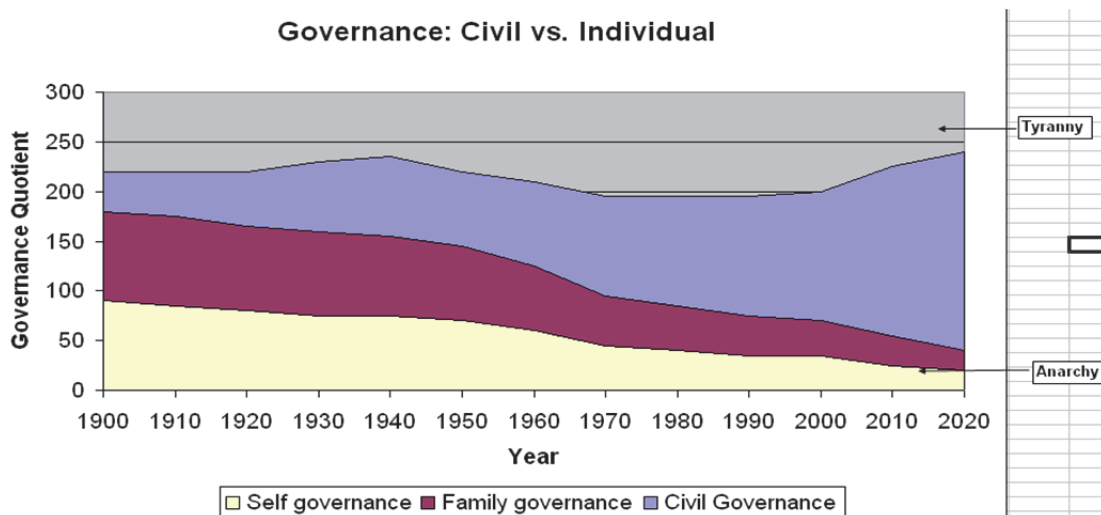


Figure 3. The relative strengths of self-governance, family governance, and civil governance.

How does family play a role in Counter Strategy #2? How will our dedicated devotion to building strong families help resist the threat in this nation to the Christian faith? Figure 3

³⁰ Ibid.

pictures the balancing problem among the God-designed terrain--"sphere sovereignty" as theologian Abraham Kuyper called it. After listening to one of my lessons, one of my sons created this chart several years ago. It's only meant to depict the situation in qualitative terms, I think it does a fairly good job at showing what is happening. As self-governance goes away, as family governance declines, civil governance explains to fill the vacuum. That's why Hillary Clinton could say several years ago that it takes a whole village now to raise a child. That's why the law professors I cited at the beginning of this paper now demand that the state has primary responsibility for children, not the parents. Eberstadt comments on the decline in self-governance:

"I think it makes a big difference why there's somebody who commits a big sin and then says, "Uh oh, I'm going to hell for that." Or commits a big sin and says, "Uh oh, I hope I don't get caught at that." And in that kind of distinction I think we see the difference between our age where people seem more afraid of being caught than previous ages where they actually believed enough to think that there would be eternal consequences for certain things."³¹

As figure 3 shows, however, the civic authorities are only too ready to expand their power for the "good" of society. This dynamic was foreseen over eighty years ago by J. Gresham Machen who wrote against parents sending their children to public schools: "The technique of tyranny has been enormously improved in our day. . . .A monopolistic system of education controlled by the State is far more efficient in crushing our liberty than the cruder weapons of fire and sword. . . ."³² Calling the movement to create a Federal Department of Education, a "vicious proposal," he declared, "if liberty is not maintained with regard to education, there is no use trying to maintain it in any other sphere. If you given the bureaucrats the children, you might as well give them everything else."³³

Biblically functioning families are powerful competitors to the tyrannical state. A constant tug-of-war over who's responsible goes on between them in education, in ownership and disposition of private property, and in health-care and social welfare. The family-state interface is precisely in the center of the conflict. So the God-designed family institution must be thrust into public vision at point after point of socio-political debate. Because that institution is part of God's general revelation, it is a powerful vehicle as well for opening hearts to the gospel.

As part of Counter Strategy #2 we could also mention the strengthening of the local church's social ministries whereby members help members. If the functioning family models true educational responsibility and ownership of wealth, biblically functioning local churches model true charity. In today's shallow discourse state welfare programs somehow are considered as manifestations of the state's "compassion." The term compassion used this way is like the terms equality and fairness. It's another empty word used to smuggle into political speech a vague notion of loving concern. When the civil government confiscates private property through taxation or other seizure, deducts a sizeable amount of wealth from that seizure to support an unelected, inefficient, and often ineffective bureaucracy, and then gives what's left over to certain of its subjects either with careless screening or political deliberateness, that is not charity.

³¹ Ibid.

³² J. Gresham Machen, "The Necessity of the Christian School (1934)," *Education, Christianity, and the State*, ed. John W. Robbins (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1987), 68.

³³ "Shall We Have a Federal Department of Education?" (1926), *ibid*, 98.

Charity is voluntary, not compulsive, and therefore can never be part of the state's programs, regardless of the labels used.

Within a socially-functioning local church the meeting of member needs throughout the year amounts to the equivalent of thousands of dollars in what otherwise would be government welfare programs. Charitable acts like caring for the sick and elderly, baby-sitting for burdened parents, particularly single parents, doing odd jobs for widows, providing transportation are usually administratively simple and efficient often occurring without any formal program. This idea of charity is something that people raised in a secular environment who have no contact with local church life know little of. Yet as creatures made in the image of God, they intuitively sense the need for charity. Lacking a social group united with a common worldview, they too often try to turn the state into a virtual church by adding various favorite charity-like functions. Many times these kind of secularists come from wealthy families and seem almost guilty for their wealth. Success in expanding the state functions beyond the original God-designed function gives them a feeling of righteous accomplishment. Besides the local church's immediate activities, it was Christianity, not paganism, that spread the notion of charity into the surrounding culture. Observers of American culture have noticed how widespread such localized charity has been in this country.³⁴

Summary of the General Christian Threat Response. All Bible-believing Christians face the same threat of a culture looking more and more like that of the ancient pagan world. The contemporary scene inherits the disappointment over the failure of unaided reason to bring about socio-political unity. Public discourse has been left in a crippled state unwilling and increasingly unable to consider fundamental notions of reality, truth, and proper conduct as shown in figures 1 and 2. With this sort of mental fog, society at large naively plods along toward a civil government increasingly relying upon a virtual state secular religion for its socio-political unity. Judicial decisions, laws, and bureaucratic regulations increasingly intrude upon Christian religious liberty.

Two counter-strategies have been suggested: first, a vigilant effort to crack open public discourse to consider its neglect of fundamental verities including reason itself; and second, a deliberate strengthening of the institutions most strongly opposed to the expansion of state power, i.e., the family and the local church. These strategies can be followed by all Bible-believing Christians. Whether other strategies exist and just what goals we should have for these strategies constitute the next section of this paper.

The Contemporary Socio-Political Threat to the Christian Faith and a Dispensational Response

³⁴ A crucial study of early American church-centered charity was done by Marvin Olasky in his book, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., 1992). Olasky documented how private, usually-Christian, urban rescue missions provided lodging, food, and job-training to the homeless and poor long before state welfare programs. He also found they were fanatics about wisely using the "Lord's money" through precise screening procedures to separate the truly needy from the lazy. This book was distributed to members of Congress and led to the 1994 welfare reforms that copied some of the screening procedure ideas.

With the foregoing overview of a Christian response that can be shared by all Bible-believers in mind, we now focus specifically on how the socio-political implications of dispensationalism shape our use of these strategies. Justification and details of these implications themselves are given in the work cited earlier so only their effects on our strategies will be discussed here.³⁵ Cone has argued convincingly that the literal, grammatical and historical hermeneutic underlying dispensational theology, if applied consistently, leads to the conclusion that the New Covenant so central to Old Testament eschatology belongs to Israel alone. The Church is not a party to that covenant.³⁶ It then follows that the worldwide, physical, political Kingdom of God follows the Rapture and Tribulation when Israel once again assumes center stage.

Of course this conclusion establishes a premillennial position opposed to most Reformed Covenant theologians. Some brethren belonging to the Covenant camp have been particularly outspoken in criticizing dispensationalism for its apparent lack of concern to redeem or transform the culture.³⁷ In terms of H. Richard Niebuhr's famous five categories of Church-culture presented in his book *Christ and Culture* (1951), these critics belong to the "Christ the transformer of culture" position of restructuring culture by biblical standards. Broadly speaking they find it easy to pigeon-hole dispensationalism into Niebuhr's "Christ against culture" position often followed by those of the Anabaptist tradition (shunning cultural life altogether because it is hopelessly contaminated by sin). Or they talk as though we belong to the "Christ and culture in paradox" position of the Lutheran tradition (intruding redemptively into the culture only to evangelize and disciple converts while passively letting God use civil government to providentially retard the spread of evil).

Both of these Church-culture categories have proved unworkable in actual practice. The "Christ against culture" advocates have never been able to find a safe religious ghetto where no cultural influences exist (although some Christian educators try valiantly to educate children without any interaction with contemporary unbelief). The second position, one common to Lutheranism, lulled German evangelicals during the 1930s into allowing Hitler's Nazi minions to take over their country. Since culture always follows *some* set of values that in turn proceed from *some* worldview, there can be no such thing as cultural neutrality.³⁸ Either the Church recognizes the constant battle not to be conformed to this world (Rom 12:2) or by default it complies with the surrounding cultural norms. Thus dispensationalism, together with its Reformed critics, belongs to the "Christ the transformer of culture" position.

³⁵ See footnote 1.

³⁶ Christopher Cone, "Hermeneutical Ramifications of Applying the New covenant to the Church: An Appeal to Consistency," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 13 (December 2009): 5-22.

³⁷ See, for example, Greg L Bahnsen and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *House Divided: The Break-up of Dispensational Theology* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989). Ex-dispensationalist Bruce K. Waltke complained that dispensationalism is indifferent to the lordship of Christ over society and pointed to "its failure to address the questions of church-state relationships and of the ethical principles that ought to guide the state," in "Theonomy in Relationship to Dispensational and Covenant Theologies," *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique*, 66.

³⁸ See the logical proof of the self-contradictory nature of the neutrality claim in the section referenced above in footnote 21.

Dispensationalists join with Reformed colleagues in such matters as creationism, anti-environmentalism, religious liberty lawsuits, and Christian education whether inside or outside the home. Some of our reasons for doing so coincide such as the need to critically reinterpret the numerous social and scientific facts within a biblical frame of reference. Where the difference arises is in how the different ecclesiology sets the relative priority of cultural transformation to evangelism and in how the different eschatology controls our view of possibilities in this age. That difference sets the dispensational response apart from that of its covenant theology critics.

Pertinent Features of Dispensational Ecclesiology. Dispensational ecclesiology is sharply different from the Israelite theocracy. One is a supra-national entity defined by regeneration through faith in Jesus Christ; the other is a nation defined by racial descent from Jacob's family. One dwells in different cultures; the other was given distinctive norms for it to dwell in one special culture. One obtains its spiritual blessings through Christ, the Messiah of Israel; the other obtains its spiritual blessings through the covenants or contracts that Yahweh made with it as a nation.

This difference is blurred by covenant theology's attempt to generalize all facets of redemption into one covenant with one people of God. The New Covenant, in this view, concerns the Church as the "new Israel." Since the New Covenant speaks of an earthly Kingdom of God, the Church's job, at least as it is seen among postmillennialists, is not just to transform culture but transform it all the way into Kingdom culture. The risen, ascendant Lord Jesus Christ is seen sitting on David's Throne now reigning through the Church to bring all nations under His dominion. Differences over details exist, of course, within the Reformed covenant community, but in this paper we contrast the dispensational view of culture with the most vigorous group within the covenant community, the post-millennial theonomists.³⁹

Elsewhere I have argued that Church imagery in the New Testament is not that of a Kingdom. There are two central NT images:

"The post-Pentecostal imagery of the Church is not that of a king and a domain governed by contracts and treaties. It is overwhelmingly that of a Body (e.g., Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 10:17; 12:12-27; Eph 1:22-23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4-16; Col 1:18-24). And this body metaphor, like all biblical metaphors, isn't an arbitrary literary choice by the writer. It deliberately points to the phenomenal structure of the human body thoughtfully designed and created in advance as an analog to this spiritual union of believers with Christ. As the union of vine and branches in Jesus' vine metaphor in John 15, there is a systemic communion within the body that operates more deeply than just the self-conscious interaction between a king and his subjects. Perhaps Paul was led to think in these terms by Jesus' remark on the road to Damascus that by persecuting Christians Paul was actually persecuting Him even though He was physically absent (Acts 9:4)."

The Body image is one image that links with a second image:

³⁹ There was a decade-long controversy between the theonomists and non-theonomists that I document in Chapter 9 of the book cited in footnote 1. The theonomists insisted that the details of the Mosaic Law were valid in principle for all nations for all time and that the New Covenant empowered the Church to slowly advance global society toward those Kingdom conditions. The non-theonomists involved in that controversy cited historic Reformed creeds that rejected the global normativity of the Mosaic legal stipulations.

