

A Booklet-length Response and Interaction with Stephen Wolfe’s Case for Christian Nationalism

Ian Burke Perry, November 7th, 2023.



I preordered Stephen Wolfe’s The Case for Christian Nationalism,² read it a few weeks after it was first published, and here offer a discussion which has changed into a much lengthier engagement than I originally planned. I share some key areas of agreement with Wolfe, but there are also some areas where I disagree or think certain things should have been made more clear. I also engage with some views and concerns expressed by people who differ with Wolfe in a variety of directions. The motivation for my review (as it was originally envisioned) is, in part, arguments on twitter which seem to unnecessarily pit different things against each-other with

¹ John Gadsby Chapman, Baptism of Pocahontas (1840) Capitol Rotunda <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/baptism-pocahontas>

² For a discussion of Stephen Wolfe’s use of the term “Christian Nationalism”, in addition to his discussion of these terms in the book see Stephen Wolfe, *A Defense of Christian Nationalism, Part 1 (Introduction)*, Ars Politica March 8th, 2023. <https://ars-politica.captivate.fm/> (Judging from my interactions with Samuel Perry on twitter, the accusation that his work is shoddy, a little after the 11:50 mark, is correct.)

regard to the subject matter of the book—I believe there are ways to harmonize some of the concerns of Wolfe and his detractors. There are also both right wing readers of Wolfe who like aspects of his work while going in directions he had signaled he does not intend to go, and leftists replying on the basis of various corrosive ideologies, and I have some thoughts on how to reply to each. So, I am both engaging with Wolfe’s book (and other writings and audio productions of his) and making a case for my point of view in areas where I differ from him either in preferred emphasis or in substance.

I have been motivated to spend this much time on a deep dive engagement because of a combination of passion about the subject and dissatisfaction with how some issues have been handled by both promoters and critics of this book. I am hoping to offer a depth of engagement which may change some minds of key participants in this discussion or at least cause some reconsideration of rhetoric and framing.

This will start with a discussion of how Wolfe presents the relationship of natural law, revelation, and government, move to a discussion of nations and ethnicity, then discuss state formation and the possibility of just revolution, then discuss hierarchy, representation, and differences between the sexes, before I discuss Christianity’s relationship to religious freedom generally and Judaism specifically both historically and with regard to how resourcement should be applied in America and other contemporary contexts. After I had written a substantial part of this review (almost 5,000 words worth), a very bitter dispute broke out on twitter regarding an associate of Wolfe; I will discuss that and other issues of rhetoric and political coalitions immediately prior to the conclusion.

I: Natural Law, Revelation, Government and Two Kingdoms Theology

A key positive claim in the book which I agree with and am happy to see articulated before a broader audience, is that an acknowledgement of natural law presupposes an acknowledgement of God, and that this natural duty can receive additional specification from special revelation. “If civil societies ought to be under the true God by nature, then they ought to be under the Triune God, for the Triune God is the true God.”³ We have a duty to honor God, and if we know God to have become incarnate in Christ, we have a duty to honor him. Wolfe writes “Nations have always, even for prelapsarian Adam, had the duty to acknowledge God and orient themselves collectively to his heavenly kingdom; indeed, this is the chief end of nations. The Christian nation, therefore, has not transcended the nation according to nature but has fulfilled it; it is complete in form.”⁴ Wolfe is not arguing that America is God’s chosen nation.⁵ Wolfe argues that a nation can be Christian in a similar manner to a family which is Christian,⁶ whose natural characteristics “are fulfilled in light of grace.”⁷ Wolfe correctly argues that knowledge of the “second table” of the law involves knowledge of the “first table”.⁸ Some of Wolfe’s arguments push back at arguments for a secular nation, for instance, he argues that properly ordering earthly goods requires cognizance of a higher good.⁹

³ Page 198.

⁴ Page 175.

⁵ This is clear in the book, but see e.g. his interview with Alex Kaschuta, *Stephen Wolfe - Is Christian Nationalism an Option? Subversive W/ Alex Kaschuta* (October 30th, 2023, though it seems to have been recorded months before) <https://www.alexkaschuta.com/p/stephen-wolfe-is-christian-nationalism#details> starting around the 5 minute 30 second mark.

⁶ Page 175.

⁷ Page 179.

⁸ Pages 363-364.

⁹ Pages 187-188.

Wolfe distinguishes the role of the state and the church. As he noted in one recent discussion “ministers should not be civil rulers” (at least in their office of minister)¹⁰ and “I don’t think. . . ministers should stand up in the pulpit and constantly preach about politics every day”.¹¹ This is consistent with what he says in the book,

“the instituted church was not instituted to organize patriotic song-singing or national flag-waving or to host campaign speeches. It administers Word and Sacraments to a sacred assembly for heavenly life; its main orientation is to heaven. I’m ambivalent about national flags located inside or outside churches, but national flags should not be displayed in a sanctuary and especially not within sight during worship. The worshipper should see pulpit, table, and font.”¹²

In a way, I like even some of Wolfe’s arguments I don’t find particularly appealing considered by themselves, insofar as they show that the implications often believed to follow from certain claims do not in fact follow. Wolfe says, “I affirm with the modern two-kingdoms advocates that the principal scope and purpose of the redemptive kingdom concern eternal life, not temporal life, and that the instituted church administers the sacred things of that kingdom.”¹³ Wolfe provides numerous arguments that having a primary responsibility for this-worldly matters informed by natural law does not preclude a civil government acknowledging Christianity as the true faith, and, in fact, provides reasons for it. And on this he is closer to the reformers than are radical two kingdoms advocates.¹⁴ That said, while I am aware that radical

¹⁰ Stephen Wolfe, *Responding to Kevin DeYoung*, starting around the one hour 7 minute 30 second mark: https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=4050

¹¹ Stephen Wolfe, *Responding to Kevin DeYoung*, starting a little after the one hour 9 minute 36 second mark https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=4176 It was already obvious that Kevin DeYoung was (in *The Rise of Right-Wing Wokeism Review: ‘The Case for Christian Nationalism’ by Stephen Wolfe, The Gospel Coalition, November 28th, 2028*) wrong in his interpretation of Wolfe referring to pastors as “more like chaplains” in relation to political activism, it was already obvious prior to this response that Wolfe was not advocating reducing their role generally to chaplaincy, but if anyone was still unclear on this the response to DeYoung makes it even more clear.

