

A MAGAZINE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

A DUTY TO KILL? | RETHINKING SECULARISM

LIBERTY

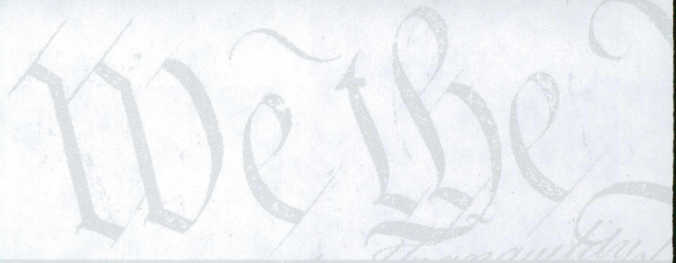
JULY/AUGUST 2022

Patriotism Health Check

Center for Adventist Research
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PERVERSE OPTIMISM

At a Capitol Hill meeting some years ago I heard a report that sounded utterly far-fetched. It was during a regular weekly gathering of human rights and religious freedom advocates, each representing a different government agency, nongovernmental organization, or faith group,

Toward the end of that day's agenda someone rose to speak. His concern? Organ harvesting, which he claimed was being carried out on religious and cultural groups in detention in China—minorities such as Uyghurs, Tibetans, Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners, and Christians. He said there was indisputable evidence that organs were being taken from living, nonconsenting donors—kidneys, livers, corneas, and even hearts.

His claims activated my conspiracy-theory antennae. Really? Could such a premeditated, systematic, large-scale atrocity of this kind be taking place in the way he described? Surely such horrors wouldn't go under the radar. They'd be widely known and reported in the media. I looked around, trying to read the skepticism level in the room.

I had a lot to learn.

I learned, for instance, that the United Nations has documented credible evidence of these practices. According to its most recent report, released in 2021, detainees from ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities may be forcibly subjected to medical examinations without their informed consent and then registered in a database of living organ sources.

Yet this is just one facet of China's brutal treatment of many of its minorities. Since at least 2014, Chinese authorities have detained a reported 1 million Turkic Muslims

in Xinjiang province—the nation's northern manufacturing hub. Hundreds of thousands of these cultural and religious “misfits” are being held in camps and subjected to so-called re-education intended to render them more tractable to China's Communist authorities.

What most of us don't realize, however, is that we each likely have a direct personal connection with these horrific abuses.

How? Through the complicated wonders of global economic supply chains.

Many of these Muslim detainees in Xinjiang have also been conscripted as unpaid laborers in factories that produce goods or product components that, in turn, flow into international markets. Global corporations including Apple, Kraft Heinz, Adidas, Nike, Coca-Cola, Costco, Patagonia, Tommy Hilfiger, and many, many more have supply links with Xinjiang province. This region alone produces around one fifth of the world's cotton supply. A vast range of our consumer products—from T-shirts to solar panels to Christmas decorations—are made in whole or part by men and women detained in inhumane conditions and forced to work without pay. Women such as 39-year-old Gulzira Auelkhan, who, before escaping to the West, was bused to a textile factory before dawn each day to sew gloves, alongside hundreds of other unpaid factory workers.¹

The chances are high that we all have products in our homes that have been touched by the hands of someone such as Gulzira.

All this forms the background to a landmark U.S. law, the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which went into effect a few weeks ago. This extraordinary law imposes strict accountability on U.S. importers that have links, no

matter how tangential, to Xinjiang province. The law presumes that *all* goods from that province have been made with forced labor, and are therefore banned, unless the importer can clearly prove otherwise.

The passage of this law was astonishing for many reasons, not least because in a pathologically divided Congress it gained overwhelming bipartisan support. Even more surprising, this bipartisanship survived fierce and sustained opposition from powerful U.S. corporations who foresaw how this enforced moral reckoning could impact their bottom lines. According to one estimate, the law will impact some \$64 billion in direct U.S. imports from Xinjiang each year, along with some \$119 billion imported from elsewhere in China.

It's tempting to think this law makes a statement, writ large on the global stage, about American identity and values. A statement that says to be American means standing up for the rights of these oppressed cultural and religious misfits, regardless of the economic consequences to ourselves. But does it?

You could rightly point out that the Uyghur genocide isn't the only massive-scale human rights atrocity taking place in the world today. That because it's happening in China, many China hawks in Congress have a vested interest in acting.

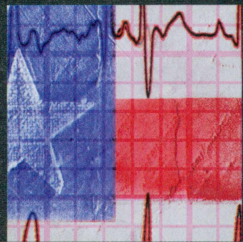
A cynic could go further and say passage of the bill has less to do with any kind of core American identity and more to do with moral posturing on the part of politicians.

Others may say, “So what if the left and right managed to find moral agreement on this narrow issue? Just look at the aftermath of the Supreme Court's abortion decision—America is more fractured than ever.”



PEOPLE of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do hereby constitute a Federal Constitution for the United States of America.

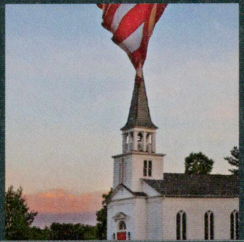
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But I feel a perverse sense of optimism when I consider the passage of the Uyghur Forced Labor Act. The fact that this law exists and is now being enforced is powerful proof that a shared ideal is still able to unite and energize an otherwise disparate group of people.

I know some of the folk who pushed hard on this bill behind the scenes. They weren't only Uyghur advocates or foreign policy hardliners. The people who worked for the passage of this law included representatives from many different American faith groups—Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, and more. They partnered with human rights organizations whose political persuasions span the spectrum from left to right. They sat together and worked together because they shared a belief in two bedrock values of American identity: that the rights of minorities matter, and the right to religious

freedom or belief belongs to every person, regardless of their nationality or religious tradition.

Idealistic? Naive? Perhaps. But it's the kind of naivete shared by President John F. Kennedy when he reminded Americans—then violently divided on civil rights reform—that “this nation was founded by men of many nations and backgrounds. It was founded on the principle that all men are created equal, and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.” It's a naivete shared by Nelson Mandela, who, after enduring 27 years of unjust incarceration, worked with some of his former oppressors to end apartheid, and later wrote, “To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” It's the kind of naivete that seems appropriate for this month, as we celebrate the achievement of

an incongruous group of idealists who managed to set the great American political experiment in motion.

For now, nothing much has changed. Our disagreements remain as entrenched as ever. But just for a moment I'm happy to enjoy some optimism, however perverse.

¹ For more about the Uyghur genocide and a behind-the-scenes look how the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention law was passed, it's worth reading Haley Byrd Wilt's 80-plus-page journalistic tour de force, “The Liberty of Democracy Is a Complicated Undertaking”: How the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Became Law, June 20, 2022, thedispatch.com.