"Another important image of the Church is that of a temple (1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:21). As that part of the Body of Christ on earth the Church is Christ's presence amidst all people groups. That presence is *spatially limited* just as Yahweh's presence was spatially located in the Old Testament tabernacle, Temple and elsewhere (e.g., Eden, Bethel, Sinai). These locations were 'sacred spaces' designated by God for face-to-face meetings with man.⁴⁰ As finite spaces they obviously must be distinguished from His omnipresence. In this dispensation the Church as Christ's presence--as His meeting place (with unbelievers 'outside' in need of the gospel and believers 'inside' in need of sanctification)-- demarks the boundaries of His redemptive work. Instead, therefore, of a vaguely defined kingly reign over all nations through some sort of theologically-constructed new covenant, we have sharply defined spatial areas within socio-political entities where He 'lives.'"⁴¹

The emphasis of these images is away from a transcendent King in *absentia* and toward an immanent Presence of the risen, ascended Lord Jesus Christ in His Body and Temple on earth. The transformation of culture is seen in a remarkably different way. The Church as the locus of the Presence of the Son of God on earth amidst hostile pagan culture puts it in a position analogous to that of Jesus during His earthly ministry. As I have written:

"Let's start with Jesus' model as the apostle John urges us to do: "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6 NKJ). How did Jesus walk? He walked in occupied Israel under Gentile domination, and He offered the kingdom if they would accept Him. What were His priorities? His calling was "to save His people from their sins" as "the Lamb of God" (Matt 1:21; John 1:29). Thus He affirmed that He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). While he did heal and feed people, these efforts were quite limited and subordinated to His first priority.⁴² This consistent subordination to His Father's calling modeled true humility as the cardinal virtue in stunning contrast to the chief pagan virtue of hubris (Phil 2:5-8). Ironically, however, His seemingly passive behavior has left a centuries-long record of significant cultural transformation unmatched by anyone else."⁴³

This lasting cultural transformation has been accomplished by believers through whom the Holy Spirit has spread aboard the lifesaving-influence of the Son. For most of church history believers in Jesus had no direct political standing yet through God's created terrain--public discourse, labor with its unavoidable economic exchanges that expose ones value choices, marriage and family with its life-production and educational function--they impacted their social

⁴⁰ See the discussion on sacred spaces in Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 281-292, 351-59, 452-454.

⁴¹ Cone, ed., 311f.

⁴² Jesus clearly was careful not to compromise His agenda of gaining peoples' trust in Himself as Messiah by His efforts at social welfare. Note His response to those whom He had fed: "You seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26 NKJ). As Ryrie concluded: "The Lord gave top priority to spiritual needs. Though sensitive to physical needs, He met relatively few of them. Though always obedient to government, He led no attempt to reform the system or correct injustices." Charles C. Ryrie, *The Christian and Social Responsibility* (Ft Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008) 61.

⁴³ Cone, 312f. Numerous books tell of his unprecedented effect on world culture. See, for example, Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz, *Why Jesus Matters: The Impact of One Extraordinary Life* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Pub. Co., 2003).

environment. John Robbins writes concerning their dissemination of *political ideas* while they still had little political power:

"Christ founded a church whose government is representative and republican, whose officers are elected by the people, and whose constitution--the Bible--is written. . . .The early Christians, condemned by pagans such as Celsus and Porphyry as stupid, foolish, and superstitious, were not killed for their stupidity, but because they rejected the highest value of pagan society: worship of the state in the person of the Emperor. . . ."44

He further writes concerning their demonstration of *the value of people* made in God's image regardless of their social status:

"Christ taught that man is a creature of God and the lord of creation. . . .what [men] believe and do on Earth will have eternal consequences. . . .The classes and nations of ancient society--the nobles, the proletariat, the slaves, the citizens, the men, the women, the Jews, the barbarians--mean nothing to God. . . ."45

He also points to the early Christian influence on *social welfare* and *education*: "The early Christians rescued thousands of children discarded by the pagans. . . .Christianity. . .made theological and moral knowledge and teaching. . .available to all."46

The Jesus model sets the precedent for the Church' cultural transformation. Just as Jesus utilized His everyday interaction with people, so historically the Church has relied primarily upon individual believers expressing their faith by word and work in their respective spheres of influence. The political impact came *after* the Church's impact on individuals. What about now that Christians have political capacities beyond anything like that of the early Christians?

"We now have citizenship responsibilities for influencing the ethical standards that determine our social and political lives. We must point out here that, contrary to the repeated charge of political indifference against dispensational premillennialists by church historians like Mark Noll and most covenant theologians, dispensationist leaders have publicly argued for Christian involvement in civil affairs for many years."47

As citizens we execute the same general counter strategies mentioned in the previous section, but as dispensationalists we do so in the pragmatic manner of Daniel not as part of a

44 John W. Robbins, *Christ and Civilization* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 2003), 25.

45 *Ibid.*, 26.

46 *Ibid.*, 19.

47 Cone, 315f. See the repeated claim in Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994). What he and others of like-mind ignore is the clear socio-political involvement of dispensational premillennialists such as that documented in Jim Owen, *The Hidden History of Historic Fundamentalists, 1933-1948* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004). Owen uses original source documents to show how dispensationalists correctly identified the threats of communist/socialist ideas and of Nazi anti-Semitism long before they were acknowledged by mainstream culture and how they had organized relief efforts for those afflicted well in advance of government-sponsored efforts. They also within a few years of the implementation of New Deal policies correctly identified its threats to individual liberty and had undertaken efforts to relieve the economic suffering of the Depression on a deeply personal level. Owen cites Dr. James Congdon's talk on "Christian Patriotism" in 1936 to the student body of Moody Bible Institute in which he criticized evangelical neglect of citizenship duties as much as he did participation in left-wing Social Gospel action groups. He also reports on similar published statements by Paul Rood, president of Biola in 1936 and editor of *The King's Business* (see pages 82-83). The argument that lack of political involvement by some dispensationalists proves a flaw in their theology is no more valid than the argument that because some Reformed Christians don't share Christ with their neighbors, their theology of salvation is defective. In both examples the problem isn't their theology; it's lack of personal growth.

gradual program to expand the domain of Jesus as presently reigning King. We do not seek to compel unbelieving society to act righteously against their will. That only produces a phony legalism. However, we do have a large amount of wisdom resources in Scripture that point to the a way to live that fits, instead of clashing, with the reality of God's design features and His character. We have opportunities to "sell" the same advice to every person in every generation in every society that works better than paganism psychologically, legally, economically and in other ways because it is truth, not fantasy. It connects with the lower layers in figures 1 and 2.

"Rigorous exegesis of Scripture will yield a wealth of truths about the creation design of society. From the creation account one obtains foundational truths of man's conscience, his responsibility for the environment, the necessity of labor and economic value choices in use of private property, the distinct male and female aspects of God's image in man, marriage and family as well as the effect of the fall on each. From the Noahic covenant one obtains the reason for lethal civil power to judge evil (pro-life, not social vengeance). From the Abrahamic covenant one obtains the justification of the exclusive authority of revelation mediated through Israel (i.e., biblical authority). These are truths universal applicable to all mankind, whether acknowledged or not, and form the context for additional truths available from the Mosaic covenant. From the New Testament one obtains Jesus' model behavior toward society-at-large and the apostles' directives to the Church concerning it. Sufficient revelation, therefore, exists for socio-political policy making in areas as diverse as court proceedings, labor and contract law, economic and education policies, public health regulations, and environmental protection."⁴⁸

The silly notion that the Old Testament doesn't apply to modern society has little to do with dispensational theology and more to do with intellectual laziness. It is precisely the Mosaic Law that defines what real "social justice" looks like in the fallen world and what sort of justice will be implemented throughout the world when Jesus actually becomes King. Its precepts and sanctions can be used today in conversation to stimulate a sense of sin.

In a nutshell dispensational ecclesiology prioritizes evangelistic outreach as the *means* of cultural transformation because it views the Church as the present location of the Presence of Christ that ever seeks the salvation of the lost. Evangelism that conforms to Scripture necessarily challenges the worldview of hearers. Follow-up and sanctification transforms worldview and behavior. Those saved in turn expand the radius of cultural influence. Dispensationalist Christians use Counter-Strategy #1, therefore, as a probe to provoke discourse that reaches downward in the sense of figures 1 and 2 *primarily* for the spiritual sake of the person or persons spoken to and *secondarily* to transform the culture into one a bit less hostile to Christian citizens. With this priority in mind it assists us to maintain a gracious and courteous demeanor as we do so. We use Counter-Strategy #2, to create a publicly-observable demonstration of the Christian cultural transformation that will be as difficult to ignore as possible by our spiritually fog-bound culture. We do so, however, following the same dispensational priority, viz., to reach out to our immediate social contacts as part of our biblical apologetic for the gospel.

Pertinent Features of Dispensational Eschatology. Dispensational eschatology justifies why the Church acts in the way dispensational ecclesiology pictures. In the Cone volume, I point out that when Jesus died on the Cross, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sat at

⁴⁸ Cone, 319.

the Father's right hand, he did far more than ratify the New Covenant for Israel. His accomplished work and subsequent actions entered a wholly different sphere, one that was not understood well in Old Testament prophecy, viz., the doxological realm involving the unseen world of angels, Satan, and forensic debate over the character of God. In this sphere the issue isn't redemption, per se; it is the doxological honor of God against all spiritual opposition.

"The forensic center of the ethical clash in the unseen world points to what dispensational theology has always made central: the doxological purpose of history. In discussing the grand climax of history given in the book of Revelation, Pilkey uses a very simple argument to show the all-encompassing nature of the doxological compared with the redemptive:

As mortals, we remain in various kinds of trouble; and salvation strikes us as an all-consuming, universal concern. Yet the angels of heaven have never been saved; the demons cannot be saved; and the redeemed in heaven have nothing from which to be saved. If life in the resurrected state has a purpose, goals must exist beyond salvation. . . . In [Revelation] the doors of the third heaven have swung open exposing mankind to a new note of confrontation, defiance, and universal intrigue. To possess such a book now, under the limitations of the present age, is to distinguish between the Christian religion, as it must exist today, and the Christian faith, as it exists in all ages and in eternity.⁴⁹

Redemption applies to only part of creation. The ethical struggle extends throughout all creation, encompassing angelic beings as well as mankind. In their abode the struggle centers on vindication of the character of God and lasts from the fall to ultimate judgment when good and evil will be forever separated never to mix together again (Rev 22). Once the eternal state begins, redemption and grace end and are eclipsed by the doxological purpose. Here is the unifying theme larger than redemption as dispensationalism has always claimed."⁵⁰

The battle on earth between the Church and unbelieving culture must be seen against this background. The Satanic order, the cosmos, comprehensively affects man and nature both. As John says, "*the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*" (1 John 5:19). This is an age of mortals, fallen mortals who though they may become regenerate are still corruptible. Whatever local cultural influence exists, *there is no guarantee that it will persist there*. Church history substantiates this conclusion. The Reformed post-millennial eschatological conception of a slow progressive "Christianization" of global society is at odds with that truth. Dispensational premillennialism with its belief in a physical renovation of nature by the Tribulational judgments, a purging of all unbelievers, and the return to earth of the resurrected Christ with His resurrected administrators provides justification for the hope of a global governance with an incorruptible ruling elite in a prosperous natural environment. It turns out that dispensational eschatology provides a larger perspective on God's words and works in history, a perspective that is logically consistent with the view of the Church's mission in dispensational ecclesiology

Some Closing Questions and Answers. Because in my experience critics have raised particular questions about dispensationalism's treatment of the Church's mission, I want to respond to three types of questions. First, if cultural transformation is reversible because there is

⁴⁹ Pilkey, 279-280.

⁵⁰ Cone, 335f.

never any assurance of any lasting, progressive evangelistic and missionary success anywhere on earth, where is there any sign of progress in this age? Don't dispensational time lines showing the Church as a mere parenthesis imply that the present age is merely "marking time" in God's plan? Where is the incentive for Christians to reach outward and do good works before men year after year especially when fruit is not seen? If the real reason why Jesus hasn't set up His kingdom and inaugurated the new covenant is Israel's rejection of Him (Matt 23:39), how can it then be said that the Church accomplishes something that is also required before that kingdom can come? Doesn't dispensational eschatology argue that it is the tribulational judgments, not the Church, that cause Israel to repent?

I present here a greatly shortened form of the detailed answer given in *An Introduction to the New Covenant*.⁵¹ During the Church age the Body of Christ is being completed in at least two ways. Quantitatively, it is building to some finite number of members that in some fashion represent all humanity.

"In the vision of Rev 5 the pre-kingdom judgments upon mankind begin with the qualification of Jesus Christ: "*Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth .*" (Rev 5:9-10 NAS).⁵² According to the vision Jesus alone is qualified by virtue of His substitutionary atonement that has by then enabled the redemption of people from every subset of mankind. A representative body of Adam has thus come into existence.⁵³ It satisfies all the forensic requirements of heaven and thus makes possible the tribulation judgments which in turn will bring about Israel's repentance."⁵⁴

What redemptive work goes on here on earth, it must be remembered, must meet the holy standards involved in the forensic activities happening around the throne of God. Some sort of final accomplishment is required for the Lamb to qualify to open the seals that begin the Tribulation. Viewing the succession of theological debate in Church history, one can speculate that there is also a qualitative accomplishment that finishes the Body. It seems to take heresy to make the Church dig into Scripture to find truth from the christological struggles of the first four centuries through the soteriological struggles of the medieval centuries to the present ecclesiological and eschatological struggles over the last few centuries.

So there is uninterrupted progress throughout the Church age in that the Body of Christ is being constructed. The progress isn't observed sociologically and politically because each generation of believers dies and goes to heaven. This kind of progress is similar to the financial progress of a business. While year-to-year income varies, a good business steadily accumulates assets. The balance sheet, not the income sheet, is the place to look to check on progress. The

⁵¹ Cone, 330-343.

⁵² I cite the NAS version that follows the textual tradition of the third person plural pronouns in 5:10 rather than the second person plural pronoun readings in the NKJ. Dr. John Niemela using an extensive study of manuscript evidence persuasively argued for the third plural reading at the 2006 Chafer Seminary Pastors Conference but unfortunately did not submit a paper of his talk.

⁵³ All five of Daniel's images in Dan 2 and 7 seem to refer to the individual founding kings as well as the people in each kingdom. The first four are beastly (sub-human) in nature. Only the fifth, the Son of Man, is truly human and fitting for the race of Adam.

⁵⁴ Cone, 337f.

problem we have with the Church's progress is that we don't yet get to see its "balance sheet", viz., the total number of accumulating dead saints, their works of gold and silver, and the victorious forensic defeats of Satan's accusations. Darby wasn't wrong to call the Church God's heavenly people to distinguish it from God's earthly people Israel.