¹² Page 240.

¹³ Page 194.

¹⁴ For instance, compare Michael Horton, *A Tale of Two Kingdoms Worldview and Culture* <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/tale-two-kingdoms> “The very idea of a Christian empire or a Christian nation was a serious confusion of these two cities” and “We need not ‘Christianize’ culture in order to appreciate it and participate in it with the gifts that God has given us as well as our non-Christian neighbors” to The Magdeburg Confession which says, of politics church, and “economy”, “For God has armed these ordinances and powers with

two kingdoms theology represents a departure from the traditional two kingdoms understanding, as of yet the phrase “two kingdoms” has not resonated with me as a description of the different aspects of God’s rule in the world. The phrase “twofold kingdom” sounds a bit better. Wolfe has repeatedly criticized “neo-Calvinism”,¹⁵ but has not, as far as I have seen, directed readers to anyone else who does who he endorses to define the term, as far as I am aware he has not yet provided a systematic treatment of his own, defining what he means by the term or the scope of his critique. I’m not clear on to what degree he merely complains about the approaches (or lack of historical knowledge) of particular neo-Calvinists and to what degree his criticism is intended to apply to anything which might be labeled neo-Calvinist. I’m left to infer his position largely from looking at various tweets of his. It seems like a departure from two kingdoms theology is a key area of criticism (my impression is that he views the neo-Calvinist view of the kingdom as undermining things like immigration restriction). I’m not sure at exactly what point he regards a theologian as in “neo-Calvinist” error. For instance, I’d be curious to hear Wolfe’s response to, say, Gerhardus Vos’s critique of two kingdoms language,

“It should be observed that our Lord’s teaching relates to two aspects of the same kingdom, not to two separate kingdoms. The ancient theological distinction between a kingdom of grace and a kingdom of glory is infelicitous for this reason. In the parable the

fear of both wrath and punishment, divine and human, and they both hold their respective power. And He has distinguished one power from another in His Word, so that He has attributed to each of them its own object and task, and likewise to each its own method of punishment. And although He does not desire the powers to be mixed up with each other, nonetheless He desires them to help each other in turn, so that in the end they all may agree, and that everything in its own place and way principally may promote the true knowledge of God and His Glory and their eternal salvation, or, when it does not attain this ultimate goal, may at least bring about a secondary sort of well-being, that men may live peacefully, uprightly, kai ouk akarpoi in this civil manner of life.” The Magdeburg Confession, Matthew Colvin, trans., page 41.

¹⁵ “One hopes that reviews like this will become a thing of the past, as neo-Calvinist anxieties about the Protestant retrieval of 17th century Reformed thought subside. Retrieval has increasingly revealed that, despite the diversity in the doctrinal development of the 17th century, the distinctives of neo-Calvinism have no place in that diversity, nor could they arise logically from that diversity. Reformed theology, from Calvin to the 19th century, was thoroughly ‘dualistic’ – affirming distinctions between natural/supernatural, nature/grace, reason/faith, temporal/eternal, earth/heaven, and secular/sacred.” Stephen Wolfe, *Correcting Theologians: A Response to Brian Mattson* <https://institutesofchristianpolitics.substack.com/p/correcting-theologians>

growing of the grain and the harvest belong together as connected parts of the same process.”¹⁶

However, regardless of that, I think Wolfe’s argument helps to push back against poorly thought-out appeals to the existence of “two kingdoms” to argue that political power should not be explicitly put under the Lordship of Christ.¹⁷

2: Nations and Ethnicity

In what follows I will examine the nature of nations and ethnicity, both in relation to Wolfe’s own arguments and with an eye to issues raised by his opponents who are concerned about the implications of what he says, and with an eye towards right wing ethnonationalist views which differ from what Wolfe argues but which are part of the online discussion of nationalism and ethnicity (I note this to clarify that, while Wolfe will be the focus of my direct engagement, when I engage with positions he does not set forth in his statements, I am not thereby attributing those views to him—I am attempting to set forth a positive view that addresses a variety of perspectives readers may have or be influenced by).

Wolfe argues that the existence of nations is part of how the world is created. The existence of distinctions between different ethnic groups, he argues, is a result of human limitation and would exist in a sinless world.

¹⁶ Geerhardus Vos, [The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church](#), Pages 32-33. See also Id. Page 39, “its consummation does not spontaneously result from the preceding process, supernatural though this be. The harvest is conditioned by the ripeness of the grain, and yet the ripeness of the grain can never of itself set in operation the harvest. The harvest comes when the man puts forth the sickle, because the fruit is ripe. So when the immanent kingdom has run its course to maturity, God will intervene in the miracle of all miracles. It would also plainly be impossible for the final kingdom to come in any other way than this. For this final state of the kingdom presupposes great physical, cosmic changes, which no force working in the spiritual sphere can produce.”