Bettina Krause, Editor
Liberty magazine

Please address letters to the editor to editor@libertymagazine.org

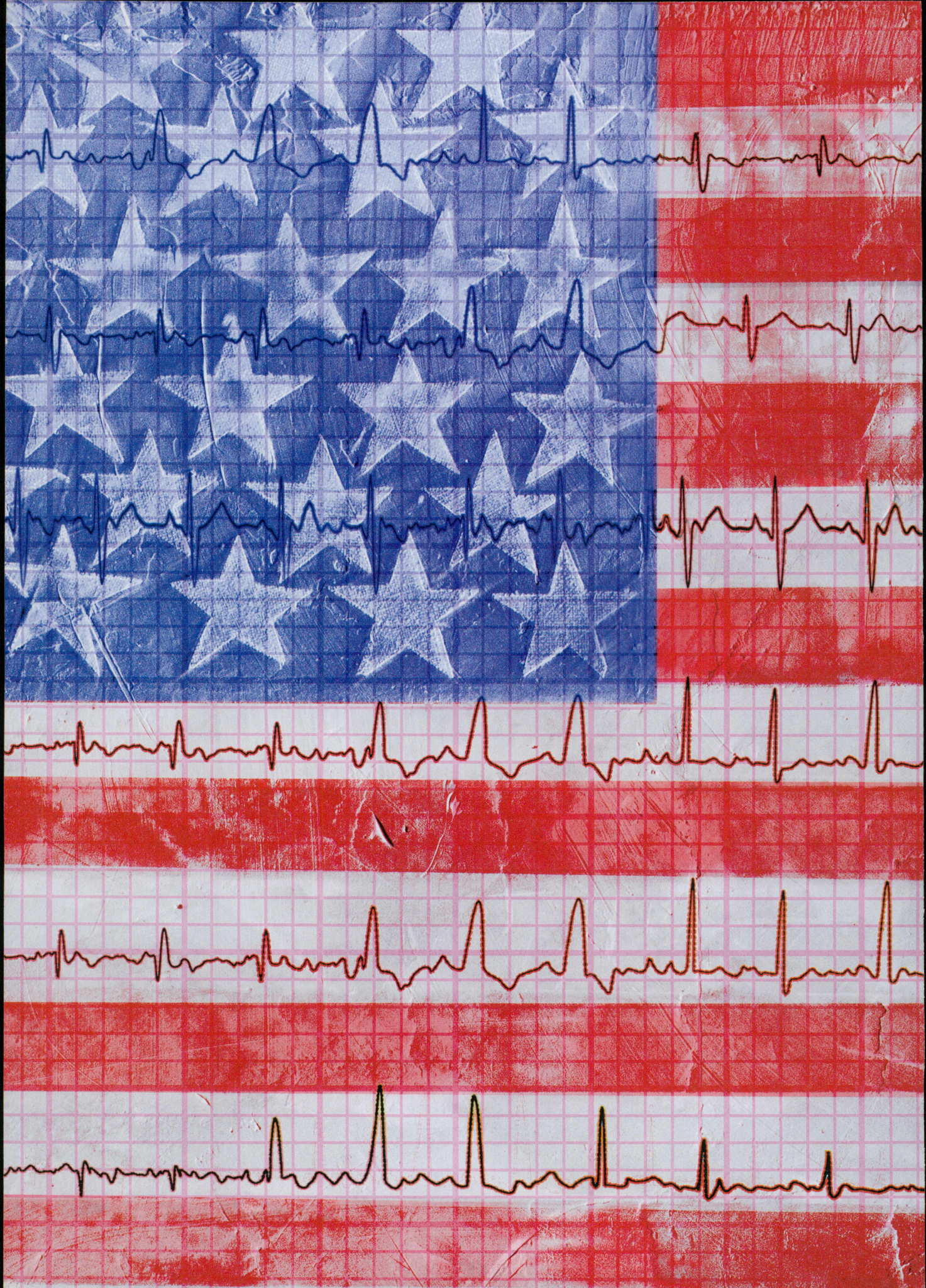
DECLARATION
of Principles

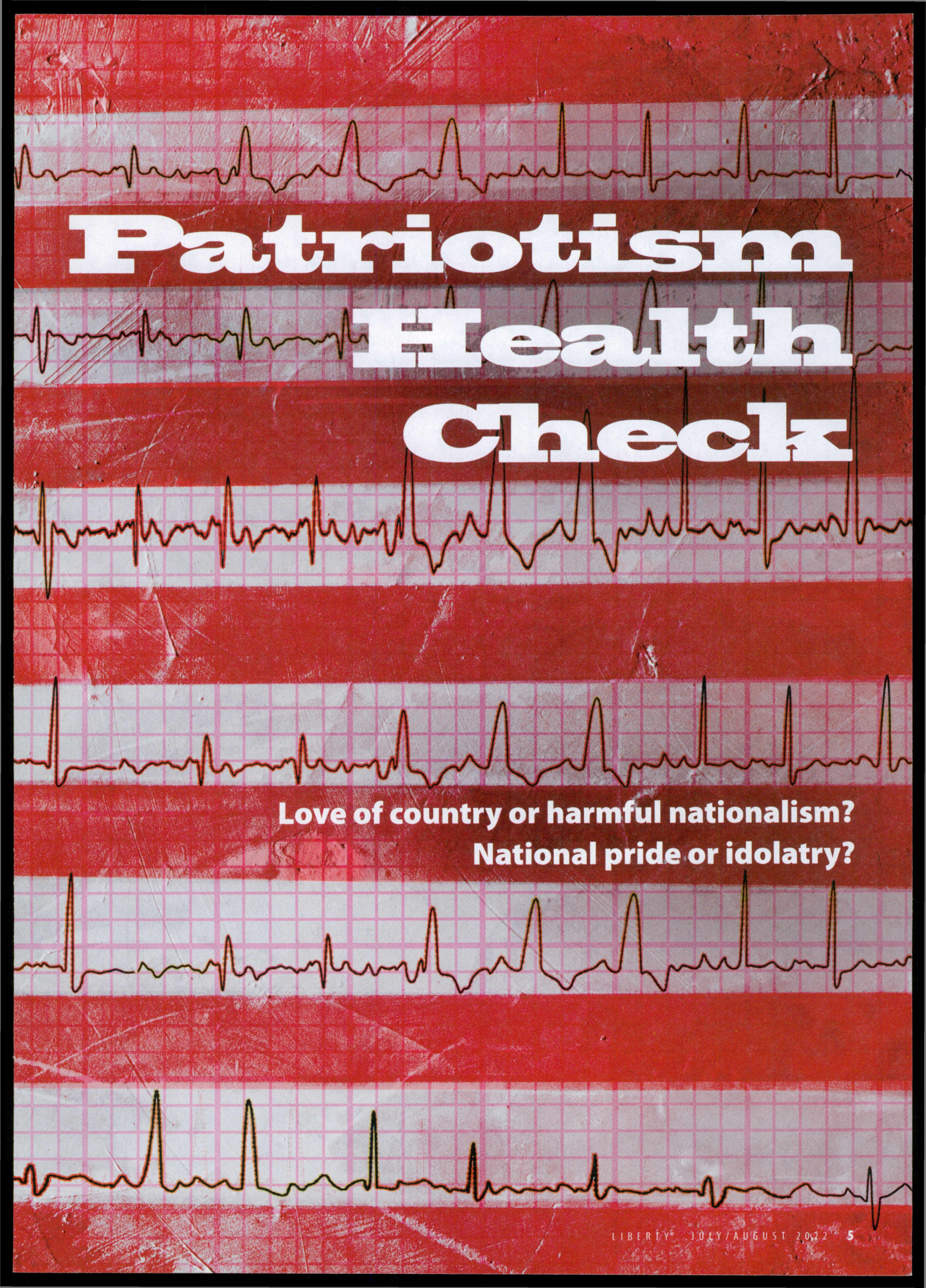
The God-given right of religious liberty is best exercised when church and state are separate.

Government is God's agency to protect individual rights and to conduct civil affairs; in exercising these responsibilities, officials are entitled to respect and cooperation.

Religious liberty entails freedom of conscience: to worship or not to worship; to profess, practice, and promulgate religious beliefs, or to change them. In exercising these rights, however, one must respect the equivalent rights of all others.

Attempts to unite church and state are opposed to the interests of each, subversive of human rights, and potentially persecuting in character; to oppose union, lawfully and honorably, is not only the citizen's duty but the essence of the golden rule—to treat others as one wishes to be treated.





Patriotism Health Check

**Love of country or harmful nationalism?
National pride or idolatry?**



BY THOMAS S. KIDD

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT HUNT

**Amid all the
political
acrimony of
recent years,
no concept
has been the
target of more
debate and
fury than
“Christian
nationalism.”**

A steady stream of books and articles have blamed Christian nationalists for all manner of ills in America, ills that culminated in the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol by supporters of then-President Trump. Some of the rioters were conspicuously carrying Bibles or Christian-themed signs. But for observers troubled by the Christian nationalist phenomenon, there remains an inescapable truth: all people, including Christians, live in nations. Humans have occasionally created transnational or supranational entities, too, such as empires, or the European Union, or the United Nations. But for everyday people around the world, living in a nation is the default mode of political existence. This doesn't necessarily mean that a nation composed mostly of Christians is a "Christian nation," but it does mean that Christians have no option but to reckon with their national identity. At least in a geographic sense, we're all nationalists.

A Necessary Gift

If national identity is inescapable, what does healthy Christian nationalism or patriotism entail? This is not the place to unpack an entire theology of nationalism. But the Bible

assumes that nations exist and that God granted people national identities after sin entered the world. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, they and their children would presumably have lived in a God-ruled earthly kingdom, not in particular nations. But in Genesis 10 we see the peoples of the earth dividing into “nations” after Noah’s flood. In Genesis 11 God “confounded” people’s languages as a response to their prideful sin in building the Tower of Babel. Divided languages further differentiated the nations of the earth, as a common language is a typical feature of a nation. (The French speak French, the English speak English, and so on.) Biblically, nations are the result of human sin, but they are also part of God’s common grace to all humans. Nations, and the governments that rule over them, are God’s gifts to rebellious humans who have made a mess of God’s creation. Nations are contingent creations, but given their divine origins, they *can* be good things.

Nations are not inherently bad, yet they are a divine accommodation to human frailty. This tension provides a helpful perspective on a Christian view of a nation. Nations can aid human flourishing if they embrace the common good and do not become objects of undue reverence. America’s tradition of religious liberty, for example, suggests a way that healthy nationalism or patriotism works. Americans are rightly proud of their heritage of religious liberty, as exemplified in the First Amendment. But we should remember that in our imperfect national history, religious freedom has often been denied and/or contested. Religious liberty must serve the common good of all faiths and people of no faith, or it is not real freedom. For Christians and people of other faiths, the ultimate purpose of religious liberty is to worship God (or not) in spirit and truth. Doing this transcends the ephemeral priorities of a nation. A proper view of religious liberty reminds us that our commitment to God far exceeds our commitment to the nation.

Religious nationalism goes wrong when one’s religion and spiritual allegiance becomes inextricably tied to the nation. In other words, we err when we conflate the kingdom of God with a transitory nation. In our frailty and shortsightedness, however, this is a tempting thing to do. We see the trappings of the temporal nation all around us, and it is easy to forget that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Citizens of any nation could potentially fall into undue or idolatrous forms of nationalism. But undue nationalism is a special temptation for citizens of powerful nations. Since World War II, America has been the most powerful nation on earth. We should not be surprised that some American citizens’ patriotism has at times turned into a wrongheaded form of Christian, or at least religious, nationalism.

Divine Appointment?

The temptations of Christian nationalism are most acute in times of war. Indeed, war is the great historic engine of civil religion, or the blending of devotion to God and the state. War demands national unity. The immense sacrifices of war, especially the deaths of soldiers, sometimes turn citizens’ thoughts to reverential thoughts about the nation itself. America has obviously had its share of wars. The nation was born in war (the American Revolution), it had a “new birth of freedom” in the Civil War, and it has spent the past two decades engaged in the amorphous but costly “war on terror,” galvanized by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Other countries have also embraced versions of Christian nationalism, especially Protestant or Catholic countries that once possessed far-reaching empires, such as Spain or Britain. From the time of Columbus’s explorations in the New World in 1492, a number of European nations saw their empire’s growth and victories in war as a fulfillment of God’s purposes in the world. Colonists in America had a deep providential attachment to the British nation in the early 1700s, before they ever conceived of America as a separate, non-British “nation.”

When America improbably won its war against the powerful British military and secured independence as a nation in the Treaty of Paris in 1783, even the more skeptically minded Founders turned to providential rhetoric to explain what was happening. Many recalled the prophetic questions in Isaiah 66:8: “Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once?” Yes, it seemed that a new nation had been “born at once,” according to God’s plan. Advocating for the new Constitution in *The Federalist*, the normally reticent James Madison stated baldly that it was impossible “for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in [the founding] a finger of that Almighty Hand which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical stages of the revolution.”¹ For traditional Christians, there could be no question whether God had sovereignly permitted the creation of the American nation. But did this new nation somehow play a special role in God’s plans for humanity, the way that biblical Israel once had? The answer to this question was less clear.

From the American Revolution forward, war and other national trials have always drawn out discussions regarding God’s plans for America, and America’s allegedly redemptive role in the world. Even lesser-known conflicts such as the Mexican War of the 1840s raised such questions. It was the looming U.S. war with Mexico that prompted the New York journalist John O’Sullivan in 1845 to coin the phrase “manifest destiny,”² referring to the idea that God planned

We should not causally assume that God has a unique providential role for America above all other nations of the earth.

for Americans to “overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” O’Sullivan was speaking specifically about the annexation of Texas, much of which had been part of northern Mexico as of the mid-1830s. Critics of the Mexican War saw it as craven territorial aggression in order to expand the “Cotton Kingdom” of Southern slave masters. But defenders of the war typically saw it as an unfolding of the providential plan of God for the nation and for North America. Such beliefs have always made the nation more willing to sacrifice lives and treasure in times of war and have added to the sacred aura of the nation itself.