A second kind of question concerns the connection between the Church and the Millennial Kingdom. If the Church isn't bringing about the Kingdom of God in history, what relevance does the vision of such a kingdom play in an ordinary Christian's daily life? Actually, the millennial vision has played a very significant role in the lives both of dispensational Christians and of secular politicians. The idea of a future golden age can be found nowhere but in the Bible. Some pagan myths faintly remember pre-fall Eden and pre-flood longevity and thus speak of a past golden age, but not one in the future.

"In spite of the limitations of mortality, or perhaps due to them, the vision of the millennium continues to mesmerize political reformers. One of the leading social progressives in the early twentieth century, Walter Rauschenbusch, lamented the lack of a millennial vision: "We need a restoration of the millennial hope which the Catholic church dropped out of eschatology. It was crude in its form but wholly right in its substance. . . . We hope for such an order for humanity as we hope for heaven for ourselves."⁵⁵ He meant by the term "crude" the supernatural view of the cosmos we have discussed above. Belief in the invisible world and its evil components "will be confined to narrow circles, mostly of premillennialists."⁵⁶ Every visitor today to the United Nations building in New York City can observe the inscription of Isaiah 2:4 testifying to the continuing effect of the millennial vision on political progressivism. Ironically, in pursuing this vision in a purely naturalistic fashion progressives actually are regressing back to the pagan dream of Babel where man imagined he could define his existence (Gen 11:1-4)."⁵⁷

Precisely because dispensationalism has always maintained the supernaturalism of the millennium, it has saved many in the Church from being seduced by progressive political counterfeits. Footnote 47 refers to how dispensationalists in the pre-World War 2 years recognized early on the evil aspects of Communism and Fascism while the political and educational elite were still lauding them as signs in man's social evolution. It is also true that dispensational seminaries that forsake a literal interpretation of early Genesis to harmonize with naturalist cosmology will have to also forsake belief in a literal millennium that requires supernatural cosmology since two contradictory cosmologies cannot coexist.

A third kind of question asks how dispensationalism avoids total pessimism as the age is supposed to end in increasing apostasy. The answer is simple and straightforward. We're not in the Tribulation!

"Premillennialism is often accused of promoting cultural passivity and impotence by conservative and liberal critics alike."⁵⁸ Such criticism, however, ignores at least two

⁵⁵ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1922), 88.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁷ Cone, 346f.

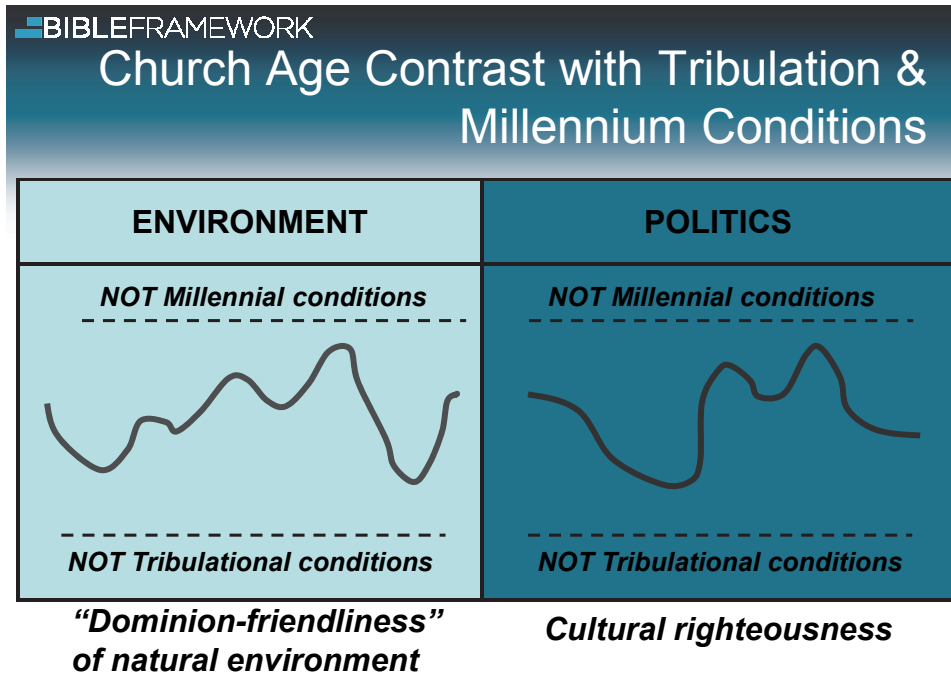
⁵⁸ Besides later liberal progressive criticism in the twentieth century, conservatives criticized it earlier in the nineteenth century. George Ladd wrote "Premillennialism tends to let down the tone of the Christian life and to discourage ministers from feeling that they are working 'for the Ages' and 'for the race.'" Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), 235-236 (Citing George T. Ladd in Yale's

truths. First, no one knows when Jesus will return, so there is no way to evaluate when cultural decay has become uncorrectable. Thus we don't cease doing what the Lord told us which includes doing good to all men (Gal 6:10). The truth that the Lord can come at any moment is actually protected in premillennialism whereas in postmillennialism it is pushed off into the future to allow time for Christianizing the world. However, there is a second more significant truth that few have considered.

Just as the delta between the Church age and the millennium establishes a realistic *upper* bound on Christian influence on culture, so the delta between the Church and the tribulational period establishes a realistic *lower* bound or floor on this influence. That Christians in this age will always have some transforming effect is implied by the restraining influence in 2 Th 2:7. The Man of Sin cannot take over while the Church remains. Severe persecution and defeat may come locally, but it will never be global. There will always be room to migrate and regroup for another day as Paul did in Thessalonica and as missions today focus more on the Southern Hemisphere and utilize more non-Western personnel. Somewhere there will be "an open door" that "no man can shut" (Rev 3:8). *Dispensationalism thus protects premillennialism from undue pessimism by the pretribulational rapture.* The much ridiculed "fire escape" rapture is precisely what gives enduring hope for the Church age. There is no excuse, therefore, for half-hearted evangelistic and apologetic attempts other than ignorance of Scripture and/or simple laziness. Nor is there a reason for dispensational premillennialists to cease efforts at responsible Christian citizenship."⁵⁹

In responding to the third kind of question, we discover how dispensational eschatology establishes a very realistic view of the Church. Figure 4 depicts the concept of church age realistic boundaries inferred from comparing this age with the Tribulation (establishing a "lower boundary" in negative cultural conditions) and with the Millennium (establishing an "upper boundary" in positive cultural conditions). Figure 4 also brings to the fore the issue of the physical environment which dispensational theology has always mentioned as it has interpreted millennial passages of Scripture. A future golden age will have to have a refurbished physical environment free from toxic wastes, depleted soil, and scarcity of natural resources in order to sustain economic prosperity and restored human longevity.

New Englander, 33 (1874)). Presbyterian Hodge claimed premillennialism "disparaged the gospel," Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3: (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 864. Baptist Strong accused, "It begets a passive and hopeless endurance of evil," Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), 1012. Rutgers more thoroughly criticized, "The pessimism of premillennialism is inherent, belonging and logically related to the whole system. . . the world, church, men must grow worse. . . a gradual deterioration, retrogression on every hand must be observed. If not, then premillennialism fails as a system." William H. Rutgers, *Premillennialism in America* (Goes, Holland: Oosterbaan and LeCointre, n.d.) 157.
⁵⁹ Cone, 358f.



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Figure 4. Depiction of how the perspective of the literal views of the Tribulation and Millennium gives a realistic view of Church age activity.

Conclusion

Utilizing material presented in greater detail in the two chapters I wrote in *An Introduction to the New Covenant*, this paper has shown that the socio-political implications of dispensational theology are specific and determinative in how we Christians are to respond to the current threats from a culture increasingly intolerant of God's general and special revelation. Two prominent threats were discussed. One was the truncated capacity of public discourse to engage the ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical foundations for all social and political matters. This condition has been brought on by the failure of unaided reason to do what the Enlightenment hoped it could do. It now permeates all influential levels of society from education and the media to government policy-making and judicial decision-making. And it increasingly makes more difficult propagation of gospel truths. The other threat was the surreptitious and gradual establishment of a de-facto state religion so frequently observed in secular and biblical history. Such state religions serve to solidify citizen loyalty to tyrannical heads-of-state and therefore cannot tolerate any religious competitors, Christianity in particular.

We delved into two counter-strategies. The first aimed at the trivial level of public conversation wherever it is encountered whether with individuals, teachers, corporate managers, or government officials, even involving lawsuits if necessary to engage the judicial community. The idea here is to breach the "reasonable" restriction on public discourse pictured in figure 2. The second counter-strategy aimed at the sneaky, gradual erection of a state secular religion. The idea in this strategy is to aggressively strengthen exactly those divine institutions most strongly opposed to the expansion of state power. Those are the family and the local church as shown in figure 3.

While we share with all Christians general strategies to counter these threats, our use of these strategies carries different priorities with different goals. Instead of seeking to bring the nations progressively under the reign of King Jesus in *absentia* who supposedly is now sitting on David's throne in heaven, we seek to complete the Body of Christ because of His immanent Presence in various geographical locations on earth. Our priority is evangelization which logically leads to cultural transformation in those locations of His Body Presence during those periods when His revelation is received.

Because of mankind's current pre-resurrection mortal status we know that any cultural transformation remains contingent upon the receptivity to the gospel and its supporting worldview. While holding, therefore, to the millennial vision of universal justice and peace for all, we realize the supernatural requirements for that vision do not now exist and consequently look askance at all politically progressive attempts to realize that vision, especially those that concentrate power into the hands of a corruptible elite.

That skepticism, however, is balanced by the equally strong pretribulational conviction that prior to the Rapture,

"Christians in this age will always have some transforming effect [because of] the restraining influence in 2 Th 2:7. The Man of Sin cannot take over while the Church remains. Severe persecution and defeat may come locally, but it will never be global. There will always be room to migrate and regroup for another day as Paul did in Thessalonica and as missions today focus more on the Southern Hemisphere and utilize more non-Western personnel. Somewhere there will be "an open door" that "no man can shut" (Rev 3:8). *Dispensationalism thus protects premillennialism from undue pessimism by the pretribulational rapture.* The much ridiculed "fire escape" rapture is precisely what gives enduring hope for the Church age. There is no excuse, therefore, for half-hearted evangelistic and apologetic attempts other than ignorance of Scripture and/or simple laziness."⁶⁰

The following supplement is a proposal to pastors and their boards on responding to the latest step in fuzzy public discourse that has advanced the state's secular religion enough to threaten the operation of local churches. I hope it will be taken seriously.

⁶⁰ Cone, 258f.

A PROPOSAL TO REFORM THE WEDDING SERVICE IN BIBLE- BELIEVING CHURCHES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to a very successful campaign waged by certain activists, the traditional Judeo-Christian concept of marriage as a divinely-designed relationship exclusively between one man and one woman has been virtually criminalized. Expression of that concept in the public square--whether in school, in government agencies including the military, and in business--now meets with overwhelming disdain and even judicial punishment. Underlying this action by civil authorities is the assumption that marriage is merely a social construct that can and ought to be changed in response to public opinion. Thus two mutually contradictory notions of marriage--a mutable social construct and an immutable divine institution--appear in the wedding service when the pastor or other church officer pronounces the couple man and wife while acting as an agent of both the state and the Lord Jesus Christ. *The proposal put forth in this document argues that Bible-believing churches in those civil jurisdictions which have written the biblical view of marriage out of their law must now respond by separating the civil portion of marriage from the ecclesiastical portion and eliminate it from the wedding service. The wedding service itself must now include a robust public defense of one-man-one-woman marriage based upon God's design.* Appendices supply suggested topics to include in such a defense, a letter of official notice to the state government officials of the church's new wedding procedure, and a sample exchange with government authorities over this matter of marriage.

INTRODUCTION

Activists for expanding the definition of marriage beyond that of one man and one woman have succeeded in convincing political leadership to employ their legal authority for forcibly imposing this new marriage concept upon society. They have skillfully employed adjectives like "fair," "socially just," and "equal" in indiscriminate fashion. Their arguments have been emotionally appealing in spite of their logical fallacies. The end result of their campaign not only intimidates many into silence but also sets up Bible-believing Christians who express their disagreement in public as "bigoted" and "self-righteous" and subject to dismissal from their jobs and/or liable for criminal charges.⁶¹

The wedding service is the central occasion when the concept of marriage ought to be explained and implemented in a clear manner. For it to be clear, the officiating authority has to remind those present of the institution's essentials. After all, those present are being asked to witness the couple's public oath-taking and should therefore understand what the relationship is

⁶¹ Bible-believing Federal employees and members of the military are increasingly targets of anti-Christian bigotry. In a recent example Gay activists have demanded that the USAF Academy fire one of their civilian analysts merely because he used to do some work on the side for Exodus (a ministry helping homosexuals seeking to follow the Lord out of the lifestyle) and Focus on the Family. See the report at: http://www.airforcetimes.com/article/20131220/NEWS/312200018?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter. Also see recent examples of criminal charges against Bible-believing business men and women seeking to live within the dictates of their conscience regarding what marriage is (e.g. Jack Phillips of Masterpiece Cakeshop in Denver, CO, Barronelle Stutzman of Arlene's Flowers in Richland, WA, Aaron & Melissa Klein of SweetCakes by Mellissa in Gresham, OR, or Blaine Adamson of Hands On Originals in Lexington, KY).

that they are promising to support. An explanation of the difference between the state's so-called "progressive" view that marriage is a mutable social construct subject to changing definition and the biblical view that marriage is an immutable divinely-designed institution defined by God once-and-for-all should now become part of the wedding service. Consistent with that explanation, civil licensing should be excluded from the wedding service. The pastor or other officiating person should no longer act as an agent of the state lest he lend unspoken endorsement to the false precepts now infiltrating civil marriage. All people present at the service, therefore, should see only the correct view of marriage enacted.