¹⁷ To see some relevant issues, Compare Wolfe and David VanDrunen in these articles: David VanDrunen, *Theonomy: A Theological Critique*, [The London Lyceum](#), July 1st, 2022. <https://www.thelondonlyceum.com/theonomy-a-theological-critique/>
Stephen Wolfe, *Classical Reformed Theonomy*, [The London Lyceum](#), July 4th, 2022. <https://www.thelondonlyceum.com/classical-reformed-theonomy/>

“Man by nature, even when having full command of his faculties, is not only an earth-bound being but a place-bound being. He dwells in a particular place and can move long distances only with great trouble. Everyday interactions are limited by a locale, and he is ignorant of events and individuals in faraway places and even in the next town over. The fall did not cause this.”¹⁸

He moves on to discuss how because of such limitations, distinct human cultures would likely exist even in the absence of sin. In addition, he argues that humans, because of limitation rather than sin, have a need for a connection “with a particular, bounded people”.¹⁹

“Cultural diversity is, therefore, a necessary consequence of human nature, and so it is *good* for us. It is good that particular practices are made habitual by localized socialization and are ‘owned’ in a sense by a particular place and people. It is good that the particularity of each community distinguishes it from others.”²⁰

In an earlier work he has written (speaking of healthy life within lesser communities but, I think, relevant to what he says in the book about ethnic groups and nations),

“meaningful work requires a community seeking forms of life in common that, at least in some small way, distinguishes them from others, not in a jingoistic fashion, but as a quiet, peaceful, and self-affirming community pursuing the common good across generations. In such a community, people know each other as more than individuals in mutual alliance for self-interest; rather they are a people desiring to communicate one to another their gifts for the best collective life possible—to live well.”²¹

¹⁸ Pages 63-64. See also *Defense of Christian Nationalism, Part 2 (Chapter 1)*, *Ars Politica* <https://ars-politica.captive.fm/> May 15th, 2023 Starting little after 9:12 “my argument is that according to the natural social relations of man, according to our nature as human beings . . . we would form distinct and separate nations, and . . . we would understand ourselves according to particularities that could be otherwise, that is customs, customs and culture. So there would be a diversity of culture, there would be a diversity of peoples. . . each having a distinct culture, and that would be according to our very nature as a human being. . . if that’s natural in a prelapsarian world, what that means—that the diversity of nations within our world now, despite the sin that occurs in nations and the sinful features—content of nations, the actual formation of distinct-in-a-diverse array of nations on the world is itself natural.” And see also the same discussion starting around 19:20, where after discussing how the individual needs the community, he says, “. . .as we think about forming communities, we have to think about two other aspects of man, and that’s his gregariousness and his limitedness. Now I don’t think there is one review that has mentioned that, even though those two aspects of man, they are essential premises for my argument that there be different nations, but everyone just denounces it as speculative, they don’t actually take my premises and say it doesn’t follow, nor do they say it’s false.”

¹⁹ Page 65.

²⁰ Page 65.

²¹ See Stephen Wolfe, *Small-Scale Production and Meaningful Work: Toward a Community of Gift and Craft* (2019). LSU Master's Theses. 4990. Page 55.

https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6032&context=gradschool_theses

It is true that people have a limited capacity and must devote themselves more to some people than to others. It is likewise true that we can appreciate many gifts of God in and through the diverse cultures in the world. (And note that Wolfe’s argument differs from the argument of certain right wing Christian ethnonationalists who argue that racial groups are reified entities which trace back to Noah’s sons or the tower of babel etc.²²—rather Wolfe argues that ethnic groups are an emergent property of human sociality, which is consistent with his denial that interracial or interethnic marriage is ipso facto immoral and with his belief that ethnic groups can assimilate outsiders.²³) However, I believe Wolfe’s argument does not properly account for the degree to which the shape of nations as we have them now has been occasioned by human sin, and insufficiently accounts for the changeableness of some factors even in the absence of sin.²⁴

In arguing for the existence of separate nations even in the absence of sin, Wolfe references communications as a human limitation that exists apart from sin.²⁵ However, the state of communications is clearly contingent technologically and organizationally even aside from sin (presumably sinless people would improve communications links and non-sin-related divisions would be overcome in many cases), and as things are, has clearly been seriously disrupted by sin.

²² For an example of such a view (not the one held by Wolfe), *Doug Wilson, The Pactum Institute and Ethnic Complementarianism* The Pactum Institute September 27th, 2022 <https://www.pactuminstitute.com/press-statements/doug-wilson-the-pactum-institute-and-ethnic-complementarianism> After writing this, I came across Wolfe explicitly denying such a derivation of the current nations from babel here: Stephen Wolfe, *A Defense of Christian Nationalism: Chapter 2, Ars Politica*, September 26th, 2023, <https://ars-politica.captivate.fm/episode/a-defense-of-christian-nationalism-chapter-2> a little after the 22 minute mark.

²³ See e.g. *Stephen Wolfe Answers His Critics (Audio)*, Conversations that Matter <https://youtu.be/8KyChQts3fQ?t=2493>

²⁴ The lengthy argument that follows also applies to the essay of his which was just published (particularly its subsection titled “Natural Limitations”), Stephen Wolfe, *National Diversity in an Unfallen World*, American Reformer, November 1st, 2023. <https://americanreformer.org/2023/11/national-diversity-in-an-unfallen-world/>

²⁵ Page 64.

For example, in *The Saga of the Greenlanders*, we read of Scandinavians²⁶ exploring North America and encountering Native Americans:

“After they secured their ship in a sheltered cove and put out gangways to the land, Thorvald and all his companions went ashore.

“He then spoke: ‘This is an attractive spot, and here I would like to build my farm.’ As they headed back to the ship they saw three hillocks on the beach inland from the cape. Upon coming closer they saw they were three hide-covered boats, with three men under each of them. They divided their forces and managed to capture all of them except one, who escaped with his boat. They killed the other eight and went back to the cape.”²⁷

Members of this Native American group then counterattacked the Vikings.²⁸ Unless the narrative left out something important, the Vikings, though it mentions right after this that the grave of one of them was marked with a cross and notes that Greenland (from which they set out) had converted,²⁹ appear to have initially killed unprovoked out of generalized fear rather than acted in self-defense (in other words, unless the narrative is leaving something out, the Vikings committed murder). In either case, sinless humans encountering each other would not have interacted like this.

Communications would have likely been established but for the violence between the two groups. Such differences have played a major role in disrupting communications throughout history and back into the past before history was being written down. Linguistic differences achieve a new starkness when human sin is involved (much of the fear involved in interacting with strangers who speak a different language would go away if each group knew the other would follow the ten commandments). In a sinful world in which grace is also working, there are contingent factors which add varying degrees of difficulty in interacting with others, like

²⁶ Accompanied by a German, *The Saga of the Greenlanders*, The Vinland Sages, trans Kuneva Kunz, Page 6, 8. There were also some Scots involved in one of the voyages according to *Erik the Red's Saga* (See Id. 41).