This interpretation may sound cynical, and certain politicians have always been willing to exploit Christian nationalist rhetoric for political advantage. But there are also times in which religious nationalist language truly has been unifying, and it has seemed entirely appropriate to the needs of the national moment. One such moment was the civil religious rhetoric during World War II, rhetoric that crested in 1944 during the D-Day invasion. Christian pacifists, of course, would view no war as a good thing. But few would disagree about the abominable nature of the Nazi regime that the Allies defeated in World War II. Again, American and Allied leaders framed the invasion of Europe in 1944 as a cause blessed by God. General Dwight Eisenhower told the Allied Expeditionary Force on D-Day that they were about “to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months.” Echoing John Winthrop’s “Model of Christian Charity” oration to Massachusetts colonists in 1630, and Christ’s words in the Gospels about the city on a hill, Eisenhower assured the troops that “the eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. . . . Let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.”³ These were civil religious sentiments that united a wide range of Americans to support—and pray for—the Allied campaign to liberate Europe from Nazi tyranny

Seeking Wisdom

Most causes do not feature such moral clarity as the campaign to defeat the Nazis. Were the American wars in Vietnam, or in Iraq in 2003, morally justified? Historians and theologians will continue to debate such matters, but the use of Christian or religious nationalist rhetoric during these wars could not paper over the serious political and ethical dilemmas raised by the wars themselves. Who could forget George W. Bush’s assurances to the nation in his

address to Congress after the September 11 attacks? “Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them,” Bush declared. “We’ll meet violence with patient justice—assured of the rightness of our cause, and confident of the victories to come. In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America.”⁴ Few grieving Americans, including me, objected in that moment to Bush’s nationalist sentiments. Yet after enduring two decades of wars with highly equivocal outcomes—including the war in Afghanistan, which had provided a haven for Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden—Bush’s confidence about God’s intentions and plans seems more questionable.

In light of this history, Christians must find a wise balance in their view of the nation. First, we do in fact live in nations. Even Christian groups such as the Amish, who largely avoid entanglement with the nation, are profoundly shaped by their withdrawal from its affairs. Reckoning with our national identity is an experience common to humankind. Second, it is fitting for Christians to appreciate and express gratitude for good things in their nation’s tradition. American Christians can readily admire aspects of their national history, such as our heritage of religious liberty, and our founding doctrine of all people’s equality before God. But we should not causally assume that God has a unique providential role for America above all other nations of the earth. Our nation may be powerful, and we may love it, but that does not necessarily mean it is God’s redemptive vessel in providential history.

¹ James Madison, “Concerning the Difficulties of the Convention in Devising a Proper Form of Government,” *Daily Advertiser*, January 11, 1788, retrieved May 5, 2022, from The Avalon Project, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 37, <https://bit.ly/3k1bn>.

² John O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (New York: 1845), vol. 17, pp. 5, 6, 9, 10, retrieved May 5, 2022, from The American Yawp Reader, <https://bit.ly/3ykAjC2>.

³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Order of the Day,” delivered June 6, 1944, retrieved May 5, 2022, from American Rhetoric Online Speech Bank, <https://bit.ly/3MTPLci>.

⁴ George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” delivered September 20, 2001, retrieved May 5, 2022, from George W. Bush White House Archives, <https://bit.ly/3LST6Z9>.

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Religion on the Court

Are the religious beliefs of Supreme Court justices relevant? According to the U.S. Constitution, which forbids religious tests for public office, the answer is an unequivocal No. Yet, historically, religion *did* play at least an unofficial role in the choice of justices. From 1894 onward, presidents generally reserved a “Catholic seat” on the Court—ensuring the perception of representation for this religious minority on the nation’s highest court. From 1916, the same practice was followed for a “Jewish seat.”

With the most recent appointment of Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson (a nondenominational Protestant), the Court now has two justices who are Protestant, one who is Jewish, and six who are Roman Catholic.

But what would the Court look like if it reflected the current religious demographics of America?¹

- According to Gallup, 22% of the adult population identifies as Catholic, as opposed to the 67% Catholic representation on the court.
- Two percent of the population identifies as Jewish (Justice Kagan, who is Jewish, represents 11% of the nine justices).
- The biggest gap, though, comes in terms of Protestants. About 45% of Americans are non-Catholic Christian, or Protestant, compared with 22% Protestant representation on the court.
- Completely absent from the court are the so-called nones—those who say they have no formal religious identity. About 21% of the U.S. population are nones (and another 3% don’t give a response when asked about their religion). This would translate to about two out of nine justices.

¹ All data from Frank Newport, “The Religion of the Supreme Court Justices,” Gallup.com, April 8, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3yPnDDn>.



BY KEVIN THERIOT
ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL GLENWOOD

A California law gives a new spin to the Hippocratic Oath to “do no harm.”

A Duty to Kill?

The test results come back, and they're not good. Your doctor explains that the cancer has advanced and that the chemo and radiation can do nothing, at this point, to help you. You probably have less than six months left to live, and only two options, really, from which to choose.

The first, palliative care, will make your remaining time as painless and comfortable as possible. The second, on the other hand, can make the remaining time as short as you choose it to be.

Option two is known as physician-assisted suicide, and if you'd like more information—a contact number, a recommendation or referral—just ask. Your doctor will be happy to provide that for you.

Only, what if your doctor isn't? What if he or she believes in the sanctity of life, takes seriously their medical oath to do no harm, and perhaps even holds out hope for an as-yet-undiscovered treatment or untried medication or unexpected circumstance that could extend your life or even improve your condition? What if, in short, your doctor doesn't want to offer you suicide as the means to your end?

If you live in California, that's no longer your doctor's decision to make.

California is one of 10 U.S. states, and the District of Columbia, that allow physicians by law to recommend and prescribe poison to commit assisted suicide if a patient is deemed to have a short time left to live. The California law also requires doctors to document a patient's request for assisted suicide, provide them information about it, and, if necessary, refer the patient to another physician better equipped or more willing to help bring a life to its end.

In January, amendments to the law went into effect that speed up and simplify a process first legalized in 2016 by the California legislature. Under the original law, patients wanting

to end their lives prematurely were required to verbally ask a physician to approve that request, wait at least 15 days before asking another physician to agree, and then submit a third request, in writing, signed, dated, and witnessed by two adults.

Under the 2022 revisions, however, eligible patients no longer need submit the written request, and the waiting period between oral requests has been reduced from 15 to two days.

Why the rush?

Legislators who have pressed for doctor-assisted suicide—like state senator Susan Talamantes Eggman, who pushed through the original bill six years ago—have positioned themselves as agents of mercy, granting the gravely, hopelessly ill “the peace to be able to die on their own terms,” as Eggman says.¹ In their view, speeding up the process just spares suffering patients that much more pain.

The new changes to the law purport to protect the dignity of terminal patients who may be depressed by the prospect of increased suffering, diminished independence, or becoming a serious burden to their loved ones. And, in that sense, the law seems aligned with the sentiments of a growing number of Americans.

During the past three decades, Gallup polling has indicated that not less than 64 percent—and as many as 75 percent—of Americans appear to support medical efforts that would “end the [terminal] patient’s life by some painless means.” The numbers run lower when people are asked about allowing doctors to help patients “commit suicide.”²

But opponents—including many medical professionals—contend that the law is as ethically slippery as a water park slide.

Coerced Participation

Dr. Leslee Cochrane is a full-time hospice physician in Murrieta, California. He told me he still recalls his first personal experience with death and dying, when his grandfather suffered a major stroke and lapsed into a coma during Cochrane’s sophomore year in college. “I remember vividly the anguish our family felt,” Cochrane said, “as we sat helplessly outside the intensive-care unit over the ensuing weeks, watching and waiting.” Eventually his grandfather died of complications related to the stroke.

“I know and understand what it feels like to have a loved one who is facing a terminal illness,” Cochrane said. “That experience was a significant factor in my decision to become a medical doctor and has given me tremendous

empathy for those in similar situations.” His empathy and experience have led him to oppose this California law.

“I have been practicing medicine for more than 34 years—the past 18 as a full-time hospice physician,” he said. “In that role, I regularly make house calls and deal with complex pain and symptom management issues for terminally ill patients. I have provided end-of-life care for thousands of patients with a variety of conditions.

“In extreme cases, where the pain or symptoms are severe and difficult to control,” Cochrane said, “patients have occasionally required high doses of medications to control pain or agitation, and those medications may cause sedation. But there has never been a situation in which prescribing an assisted-suicide drug, intended to cause death, was necessary to control pain or symptoms.”

Cochrane—who is a member of the Christian Medical and Dental Associations, which is suing to challenge the law in federal court—says the 2016 version of the law was “written to ensure right-of-conscience protections for physicians like me, who do not wish to violate our consciences, morality, and professional ethics by participating in physician-assisted suicide.”

Under those protections, Cochrane says, participation in the law was strictly voluntary. Since the hospice where he works does not offer physician-assisted suicide, he never had to offer that option to the patients he provided with end-of-life care. Patients who wanted to access physician-assisted suicide could do so by contacting another provider, and neither Cochrane nor any of his colleagues had to violate their conscience or medical ethics.

The new version of the law changed all of that significantly. If asked, doctors are now required—whatever their personal concerns—to discuss, document, and forward a request for an assisted-suicide drug to a participating physician.

Cochrane and the Christian Medical and Dental Associations are not the only ones to balk at the change. Even before the current law was signed by California governor Gavin Newsom, two legislative committees raised concerns that the revisions would force doctors to participate in assisted suicide. Both the California Hospital Association and the California Medical Association have expressed the same objections. And the American Medical Association’s Code of Ethics says assisted suicide is “incompatible with the physician’s role

as healer [and] would be difficult or impossible to control.”³

“They recognize, correctly,” Cochrane says, “that the new law mandates that a doctor take steps to help the patient commit suicide—even as it claims physicians will not be ‘participating’ in the process.”