To help Christian leadership understand why reformation of the wedding service is needed the following sections of this proposal will: (1) critique the concept of the new expanded view of marriage; (2) review the manipulative use of terminology that led to this view; (3) analyze the particular paradigm responsible for altering the definition of marriage; and (4) note the potential legal threat to a pastor and his church if they do not separate the civil from the ecclesiastical portions of marriage. Hopefully, by the conclusion of this report leadership will be prepared to remind those present in a wedding service of why it is a service exclusively for one man and one woman while minimizing the likelihood of this feature being labeled as bigotry and self-righteousness.

THE TENSION BETWEEN THE SPHERE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY AND THE SPHERE OF BIBLICALLY-BASED LOCAL CHURCH AUTHORITY

Marriage was instituted by God long before His institution of civil authority. Marriage as an original creation ordinance has prior claim to civil authority. Civil authority came after the later events of the fall and collapse of antediluvian civilization. It arose when God delegated to man the ethical responsibility to execute temporal judgment against the more overt forms of evil in order to preserve society (Gen 9:1-7 cf., Rom 13:1-7). Biblical history reports, however, that mankind soon perverted this divine institution into a tool of social engineering toward a "progressive" civilization as conceived independently of God (Gen 11:1-9--"We will make a name for ourselves"). God responded historically by creating a counter-culture through Abraham as a conduit of His revelation (Gen 12:1-3--"I . . . will make your name great"; Rom 3:2; 9:4). Over the four thousand years since this calling out of Abraham tension has persisted between human culture deceived and empowered by the dark spiritual powers (Eph 2:1-3) and communities of those trying to adhere to the authority of God's special revelation. This tension manifested itself in the interactions of the great gentile powers of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome first with ancient Israel and later with the early Church.

Having rejected the ultimate authority of God's revelation preserved in Scripture, the pagan perversion of civil government inevitably attempts to relocate that ultimate authority in itself.⁶² Authority has to reside somewhere because it is an inescapable concept. Pagan state institutions, therefore, cannot avoid establishing a counterfeit religious faith to safeguard their

⁶² The term "pagan" here is used in a technical way to mean the disbelief in the revelational authority of the Old and New Testaments and the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical consequences that reshape society. This is the definition used by *Encyclopedia Britannica* editor, Mortimer J. Adler in his book *How To Think About God: A Guide for the 20th-Century Pagan* (New York: MacMillan Pub Co., 1980). Since everyone utilizes an ultimate authority, that authority never disappears. It is simply relocated.

political authority. The ancient Pharaohs were considered mediators between heaven and earth which contributed greatly to the stability of ancient Egypt and resistance to Moses' call for a Jewish exodus. As we learn from the biblical books of Daniel and Esther the Babylonian and Persian kings thought nothing about mixing counterfeit religion with totalitarian civil government using the former to solidify the latter. Even within ancient Israel apostate Jewish kings created their own state religions to help insure their reigns against the challenge of competing Yahwehism (e.g., King Jeroboam 's reasoning in 1 Kings 12:26-33 and the state-imposed Baalism of Ahab and Jezebel in 1 Kings 16:30-33). They reasoned that it was better for subjects to owe allegiance to the king than to God, thus putting full control in the hands of the king!

After Christ established His Church, the tension continued. Early Christians weren't persecuted, threatened with fines, punishment, and death because they had taken up arms against the Caesars but because they refused to accord ultimate authority to the state. German evangelical pastors who refused to submit their church proceedings to the Nazi Party were jailed just as believers have suffered and continue to do so under Communist regimes (e.g., China). The tension similarly continues today under Muslim regimes that demand submission to the counterfeit religion of Islam on pain of death.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that federal, state, and local governments of the United States increasingly demand that Christians submit to their authority to pervert the divine institution of marriage. Becoming more and more like pagan states of the past, they cannot tolerate the notion that marriage is rooted in God's design of man and woman because as such it lies beyond the state's authority and therefore cannot be changed.⁶³ Notice, for example, the very title of Maryland's destructive 2012 legislation: the "Civil Marriage Protection Act." Following the age-old Babel vision of civil authority as the definer and redeemer of society, the Maryland legislature characterized its actions as "protecting" marriage. Marriage in Maryland, legislators argued, was to be protected against the transcendent threat of being defined once and for all by an Authority higher than themselves.

Defenders of Maryland's Civil Marriage Protection Act and other similar legislation have stated that pastors and their associated churches ought not to feel threatened. This kind of legislation, they claim, contains "exception clauses" that permit churches to conduct wedding services in accord with their faith in one-man-one-woman marriage. They affirm that a

⁶³ The motivational parallels here with the Old Testament "sin of Jeroboam" are getting remarkably clear. Fay Voshell recently wrote on the *American Thinker* website regarding the federal government's health care assault on religious beliefs: "In direct contradiction of the First Amendment, which forbids the establishing of a state religion, the Obama administration is busily doing just that. . . . It is establishing the faith of secular statism, a religion currently characterized by the tenets of radical progressivism. Statism is rapidly becoming the only faith in America allowed to operate with complete freedom. . . . Government enforcement of the religion of statism, which includes the belief in the supreme higher power and authority of an absolute State, is nowhere more apparent than in the case of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Whatever the eventual fate of the sisters, their case is an example of our administration trying to force state religion down the throats of Christians." See at http://www.americanthinker.com/2014/01/establishing_a_us_state_religion.html#ixzz2qDullivP

pluralistic society must accommodate different beliefs. So what's the problem? The issue is that by granting such exception clauses the state implicitly assumes that it has the authority to regulate church officers who preside at weddings. It asserts that the state has magnanimously granted a special privilege to church leaders (for the time being). This is no idle threat. Gay-rights organizations recently demanded withdrawal of such an exception clause in proposed same-sex marriage legislation in New Jersey.⁶⁴ Once the state claims the Babelesque authority to redefine marriage, it has denied that marriage is an unchangeable institution with a prior authority claim to that of the state. Marriage has become a mere social construct under the protection and social engineering of the almighty state. What's more, there may soon come a day when this social construct will have to be further "protected" against the allegedly unfair, unjust, and unequal notion of one-man-one-woman being promulgated by Bible-believing churches.⁶⁵

A chilling sign of that mentality can be seen at the federal level in the 2013 Supreme Court decision concerning the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Although the Court refused to redefine marriage for the nation, Justice Kennedy writing for the 5-4 majority opinion reasoned that support for one-man-one-woman marriage prior to 2000 was based upon bigotry (!). Justice Scalia in a scathing dissent wrote:

"To defend traditional marriage is not to condemn, demean, or humiliate those who would prefer other arrangements. . . . To hurl accusations so casually demeans this institution. In the majority's judgment, any resistance to its holding is beyond the pale of reasoned disagreement. . . . All that, for simply supporting an Act that did no more than codify an aspect of marriage that had been unquestioned in virtually all societies for virtually all of human history. It is one thing for a society to elect change; it is another

⁶⁴ Democratic Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg explained that certain gay-rights activists "don't want any kind of religious exemption." *They are demanding that the law allow for full and vigorous prosecution under anti-discrimination and public-accommodation laws of anyone who will not embrace and celebrate homosexual marriage.* <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Government/2013/12/18/War-on-Christians-in-New-Jersey> (accessed Jan 9, 2014).

⁶⁵ The recent pluralist argument that the state must accommodate beliefs that go to the extreme of rejecting the philosophical common law foundation of the United States Constitution and its laws is itself a radically innovative philosophical dogmatism. Alan Sears, president of Alliance Defending Freedom, writes in his introduction to Patrick Henry College professor Robert Stacey's book *Sir William Blackstone: The Common Law* (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision Press, 2008), 14: "The common law, contrary to what critics have said, did not establish Christianity as an oppressive state religion. Blackstone wrote that the law of England (and eventually that of America), 'gives liberty, rightly understood, that is, protection, to a Jew, a Turk, or a heathen, as well as to those that profess the true religion of Christ.' Those founding fathers that were not devoted Christians still shared the understanding of the religious underpinnings of the common law and accepted the fact that our country was being founded on Christian principles. This was true religious liberty, a freedom that protected all people of faith and favored no religion above another, but *acknowledged that all law came from God, not from man.*" [Emphasis supplied.] Like every belief system pluralism contains its own ultimate authority. This recent form of legal pluralism tries to stretch the notion of accommodation to include both beliefs in the Creator-creature distinction and pagan denials of that distinction. In the first view the Creator is the source of law; in the second man is its source. The state cannot logically accommodate the two mutually conflicting concepts. So states like Maryland and others that redefine marriage have shifted the basis of their laws to a pagan belief system under which law is derived wholly from man. There is then no transcendental standard to inform the conscience about a law. Conscience thus cannot claim any higher authority than individual, subjective opinion or a statistical compilation of such opinion. All citizens of these states regardless of their personal faith are *now compelled to live out their lives in the public square as functional pagans.*

for a court of law to impose change by adjudging those who oppose it *hostes humani generis*, enemies of the human race. . . .I promise you this: The only thing that will 'confine' the Court's holding is its sense of what it can get away with."⁶⁶

The traditional view of marriage, i.e., the biblical view, will undoubtedly be deemed prejudicial and subject to increasingly aggressive suppression by all levels of civil government in every area of social life.

THE MANIPULATIVE USE OF TERMINOLOGY TO MAKE BIBLICAL MARRIAGE APPEAR UNFAIR, UNJUST, AND UNEQUAL

Political causes have for years used words manipulatively as slogans because words have a feature that goes beyond their definition. Over forty years ago Francis Schaeffer in looking at the example of twentieth century theology delved into the manipulative use of words. "Every word has two parts," he wrote. "There is the dictionary definition and there is the connotation. Words may be synonymous by definition but have a completely different connotation. . . .So when the new theology uses such words [as the *cross*], without definition, an illusion of meaning is given which is pragmatically useful in arousing deep motivations. This is something beyond emotion. An *illusion of communication and content* is given so that, when a word is used in this deliberately undefined way, the hearer 'thinks' he knows what it means."⁶⁷ [Emphasis original]

Manipulative use of words for the sake of their socio-political effect is a favorite tool of propaganda because it by-passes the conscious reasoning process and therefore escapes ethical evaluation. One can detect this kind of word use by noticing the lack of substantive argument in the immediate context. Words are repeated over and over to enlist their connotation power without relating their dictionary meanings to the subject at hand. Adjectives like "fair," "just," and "equal" have been very effective in rendering biblical marriage suspect in the eyes of public opinion because they create the illusion of a moral superiority over the Bible. When one asks why biblical marriage is not fair, not just, or not equal, he usually gets the response "it just isn't." When homosexual activists are the driving force for redefinition of marriage, the response is a little more thoughtful: "It excludes loving, same-sex couples." In Maryland one favorite tactic that tipped the scales with hesitant legislators was the claim that defining marriage to be only between one man and one woman was unfair to the children of same-sex couples who had little or nothing to do with the same-sex status of their (adoptive) parents. Who wants to be unfair to children? These tactics work only because the general public repeatedly hears the adjectives, "fair," "just," and "equal" manipulatively used to arouse sympathy and thinks that a legitimate moral argument has been made to alter the meaning of the noun "marriage."

Of the three adjectives, "equal" is perhaps the most effective as in "I believe in marriage equality." It is frequently used throughout today's political spectrum to enlist the powerful connotation of the Declaration of Independence (sterilized, of course, of any notion that equality comes from God's creation) in juxtaposition with the inequality of American slavery and its

⁶⁶ Cited by Ryan Anderson in an essay <http://www.redstate.com/ryantanderson/2013/07/02/what-three-dissents-signal-for-marriages-future/> (accessed Jan 9, 2014). Anderson is a co-author of the book *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* with Princeton University scholars Sherif Girgis and Robert P George.

⁶⁷ Francis A Schaeffer, *The God Who is There* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), 57.

aftermath. Further manipulative power comes from the growth of radical egalitarianism that has grown out of the so-called Enlightenment and which was so dramatically expressed in the slogan of the French Revolution of 1789: "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." History quickly showed, however, that the liberty of the Revolution quickly became anarchy, equality became the condition only of those outside of the reigning elite, and fraternity survived only within feuding political groups. Applied to the contemporary marriage debate, the word "equal" carries all these connotations, which give an *appearance* of profundity to the cause without an explicit argument for it. For a recent example of how one Congressman branded the traditional marriage view as "marriage discrimination" but was properly challenged on his manipulative vocabulary by one of his evangelical constituents, see Appendix 3.

Appearance or not, claiming that marriage ought to include other unions besides that of one man and one woman is a radical innovation in human history as Justice Scalia has noted and therefore warrants critical examination. Without such an examination it remains a merely arbitrary claim. Just saying something is equal, even if it is repeated a hundred times, doesn't make it equal. Why, for example, must the relationship of loving same-sex couples be classified as a marriage? Couldn't the state have devised another term for a contract regarding that relationship? Is that sort of relationship really *equal* to a heterosexual marriage in its function in society? Does the act of sodomy express the sexual design of the male and female bodies equally as well as normal intercourse expresses it? Are same-sex parents able to provide the diverse male and female perspectives for training their adopted children *equal* to child training by heterosexual parents? If a feeling of love qualifies a homosexual couple for marriage, why doesn't that feeling also qualify any kind or number of people for marriage--polygamists, for example? If the terms "love" and "equal" can be repeated enough times in public discourse to persuade civil authorities to equate homosexual and heterosexual couples' relationships, why can't these same terms also be used to equate, say, polygamist multiple-partner relationships? These thought-provoking questions are rarely raised and when they are, they are not seriously answered.⁶⁸

What the endless use of connotation words hides is an argument that resembles an attempt to change the sport of football by arguing that baseball players are "equal" to football players so they ought to be allowed to play football with baseball rules. As matters now stand, it would claim, baseball players are unjustly discriminated against by their exclusion from football. It's not "fair." The truth is if one wants to play football, one adheres to the rules of football, not

⁶⁸During their drive for same-sex marriage, the gay lobbyists and their media allies such as the Baltimore SUN ridiculed the "slippery slope" argument that such redefinition would open the door to any conceivable "loving" relationship. Yet sure enough last month, December 2013, the federal judge in the US District Court in Utah ruled that Utah's anti-polygamy law is unconstitutional (in spite of the U.S. Supreme Court's DOMA decision that refused federal interference with existing state marriage laws). As Albert Mohler commented, "If marriage can be redefined in terms of gender, it can easily be redefined in terms of number" at http://www.albertmohler.com/2013/12/16/moral-mahem-multiplied-now-its-polygamys-turn/?utm_source=Albert+Mohler&utm_campaign=af2f00fea5-Albert_Mohler_Email_June_7_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b041ba0d12-af2f00fea5-307804317 (accessed Jan 9, 2014). Beyond Mohler's point marriage can now be defined in terms of non-human partners. A French city mayor recently blessed a marriage between a woman and a bridge! See how far this foolishness can go at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2356774/Australian-woman-Jodi-Rose-marries-bridge-France--gets-mayors-blessing.html#ixzz2jsUJ5vso>

baseball. If one wants to call a relationship "marriage," one man and one woman are required, not some other combination. God has designed our language with nouns in order to discriminate between different things and give them stable meanings. Excluding baseball-only players from football in no way demeans their value as human beings; it is simply the consistent use of the noun, football.