²⁷ *The Saga of the Greenlanders*, The Vinland Sages, trans Kuneva Kunz, Pages 10-11.

²⁸ *The Saga of the Greenlanders*, The Vinland Sages, trans Kuneva Kunz, Page 11.

²⁹ *The Saga of the Greenlanders*, The Vinland Sages, trans Kuneva Kunz, Page 11.

differences or agreement in religion. The boundaries between different groups of people have often been hardened and are less easy to bridge because of sin.

Humans have limited faculties and, even if we were not fallen, we would still need to prioritize particular people and responsibilities in our love. However, the actual nations that exist often have the boundaries they do not merely because geographical reasons. Wolfe mentions ethnicity as defined by things like “common language, manners, customs, stories, taboos, rituals, calendars, social expectations, duties, loves, and religion” which permit coordination and civil fellowship.³⁰ Some of these criteria are not necessarily the result of sin, but in the world we live in most of them involve sin to some degree or other. We can see a great number of instances of people who are or once were sufficiently similar to have formed a joint ethnic or national community according to the aspects of this list which are not necessarily the result of sin, but who are divided by differences that are directly the result of sin or which are downstream of divisions originally occasioned by sin.

According to Wolfe,

“Nations today are not built around bloodlines stretching back to arch-patriarchs. But blood relations remain relevant to nations, when referring to one’s ancestral connection to a people and place back to time immemorial. The originating source for one’s affect of people and place is his natural relations—those of his kin. But the ties of blood do not directly establish the boundaries of one’s ethnicity. Rather, one has ethnic ties of affection because one’s kin conducted life with other kin in the same place. Christian philosopher Johann Herder was correct in saying that the *volk* is a ‘family writ large.’ This is an apt description not because everyone is a cousin by blood but because one’s kin lived here with the extended families of others for generations, leaving behind a trace of themselves and their cooperation and their great works and sacrifices.”³¹

³⁰ Page 136.

³¹ Page 139. For further explanation from Wolfe, see *Responding to Kevin DeYoung* a little after the 16:30 mark, https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=991 and Id. around the 46 minute mark, https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=2769 The concern for the connection of a person to a place seen in the book appears to have been a concern of Wolfe for awhile, judging from his inclusion of this topic in a master’s thesis. See Stephen Wolfe, *Small-Scale Production and Meaningful Work: Toward a Community of Gift and Craft* (2019). LSU Master's Theses. 4990. at e.g. Pages 16-18.

Wolfe does believe shared ancestry plays a role in establishing ethnicity but does not believe ethnicity is reducible to ancestry (and he distinguishes his account of ethnicity from race³²). Wolfe frames nations and ethnicities (he indicates that he uses the two terms interchangeably, though this is an area where I think there is some inconsistency or unclarity of application in his usage in some places) as in part a matter of shared memory. He gives some examples of this, some of them I found to be rather beautiful illustrations of intergenerational love.³³ I have experienced more of such intergenerational ties than many contemporary Americans, but my experience is still fairly weak both by historical standards and relative to some of my contemporaries—the sense of intergenerational ties that Wolfe highlights is indeed something America (and many other countries), needs to work to recover and make widespread.

However, an examination of the events remembered intergenerationally will often reveal many things which illustrate the contingency of existing polities and ethnicities, and the existence of divisions beyond those occasioned by the non-sinful aspects of being bound to a particular community and place. For instance, take the song “The Bloody Road to the Somme”,³⁴ which certainly embodies many of the positive characteristics of shared memory which Wolfe indicates are an aspect of a nation.³⁵ There’s a mix of potentially healthy intergenerational affection and events occasioned by sin somewhere down the line (exactly where depending somewhat on what you think the causes of the conflicts were), with it describing the brave young

³² See Page 119, footnote 3. https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6032&context=gradschool_theses More recently, he has endorsed (<https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1689647906092179457>) this review, which describes his views of ethnicity as not based on race, as accurate summarizing his position: James Clark, *Kinism and Wolfe’s Case for Christian Nationalism*, The North American Anglican, August 10th, 2023, <https://northamanglican.com/kinism-and-wolfes-case-for-christian-nationalism/> See also *Stephen Wolfe Answers His Critics (Audio)*, Conversations that Matter <https://youtu.be/8KyChQts3fQ?t=610> for another place where he denies that his concept of ethnicity is the same as race.

³³ Pages 120-131. For a critique of one illustration used in this section, see Suzannah Black Roberts, *The Laws and the Cosmos: A Brief Response to Stephen Wolfe on Cicero*, The Theopolis Institute, November 24th, 2022 <https://theopolisinstitute.com/the-laws-and-the-cosmos-a-brief-response-to-stephen-wolfe-on-cicero/>

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtaRuOK0gm8>

³⁵ Pages 120-131.

men of Ulster crying “No Surrender” and charging through the German trenches “like a mighty flood”, and then tells us how “they were cut off, with no one to support them,” and “bravely they fell, like leaves in the autumn.”³⁶ Closer to my central point, it described how, prior to engaging in World War 1, Ulstermen had originally taken to arms for a different purpose, “determined that Gael and Rome should not rule them”.³⁷ It’s clear that the religious division referenced by “Rome” is not the sort of division which would exist among hypothetical unfallen people groups. Moreover, regardless of how one apportions the fault, the religious division was fundamental here.³⁸ The song references Gaelic ancestors (“These were the seed of mighty CuChulainn, These were the sons of Congal Claen”³⁹) while describing opposition to contemporary Gaels—but-for the religious divisions, it is not clear that these Ulstermen would have needed to see Gaelic-speaking (or Gaelic-idealizing⁴⁰) Irishmen of their day as outside their ethnos (and they could have presumably kept ties of memory to English-speaking ancestors while speaking Gaelic about as easily as they kept ties of memory to Gaelic-speaking ancestors while speaking English). Regardless of what one sees as the path forward in that specific instance, it’s clear that aspects of this involve division that Christians should work to overcome.