Any physicians who decline to give their patients a referral when asked can be subject to civil or criminal penalties—and could potentially lose their license. That means such doctors as Cochrane are being forced by their government to choose between violating the law or ignoring their own deeply held personal convictions.

Standing for Life

Those convictions can take several forms: medical, legal, and religious.

For one thing, the doctor-assisted-suicide law ignores the extraordinary advances in palliative care made available in recent years. Hospices and oncologists are now able to manage the pain of their patients in ways that allow them to live out their final days with dignity and minimal physical suffering.

Doing so not only underscores the value of every available moment of life itself, but offers an example of courage and strength to those who cherish and care for a person in their final days.

That, of course, assumes that the terminal prognosis is correct. Doctors continually marvel at the resilience, endurance, and even recuperation of those they’ve had to confront with a seemingly abbreviated time to live. Assisted suicide leaves no room for the mercies of God or the determination of individuals to surmount their predicted fate.

But it does allow for those who might profit from a suffering person’s early demise. By law, assisted suicide has no effect on the validity of the patient’s life insurance policy—an extraordinary loophole for those with an incentive to speed death along.

And, once a patient commits physician-assisted suicide, state law requires the cause of death be identified as their current, terminal condition, regardless of what else may ultimately contribute to their demise. This is, again, an unhealthy incentive and unwholesome opportunity for an interested party with wrong motivations.

The concerns, however, run considerably deeper than that.

The cultural embrace of assisted suicide also underscores the growing conviction of our

society that the old, infirm, and vulnerable are an unnecessary burden on the rest of us—and so best disposed of as quickly and efficiently as possible. Life, a surging chorus of voices assures us, is only for those vital and viable enough to make a tangible contribution to society.

Since it’s increasingly the government that determines what makes a contribution “tangible,” this is a point of view that makes all of our lives more expendable.

The doctor-assisted-suicide law is a threat to the civil rights of medical professionals, compelling them to set aside their deepest personal beliefs simply because they’re physicians. And it’s a threat to the best interests of the patient, forcing doctors to compromise their greatest asset: a compassionate commitment to life. Heroic measures, after all, are hardly necessary for someone who’s already made up their mind to die.

The law is not even in the best interest of California itself, as Dr. Cochrane points out. In the wake of COVID-19, the state is facing a physician shortage, with the need for health-care workers greater than ever. Forcing physicians to choose between violating their conscience or leaving California to practice won’t enhance recruiting or improve medical care for the state’s citizens, whether terminal patients or not.

All of these factors are considerations in a new lawsuit filed by Alliance Defending Freedom against California’s doctor-assisted-suicide law—a law that contradicts Hippocrates’ primary admonition to do no harm.⁴ It’s a law that further paves the already-too-smooth path to legalized euthanasia. And it pushes the “right to die”—already rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court⁵—ever closer to a “duty to die.”

Perhaps some of the citizens and legislators of California have no problem venturing down that treacherous path. But the state’s physicians should not be compelled to do the same.

¹ Patrick McGreevy, “California Lawmakers Vote to Speed Up State Process for Terminally Ill to End Their Lives,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 10, 2021.

² Michael Cook, “Most Americans Support Some Form of the ‘Right to Die’: Gallup Poll,” June 2, 2018, BioEdge.org.

³ American Medical Association Code of Ethics: Physician-Assisted Suicide, <https://bit.ly/3xZgm3z>.

⁴ You can find out more details about this case on the ADF website, <https://bit.ly/36YVD5s>.

⁵ *Vacco v. Quill*, 521 U.S. 793 (1997).

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LISA VULOVICH / ISTOCK

INTERVIEW

Why Our Story Matters: Interview with Philip Gorski

**What is the story of our nation?
How did it begin, and what is its
destiny? What values define what
it means to be American?
And does it matter how we
answer those questions?**

In their recently released book, *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* (Oxford University Press: April 1, 2022), Philip Gorski and Samuel Perry explore what they call a “deep story” that today wields immense power within American culture and politics. It’s a story that says America is a specially favored nation—one with a God-given purpose. It’s a story that says America is for “us” and not for outsiders—socialists, Muslims, atheists, secular folk, or anyone else who doesn’t

share in the common heritage of Christian America.

Both Gorski and Perry are nationally known authors and sociologists of religion. Together they've produced a succinct, readable, and profoundly important book about the phenomenon known as White Christian nationalism.

Bettina Krause, editor of *Liberty* magazine, recently spoke with Professor Gorski, chair of the Department of Sociology at Yale University, about what drives this particular understanding of American identity.

Bettina Krause: *As someone who has researched and written so much through the years about religion in America, were you surprised by what happened at the Capitol on January 6 last year, and the prominence of Christian symbols and language?*

Philip Gorski: I was horrified, but I wasn't surprised by the events of January 6. Both Sam Perry and I were already well along with this book by then. I actually started writing about religious nationalism almost 20 years ago, back when only scholars were interested in talking about it.

Sam and I had warned many people there would be violence during the period between Election Day and Inauguration Day, especially if Trump lost. So we weren't surprised by what took place.

But the events of that day did suddenly make many people, who were outside that subculture, suddenly aware of this thing called Christian nationalism, which had been completely invisible to them before. For many conservative White Christians, it was also a bit of a wake-up call when they saw what was being done in their name.

Krause: *What makes someone a "White Christian nationalist"?*

Gorski: There probably aren't that many people out there who would say, "Yes, I'm a White Christian nationalist." Who would want to adopt that label for themselves?

But what we're talking about is a way of seeing the world and a way of understanding our place within the world—a way that many conservative, White, native-born Christians in America embrace to one degree or another. They see themselves and America in terms of a deep story, which runs something like this: *America was founded as a Christian nation (by*

White Christians). It's based on biblical principles (Protestant principles). The United States is powerful and prosperous because it's a chosen nation or a blessed nation. Today that power and prosperity are threatened—by immigrants, by non-Christians, by people who somehow don't belong, by internal enemies who are in some way violating America's moral code.

That is the deep story. And so you might say, *Well, OK, sure, that's interesting, but is there really anything biblical or Christian about this story?* And that's a theological question I don't really feel prepared to answer, but I can say that this story does draw on a certain understanding of Christian Scripture.

Krause: *So "Christian" in the context of White Christian nationalism isn't necessarily talking about the Christian faith, as such? But it is equating Christianity to a particular social identity?*

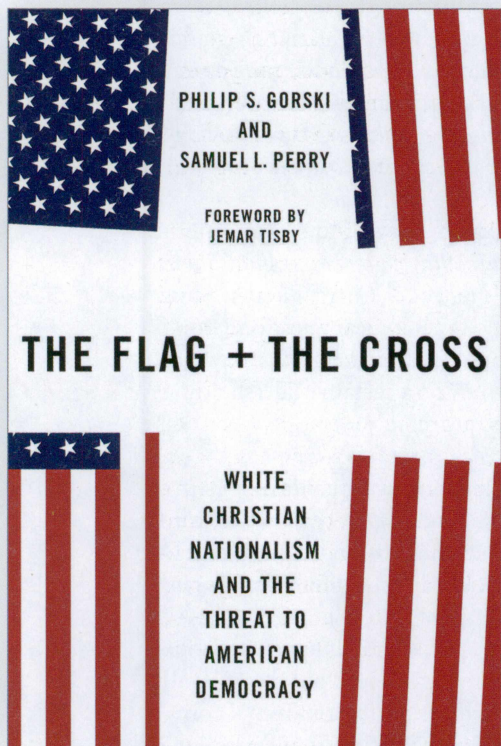
Gorski: Well, the way I would put it is this: all expressions of Christianity are always going to be entangled with a particular cultural context, right? That's inevitable. But the important question is, What is the dominant part of that Christianity? And do people recognize the tension between the two?

White Christian nationalism is a form of cultural captivity. That is, where Christianity has been captured by culture to the extent that people don't perceive the difference, or the tension, between the two anymore.

Perhaps what's distinctive about the United States, and what has made it more vulnerable to Christian nationalism, is that so many forms of contemporary Christianity are nondenominational. They're not embedded within a particular theological tradition. Rather, they're often organized around a single charismatic leader who's the final arbiter on orthodoxy, so there's often no one who can step in and say, "This isn't historic Christianity anymore."

For example, I'm originally from Wheaton, Illinois, which as we know is the home of Wheaton College, one of the most prestigious evangelical liberal arts colleges in the country. In early 2021 the faculty there issued a very clear statement distancing themselves from all forms of Christian nationalism and White supremacy. But they have no authority over, say, a megachurch in Atlanta or Charleston. Certainly not in the same way as a Catholic bishop in France or an Anglican Church leader

In White Christian nationalism, Christianity has been captured by culture.



“I feel slightly more optimistic now than I did a few months ago. And ironically, and sadly, it is in part because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.”

in England, who could simply say, “That is not a true expression of historic faith.”

And so, this reality makes it easier in the United States for the cultural capture of Christianity to take place.

Krause: *In your book you discuss the impact of changing demographics—America is becoming less White and less Christian. How does this reality play into White Christian nationalism?*

Gorski: This feels very threatening to a lot of people, and it’s a reason many conservative White Christians in the United States have a sense of being persecuted or oppressed. Of course, this is clearly not what’s happening when you compare it with the persecution of Christians in the Middle East or North Africa, or parts of Asia!

But what they’re expressing, first and foremost, is a sense of vanishing cultural influence. They sense, also, that political control may slip from their grasp soon if they don’t do something to protect it. This has pushed some toward positions that are increasingly at odds with full-fledged democracy. It’s one of the reasons there are high levels of support for measures restricting voting, for instance, or for institutions such as the electoral college system, which tend to filter out the will of the majority. Counter-majoritarian institutions, as the political scientists call them.

Krause: *I’m curious about how Christianity and religion in general can positively impact American civic life. You wrote a book some years back, *American Covenant*, talking about “civil religion” and how religious themes and ideas are sometimes able to build consensus or solidarity within a pluralistic society. But how do you square that with what we’re talking about today? How do we find the balance?*

Gorski: I think it’s very tricky. I wrote a third book in between *American Covenant* and *The Flag and the Cross* called *American Babylon*. The subtitle was: *Christianity and Democracy Before and After Trump*. One of the arguments that I made there was that Christianity and democracy have always had an ambivalent relationship.