The political pressure to deny biblical marriage could have come from several quarters. It could have come from polygamous or pedophilic groups. In fact, in one sense, it already existed in the pressure from those who campaigned years ago for liberalizing divorce (and thus allowing serial polygamy) although that campaign focused on the breaking of the marriage contract rather than on the more overt changing of its content. Any group that tries to alter the traditional legal definition is essentially arguing against the biblical notion of an unchangeable marriage institution. As we know, however, the political pressure did not come from any of those groups.

The group that accomplished the overthrow and transformation of marriage was the homosexual lobby. Their success in radically shifting public opinion in their favor came from a skilled six-point strategy put forward in two publications: an article in 1987 ("The Overhauling of Straight America") and a book in 1989 (*After the Ball*). The homosexual lobby has executed those six points with precision:

1. Talk about gays and gayness as loudly and as often as possible.
2. Portray gays as victims, not aggressive challengers.
3. Give homosexual protectors a "just" cause.
4. Make gays look good.
5. Make victimizers look bad.
6. Solicit funds (i.e., get corporate America and major foundations to provide financial support to the homosexual cause)⁶⁹

The execution of the six-point strategy hasn't always been limited to the manipulative use of terminology to give the illusion of communication. On occasion it has also utilized violent mob-like events, personal threats, destruction of property and financial blackmail--behavior reminiscent of the mobs of Sodom recorded in Genesis 19:1-13 and of any people who are spiritually out of control. These tactics reveal the real spirit behind the movement. Violent attacks against Christianity always occur when Satan's false teaching fails to alter believers' adherence to biblical authority.

The response by churches to homosexuals' strategy to gain acceptance has varied from a lack of grace among some conservative groups to total capitulation by liberal ones. Sadly, one

⁶⁹ The authors were Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen. Madsen wrote the earlier article under the pseudonym Erastes Pill. See documentation and complete discussion of this well-executed strategy to transform public perceptions in *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2003) by Alan Sears and Craig Osten. With its apparent victory for social acceptance, the agenda now is moving into the public schools to convince pre-pubescent elementary students to begin experimenting with homosexuality. It continues its manipulative use of words with terms like "anti-bullying," and "making schools safe for all students," to create the illusion of moral superiority. Use of such terminology deliberately distracts observers from ethical evaluation of such projects.

extremist group out of Kansas pickets funerals of fallen American soldiers with signs that blame their death on the nation's public toleration of homosexuality. Deceived by the gay lobby's claim that one cannot distinguish homosexuals from their homosexual disposition, some conservative congregations have reacted with a kind of ostracism. They have unwittingly denied the biblical distinction between a sinner as a person made in God's image for whom Christ died and provides His transforming work and that person's particular sin pattern. Authentic biblical theology, however, does better than that.

Liberal groups, accepting the propaganda that homosexual identity is fixed, have responded by embracing both the homosexual and his or her sin. To justify that kind of acceptance they have had to modify their theology to exalt God's love over His other attributes.⁷⁰ Liberals apparently forget that the greatest act of love in cosmic history was the Cross where love fulfilled all righteousness and justice with a substitutionary atonement. Note the balance in Romans 3:25-26 which preserves the righteousness of God while allowing an expression of His love. Biblical love is not an ethically void sentiment.

EXAMINING THE UNDERLYING LOGIC OF THE CASE FOR FULL PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUALITY

In contemporary culture the denial of biblical marriage rests completely upon the underlying homosexual rationale. To defend biblical marriage during a wedding service, therefore, the pastor needs to understand that rationale. Wedding attendees need to appreciate why we hold to one-man-one-woman marriage in spite of widespread accommodation of the homosexual agenda by federal, state, and local bureaucracies, major corporations, and public school curricula. Our dispute isn't because we "hate" homosexuals.⁷¹ It's because the homosexual lobby's case, when stripped of the superficial connotation words, is logically and ethically flawed, in addition to being hateful of Scriptural authority.

Fortunately, in recent years increasing numbers of Christians are speaking out and legally defending the freedom to adhere to the biblical ethic as Christian citizens.⁷² One author -- Ed

⁷⁰ Liberal churches have been doing this for years on other matters. Thus the Presbyterian Church USA excludes the hymn "In Christ Alone" from their new hymnal because members objected to the line "On that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied" and wanted the writers (Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend) to replace the last clause with "The love of God was magnified." Mary Louise Bringle, the chairwoman for the hymnal committee, explained in the August 2013 issue of *The Christian Century* magazine that the committee didn't want to claim that Jesus' death on the cross was an atoning sacrifice needed to assuage God's anger over sin. Love here is clearly divorced from a justice rooted in God's revealed essence when, ironically, the same Presbyterian Church USA has been involved in numerous political campaigns in the name of "justice." Thankfully, Getty and Townsend refused to change the hymn so the Presbyterian Church USA exercised its anti-biblical dogmatism by omitting it from their hymnal.

⁷¹ The silly idea that because we ethically disagree with someone's behavior, we must hate them is easily refuted by observing parental disagreement with their children's behavior. Do parents "hate" their children because they differ with their children's choices? Moreover, this idea is self-refuting. Homosexuals ethically disagree with those of biblical faith so they must hate us. They wind up in exactly the same position they are accusing us of being in.

⁷² See, for example, the excellent compendium compiled by Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI; 2010), especially Chapter 7 on marriage and the law, pp 213-244.

Vitagliano -- has summarized what he calls the "gay paradigm" that lies at the bottom of the homosexual agenda. He writes, "This juggernaut has found its success due to the clear and cogent argument it has employed: Homosexuality is natural, moral and healthy, and thus it should be accepted by all fair-minded people. . . .Most Christians are completely unprepared to confront the logic of this paradigm. . . ."73 Summarizing Vitagliano's analysis and modifying it slightly, we arrive at three propositions that express the underlying logic:

P1: Homosexual feelings are natural.⁷⁴

P2: What is natural is moral.

P3: What is moral ought to be publicly expressible and not repressed.

Following the advice of the book of Proverbs, let's examine these three propositions in two ways. First, Proverbs says (Pro 26:5) "*Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.*"⁷⁵ We are directed here to do an internal critique of claimed beliefs. We are to listen to the fool lest we misunderstand him and respond prematurely (cf. Pro 18:13). Then we are to sit in his chair, see things from his point of view, and look for logical problems in that point of view including any absurd consequences that flow from it. The Lord made use of this line of reasoning in Isa. 41:21-23. Paul used it to challenge some in the Corinthian church who claimed that the resurrection was not integral to the Christian faith. He showed that their position contradicted itself (1 Cor 15:12-19). Following this procedure we now ask, whether the three core propositions above logically support the public impression given by the homosexual lobby's six-point strategy.

An internal critique of P1. Does the statement "homosexual feelings are natural" belong to a general class of statements "X feelings are natural," or is it a particular statement applicable only to homosexual feelings? If a general class, does it include all kinds of sexual feelings? Does it also include all kinds of non-sexual feelings? If so, then a wide variety of feelings--heterosexual desires to fornicate, anger, coveting, desire to dominate, etc.--must also be included. All feelings would then appear to be *equal* in the sense that they are all *natural* according to P1. What would be the outcome of applying P2 and P3 to this entire class of natural feelings? Not many would accept the absurd consequences that flow out of this reasoning, so P1 must be a particular statement applicable only to homosexual feelings. However, if P1 is a particular statement, it implies that homosexual feelings are natural in a manner in which not all other feelings are natural. How so? P1 suffers from *ambiguity*. The terms "feeling" and "nature" are used imprecisely⁷⁶.

⁷³ Ed Vitagliano, "Piercing the Gay Paradigm," *AFA Journal* 37 (Sept 2013) 8, 10-11.

⁷⁴ I'm using the noun "feelings" as a class label for the varied and usually undefined terminology used in this debate which would also include terms such as "attractions," "orientation," "disposition," "desires," etc.

⁷⁵ All quotes included herein are from the *New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997). I am indebted to Dr. Greg Bahnsen who in his various lectures and writings pointed out the application of these texts in Proverbs for internal and external apologetic critiques.

⁷⁶ The same problem occurs when neo-Darwinian evolution is brought into the discussion as a supporting proposition for P1. Since man is said to be a highly evolved animal, human behavioral characteristics are often thought to be a sort of evolutionary legacy. Homoerotic behavior is observed throughout the animal world. Therefore, the reasoning goes, homosexual behavior in man is indeed natural. However, Biologist Kevin Anderson

Important in understanding P1 is the matter of determinism. Unfortunately, we are at a disadvantage at this point in our examination of P1 because of its inherent ambiguity. If such feelings actually determine behavior, are we concerned with determinism in all human feelings or just in homosexual feelings? Let's try once again to understand P1 as making a claim about all human feelings. Are all human feelings compulsive or merely tempting of behavior? If compulsive, there is little difference between a feeling and a behavior. One would then have no real freedom to choose whether or not to act upon a feeling. Behavior in this case is merely the response to a biochemical stimulus. This conclusion would invalidate all law because law assumes that citizens have freedom of choice and are responsible. Society acts as though most human feelings or desires are only enticing of behavior, i.e., freedom of choice stands between desires and behavior.

So what about the specific feeling or desire of same-sex attraction? Is that specific desire compulsive or merely an enticement? Whichever decision is made, homosexual feeling can't be said to be *equal to all* other natural human feelings. It can be equal only to compulsive feelings or to temptations but not to both. P1 is so ambiguous it doesn't say one way or the other. Although scientists have studied genetics and brain chemistry for a link with homosexuality, no significant connection has been found just as a significant connection between genetics and behavior in general has never been found.⁷⁷ Humans appear to have enough freedom-of-choice to be held responsible for most of their behavior.

Our internal critique of P1 has found that its *ambiguity* doesn't distinguish homosexual feelings from any other human feelings. That failure leads to two problems. First, either homosexual feelings are uniquely natural in some undefined way, or all human feelings are natural including outright criminal desires. Second, either homosexual feelings are biochemically determined (i.e., compulsive) in a way that distinguishes them from other ordinary human desires, or not. If not, then they are merely enticements and homosexuals have as much freedom-of-choice regarding them as mankind has regarding all our feelings. We have a right to ask the question of P1. Are homosexual feelings different from other human feelings or not? If so, how?

An internal critique of P2. To argue that something is moral for everyone is to assume: (1) there is freedom-of-choice; and (2) there exists a universal moral standard by which to evaluate that choice. At this point we have to clarify the ambiguity in P1. If homosexual feelings are compulsive, then an ethical standard would no longer apply any more than it would apply to a birth defect. Compulsory behavior is ethical only in the sense that it cannot be condemned, but it is not ethical in the sense of meeting some positive moral standard. However, homosexuals aren't campaigning for the kind of acceptance accorded to those with birth defects.

points out two problems here. First, "various forms of rape, pedophilia, incest, theft and murder occur in the animal world. Does that give us a justification for the normalcy of these behaviors as well?" Second, "overlooked in these arguments is that actual same-sex copulation between animals is rare. While various animals may display forms of homoerotic behavior (at least defined by the human researcher), the human version of homosexual intercourse is far from widespread in the animal world." Kevin Anderson, "Not So Gay," *Creation Research Society Journal*, 48 (Winter 2012) 3, 199f.

⁷⁷ See entire Anderson article with bibliography referenced in the previous footnote.

They want the kind of acceptance like that accorded to moral heterosexuals. So P2 makes sense only if homosexual desires are non-compulsive temptations. But if they are genuine temptations, choice exists, and homosexuals have the freedom to choose or not choose to live out their desires. If that is true, then escape from unwanted bondage to such powerful feelings might be possible with certain therapeutic aids--something that the activists adamantly oppose.⁷⁸

Moreover, if P2 is a universal claim involving free choice, it has to assume that a universal moral standard exists for all people. Where is the implied moral standard in P2 coming from? Since the biblical claim of God's revealed ethical standards has been rejected, the standard must be coming from man who is thought to be "the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving."⁷⁹ P2 here blunders into the "is-ought" fallacy. One cannot derive a universal ethical standard (an "ought") from one's limited experience of reality in a universe without revelation from God (an "is"). The only way to do it might be to posit some sort of self-evident truth as Adler has pointed out.⁸⁰ The idea in P2 that all feelings, because they are natural, are therefore moral is hanging in mid-air without any sort of support--a sort of intellectual magic act of levitation. Whereas P1 was an *ambiguous* claim, P2 is an *arbitrary* claim because it merely asserts but does not justify its ethical rationale. We have the right to ask the following questions of P2: *What is the source of the standard of morality used to declare that "what is natural is moral"? And if homosexual feelings are subject to moral judgment, doesn't that imply they also are freely chosen?*

An internal critique of P3. That "what is moral ought to be publicly expressible and not repressed" omits two considerations. First, just because something is moral doesn't mean it must be publicly expressed. Wisdom might dictate that it ought to remain a private matter. Even if it could be shown that homosexual desires are moral, at least some kinds of public expression still might not be acceptable. Red Cross blood donation rules, for example, prohibit homosexuals from donating their blood due to the unhealthy consequences of their behavior. In establishing these rules the Red Cross is not thereby calling homosexuality immoral any more than it is calling immoral the potential donors who have visited certain geographic areas and are therefore also prohibited from donating. Second, expression and repression are not the exclusive options. There is a third option: personal desires can be supplanted by other desires as in Christianity. Buddhism proposes yet another option. It strives for a final state where there is a loss of all desire. P3 prematurely confines the discussion to two options when there are more. It therefore commits the "either-or" fallacy.