Moreover, ethnicities as we have them are often geographically overlaid on each-other in a way that Wolfe’s argument does not sufficiently account for. Wolfe writes, “Since every people-group has internal differences (e.g. class-based differences), nation is used to emphasize

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtaRuOK0gm8>

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtaRuOK0gm8>

³⁸ See Crawford Gribben, The Rise & Fall of Christian Ireland.

³⁹ <https://war-poetry.livejournal.com/615130.html>

⁴⁰ See discussion of language decline in Crawford Gribben, The Rise & Fall of Christian Ireland, despite the language of the song about “Gael and Rome”, the Gaelic language itself had in the past sometimes been engaged with by Protestants, and sometimes undermined by the Roman Catholic Church, my own discussion in the main essay handles a complicated issue a bit briefly, and I refer the reader to the just-cited book by Gribben for a nuanced account.

the unity of the whole, though no nation (properly speaking) is composed of two or more ethnicities)".⁴¹ Wolfe does add some qualifications to this,

“Nor do I call for ethno-states in the modern sense, though I *do* affirm that each nation ought to seek and have sufficient political and social autonomy to order and secure themselves according to their particularities. In a postlapsarian world, existing under an empire of nations can provide better conditions for national life than being a wholly independent nation contending with anarchic international conditions. Still, nations must have and ought to fight to secure law-making authority, even if that authority is subordinate to a higher imperial law.”⁴²

In a later chapter, Wolfe writes, “each people-group must decide for themselves how they will govern and arrange themselves. Making these decisions requires people to consider their experience as a people and the circumstances in which they find themselves.”⁴³ In actual political communities, not only are there very typically multiple ethnicities, in some cases those ethnicities may have the character they do because of the existence of the country or at least an overarching cultural system. Razib Khan writes,

“Indian populations that have lived in close proximity to each other have remained strictly endogamous for thousands of years, not centuries. The ‘higher castes’ are genetically distinct from ‘lower castes,’ and the most marginalized group, the ‘outcastes’, today called Dalits, are the most distinct of all. A very ancient social structure has been imprinted on the genomes of modern Indians.”⁴⁴

For instance,

“South-Indian Brahmins have less steppe ancestry than North-Indian Brahmins due to early intermarriage with the local populations, but they have far more steppe ancestry, 20%, than other South Indians.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Page 135.

⁴² Page 164.

⁴³ Page 396.

⁴⁴ Razib Khan, *The Character of Caste* <https://razib.substack.com/p/the-character-of-caste> Cf. Razib Khan, *Indra Is Absolved: The “Caste System” Predates The Indo-Aryans*, *Gene Expression*, August 15, 2022

<https://www.gnXP.com/WordPress/2022/08/15/indra-is-absolved-the-caste-system-predates-the-indo-aryans> and Razib Khan, *Stark Truth About Aryans: a story of India*, Part 1 <https://razib.substack.com/p/stark-truth-about-aryans-a-story> And Part 2 <https://razib.substack.com/p/stark-truth-about-aryans-a-story>

⁴⁵ Razib Khan, *The Character of Caste* <https://razib.substack.com/p/the-character-of-caste>

In his book, Wolfe notes the nature of marriage in forming a community.⁴⁶ More controversially, Wolfe has made statements about interethnic marriage on twitter that occasioned many people to express concern.⁴⁷ He retracted at least one of those statements in an interview.⁴⁸ In actual politics, endogamy has often existed within groups which occupy a social (and sometimes economic) niche within the realm or multiple realms.⁴⁹ For example, the Parsis of India are a genetically distinct endogamous group descended from Zoroastrian exiles from Persia who intermarried with Indian women and have lived in India as a distinct group for around a thousand years or more⁵⁰ without their own territorial state. The Romani have lived in Europe as a distinct-but-lacking-a-territorial-polity ethnicity for around a millennium.⁵¹ If such an ethnicity had its own independent territorial polity, it seems likely its marriage practices might change, insofar as its current character is tied to occupying a particular social niche within a polity (or group of polities) which includes many other groups filling other social niches. This highlights a problem if two ideas that Stephen Wolfe has advocated are combined—in comments online he had

⁴⁶ Page 139.

⁴⁷ <https://twitter.com/JacobTBrunton/status/1581314629044965377>

<https://twitter.com/DocSandlin/status/1580554106204475392>

⁴⁸ *The Case for Christian Nationalism w/ Stephen Wolfe in Studio CROSSPOLITIC*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx3bxz-WdeU&t=1783s> See here for a more recent discussion of the same issue than the retracted statement: *Stephen Wolfe Answers His Critics (Audio)*, [Conversations that Matter](https://youtu.be/8KyChQts3fQ?t=2493)
<https://youtu.be/8KyChQts3fQ?t=2493>

⁴⁹ Wolfe discusses the nation and the state not necessarily being coterminous here: *Responding to Kevin DeYoung* Starting at approximately the 22:33 mark: https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=1141

though I don't think this addresses the specific issue of ethnicities having different relationship to politics and geography, https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=1353

⁵⁰ *The genetic legacy of Zoroastrianism in Iran and India: Insights into population structure, gene flow and selection*. On page 36 they say, “we date this event in ancestral Parsis to around 1030 CE, in agreement with historical records”. On Page two they say, “Indian Zoroastrians (Parsis) intermixed with local groups sometime after their arrival in India, dating this mixture to 690-1390 CE” An earlier date, closer to the Islamic conquest, initially appears more plausible to me. <https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/128272v3.full.pdf> India provides a number of other examples of ethnic boundaries not matching up to political ones, “The Marwari trader community of Rajasthan has branches across India, and like Ashkenazi Jews, they are highly endogamous. Marwari families settled in Bengal for hundreds of years may still more closely resemble their Marwari relations in far-off western India, than their Bengali neighbors.” Razib Khan, *The Character of Caste* <https://razib.substack.com/p/the-character-of-caste> (There was historically a King of Mewar, but if I understand correctly the traders were a separate caste.)