If you look for it, you can see ways in which Christianity prefigures what we understand by democracy, or shapes what we understand by democracy. Just one example: the development

of the idea of fundamental human equality is historically linked to the idea that all human beings are created in the image of God. This allows for the idea of representation, right? The idea that a group of people can send a representative to a body that will make decisions.

And there are many other ways in which you can see democracy being prefigured by Christianity. But we need to also remember that, for most of its history, Christianity and Christians made peace with hierarchical, inegalitarian, unrepresentative, and authoritative institutions.

Your point, though, is one of the challenges we have today. How can we find a way to maintain democratic solidarity in societies that are deeply pluralistic? That's not easy. To find a common story and common inspiration. Especially when today the stories of Christianity are no longer familiar to many American citizens—which is something I find in my own teaching.

Krause: *Your book touches on various illiberal trends that are taking hold in other countries—Hungary, Poland, Russia, India, and so on—where populism becomes allied with religion and supports a more authoritarian style of government. And then you asked a question: Could it happen here? It's a question that, a few years ago, would have sounded ludicrous. But is it? Could something like that happen here?*

Gorski: Absolutely. I don't have a doubt in my mind that it could happen here, and I think the next five or eight years will be a crucial watershed moment. I will say, though, that I feel slightly more optimistic now than I did a few months ago. And ironically, and sadly, it is in part because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This has been a bit of a shock to many Americans, who are seeing what actual tyranny looks like. That tyranny isn't something such as being inconvenienced by wearing a mask or being asked to get vaccinated; the reality of tyranny is much more ferocious than that.

Krause: *What are the differences, in your mind, between patriotism and a Christian nationalistic worldview? How can we express pride in both our nation and our faith in ways that don't feed into unhealthy narratives?*

Gorski: It's important to say that you can be a

patriot without being a Christian nationalist. I personally draw a sharp distinction between nationalism and patriotism. Nationalism, for me, is above all about "blood, soil, and power." It's about our country being great in the world, it's about controlling groups that are not like us, whether that's inside or outside our borders.

But patriotism means pride in a particular set of political institutions or in a shared way of life. The blood, soil, and power kind of nationalism displays hostility toward outsiders and toward those who are perceived, internally, as enemies.

Whereas patriotism is potentially open and embracing of all those who support a shared way of life and particular set of values. In the context of the United States, that means supporting constitutional law and collective self-government. It also means, today, being committed to a multiracial culture and a multiracial form of democracy. This patriotism is welcoming to the stranger and affirms the equality of all people.

White Christian nationalism is opposed to precisely all those things.

Krause: *Your book relies heavily on research and on national survey data you collected, but I'm mindful that simply presenting facts doesn't necessarily change hearts and minds. Do you have any sense of what it could take to reach those who may have unknowingly taken on elements of a White Christian nationalist worldview?*

Gorski: There's work that people need to do within their own communities—within their own faith groups and their own personal networks. As you say, we can put up all the charts and graphs, and cite all the books and articles we want. But unless this message is coming from somebody you trust—and there's a lot of people out there who don't trust a Yale sociologist, and I totally understand that—it's just not going to get through.

There are already many serious and difficult conversations going on around the country right now. Sometimes those discussions just end in division, but I think sometimes they do lead to reflection and rethinking, and that's what we have to hope for right now.

But for this message to really have any meaningful effect, it has to be delivered by Christians to Christians, within Christian communities.

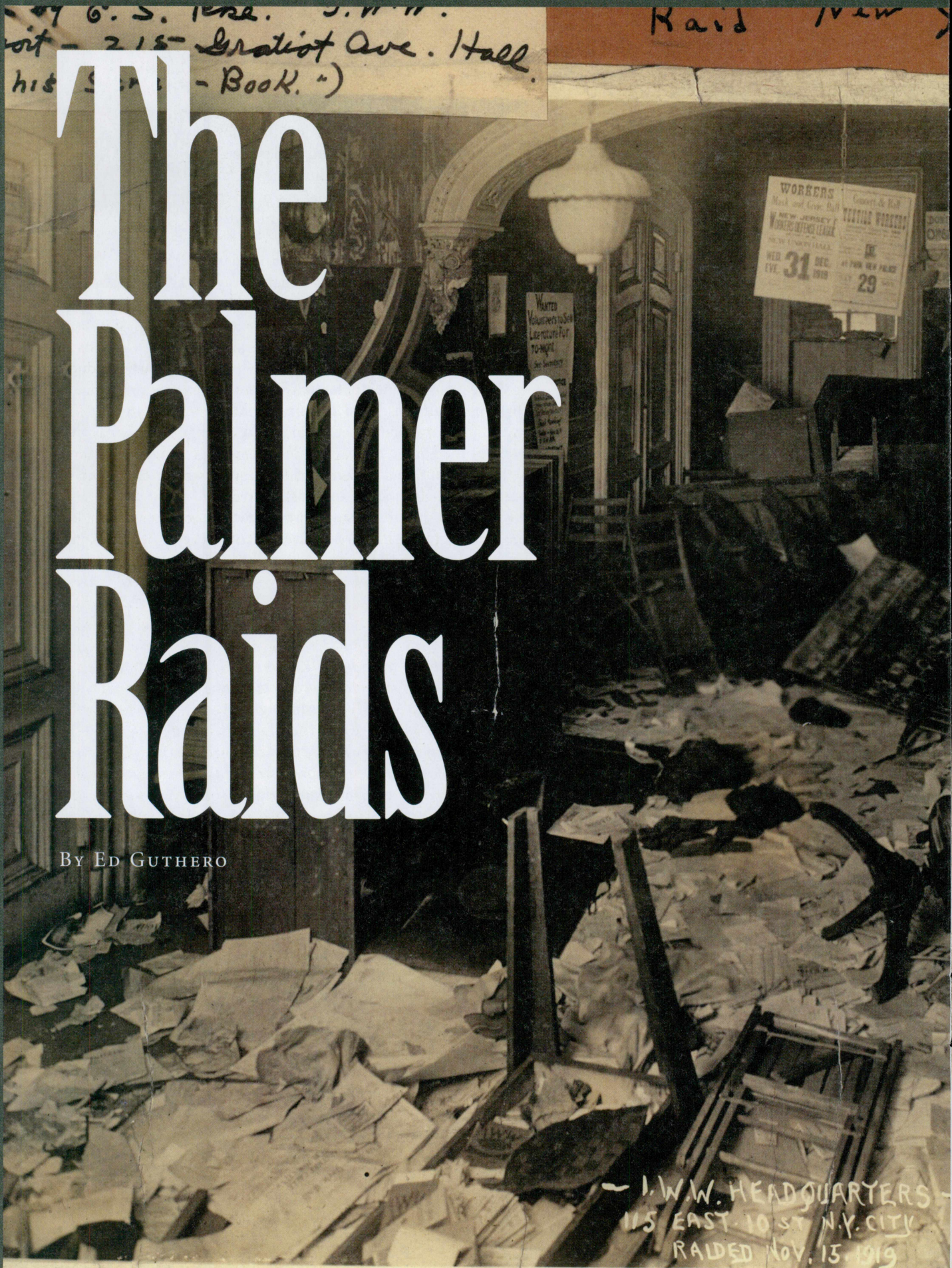
Patriotism means pride in a particular set of political institutions or in a shared way of life. But nationalism displays hostility toward outsiders

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Raid New

The Palmer Raids

BY ED GUTHERO



I.W.W. HEADQUARTERS
115 EAST 10 ST N.Y. CITY
RAIDED NOV. 15, 1919

... with ...



A tale of immigrants, free speech, and mass hysteria in the Land of the Free.

New York City, November 1919

A mathematics class is not typically a setting for subversion. Bespeckled teacher Michael Lavrowsky was busy conducting an algebra lesson for Russian immigrants at Manhattan's Russian People's House. Then 50 years old, the studious Lavrowsky had applied for American citizenship, but his hopes and the tranquility of his classroom were about to be shattered.

Stunned students watched in horror as suddenly armed Department of Justice agents burst into the room. Confronting Lavrowsky, the agents proceeded to mercilessly beat the startled academic. Reeling under the blows, Lavrowsky staggered. The agents flung him down the stairs and resumed their assault. In a bizarre side detail, they had asked the teacher to remove his glasses before pounding him.

There were many people, mostly students, in the Russian People's House that evening. They were pushed and roughed up, and some were beaten as they were piled into the police wagons waiting at street level. Other students approaching the building were grabbed by agents and beaten in the street. Back inside, federal agents and police commenced to trash the place—smashing furniture and equipment, and scattering paper.

At Department of Justice headquarters agents interrogated those arrested about their connections to the Union of Russian Workers (URW), a labor union that rented space in the Russian People's House facility. The interrogators discovered that only 39 of the 200 people they had seized were members of the URW.

The union members were detained and the others released, including the battered Lavrowsky, who returned to his Bronx home after midnight. His wife and two children were startled to see him nursing a fractured head, shoulder, and foot.

Across town the majestic Statue of Liberty towered above New York harbor—a watchful symbol of hope to immigrants fleeing war-torn Europe and seeking a new start in America.

What had Lavrowsky, and the 200 others hauled off to the agency's New York headquarters that infamous night, done to deserve such treatment?



President Woodrow Wilson
with Attorney General
Mitchell Palmer

And what had triggered law-enforcement personnel to resort to thuggery?

This was the era of America's first "Red Scare." The nation was gripped by heightened suspicion of immigrants and labor unions, resulting in waves of raids, arrests, unsettling government surveillance, and deportations. Sometimes just having a foreign accent was enough to get someone arrested. According to Christopher Finan, author of *From the Palmer Raids to the Patriot Act: A History of the Fight for Free Speech in America*, the crackdown on suspected dissidents meant that "even simple criticism of the government was enough to send you to jail."¹

The architects of these mass raids and arrests were Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and his young assistant, J. Edgar Hoover. Palmer had taken leadership of the Department of Justice in early 1919 during a period of daunting challenges for both America and the world. Around the globe, nations were still suffering from the aftershocks of World War I. The recent Bolshevik Revolution in Russia added to the sense of political instability. The world was walking a tightrope of anxiety.

The Buildup

A toxic climate of suspicion and unrest was already growing in America well before Palmer became attorney general. The year 1917 would see accelerated government surveillance and

widespread fears that Russia's revolution would spread to North America.