⁷⁸ Anderson recounts how repugnant to homosexual activists is the idea that change from homosexuality is possible "Masters and Johnson (1979) stated that 'reparative therapy' was often effective for individuals who wanted to change. I personally remember the sharp criticism they received for making such a claim." Anderson, 198. Recently one study that showed change was possible received such emotional negative feedback that the journal editor wrote an entire article on it. See K. Zucker, "The Politics and Science of Reparative Therapy," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32:399-402. The California legislature has been so receptive to homosexual activists that it has passed a law that prohibits any attempt at reparative therapy--a clear example, incidentally, of the state defining its own religious beliefs as discussed in the first section of this proposal.

⁷⁹ These are the words of Bertrand Russell in his essay, "A Free Man's Religion," that he wrote in 1903. He published it in 1917 in *Mysticism and Logic*, 45. Russell honestly expressed the foolish but terribly logical consequence of the modern pagan worldview.

⁸⁰ See discussion of Mortimer J. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes* (New York: MacMillan Pub. Co., 1985), 108-127.

Summary of the internal critique. Our internal critique of the case for full public acceptance of homosexuality shows that its underlying paradigm, *even on its own terms*, is plagued with ambiguity, arbitrariness and logical fallacy. For a paradigm that has been the foundation of the homosexual lobby's victorious public campaign strategy, it is surprisingly weak. It amounts to them saying, "We experience homosexual feelings so everyone should not only accept our behavior but embrace it." This homosexual rationale could have been widely challenged on logical grounds. Instead, either because of intimidation or laziness our nation's shallow culture was simply swept along by a very clever strategy that appeared to create an unchallengeable moral position. When explaining the principle of biblical marriage in wedding services, pastors need to keep these things in mind because it can be assumed that a significant number of attendees have bought into the homosexual lobby's propaganda. And if they have, they're already predisposed to interpret the biblical wedding as a biased and unjust thing.

Using more of the wisdom of Proverbs, we now take up the second approach to examining the gay paradigm. Proverbs 26:4 says, "*Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him.*" The advice here directs us to do an external critique. We separate entirely from the presuppositions of the fool and base our response on biblical presuppositions rooted as they are in the kind of universe the Bible presents. Instead of the pagan metaphysic of one level of existence, a grand impersonal Nature within which are all things--gods, mankind, animals, plants, rocks and purposeless processes--, we start with two levels of existence, the Creator and the creation. Instead of locating ultimate epistemic authority in collective mankind, e.g., the state, we start with locating ultimate epistemic authority in God's historic revelation preserved in Scripture. Instead of trying to overcome the subjective character of relativistic ethics by anchoring them in some sort of Platonic idealism, evolutionary legacy or public opinion poll, we look to the imperatives of divine revelation as our source of ethics. The Lord used this kind of reasoning with Job in chapters 38-41. Paul warned us to submit our reasoning to God's revelation, supremely in Jesus Christ in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 and Colossians 2:8-9. Therefore, in our stand for biblical marriage against the new state mandate, we consciously choose to stand with Moses against the "divine" Pharaoh, with ancient Israel's prophets against the corrupt state religions of Jeroboam and Ahab, with Daniel against imperial Nebuchadnezzar, with Paul against the civil bureaucrats of his day and with the recent martyrs against the utopian delusions of fascism, Communism and Islamic Sharia. Pastors in wedding services should fearlessly but graciously explain precisely those features of biblical marriage that directly challenge the sloppy pagan paradigm.

An external critique of P1. The idea that "homosexual feelings are natural" should be brought into contact with the comprehensive biblical idea that in this fallen creation all sorts of feelings, attractions and desires are natural. The major problem here is that the homosexual paradigm totally ignores creation and the fall and their implications. Thus in addition to being ambiguous, P1 builds upon a false view of reality. That man and woman are both created in God's image and both suffer from the fall *in sexually-distinct ways* is clear from Genesis 2:18-25; 3:16-19 and Proverbs. So, depending upon the particular wedding service, the officiating person ought to mention the distinctly different nature of man and woman from creation and how the male and female natures suffer differently from the fall. Human sexual differentiation as revealed in the Bible is so deep--not only anatomically but also psychologically and in ways we

know not--that even homosexual behavior cannot totally erase it.⁸¹ The deep biblical distinction in human male and female natures accurately describes an undeniable feature of intelligently designed reality. Moreover, if we define normalcy as the state of original creation, then after the fall everyone lives in an abnormal existence. All feelings, therefore, although natural cannot be said to be normal. We are expected to rule over our abnormal feelings and are going to be judged accordingly (Gen. 4:6-7). *The truth that our sexual identity is determined by our design, not by our desires, needs a prominent place in any presentation of true marriage.*

An external critique of P2. The idea that "what is natural is moral" should be brought under the dominion of God's transcendental ethics. He is the Designer of all things and thus is alone competent to declare what is and is not moral. As the Creator of human sexuality, only He determines what appropriate sexual behavior is because He alone knows all the consequences of violating His intelligent design. Marriage as He has designed it, is revelatory of the special relationship between Yahweh and Israel (Hosea 2).⁸² It also reveals the relationship between Christ and His Body, the Church (Eph 5:22-32).⁸³ The one-man-and-one-woman design alone is analogous to those relationships. It must be preserved as part of general revelation lest the capacity to understand those relationships be lost.

Rejecting the homosexual paradigm's reliance upon man-centered epistemic and ethical authorities, we proceed with God's historic revelation as our epistemic authority and its imperatives as our ethical authority. That said we discover an unsavory immoral cause of at least some homosexual feelings. It has been widely observed that homosexual feelings often arise in a person after he has experienced physical, emotional, or most commonly sexual child-abuse.⁸⁴ Such abuse is a violation of God's design for the family to produce a godly generation of successors. Child-abuse, though it may be "natural" in a fallen world, certainly is not moral. As we think about homosexuality, we need to reflect on what is taking place in our families. Are

⁸¹ In 1 Corinthians 6:9 Paul uses two words to describe the homosexual relationship--one for the partner exercising the "male" role and for the other partner exercising the "female" role. There remains *a heterosexuality in homosexual relationships which shows that God's creation design cannot be totally suppressed*. Paul points to this in Romans 1:26-27 where in spite of the attempted suppression, the "natural use" of human male and female sexuality continues to be known else the perversion would not be recognized. Homosexual apologists try to argue that this passage is talking only about pagan temple prostitutes because of the worship language in 1:25 which they interpret as specific ritual. They ignore Paul's use of these very same words in 12:1 that shows he uses them to refer to the whole sphere of life, not just what one might do while in a temple ritual.

⁸² See discussion in Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, rev. 2001), 828-836.

⁸³ Here, if we honor a literal hermeneutic of the sacred text, we observe the consistent wisdom of God in how he created woman (Hebrew: *isha*) out of man (Hebrew: *ish*) in a special way in the Genesis 2 narrative unlike how He created the sexual distinction in animals. That act set up a conceptual perspective of the deep distinction between man and woman that reveals much about the God's redemptive relationship to mankind which otherwise would not be understood. This entire matter of our sexual design is destroyed when marriage is redefined.

⁸⁴ See discussion in Wilson, H. W., and C. S. Widom, "Does physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect in childhood increase the likelihood of same-sex relationships and cohabitation? A prospective 30-year follow-up," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39 (2010) 63-74. Biblical counselors report the same thing. See the account of a multi-month long counseling ordeal of helping a 25-year old Christian young man escape homosexual bondage in Kevin Carson, "'Jason' and Homosexuality," ed. Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God's Resources in Scripture* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2012), 227-255.

they nourishing their providentially-assigned children? Or are they breeding grounds for the very thing we are opposing?

A biblical analysis also exposes the natural consequences of homosexuality. Poor health effects of homosexuality are well known: greater-than-normal sexually transmitted diseases, higher suicide rates, and greater mental disorders.⁸⁵ Tragically, the very child abuse that often causes homosexuality produces yet more child abuse. Publications by the gay community, the academic community, and the American Psychological Association clearly state the link between homosexuality and pedophilia with pedophiles characterized not as child abusers but people who want to help children express their sexuality. Pre-pubescent children "expressing their sexuality" may be natural in today's world, but they are not moral. Alas, the long-term damage of deviating from God's design in such a way is completely ignored in these publications.⁸⁶

Homosexual couples who decide they want to adopt children necessarily share with single-parent families the absence of one or the other sex. This absence makes it very difficult for children to learn the vital roles that God has designed for both men and women--namely, how each sex complements the other in living out roles. Homosexual families thus inherit some of the worst features of incomplete or dysfunctional straight families. Commenting on the increase in "unconventional families" deliberately built on a single parent for *both* reproduction and child rearing (by both homosexuals and heterosexuals) Elizabeth Marquardt points out, "Such a family structure is seen as being fine for children. And the only reason this change has occurred is because--increasingly in the eyes of society's leaders--an adult's right to children outweighs children's hardwired need for their mother and their father."⁸⁷ Given this line of thought one wonders if children have now been reduced to a new kind of pet and/or status symbol.

The explanation of biblical marriage during a wedding service, therefore, needs to reinforce *the supremacy of Scripture as the ultimate ethical authority over all human authorities--including civil government--in directing the couple's life together*. None of us know enough about God's design of marriage with its resulting actual or virtual family (e.g., a childless couple who adopt children or minister to children) to make decisions without His guidance. The consequences of violating His design of human sexuality are the spread of destruction throughout the social order. Too much damage from foolish decisions already exists in our culture. We don't need more. C. S. Lewis has wisely written:

"The most dangerous thing you can do is to take any one impulse of your own nature and set it up as the thing you ought to follow at all costs. There is not one of them which will not make us into devils if we set it up as an absolute guide. You might think love of humanity in general was safe, but it is not. If you leave out justice you will find yourself

⁸⁵ See discussion with bibliography for each of these categories in Anderson, 199.

⁸⁶ Sears and Osten, 87-92. The latest term for pedophiles is "minor-attracted persons." See defenders at <http://www.b4uact.org/>.

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Marquardt, "Do Fathers and Mothers Matter?" *Propositions*, 3 (April 2011) 7, published by the Institute of American Values quarterly. This article specifically focused upon the new movements, Single Mothers by Choice and Single Fathers by Choice. These movements resort to such practices as women choosing their child's father from a sperm bank and men relying on a female "egg donor" to conceive with their sperm and on a surrogate womb mother to bring the fetus to birth.

breaking agreements and faking evidence in trials 'for the sake of humanity', and become in the end a cruel and treacherous man."⁸⁸

An external critique of P3. The homosexual lobby's insistence upon overt public expression is why it demands of state legislatures a "marriage" status and why it is not willing to compromise by accepting a "civil union" status. Behind this demand for total acceptance is an all too infrequently admitted resignation to the lifelong inevitability of overwhelming homosexual desires. Vitagliano describes the martyr-like frustration of "gay and lesbian friends who sadly say, 'Do you think I would choose this lifestyle for myself--with all the mockery and suffering it has brought me?'"⁸⁹ Besides this frustration there is often a sense of shame that explains the widespread use of the word "pride" in public announcements of gay events--a "feel-good" use of the exact antonym of shame. A troubled conscience needs a proud face. The gay life in reality is not consistently "gay."

The idea that homosexuality "ought to be publicly expressible and not repressed" needs to be reinterpreted by the doctrines of biblical anthropology and regeneration in Christ. With an authority that no academic or psychological group possesses, God tells us through Paul about the universal human condition and His miraculous work:

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, just as the others." (Eph 2:1-3)

This fallen condition is true of all humanity, not just homosexuals. All mankind is subject to constant temptations toward evil, and we are held accountable for our responses to these solicitations. If we yield to temptations and publicly express them in our behavior, we commit personal sin.

Biblical anthropology acknowledges that while originally created in God's image, we are also fallen beings in need of redemption. The biblical concept of depravity includes what we call feelings, desires, dispositions, and mental attitudes--not just outward behavior. This principle that pre-behavioral lusts are more needful of our attention than overt behavior was shown in Jesus' exposition of the Ten Commandments in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. In Romans 1 Paul's critique of pagan society includes not only homosexual behavior but the homosexual "lusts" and "passions" that precede such behavior along with similar propensities toward other sins (1:24-27, 29-32). Some Christians assert a distinction between the inner propensity toward homosexual desire, which they consider ethically neutral, and the outward behavior, which they deem as sinful--but that distinction is not scriptural. Though the temptation or solicitation toward homosexuality is not sinful, mentally entertaining it and lusting for it--are as sinful as they are for any other area of life.

There is one thing special about homosexuality. Paul ends his analysis in Romans 1 with this statement about depraved humanity: *"who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of*

⁸⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, C.S. Lewis Signature Classics, 2009) 11-12.