⁵¹ Razib Khan, *Outcast as I wanna be, part 1 of 2: 1,000 years of Romani survival, a genetic tale*, <https://www.razibkhan.com/p/outcast-as-i-wanna-be> *Outcast as I wanna be, part 2 of 2: Romani survival, and the power of culture*, <https://www.razibkhan.com/p/outcast-as-i-wanna-be-5fd>

indicated there is a duty to maintain ethnic distinctiveness,⁵² and in his book political action is tied to ethnicity. He has recently also said that if ethnicities want to amalgamate and form a new ethnicity, they can⁵³—perhaps my discussion provides some factors relevant to that thought. Even factoring in the aforementioned retraction, I think there are some apparent inconsistencies in some of Wolfe’s statements which might be bridged by fleshing out the theory relevant to the matter, though the same fleshing out will give reasons to move away from or modify some statements.

Let me reframe the issue of endogamy and exogamy. Endogamy, taken beyond a certain point, may result in a community being inbred or otherwise unhealthily isolated. Exogamy, taken beyond a certain point, may result in a community’s traditions and identity being diluted in a way which hampers communal life. In some existing ethnicities inbreeding is a major issue, for instance in many communities in or from the Indian sub-continent.

“The *jati-varna* system is predicated on endogamy, marrying within one’s own community, radically narrowing the range of marriage partners. We have long known there are genetic consequences that are a function of how long the system has persisted, most prominently disease load. The prevalence of rare diseases in India is a testament to the longevity of this practice in the subcontinent.”⁵⁴

Ashkenazi Jews have been highly endogamous for a long time and also have associated genetic disorders.⁵⁵ It has been suggested that both Iranian Zoroastrians and the Parsis in India respectively have higher rates of certain diseases because of endogamy within each group.⁵⁶

⁵² Preserved in a screenshot here <https://twitter.com/JacobTBrunton/status/1581314629044965377> . It appears that some of his of previous phrasing was included in the retraction, but here’s a recent discussion: *Stephen Wolfe Answers His Critics (Audio)*, [Conversations that Matter](https://youtu.be/8KyChQts3fQ?t=2493) <https://youtu.be/8KyChQts3fQ?t=2493>

⁵³ See Stephen Wolfe, *Responding to Kevin DeYoung*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_Wfi8NugEM at a little after the 10 minute mark and starting a little before the 54 minute mark. (Apparently referencing Pages 139-140 in the book, though I think his affirmation is more direct in the YouTube video than in that portion of the book.)

⁵⁴ Razib Khan, *The Character of Caste* <https://razib.substack.com/p/the-character-of-caste>

⁵⁵ Andrew Curry, *Meeting the Ancestors*, *Science*, November 30th, 2022 <https://www.science.org/content/article/meeting-ancestors-history-ashkenazi-jews-revealed-medieval-dna>

⁵⁶ *The genetic legacy of Zoroastrianism in Iran and India: Insights into population structure, gene flow and selection*. Page 35-36. <https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/128272v3.full.pdf>

Icelanders, who appear to constitute an ethnicity according to the criteria laid out by Wolfe, have been noted as being at risk of accidental romantic relationships with closely related people.⁵⁷ At a societal level, high levels of endogamy can create a risk of various problems associated with inbreeding, whereas high levels of exogamy can create risks of a culture dissipating. It is true that an ethnic group that is healthy should be able to provide networks which tend to facilitate finding a spouse while balancing these issues, and that there are certain goods which may be easier to achieve within a community of people with similar customs and language and, yes, shared ancestral connections to that community. A cross-cultural union will typically result in at least one side of the union transmitting fewer or weaker traditions to the children, whereas a same-culture union can facilitate passing on each side of the family's culture simultaneously. It is no surprise that parents stereotypically will try to introduce their child to a potential spouse from the same culture.

However, in several key ways, the husband-and-wife dyad is primary over the ethnic community. It is to the man and woman directly that the duty to be fruitful and multiply is given (Genesis 1:28). It is the married man and woman who have a fundamental duty of faithfulness to each-other. In some individual cases, it may be more expedient to pursue this life in a marriage in which the two are from different cultures or ancestry groups. Ruth, from a related but still distinct ethnicity relative to Israelites, was the ancestor of David and of Jesus. Moses married a woman from a different ethnicity, and attacking that union was an occasion or expression of sin (Numbers 12).⁵⁸ At a level of natural law and of biblical theology, we need to recognize that the

⁵⁷ See e.g. *New app helps Icelanders avoid accidental incest*, *USA Today*, April 18th, 2013
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2013/04/18/new-app-helps-icelanders-avoid-accidental-incest/2093649/>

⁵⁸ Exactly how different the ethnicity is in this specific case is debated (as is whether or not this is a different marriage than his marriage to a Midianite), for a discussion of possible interpretations: Alastair Roberts, *Numbers 12: Biblical Reading and Reflections - Part 221, April 16th, 2020*
<https://audio.alastairadversaria.com/sermons/10080/numbers-12-biblical-reading-and-reflections/>

husband-and-wife family is primary; however, we do not need to deny the existence of many goods which often make it easier for many people to find a suitable partner for this primary union among people who share their cultural group and ancestral people group, or among someone from a relatively similar culture or ancestral people group.