These fears of a workers' revolution came at an already tense time for the nation. In April 1917 America had joined World War I on the side of the allies ranged against Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. President Woodrow Wilson's administration showed scant tolerance for any criticism of the government's wartime policies, and a growing distrust of immigrants added to an atmosphere of uneasiness. Americans were encouraged to monitor and report disloyalty among their neighbors. Vigilante groups formed, targeting German immigrants. Postmaster General Albert S. Bursleson moved aggressively to seize masses of anti-war or socialist literature. Members of labor unions, such as the high-profile Industrial Workers of the World—often called the "Wobblies"—were targeted by the government.

During 1917 and 1918 the Wilson administration passed the War Measures Act, the Espionage Act, and the Sedition Act—legislation that enabled sweeping surveillance and prosecution of dissenters or perceived subversives. Under the Espionage Act 2,168 people were indicted and 1,055 were convicted.

Individual freedom of speech also came under heavy assault. Case in point: Rose Pastor Stokes, a socialist, was charged and convicted under the Espionage Act after writing a letter to a Kansas City newspaper editor defending her right to oppose the war. "I am for the people, while the government is for the profiteers," she wrote.² Socialist Eugene Debs, who ran for president five times, also spoke out against the war and found himself with a 10-year prison sentence. In addition, devout Quakers and others applying for conscientious-objector status were conscripted regardless and often treated harshly.

Though World War I was soon to end, fear of a Bolshevik-style upheaval and distrust of immigrants remained high in the nation's consciousness. By 1919, the table was set for new Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and the raids that would bear his name.

Crackdown

In retrospect, Palmer seemed an unlikely candidate to lead such a notorious crusade. He was a lawyer and three-term Pennsylvania congressman; a Quaker who supported compassionate causes such as tariff reform, women's suffrage, and the abolishment of child labor.

By 1912 Palmer was a key player at the Democratic National Convention, and his influence helped Woodrow Wilson secure the party's presidential nomination. Wilson won the presidency, eventually asking Palmer to become a

member of his Cabinet and serve as secretary of war. Palmer, a pacifist, turned down the offer.

In 1917, however, Wilson appointed Palmer to the post of alien property custodian and, with the world engulfed in war, Palmer began a series of search-and-seize raids on property owned by German aliens residing in America. His expansive use of power and dubious investigation methods attracted some criticism.

In the three years following 1917, a deadly nationwide flu pandemic, a string of domestic bombings, and rising labor unrest all served to increase public anxiety. In 1919 alone there were more than 3,600 worker strikes across the nation. This acute tension between industrial workers and employers fueled fears of an imminent Russian-style revolution that would attempt to overthrow the government. According to Finan, employers conflated unionists with Communists, yet these demonstrations “were prompted not by political ideology but by economic issues.” High inflation had accompanied a dramatic rise in unemployment because of the loss of wartime jobs.

Such was the climate when Palmer took over the Department of Justice in 1919. The situation became personal for the new attorney general in early June when an anarchist’s bomb destroyed the front of Palmer’s home. The bomber tripped over a wire and accidentally blew himself up as well. Shortly afterward, two people were killed by a mail bomb sent to a New York legislator. An alert postal clerk later thwarted a mail bomb plot involving 36 explosive packages sent to government and business officials. Newspaper headlines took on an increasingly alarmist tone, and the new attorney general felt pressure to act.

As a congressman, Palmer had a history of supporting civil liberties, and he was a late-comer to the anti-Communist cause. Soon, however, he became a zealous crusader against radicals and “leftist” organizations.

The earlier wartime enactments of the Espionage Act and the Sedition Act combined with congressional internal security appropriations paved the way for Palmer’s agents to commence their series of raids on the offices of Communist, socialist, and anarchist organizations, as well as labor unions. The agents cast their nets wide. Too wide, as unfolding events would soon reveal.

There is a vast difference between criminal acts committed by violent fringe groups and the First Amendment-protected activities of intellectual anarchists, dissenters, workers, or labor advocates. Yet individual rights become vulnerable when public fears fuel stereotyping and generalizations. There was little public

opposition when Palmer and Hoover set in motion their wave of mass arrests.

On the same fateful November night that Michael Lavrowsky suffered his beating in Manhattan, Department of Justice agents arrested more than 1,000 people in 11 American cities. In December 249 people, including the charismatic American radical Emma Goldman, were placed on the U.S.S. *Buford*—a worn-down vessel dubbed the “Soviet Ark”—and unceremoniously deported to Russia.

Shortly before her arrest, Goldman, a long-time U.S. resident, had finished a prison term for opposing the war. At her deportation hearing, she defended her right to free speech, claiming the government was making a terrible mistake by “confusing conformity with security.” Goldman argued that “the free expression of the hopes and aspirations of a people is the greatest and only safety in a sane society.”³

The Peak

The Palmer Raids shifted into an even higher gear, and on January 2, 1920, a wave of arrests targeted more than 30 American cities. Agents smashed down doors and dragged people from their beds. The number of arrests greatly exceeded the number of arrest warrants that had been issued. An estimated 6,000 people were taken into custody in a single day—the largest mass arrest in U.S. history.

Attorney General Palmer heralded the raids as a great success, but questions had begun to arise about the methods and legalities of his crusade. A group of prominent lawyers issued a public denouncement of Palmer and his raids. Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis Freeland Post believed innocent people were being deported, and he ordered an investigation into the January arrests. He found that the raids “failed to support evidence of violent subversion among targeted groups” and he canceled more than 1,500 deportation orders.

Undaunted, Palmer became convinced that a Bolshevik-style revolution was about to take place in America, and that 300,000 Communists were already residing within the country. Palmer, widely believed to have presidential ambitions, was positioning himself as the protector of law and order. He announced that he had uncovered a communist plot to unleash a revolution within the United States, which would occur on May 1, 1920.

As the date approached, public apprehension grew. In New York five judges, known to be socialists, were summarily thrown out of office. Some states called up additional National Guard units in anticipation of impending chaos.

But the first of May came and went. When

An estimated 6,000 people were taken into custody in a single day—the largest mass arrest in U.S. history.



Emma Goldman's 1919 deportation photo



Immigrants, swept up in the Palmer Raids, await deportation proceedings at Ellis Island on January 3, 1920.

the Mayday revolution failed to appear, Palmer's star on the national horizon began to fall rapidly, along with his chances of being nominated as a presidential candidate in the upcoming election. His credibility was shattered.

The raids were halted, but what about the 800 people who had been deported from America's shores? What about the estimated 10,000 arrests and the violent raids that had marked this moment of national hysteria? What about the numerous immigrant workers and suspected "subversives" who had been detained, kept in custody for months without warrants, charges, or trials?

A Telling Image

There is a photograph, dated January 1920, of a large group of people who had been swept up in the infamous raids of that month. They are seated on long benches at Ellis Island, awaiting the completion of deportation proceedings. At first glance the shadows and the fedora hats of the day obscure the personalities of these men. But what became of them? Who were they? What about their families, jobs, and hopes of a new start in America?

Today, these raids are considered an example of extreme overreach—a blemish on America's regard for civil liberties and due process. Despite the mass roundups orchestrated by Palmer and Hoover, the individuals behind the June bombings were never found.

Of the thousands who were arrested but not deported, 80 percent were released without charges. The Palmer Raids, and the grand scale of the civil rights violations they involved, prompted the formation of the American Civil Liberties Union. In ensuing years Supreme Court decisions placed a burden on governments to prove a "clear and present danger" before infringing on protected speech.

The tragedy of the Palmer Raids reminds us of the immense value to our democracy of First Amendment protections—of speech, press, assembly, and petition. This period in our history also reminds us that in times of national uncertainty, when fear overpowers judgment and minorities are stereotyped and targeted, innocent people will be hurt amid misplaced zeal and confusion. When the hysteria, headlines, and politics fade, the damage to individual lives remains.

Today the lessons of the Palmer Raids should not be forgotten.

¹ Quoted in Olivia B. Waxman, "A Century Before Trump's ICE Raids, the U.S. Government Rounded Up Thousands of Immigrants. Here's What Happened," *Time*, July 18, 2019, retrieved May 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3MSJk9r>.

² David L. Hudson Jr., "Free Speech in Wartime," *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*, retrieved May 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3w0ai8c>

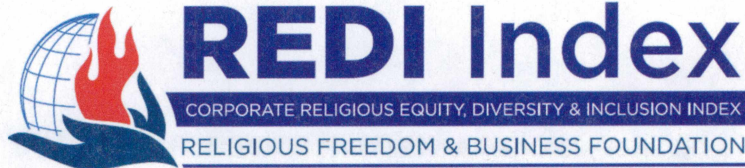
³ Christopher M. Finan, *From the Palmer Raids to the Patriot Act: A History of the Fight for Free Speech in America* (Boston: Beacon, 2007), p. 5.

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When Faith Goes to Work

Which are the most faith-friendly workplaces among America's Fortune 500 companies? According to the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, **American Airlines** tops this year's list as the company with policies and a work environment most accommodating to religious employees.¹ Other corporations scoring highly were Intel Corporation, Dell Technologies, PayPal, and Texas Instruments, which took the second through fifth spots. Equinix, Target, Tyson Foods, ALG, and Alphabet/Google rounded out the top ten. Other top faith-and-belief friendly companies are American Express, the Ford Motor Company, and Intuit.

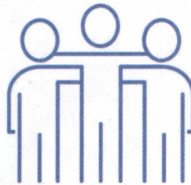
10 key measures are used to compile the REDI index.



10-question survey (max. 10 points each), plus bonus*
ReligiousFreedomAndBusiness.org/REDI-Survey



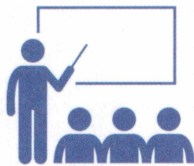
1. Religion is featured on company's main diversity page



2. Company sponsors faith and belief employee resource groups (ERGs)



3. Company shares best practices with other organizations



4. Religion is clearly addressed in diversity training



5. Company provides chaplains or other spiritual care

6. Attentive to how religion impacts stakeholders



7. Accommodates religious needs of employees



8. Clear procedures for reporting discrimination



9. Employees attend religious diversity conferences




10. Company matches employee donations to religious charities



BONUS

*Additional ways company promotes and supports religious diversity, equity and inclusion in workplaces & communities.