⁸⁹ Vitagliano, 10.

those who practice them." (Rom 1:32). Notice in his statement that *approval* of the social expression of the mental attitude sins, sins of the tongue, and overt sins listed in 3:29-31 is worse than the expression itself! When pagan society morally approves of the public expressions of sin that it did not previously, we are observing what the late U.S. Senator Daniel Moynihan 20 years ago called "defining deviancy down."⁹⁰ Sen. Moynihan pointed out that when social behavior morally deteriorates, the common social standards judging such behavior also necessarily lower. According to Paul when homosexuality appears widespread enough to warrant special attention, it is evidence that God is withdrawing His restraints. As that happens, social ethical standards lower across the board.⁹¹ Homosexuality is thus a kind of litmus test for the spiritual state of a society. Due to the frustration and shame it causes, those overwhelmed by its power build their entire personal identity around it in a way that is unlike those with other sinful addictions. Homosexuals tend to see themselves primarily as homosexuals, not as ordinary members of a fallen race who are sinful like everyone else. Their political agenda, therefore, demands free expression that requires that society publicly approve of them as Paul stated.

Beyond biblical anthropology is biblical redemption. As Christians our response to those who grapple with homosexual feelings should differ fundamentally from how society at large would respond. Biblical anthropology and redemption in Christ make a difference. As trained Bible-believing counselor Pastor Kevin Carson approached a homosexual counselee called "Jason" (not his real name). He describes how he analyzed Jason's responses to his queries concerning his behavior:

Do I see him as the product of his biological make-up or his genetic code, the result of a poor relationship with his same-sex parent, the outcome of early sexual stimuli, or one fearing rejection by others due to low self-esteem? If I accept contemporary secular explanations for homosexuality as part of the cause, then I am ultimately accepting culture as the authority for understanding and helping Jason. *Or* I can take the perspective that the ultimate cause of Jason's homosexual behavior is his sinful heart and that all of these important pieces of data make up various significant influences or pressures to which his sinful heart responded.⁹² [Emphasis original]

This talk of sin is not hate-mongering, but quite the opposite--it is actually good news for the homosexual. It means he can be free of this annoying burden just like any other believer can be freed from sin. Will he have a prolonged and difficult journey? Yes. But the rewards are many because homosexual feelings are but a part of a larger package of spiritual problems that the person carries. As Pastor Carson discovered, Jason's problem wasn't just homosexuality. Describing the cluster of problems, he wrote this list:

- lives for his feelings
- craves attention from others
- longs for affection, affirmation, relationship, acceptance
- some rebellion against the legalism of his church and against his parents

⁹⁰ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Defining Deviancy Down," *The American Scholar*, Winter 1993, 17-20.

⁹¹ For a concise one-hour presentation on Rom 1:18-32 by Dr. John MacArthur at Immanuel Bible Church in the vicinity of Washington, DC go to

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=qOUHmt3q8YE

⁹² Carson, 231.

- anger

Carson continues: "As you scan this initial list, you will notice a striking absence: the sin of homosexuality is not even on the list yet. This is because it is one issue among many."⁹³

After ups and downs during many months of weekly counseling, Jason learned how to manage and overcome his homosexual feelings. Commenting on his progress toward the end of this period, he says:

"In a recent conversation I asked him how his struggle was going.. To my delight we talked for 30 minutes as he expressed many different pressure-filled situations, but same-sex attraction never came up. It was not even on his mind as one of his most pressing struggles. . . .When we stop to minister to someone like Jason, we must be vigilant to see his sin for what it really is--not what the culture teaches. . . .The reality is that every one of the issues surrounding Jason's life could be equally true of heterosexuals."⁹⁴

God's Word through its gospel message of redemption in Christ opens up an entirely new option to the homosexual besides the "either-or" dilemma of P3. God can work today in lives of homosexuals as he worked 2000 years ago in Corinth (1 Cor 6:9).

Summary of the external critique. We have subjected the gay paradigm in this external critique to biblical authority and content instead of looking at it from inside as we did with the internal critique. The three propositions not only suffer from internal logical problems, but they are also rooted in a false view of reality (P1), a denial of God's capacity to reveal how human sexuality is designed to function (P2), and ignorance of the power of redemption in Christ (P3). The pastor or other officiating person in the wedding service can assume that some attendees are unaware not only of the logical fallacies of the homosexual propaganda but also of the pertinent biblical truths--even those attendees who have attended biblically-based church services for years.

To sum up this section on the homosexual case for altering the definition of marriage: its persuasive power has been due not to its underlying logic but to its manipulative use of connotative words that create the illusion of moral superiority. To cite Francis Schaeffer, terms like "fair," "equal," and "just" have given the American public the illusion of communication and content. As a result the ruling political and media elite and an increasing number of citizens at large think that it is fairer to adjust marriage to meet these demands than to leave it as an unalterable institution designed by God for one man and one woman. A biblical wedding service which presents marriage as a divine institution now directly conflicts with civil authority.

SEPARATING CIVIL MARRIAGE FROM ECCLESIASTICAL MARRIAGE

Marriage, civil government, and the Church are divinely-designed and divinely-authorized structures according to the Bible. These separate spheres of governance differ profoundly, however, in that marriage began at creation and is therefore an integral part of human life. Furthermore, marriage was made to last until the end of mortal history. Civil government, on the other hand, came millennia afterwards as a result of the fall and subsequent

⁹³ Ibid., 240.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 254f.

failure of early human civilization. It is God's means to manage man's depraved social existence. The Church also came later--at Pentecost--as the community of believers separate from the rest of mankind for this age under the authority of Christ and the Bible. Thus marriage has the prior claim. It consists of a loving personal relationship between one man and one woman for the growth of civilization.

As part of its divinely-commissioned function to restrain societal chaos the state supports the marriage institution by establishing licenses or contracts. Marriage contracts define responsibilities for things like property ownership, child-rearing, terms of dissolution (divorce) and tax payments. In recent times as the U.S. civil government has absorbed more of the messianic Babel vision, its efforts to regulate marriage now include specifying qualifications for civil benefits. The Church's concern for marriage differs from that of the state. It's concerned with evangelizing unsaved couples, nourishing marriages of believers as part of the sanctification process, and injecting biblical wisdom about the purpose of marriage into society including having a political influence where participatory citizenship exists.⁹⁵ The Church's historic interest in marriage is called the *ecclesiastical* component and the state's interest is called the *civil* component.

William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, is a classic text that put English common law into consistent written form and became a key source for colonial American law. Here is a citation from Blackstone on the distinction between the separate interests of civil law and ecclesiastical law pertaining to marriage:

"OUR law considers marriage in no other light than as a civil contract. The Holiness of the matrimonial state is left entirely to the ecclesiastical law: the temporal courts not having jurisdiction to consider unlawful marriages as a sin, but merely as a civil inconvenience. The punishment therefore, or annulling, of incestuous or other unscriptural marriages, is the province of the spiritual courts; which act *pro salute animae* [for the health of their souls]. And, taking it in this civil light, the law treats it as it does all other contracts; allowing it to be good and valid in all cases, where the parties at the time of making it were, in the first place, willing to contract; secondly, able to contract; and, lastly, actually did contract, in the proper forms and solemnities required by law."⁹⁶

The state's interest in marriage centers on the legal contract and restraining the neglect of the contractual responsibilities. The Church's interest centers on whether the marriage is biblically authorized and growing spiritually. The role of Christian church officials in establishing (solemnizing) the civil marriage contract in England at the time was viewed by Blackstone as a peripheral matter for the convenience of the state rather than as something required by biblical law:

"It is held to be also essential to a marriage, that it be performed by a person in orders; though the intervention of a priest to solemnize this contract is merely *juris positivi* [of civil law], and not *juris naturalis aut divini* [of natural or divine law]: it being said that

⁹⁵ By political participation I'm thinking here not of institutional participation by churches but of participation of individuals and groups of Christian citizens *as citizens*.

⁹⁶ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England (1765-1769)*, Book 1, Chapter 15, "Of Husband and Wife," available on the internet through the LONANG Library, <http://www.lonang.com/exlibris/blackstone/bla-115.htm>. Accessed 8/7/13.

pope Innocent the third was the first who ordained the celebration of marriage in the church; before which it was totally a civil contract."⁹⁷

A Christian wedding expresses the Church's interest in establishing a biblically authorized marriage and securing a commitment for it to grow in wisdom and love of God. The wedding is conducted within a gathering of interested persons with at least a core of believers to witness to the taking of oaths and to hear a scriptural explanation of what constitutes the marriage relationship. Accompanying that is the challenge for believers to support the new relationship with all the assets that Christ has given to his Body. The pastor thus acts chiefly as an under-shepherd of Jesus Christ. It is in the sphere of a biblically-submissive circle of Christians that the new marriage can grow positively. The Church's interest thus exceeds the civil state's negative interest which is merely a restraining concern against social chaos. The pastor's role as an agent of civil government in a wedding, while convenient logistically, is actually a side-bar to the main event as far as Church interests are concerned.

However, by acting as an agent of civil government, the pastor necessarily comes under the authority of his state. The right to pronounce the formation of a legally binding contract of a couple "by the laws of this state" only can be granted by the state. The state controls what its agents can, cannot, and must do. Currently, states which have adopted same-sex marriage have granted "exception" clauses to "allow" ministers to officiate in establishing contracts where the couple remains one-man-and-one-woman. But this granted right can be removed at any time by the civil authority of the state. With the new approach by a state that treats marriage as a changeable social construct, the pastor as an agent of that state can potentially be required to perform marriages where the parties could be two homosexuals, three or more polygamists, or some other combination. Bizarre? Yes, but it was only a few years ago that same-sex marriages would have been considered bizarre. Reports have already appeared from Europe where civil authorities are contemplating forcing ministers, particularly those in state churches, to perform same-sex marriages.

Under these circumstances the interests of the state and of the Church come into increasing conflict. As mentioned in the first section of this proposal the ever-present tension between these two spheres of authority erupts into full sight once again. The state that redefines marriage is no longer trustworthy as the protector of God's design so the Church should no longer solemnize its marriage contract. We rely here on the separation of Church and state which predates our First Amendment. Eighteen hundred years previous to that Amendment Jesus taught that we are to render unto Caesar his rightful due and unto God His due (Mt 22:21; Lk 20:25). A number of evangelical groups are already looking at separation from civil policies that are aimed at destroying God-designed marriage.⁹⁸ Marriage between one man and one woman is God's design and the Church must do what it can to nourish and strengthen it. All other things being equal, living in accordance with God's designs has superior economic, health, and social benefits compared to pagan lifestyles.

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ The North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention has announced it is prohibiting Baptist military chaplains from performing, attending, or supporting same-sex weddings--on or off base.

Once the local church leadership decides upon this separation, there are some steps that should be taken. Church by-laws should be revised to explicitly declare the biblical definition of marriage and that only that definition will be considered for wedding services. The Pacific Justice Institute, a nonprofit legal defense group that specializes in Church-state issues in California has a website of suggested wording for such by-laws.⁹⁹ Alliance Defending Freedom also provides information on this topic as well as on marriage law in general.¹⁰⁰ Church leaders should also consult with legal counsel on whether to end any policy for renting out the church property for weddings to the general public. Renting out can be considered a business and recent court decisions compel Christian business owners to compromise their faith and sell to all public persons. It is generally considered wise for churches to get their beliefs in writing before a dispute arises; otherwise in a court of law it could look as if something were done after the fact as an attempt to hide hostility to gays. It is also a wise step to formally notify state authorities that the church is no longer acting as their agent in conducting wedding services.

Sadly, this action will require the couple to go to other agents outside of the church (e.g., justices of the peace) to establish their civil marriage contract. This logistical inconvenience is not caused by the church; it is caused by the state in replacing biblical marriage with a changeable social construct.

SUMMARY

In response to recent state governments changing the definition of marriage and thereby affirming that marriage is merely a social construct subject to change, I propose that local church leadership in those state jurisdictions cease performing the civil function of solemnizing the civil marriage contract. Church and state are separate spheres of divinely-authorized governance. One should not intrude upon the other's sphere. When the state enforces same-sex marriage upon its citizens, it has intruded upon the domain of the Church by denying that marriage is exclusively for one man and one woman and potentially requiring the pastor or other officiating person to accept that definition. By so doing the state claims authority over God's authority in defining marriage.

The homosexual lobby is chiefly responsible for redefining marriage. This proposal has shown that its case has been persuasive only because of its skilled manipulation of terms like "just," "fair," and "equal" to give the appearance of moral superiority over biblical marriage. However appearance is not substance. The underlying paradigm is ambiguous, arbitrary, and logically fallacious. Moreover, it relies upon a false view of reality, a denial of God's capacity to reveal how human sexuality is designed to function, and ignores the power of redemption in Christ. The ruling and media elite accepted the homosexual agenda emotionally and thoughtlessly. As a result an increasing percent of the public influenced by them is now predisposed to view biblical marriage as unjust, unfair, and unequal.

Local church leaders in same-sex states, therefore, should take steps now to defend biblical marriage, protect their religious freedom, and formally notify their state authorities that they no longer will serve as agents of their state regarding marriage. Weddings should include a

⁹⁹ See <http://www.csbc.com/article370250.htm?title=1body=1>.

¹⁰⁰ See <http://www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/issues/marriage-and-family>

robust and persuasive defense of one-man-one-woman marriage for those attendees who either have accepted the new view of marriage or aren't sure how to speak up as an ambassador for Christ (see Appendix 1). The pastor and any other officiating person should cease functioning as an agent of the state in establishing its marriage contract. Couples seeking to marry will have to go to other state authorities to establish their civil contract. To make it clear to their state civil leadership that the church will no longer support the civil component of marriage, the church should formally notify the governor and its legislative representatives (see Appendix 2).

APPENDIX 1: WEDDING SERVICE SUGGESTIONS

Each wedding is different depending upon the circumstances. One of the common circumstances, however, is the attendance of those who now are predisposed to view a biblical marriage--being a relationship exclusively for one-man-and-one-woman-- as unjust, unfair, bigoted, and simply old-fashioned and out-of-date. Other attendees, even those who have attended Bible-believing churches for years, might feel uncomfortable or ill-equipped to defend biblical marriage to their peers and acquaintances. Thus the current wedding service has become an ideological battleground subtly or overtly.

However, the wedding service also is the pastor's "home turf." He is the officiating authority representing Jesus Christ. He cannot control the media messaging the attendees have heard, but he can control what they hear during the service. He has to be careful not to fulfill the homosexual lobby's caricature of Christians as gay-haters so in the limited time he has in the wedding service he can't engage in a direct refutation of same-sex marriage. An indirect strategy is wiser. Here is the reasoning with some suggestions that follow.