Biblical marriage can involve a Christian man and a Christian woman from the same, from similar, or from very different ancestry groups. Some people's circumstances will be more likely to lead to a relatively more endogamous marriage, and some people's circumstances will be more likely to lead to a relatively more exogamous marriage. I'll provide myself and my wife as an example of some of the particularities which can affect this. I and my wife are from what are, by any measure, different ethnicities (having different native languages, different nationalities of birth, and being of different continental level racial groups). My wife and I had each spent a substantial amount of time away from where we were born. My wife is a convert to Christianity and thus was not able to draw on her family network to introduce her to religiously compatible potential spouses in the way many people have, and I was in a religious crisis during much of the period when I was in college in my home state (and much of the time I was receiving further education in a culturally adjacent state) and did not date much during a significant part of the stage of life when many people of my background often find a spouse. When my wife and I met, we were already members of churches in similar denominations, and so had some common frames of reference despite other areas of our background being different. Prior to us meeting, I'd studied and become conversational in a language in which my wife had received a significant amount of her education, and she had received her doctorate in an English language program, moved to an English-speaking country, and was using English professionally.

These and other factors created a context which made us more likely to marry across ethnicities than we would have otherwise been.

The same social networks which work to maintain the culture of an ethnicity will typically work to provide for marriage-partners to meet within that ethnicity. If out-marriage is increasing it might mean either that the community is truly growing (that the out-marriage is taking place as part of the incorporation of new people), or it might mean that community bonds are weak (or both). Trying to determine which is the case is not inherently racist or invidious.

Race is sometimes raised as a sort of test case to determine whether concerns about ethnic cohesion are malicious or invidious (though Wolfe denies that his concerns about ethnic cohesion are about race, some of his critics have brought up this issue⁵⁹ and so have some of his supporters). However, taking race into account when considering potential marriage partners is not inherently malicious or inherently a sign of adherence to an aberrant racialist ideology. There appears to be a tendency via imprinting or a similar process for people to be more likely to select spouses who resemble opposite-sex parents,⁶⁰ so we have reason to think that people at an individual level are likely often predisposed (prior to receiving much of a conscious education in how to approach such things, whether positive, negative, or neutral) in a way which makes them more likely to marry someone of a broadly similar ancestry even aside from issues of culture and nationality. As far as conscious reflection, there are a few factors to consider. Larger differences in ancestry sometimes correlate to larger differences in culture, which is obviously something that should be considered by someone considering getting married, and people who consider race as such irrelevant may grant that such differences in culture are worth taking into account.

⁵⁹ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533801267683905536>

⁶⁰ See e.g. A.C Little, I.S Penton-Voak, D.M Burt, D.I Perrett, *Investigating an imprinting-like phenomenon in humans: Partners and opposite-sex parents have similar hair and eye colour* Evolution and Human Behavior Volume 24, Issue 1, January 2003, Pages 43-51

However, even for people within a shared culture, differences in ancestry may affect how they relate to that culture, which may be worth giving consideration as a man and a woman consider whether to pursue marriage, and such differences admit of degrees (can each spouse visit their great-grandparents home town without getting a visa, could both spouses read letters from their own and their spouse's great-grandparents should they come across them, and more broadly the degree of difference in ancestry may affect whether the spouses can build a common narrative that includes a shared community in which their families have participated from now back through the centuries, or must one go back to say, A.D. 800, or to the Bible—it is not necessary that every nuclear family have the same sort of intergenerational solidarity as it forms its identity, but such questions are worth giving consideration). Family groups often have a familial resemblance to each-other which helps to highlight and remind them of their connection and familial bond. Such resemblance is not a necessity, it is not the only factor which highlights familial bonds and even where it exists will look different from family to family, but potential marriage partners whose ancestry differs such that their children will likely be notably outside of the family phenotype cline of one or both of them could reasonably give consideration to how this issue will interact with the rest of their circumstances and try to ensure that, in the totality of their circumstances, there are sources of unity which are apt to help their children feel situated within an in-group in a way which supports solidarity with their parents. It is correct and biblical to oppose racist ideologies which teach that interracial marriage is immoral. Opposing such ideologies does not mean that one should consider any discussion of potential difficulties for spouses of relatively more different ancestry to be evidence of bigotry. A healthy approach is to consider it one of many prudential issues to be weighed when selecting a spouse, how much weight it should be given will vary depending on a wide variety of other circumstances.

Christianity has reorganized many ethnic ties. Some ethnic groups are distinct partly as a result of adherence to or opposition to Christianity. Christianity has, particularly in the West, promoted marriage across tribal lines. For example, Aquinas wrote against marrying kindred saying among other things, “In human society the widening of friendships is of the first importance. That is done by the marriage tie being formed with strangers.”⁶¹ Christianity has, in fact, disrupted social structures based on kinship.⁶² Much of the modern West’s distinctiveness is owed to Western Christianity influencing people towards marrying relatively less related people.⁶³ It is probable that there are a number of endogamous groups which, if they converted to Christianity, would find that much of their separate identity was grounded in pagan religious thought and practices, and would find that supporting the good of their members in Christ would include supporting out-marriage which would dilute their existing identity and cause it to merge with other castes or tribes. This is not to say that the gospel replaces natural relations, however the husband-and-wife dyad is more fundamental than tribe or ethnicity, and it is likely that seeking the good of the family would involve weakening certain endogamous ties that exist in some societies which are sometimes maintained via (non-Christian) religious or social taboos against out-marriage or which are maintained through practices with societal or physical health risks like widespread cousin marriage. (This is not to deny that, conversely, strengthening the husband-and-wife dyad in many Western countries would mean strengthening some other social ties.) It is unsurprising that marriage across larger differences is facilitated by the catholic nature of the church. Such marriages can help to manifest and support the church’s catholicity; however

⁶¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, CHAPTER CXXV—*That Marriage ought not to take place between Kindred* <https://ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/gentiles/gentiles.vi.c.html>

⁶² See e.g. HBD Chick, *whatever happened to european tribes?* <https://hbdchick.wordpress.com/2011/04/04/whatever-happened-to-european-tribes/> and HBD Chick, *inbreeding amongst germanic tribes* <https://hbdchick.wordpress.com/2011/06/22/inbreeding-amongst-germanic-tribes/>

⁶³ See Joseph Henrich, *The Weirdest People in the World*, HBD Chick, *big summary post on the hajnal line* March 10th, 2014 <https://hbdchick.wordpress.com/2014/03/10/big-summary-post-on-the-hajnal-line/>

we can acknowledge that while also acknowledging the goodness of particular people groups with their own networks which tend to lead to marriages within those groups.