¹ All data from *Third Annual Corporate Religious Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (REDI) Index Report 2022*, Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, Washington, D.C., May 23, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3wG0fa0>.



Secularism

The image features a stylized target with three concentric red rings on a white background. The word "Secularism" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font across the center of the target. Several arrows are shown in various positions around the target, some pointing towards it and others away. The arrows have red and blue fletching and brown shafts. The target is supported by three brown legs. The overall style is graphic and minimalist.



The secular state—a hallmark of Western liberal democracy—is under attack from both ends of the political spectrum. What does this mean for religious freedom? A renowned Australian theologian investigates.

The Curious Case of a Misunderstood Idea

BY MICHAEL F. BIRD

Religious liberty is paramount for any multicultural democracy. That is because religious liberty interlocks with other liberties relating to freedoms of speech and association. The right to practice one's religion without government regulation, and the ability of people of faith to participate in society without discrimination, are both at the forefront of liberal democratic pluralism. Without religious liberty, there is no democracy, no liberal republic, no tolerance and inclusion.

In more recent years, however, religious liberty has come under fire as nothing more than a license to discriminate. In several jurisdictions throughout the world, notably America and Australia but elsewhere as well, LGBTI rights have been pitted against religious freedoms where religious communities hold certain positions on family, marriage, and sexuality. In many Western countries there has also been an increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. (It is worrying that the one thing that seems to unite both progressive activists and right-wing terrorists is that houses of worship should be targeted, whether by burning them down in protest, or shooting people in a church or mosque.) Or else, one need only look at how California Democrat Diane Feintstein openly derided the Catholic faith of then-Circuit Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett.¹

Unholy Mix-up

We are at a strange juncture when political progressives regard religion as the number-one hindrance to advancing their ideals and they therefore wish to reduce religious liberty to a matter of mere belief or something restricted to the pulpit. Yet religious liberty is, according to international standards, about "freedom in community," the ability to practice and promote one's faith in public, to run one's own charities and schools, all done without discrimination or fear of reprisal.

Just as concerning is that many think religious liberty should be secured not by robust and generous secularism, but by electing a Christian strongman who will restore the privileged position of Christianity in the country, resulting in an alarming syncretism of politics and religion.

Yet I submit to you that those who wish to reduce religious liberty, and those who want to secure it under the aegis of a right-leaning civil religion, lead us to equally precarious positions.

I earnestly believe that secularism, with the separation of church and state, is the solution—not the problem—when it comes to our recent debates about religion, law, and individual rights. Now, secularism often gets a bad rap, as if it's always inimical toward religion and people of faith. Yes, some secularists can be hostile toward religion, and they can have their own crusade to do everything they can to remove religion from the public square.

Secularism, however, is not just one thing, but several different types of things. The secularism of France is different from the secularism of Turkey, which is different again from the secularism of the United Kingdom, which is different from the secularism of China, which is different from the secularism of America. Even in America there are different types of secularism: Boston has a different form of secularism than Dallas! But what makes secularism a good thing is that it protects everyone against the pitfalls of both theocratic nationalism and the state regulation of religion. Secularism is how you keep religion out of government and government out of religion. It is a way to create spaces for people of all faiths and none.

On the one hand, secularism means that the government should be independent of, and neutral toward, religion. We do not want to live in a theocracy. We do not want to replace the President (for you Americans) or the British

queen (for us Australians) with a pope, Dalai Lama, ayatollah, or chief rabbi. The reasons should be obvious.

When you mix politics and religion, you get politics. A theocratic regime creates superficial disciples. In a theocracy people feign religion in order to access political power. If you want a Christian theocracy, or at least a privileged Christian religion in a nominally Christian state, then you have the problem of which Christian denomination gets to hold all the power and the privilege. History has shown us that some Christian leaders are willing to discriminate, coerce, and punish dissenting Christian groups in matters of religion, whether that is drowning Anabaptists, or imposing the Anglican prayer book on Presbyterians, or forcing Sabbath observers to do things against their conscience. A Christianized state can yield just as much discrimination and coercion in matters of religion as can some atheistic regimes. So I hope we can agree that Christian theocracy or Christian nationalism should be taken off the table.

No Coercion

On the other side, secularism means that the government does not establish or regulate anyone's religion. The government does not tell me what to believe, how to pray, or who is fit for leadership, or prohibit the free exercise of religion. The problem at the moment is that several countries feel the need to regulate religion in the name of LGBTI rights, which means either curtailing religion or coercing the religious when it comes matters of sexuality.

Now at one level, I think the teachings of Jesus not only compel us but command us to love our gay, bisexual, or transexual neighbor. LGBTI people should not be subject to violence, harassment, abuse, or unfair discrimination. That is, let me add, not a compromise of Christian faith, but the very expression of it.

Nonetheless, many of us are committed to a faith in which God does speak about human sexuality and how it is to be expressed. We share a belief that God expects celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage, with marriage being between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all other relationships. The problem is that on that subject we are no longer the majority. However sincerely or lovingly we hold such beliefs, Christians of any kind will be castigated as vessels of bigotry, hatred, and prejudice. This in turn will be used to justify punitive measures against religious communities that do not line up with progressive orthodoxies.

Secularism is how you keep religion out of government and government out of religion.



Making a New Case

Against removers or reducers of religious freedom, we need to appropriately distinguish the various freedoms that relate to religion. According to Canadian philosopher Margaret Somerville:

“Those wanting to exclude religion from the public square have created confusion among freedom *of* religion, freedom *for* religion, and freedom *from* religion. Freedom of religion means the state does not impose a religion on its citizens: there is no state religion. Freedom for religion means the state does not restrict the free practice of religion by its citizens. Freedom from religion means the state excludes religion and religious voices from the public square, particularly in relation to making law and public policy. The first two freedoms are valid expressions of the doctrine of the separation of church and state. The third is not.”²

The other thing to take into account is that, as Western countries become increasingly post-Christian societies, the case for religious freedom is only as good as the case for religion as good for society. Thus, while we are defending the benefits and necessity of religious liberty against state actors and activists, we need to simultaneously point out that religion is good for society and a multicultural democracy.

We could argue that: (1) religion helps people discover things like greater significance and purpose for their lives; (2) religion is part of people's identity that binds them to institutions, families, cultures, and locations; (3) religion contributes ethics and discourses on how to create a good and fair society; (4) religion uses rituals to provide symbolic celebrations of different parts of life from birth, faith, marriage, and death; (5) religion is one of the best ways for creating community and unifying people around a common belief; (6) religion provides people with hope, since religion looks for a hope beyond the sufferings of our mortal coil, in something called eternal life, the kingdom of God, or the new creation.

In my mind this means that we need a new generation of apologists to defend not only religious liberty but to show how religion contributes to the common good.

Today there are many challenges to religious freedom and many temptations as to how we might maintain it. We must beware of both state incursion upon religious liberty as much as the dangers of making a Faustian pact with

political leaders who guarantee us privileges at the price of our loyalty.

Religious freedom is vital, because without it we cannot have a free, tolerant, inclusive, participatory, and multicultural democracy. Thus, the conflict over religious liberty is ultimately a battle of monocultural values versus multicultural values. Central to any campaign for religious freedom must be that treating others with dignity requires giving them liberty to be “other.” We must constantly remind political leaders and their benefactors that they cannot claim to be the guardian of a diverse, inclusive, and pluralistic society when they target religious minorities for their distinctive beliefs and way of life. If we are to believe that our civic values are better and more humane than totalitarian regimes around the world, then we must give concrete proof of this by allowing religious groups the right to dissent from the majority on any given issue.

Political pluralism should equally protect people of all faiths and none, guaranteeing them the right to live their lives according to their values and beliefs without fear of reprisal. In short, a society that ensures the free exercise of religion is more likely to uphold the rights of those who are vulnerable, marginalized, and despised for being “other.”

While many people of faith live in their silos, inhabit their own tribes, and often harbor suspicions of their religious neighbors, we no longer have the luxury of indulging historic rivalries and entertaining sectarian divisions. Many mutual foes are arrayed against us who consider our existence to be a type of living hate crime. Accordingly, whether one is Adventist or Zoroastrian, Baptist or Buddhist, Muslim or Mormon, people of faith must unite to define and defend religious liberty. In the face of progressive activists and religious prejudices, we must defend the religious liberty of our neighbors, because a threat to one religion's liberty is a threat to every religion's liberty. That may be more acute in such places as Afghanistan and northern Asia. But we are fooling ourselves if it is not also a pressing issue calling for action and activism in Australia and America.

¹ See Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing, September 6, 2017.

Feinstein: “The dogma lives loudly within you, and that's a concern.” <https://wapo.st/3vW6Ewg>.

² Margaret Somerville, *Bird on an Ethics Wire: Battles About Values in the Culture Wars* (Montreal and Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), p. 24.


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Jokers, Clowns, and Purists



BY JAMES D. STANDISH



Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right; here I am, stuck in the middle with you,” sang Scottish folk-rock band Stealers Wheel. It’s a song that has been used by everyone from Quentin Tarantino to Sacha Baron Cohen to put a bit of punch into their movies. It also pops up with curious regularity on television shows, and, maybe most surprisingly, IBM used it in a 2020 advertising campaign. Lately, however, I’ve been thinking about employing those lyrics in quite a different context: American politics. And it’s not just me.

Americans are disengaging from the “clowns to the left” and the “jokers to the right” at a very rapid pace. Gallup reported that in 2021 only 30 percent of Americans identified as Democrats. Good news for Republicans? It would be if it weren’t that only 25 percent of Americans identified as Republicans. The rest? They’re my tribe. A full 44 percent of Americans identified as Independents.¹ They’re not with the clowns or the jokers: they’re stuck in the middle.

It’s not that Independents are wishy-washy on the complex issues facing America. It’s just that they find neither party lines up with where they stand. Linda Killian, the author of *The Swing Vote: The Untapped Power of Independents* and former senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, groups Independents into four categories.

- » NPR Republicans, who are socially moderate and fiscally conservative.
- » America First Democrats, who tend to be male and more socially conservative (formerly known as Reagan Democrats).
- » The Facebook generation of voters younger than 35 who lean libertarian on social and economic issues.
- » Starbucks Moms and Dads, suburban voters who make up a huge chunk of the electorate and are reliably unpredictable.²

As the parties shed moderates, fewer and more extreme people steer them.