An indirect strategy will present biblical truths that imply conclusions opposite to the homosexual paradigm without explicitly saying as much. In internal and external critiques of the paradigm provided earlier in this proposal, we exposed some key targets for biblical counter-attack.

Target #1: False view of reality.

- Point to the creation as a literal historic event. This exposes a metaphysical gulf between the Bible and popular evolutionary nature religion.
- Point to how man and woman are sexually differentiated (Gen 2) and how that differs from that of animals (Gen 1). Sexual differentiation in mankind is *deeper* in mankind than in animals--it includes the psychological and spiritual besides the reproductive aspects. It reveals spiritual truths of how God relates to man (see Hosea and Ephesians). This implies that marriage is rooted in God's design and isn't merely a social construction by human society.
- Point to the fall as a literal historic event that affects men and women in sexually distinct ways (Gen 3). This reinforces the *depth* of human sexual design.
- Conclude that *human sexual identity in the Bible is by God's objective once-for-all design, not by subjective changing feelings.*

Target #2: Assumed silence or non-existence of God and the speculations of man.

- Point to the historic, logically-consistent, self-disclosure of God in word and action over millennia of time to a diversity of people. This exposes an epistemological and ethical gulf between the Bible and the widely-varying speculations of man.
- Point to how God as Creator alone has perfect knowledge of how we ought to think about marriage and live it out. This implies that the imperatives of the Bible are superior to the moral musings of man, especially fallen man, and superior to social consensus expressed in civil law (note the epistemic implication of Rom 3:4).

- Point to the purpose of marriage of man and wife to support civilization either through birthing and raising godly children or exercising godly influences on adoptive or other children. This implies that both sexes are necessary to fulfill marriage's purpose.
- Conclude that *God's Word alone is sufficient for entering into and fulfilling the designated purpose of one-man-one-woman marriage, not the guesswork of limited man.*

Target #3: Hopelessness of being trapped by homosexual feelings

- Point to the universal need for personal redemption in Christ. Present the gospel with an emphasis upon the "universal" aspect that levels the playing field so that homosexuality is not seen as something so unique that it is left outside.
- Point to the hope of spiritual growth (sanctification) that can overcome every spiritual obstacle--whether an addiction, depression, or anger. By not mentioning homosexuality the focus remains on generic sin as mentioned in the pastoral counseling example above which again undermines the claim that homosexuality is somehow unique.
- Point to the possibility that the marriage never ought to end in divorce if both man and woman submit to God's revealed instructions on family life. This denies that someone could be "trapped" by some sin pattern.
- Conclude that *no test, no pressure, no addiction has the power to entrap and halt the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit in those who have believed in Christ for eternal life.*

Finally, the church ought to create a formal document replacing the marriage license certifying that marital vows were exchanged under the authority delegated to the pastor from God through the Bible. It could also mention the pledge by those present to support the new marriage with prayer, encouragement, and other aid. At the end of the wedding service the couple would then be in possession of two formal documents--the civil license and the church certification.

APPENDIX 2: A SAMPLE LETTER TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES

There are at least two reasons to inform the state authorities of a church's decision to drop out of participation in the civil marriage procedures. First, it alerts them to several important truths they often overlook. One truth is that changing the law *never* eliminates discrimination because by definition *every* law specifies behaviors that society will not tolerate and will therefore punish. Changing a law, therefore, merely re-directs discrimination against different behaviors. In the case of adopting same-sex marriage the state refrains from discriminating against same-sex marriages but continues to discriminate against incestuous, poly-amorous, and pedophilial marriages while adding a new discrimination against those who limit marriage to one-man-one-woman in public speech and actions. Another overlooked truth is that no less than two whole worldviews are in collision here so that the state cannot find a place of neutrality. It *has* to come down on either the pagan side or on the Judeo-Christian side. In the case of a same-sex marriage state the civil authorities have unwittingly begun an official persecution against the Christian faith. They need to be reminded that the new law forces their Bible-believing Christian constituents to deny their faith and live in the public square as virtual pagans.

A second reason for an official letter is that it formally establishes a date when the church's pastor no longer can be considered an agent of the state. It thus eliminates any further state requirements regarding civil marriage for him to meet. It also eliminates any claim of discrimination by a gay couple whose same sex wedding the pastor refuses to conduct. The pastor becomes completely free to conduct wedding services authorized by God in scripture without any state controls and compromises. Such a letter implements the true version of separation of church and state taught by Jesus long before modern U.S. First Amendment controversies. In those states where a federal judge has ruled that the state cannot ban same-sex marriage and the state has proceeded to legalize it as a consequence of the judge's decision, it might also be prudent to address an official letter to that judge in addition to the governor and pertinent state legislature representatives.

On official church stationery:

DATE:

TO: [Governor, State Legislative Representative(s)]

Dear [Proper title of address]

This letter is to inform you of [church's name] carefully considered response to the redefinition of marriage [would be best to name the piece of legislation exactly with its date] by the State of [state name]. By redefining marriage the State of [] has made it impossible to affirm in the wedding service both the biblical view of an unalterable divinely-established institution and the new civil view of an alterable social construct. We therefore have decided to separate the civil and ecclesiastical components as defined in English common law by William Blackstone. We must respect the teachings of Jesus Christ that distinguish your civil authority from God's authority ("*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's*"--Matthew 22:21). Your authority extends over the civil aspect of marriage. Our authority as a local church of Bible-believing Christians extends over the ecclesiastical aspect.

Therefore we will henceforth refer couples seeking to be married to justices-of-the-peace and others under the state's authority for licensing of the marriage contract. Our pastors will no longer act as agents of the State of [] by conducting civil marriages. The state therefore cannot require them to perform same-sex or other unbiblical forms of marriage. They will instead perform only ecclesiastical marriage services according to biblical doctrine.

Since the state's action appears to have been taken without any serious discussion of the reality and truth claims underlying this new, historically unprecedented view of marriage, we want to include the reasons for our response. Contrary to what has often been emotionally charged, as Bible-believing Christians we do not hate homosexuals. People can love while adhering to diverse ethical standards, as any family well knows. But like all residents of [state name] we do try to live by an ethical standard we believe is true to reality. And we certainly look to that ethical standard when we are called upon by [state name] to accept a radical alteration in the very molecular structure of our society.

Our ethical standard rests upon the biblical claim of divine revelation going back more than three millennia. Since this Judeo-Christian tradition has always been opposed by pagan culture, the current ethical differences between adherents of each view are not new or surprising. The Bible states that God established marriage at creation, not arbitrarily, but based upon His design of the human male and female--a design that purposefully includes anatomical, psychological, and spiritual differences for the advancement of civilization. In our view, therefore, it cannot be considered as a construct by human society and thus is not subject to arbitrary changes.

Civil marriage and family law like all law necessarily discriminates against, and thereby restrains, destructive behaviors that would weaken the institution and thus undermine a moral society. Therefore, when those laws change, the discrimination criteria also change. Thus it comes as no surprise that the biblical view of marriage is increasingly being discriminated against in government, business, and education. We recognize that those in civil positions of authority regardless of your personal viewpoint must enforce the new law and discriminate against our belief. To minimize conflict between the church and state, therefore, we have decided to avoid participating in the civil aspect during our wedding services.

We recognize the extremely difficult job you face in trying to govern a society with such profoundly conflicting world views. We will continue to honor your office by respecting your civil authority and will pray for you as the Bible commands.

Respectfully,

[signed by church leadership]

APPENDIX 3: A SAMPLE EXCHANGE WITH A FEDERAL LEGISLATOR OVER THE MANIPULATIVE USE OF WORDS

In early January 2014 the U.S. Congress was considering two bills in the wake of the Supreme Court (SCOTUS) decision in *United States vs. Windsor* regarding the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) that had defined marriage at the federal level as the union of one-man-one-woman. While striking down the definition part of DOMA, that decision *did not redefine marriage for the nation and left that action to the individual states*. A more recent bill, H.R. 3829, attempted to prevent the bestowal of federal benefits for same-sex couples residing in states that had not changed the traditional definition of marriage. That was the bill one of my sons who lives in the 11th Congressional District (VA) urged his Congressman to support. Its title was "State Marriage Defense Act of 2014."

Notice in the reply below that Congressman Connolly by-passes that bill completely and then pretends to agree with my son using a second, completely different bill (H.R. 2523, "Respect for Marriage Act") that would allow federal benefits to same-sex couples if they were married in a state or US territory that had changed the definition of marriage but now resided in a state that had not changed the definition. The two bills accomplish opposite objectives. His first and third paragraphs are standard text that many federal legislators use in their replies to constituents. In his second paragraph, however, he uses the expressions "equal rights for all Americans" and "marriage discrimination" in the manipulative fashion discussed in the second section of this proposal.

From: VA11GCIMA@mail.house.gov

Subject: Responding to your message

Date: Fri, 10 Jan 2014 12:52:12 -0500

GERALD E. CONNOLLY
 11TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA
 424 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
 WASHINGTON, DC 20515
 (202) 225-1492

FAIRFAX OFFICE:
 4115 ANNANDALE ROAD
 SUITE 103
 ANNANDALE, VA 22003
 (703) 256-3071

PRINCE WILLIAM OFFICE:
 4308 RIDGEWOOD CENTER DRIVE
 WOODBRIDGE, VA 22192
 (703) 670-4989

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515-4611

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT
 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH, JOBS AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
 RANKING MEMBER, GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
 COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
 SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
 ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

January 10, 2014

Mr. Jonathan Clough

8917 Arley Drive

Springfield, VA 22153-1504

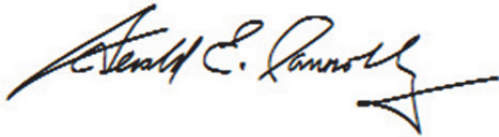
Dear Mr. Clough,

Thank you for contacting me with respect to gay marriage. I appreciate the opportunity to hear from you about this issue. Your views are important to me.

I believe in equal rights for all Americans, and I will not support attempts by government to control decisions of churches or other places of worship with respect to this issue. I am a cosponsor of the Respect for Marriage Act, which would eliminate marriage discrimination.

Once again, thank you for expressing your concern on this very important issue. I appreciate hearing from you. For more information on my views on other issues, please feel free to visit my website at <http://connolly.house.gov>. I also encourage you to visit the website to sign up for my e-newsletter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerald E. Connolly", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress
11th District, Virginia

My son refused to allow this sort of semantic manipulation and exposed the lack of logical argument in his Congressman's use of the word "discrimination." Note how he shows that discrimination is not eliminated by such "progressive" legislation; it is only relocated. That is the truth has been totally suppressed in all the marriage redefinition propaganda.

Sent: Friday, January 10, 2014 11:59 PM
To: Congressman Gerald E. Connolly
Subject: RE: Responding to your message

Congressman Connolly,

Thank you for your response, sir, but it's clear you did not read or understand my original correspondence that prompted your letter. So, please allow me to repeat myself and hopefully clarify my message.

I requested that you support the State Marriage Defense Act of 2014 (H.R. 3829), not the doublespeak-labeled "Respect for Marriage Act" (H.R. 2523), which, as you well know, is specifically designed to nullify DOMA, effectively "un-defining" and disrespecting natural marriage as understood for all of recorded human history, not to mention specifically discriminating against anyone who holds this historic/traditional view.

And yes, it will discriminate against them -- one only has to look at states that have endorsed gay "marriage" to observe the legal juggernaut brought to bear against small businessmen and women seeking to live within the dictates of their conscience on this matter (e.g. Jack Phillips of Masterpiece Cakeshop in Denver, CO, Barronelle Stutzman of Arlene's Flowers in Richland, WA, Aaron & Melissa Klein of SweetCakes by Mellissa in Gresham, OR, or Blaine Adamson of Hands On Originals in Lexington, KY, to list a few.)

While you and your staff can slyly employ platitudes like "eliminate marriage discrimination", you know very well such verbiage is devoid of real meaning. Every law discriminates, by definition -- they discriminate against behaviors or relationships deemed harmful to individuals or communities at large. All you're doing is seeking to change what categories of relationships the Federal government discriminates against.

The Federal government discriminates against incestuous, poly-amorous, and pedophilial marriages today, and it will continue to do so, even if the "Respect for Marriage" act is ever passed. So please, let's agree to communicate with clarity on this issue, and drop the rhetorical camouflage. Marriage discrimination will continue to occur, and it must for marriage law to have any distinct meaning whatsoever. The question is whether the Federal government continues to discriminate natural marriage from unnatural gay "marriage", along with the other perversions listed earlier.

In light of blatant Federal over-reach (exemplified as recently as today's Department of Justice recognition of Utah's briefly legal same-sex "marriages" in spite of a still-pending court ruling on the matter), I am requesting you throw your support behind the State Marriage Defense Act. This bill will reaffirm what the Supreme Court affirmed in their *U.S. v Windsor* ruling, namely:

"The recognition of civil marriages is central to state domestic relations law applicable to its residents and citizens."

"The definition of marriage is the foundation of the State's broader authority to regulate the subject of domestic relations..."

"Consistent with this allocation of authority, the Federal Government, through our history, has deferred to state law policy decisions with respect to domestic relations." (all quotes from page 17, Opinion of the Court, *U.S. v Windsor*)

As I'm certain you were a fan of this ruling, I'm confident you will agree with the Court's opinions regarding State authority on the matter as noted above and offer your support to the State Marriage Defense Act. I strongly encourage you to do so. Otherwise you are putting Virginia's state constitutional amendment banning gay "marriage" at grave risk.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Clough

While nothing legislatively significant may come from this exchange, at least two consequences follow. One or more of Congressman Connolly's staff will become aware that some constituents now see through their clever attempts to distract. And those who read this exchange will gain skill to challenge such semantic manipulation when they encounter it and to drive conversations toward a more rational and adult level.