I'm not sure where I fit within those categories, as I'm pro-immigrant and pro-life, I'm pro-environment and pro-fiscal responsibility, pro-gun control and pro-racial justice, pro-public safety and pro-increasing the minimum wage, pro-religious freedom and pro-a humble foreign policy that prioritizes human rights and peace. These positions don't fit into party doctrine, but they do fit neatly within a stream of Christian social teachings and are particularly close to my own denomination's traditional views.

Parties, in contrast, don't build their platforms around coherent ideologies; they pick them to form winning coalitions. That's why they are adding and subtracting positions all the time. The Republican Party that was passionately pro-free trade morphed into the party of tariffs, while the Democratic Party of tariffs morphed into cheerleading the Trans-Pacific Partnership—the world's largest free trade zone—before flipping back around and opposing it, to now more or less supporting it all over again. The party of individual freedoms wants to ban abortion, while the party of economic justice wants to reinstate a tax break to allow millionaires to deduct the property taxes on their luxurious estates in blue states like New York and New Jersey. They are all for it—before they were against it. Or against it—before they were for it. In the merry-go-round of party policy, sometimes it's hard to remember which it is. If we rent out our intellects to political parties, we'll get intellectual whiplash as we flip back and forth with the winds of party doctrine.

It's not just policy differences that keep Americans out of the major political parties—it's the parties themselves. Gallup reports that 56 percent of Americans view the Republican Party unfavorably, and an almost identical 55 percent of Americans view the Democratic Party negatively.³

There's another phenomenon that's driving Americans out of political parties: as the parties become more doctrinaire, pragmatists are turned off. While Republicans are often seen as becoming ideologue extremists, respected liberal blogger Kevin Drum, relying on data from Pew Research, has pointed out that the Democrats have moved further to the left than the Republicans have to the right in the past two decades.⁴ The Republicans have remained fairly stable in their views but have moved on their methods. Each party has strong voices that are apologists for violence by groups that align with their perspectives. Moves to the extremes in one party cause a move to the extreme in the other. Like Europe in the 1930s, the extremes of the parties are mutually reinforcing each other.

Vanishing Choices

Whether it's because the major party platforms don't line up with our values, or we view the parties negatively, or it's the growing extremism in the parties, Americans are disengaging from our two largest political parties. Which is a problem.

Why?

The more pragmatic centrists who leave party politics, the more doctrinally rigid the parties become. There once was a healthy cadre of pro-life Democrats, for example, but they have largely been driven out of the party. Similarly, anyone with an ounce of moderation in the Republican Party is frequently labeled a RINO—Republican in Name Only. As the parties become more doctrinally rigid, the more Americans are left out. As the parties shed moderates, fewer and more extreme people steer them.

Which wouldn't be a problem if a third, fourth, fifth and sixth alternative existed. They don't. Americans only have two viable choices for president every four years, and the same goes for many other elected positions on the state, federal, and local levels. Most states—34 in the 2020 presidential elections—don't have open primaries. In these states only registered Republicans can vote in Republican primaries, and only



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Democrats can vote in Democratic presidential primaries. As Americans leave the major parties, fewer and fewer Americans are selecting who will be our binary choice for president. No wonder many Independents scratch their head every four years, wondering how on earth, in a nation of 331 million people, the choice is again between two candidates they cannot stand.

Of course, independents don't get the candidates they want; they have almost no influence in choosing them.

So how can Independents help moderate the increasingly extreme political climate?

The first approach is to sit back and enjoy deciding elections for candidates they despise. Yes, Independents don't get to decide the candidates, but they are the Americans who choose every president. They are, quite literally, the swing vote. The problem with this approach is that nearly every election presents a binary choice. So yes, Independents choose the president, but that's not much comfort if you're forced to pick between what you view as two unpalatable candidates.

The second approach is to vote for a third party. The problem? Duverger's law. Duverger's law, developed by a French political scientist of the same name, states: "The simple majority, single-ballot system favors the two-party system."⁵ When we think it through, that makes sense. If there are three parties, voting for the least likely to win is a wasted vote. Even worse, having two parties on the left, for example, just divides the left-of-center vote, making it more likely the right wins. And vice versa. Other political systems operate in very different ways. But that's them. This is America. We will have a two-party system for the foreseeable future.

A Third Way?

Shy of an oxymoronic "moderates' revolution," that leaves just one more practicable alternative: the 44 percent of Americans who are too pure for the Democrats or the Republicans can become a little less untainted. Put another way, they can join the party that they're marginally closer to and be part of the process of picking candidates that best reflect their positions. As they say: "You got to be in it to win it." Of all unattractive options, this is the most likely to achieve the goal of moderating political discourse and nudging the parties back to the center.

In January of this year, 64 percent of Americans—almost two-thirds—expressed the view that American democracy is in crisis and in danger of failing.⁶ If that were not worrying enough, only 7 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds believe the U.S. has a healthy democracy.⁷ The civilization that defeated monarchism, fascism, and communism—and today is standing up to authoritarianism. The system that created arguably the most just, economically successful, and most stable large nation in history.⁸ The nation that remains the first choice of people all over the world "yearning to be free."⁹ The nation that remains, as Abraham Lincoln put it, "the last best hope of earth."¹⁰ This nation is in trouble. Our politics are failing. That's one thing the jokers, the clowns, and the people stuck in the middle can all agree on.

The answer can't be party disengagement; 44 percent of us have tried that, and look where it's gotten us. Maybe it's time for the purists to get a little dirty in the party trenches, working toward more perfect parties and, in the process, a more perfect union.

¹ Jeffrey M. Jones, "U.S. Political Party Preferences Shifted Greatly During 2021," NewsGallup.com, January 17, 2022.

² Linda Killian, "Five Myths About Independents," *Washington Post*, May 17, 2012. I would argue, though, that calling NPR "socially moderate" is a misclassification, as NPR is consistently socially liberal.

³ Jeffrey M. Jones, "Party Favorable Ratings Near Parity; Both Viewed Negatively," NewsGallup.com, October 5, 2021.

⁴ Kevin Drum, "If You Hate the Culture Wars, Blame Liberals," *jabberwocking.com*, July 3, 2021.

⁵ "Duverger's law," *Oxford Reference*, retrieved May 4, 2022, from www.oxfordreference.com.

⁶ Liz Baker and Joel Rose, "6 in 10 Americans Say U.S. democracy Is in Crisis as the 'Big Lie' Takes Root," NPR.org, January 3, 2022.

⁷ "Youth Poll, Fall 2021: Top Trends and Takeaways," Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, iop.harvard.edu, December 1, 2021.

⁸ Yes, the U.S. has a multitude of injustices and inequalities. But virtually every other diverse nation has more. Don't believe it? Travel to Latin America and view the racial inequalities, or Nigeria or Myanmar and witness religious and ethnic violence, or India and explore the caste system's legacy, or Western Europe and its struggle to integrate ethnic and religious minorities. Compared to the ideal, the U.S. is far from the mark. Compared to other options, it remains a shining city on a hill. That is why many people from all over the world still give up everything to get here.

⁹ Charlotte Edmond, "Which Countries Do Migrants Want to Move to?" *weforum.org*, November 22, 2017.

¹⁰ Abraham Lincoln's Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), vol. 5, p. 537.

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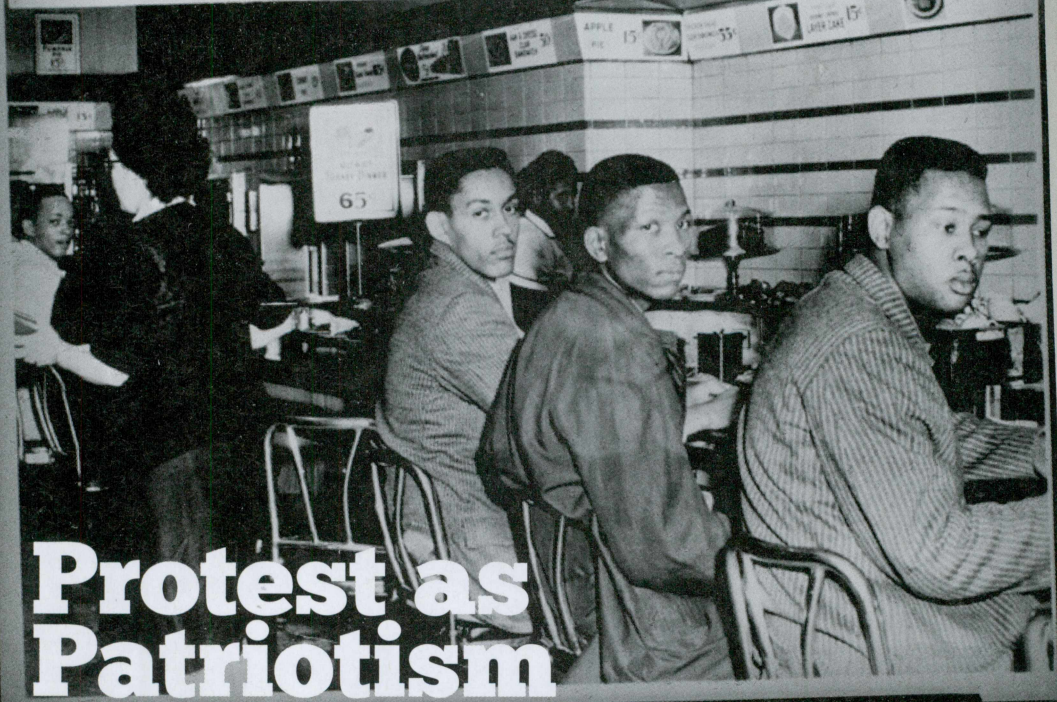
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RAFO2020h-2/2/60-GREENSBORO,N.C: A group of Negro students from North Carolina A&T College, who were refused service at a luncheon counter reserved for white customers, staged a sit-down strike at the F.W.Woolworth store in Greensboro 2/2. Ronald Martin, Robert Patterson and Mark Martin are shown as they stayed seated throughout the day. The white woman at left came to the counter for lunch but decided not to sit down. UPI TELEPHOTO fwb



Protest as Patriotism

“When these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.”