An important part of the background for Wolfe's concerns, I am confident, is the issue of immigration. In an article, Wolfe quotes several Protestant writers about the gospel not introducing new morality and says, "the Gospel has nothing to say about immigration, there is no uniquely Christian view on the matter. Immigration is a human question."⁶⁴ I assert that immigration can be analyzed via something like the mixed syllogisms Wolfe highlights in his book ("referring to syllogisms in which one premise is known by reason and the other known only by faith")⁶⁵, insofar as there are naturally known facts that Christian revelation provides new context for. That said, I share Wolfe's concern that immigration is (and has been for several decades) beyond the capacity of (inter alia) the United States to assimilate.⁶⁶

This is not simply a matter of duty to keep different groups separate. To illustrate that, I'll offer a response to an extreme position that Wolfe does not hold. A simplistic idea that races must be kept separate (of the sort Wolfe rejects but to which some people engaged in discussions on ethnicity online appear to at least have some sort of inclination towards) does often, I suspect, neglect to properly account for the fact that the present ethnic and racial groups are in most cases themselves the result of various admixtures, including of continental level (or similarly distant) racial groups. One came to light when researchers found a pattern of Europeans being more

⁶⁴ Stephen Wolfe, *Why Christians Can Support Tighter Immigration Restrictions*, Mere Orthodoxy, July 13th, 2016. <https://mereorthodoxy.com/christians-can-support-tighter-immigration-restrictions/>

⁶⁵ Page 19. See also *A Defense of Christian Nationalism, Part 1 (Introduction)*, Ars Politica March 8th, 2023 starting at 49:40 for more discussion <https://ars-politica.captive.fm/>

⁶⁶ After writing most of this portion of the essay, I listened to Christopher Caldwell's The Age of Entitlement: America Since the Sixties, which includes a discussion of some of the dysfunctional incentives around immigration. See Harrison Pitt, *Can a Christian Care About Demographics?* The European Conservative, September 4th, 2023, for a good discussion that gets into some sensitive issues in a balanced way. <https://europeanconservative.com/articles/essay/can-a-christian-care-about-demographics/>

closely related to Native Americans than to East Asians,⁶⁷ and of Northern Europeans being more closely related to Native Americans than are Southern Europeans.⁶⁸ As it turns out (via genetic study of current populations and ancient remains), thousands of years before any history book was written, a group lived in the far north of Eurasia, some of them mixed with East Asians, crossed the bearing land bridge, and are thus major contributors to the ancestry of Native Americans.⁶⁹ One subset moved west,⁷⁰ mixed with other groups, eventually giving rise to peoples who adapted their cultures to the horse and apparently introduced Indo-European languages to Europe (largely via a series of violent conquests).⁷¹ Much of the Europe they encountered had already seen two groups, Western Hunter Gatherers and Anatolian Farmers (Early European Farmers), who were as distinct from each-other as are some modern racial groups,⁷² war and mix with-each-other (some of this appears to have been peaceful,⁷³ and some of this involved violent conquest). For instance, the society which built Stonehenge appears to have been founded by a group descended predominantly from Anatolian Farmers which had been conquered by Western Hunter Gatherer men before⁷⁴ moving to Britain.⁷⁵ This group

⁶⁷ David Reich, [Who We Are and How We Got Here](#), Page 78.

⁶⁸ David Reich, [Who We Are and How We Got Here](#), Pages 79, 102-103

⁶⁹ David Reich, [Who We Are and How We Got Here](#), Pages 79-82.

⁷⁰ David Reich, [Who We Are and How We Got Here](#), Page 80.

⁷¹ David Reich, [Who We Are and How We Got Here](#), Pages 107-121. Razib Khan, [Steppe 1.0, Going Nomad](#) May 8th, 2021 <https://razib.substack.com/p/steppe-10-going-nomad> Razib Khan, [Steppe 1.1a: A nowhere man's world](#) <https://razib.substack.com/p/steppe-11a-a-nowhere-mans-world> Razib Khan, [Steppe 1.1b: culture vultures descend](#) <https://razib.substack.com/p/steppe-11b-culture-vultures-descend> Razib Khan, [The wolf at history's door](#) <https://razib.substack.com/p/the-wolf-at-historys-door> Iosif Lazaridis et al., *The genetic history of the Southern Arc: A bridge between West Asia and Europe*, [Science](#), August 26th, 2022 <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abm4247> See also Kristian Kristiansen, [Archaeology and the Genetic Revolution in European Prehistory](#) (though he does state that some of the interactions would have been peaceful, he provides a description of patterns of expansion which included violence), Pages 48-51, 58-66. See Johannes Krause & Thomas Trappe, [A Short History of Humanity: A New History of Old Europe](#), (translated by Caroline Waight) Pages 105, 168-173 for a theory of disease as a contributing factor. See also “Peter Nimitz”, *The Indo-European Conquests: From the Suvorovo Culture to the Medes* <https://nemets.substack.com/p/the-indo-european-conquests>

⁷² See e.g. David Reich, [Who We Are and How We Got Here](#), Page 104 (text discussing figure 15).

⁷³ *Between fishing and farming: palaeogenomic analyses reveal cross-cultural interactions triggered by the arrival of the Neolithic in the Danube Gorges* <https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.06.24.497512v1.full> .

⁷⁴ *Ancient Genomes Indicate Population Replacement in Early Neolithic Britain*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6520225/#SD1> See the haplogroup data in supplement 1, which

appears to have suffered a genocidal war at the hands of invading Indo-Europeans,⁷⁶ modern British (like Europeans generally) are descended from a mix of Western Hunter Gatherers, Anatolian Farmers, and the invaders from the steppe.

We should be wary of treating sinful characteristics as inherent to any racial group. For instance, most of the negative or barbaric traits Europeans recoiled at when encountering other cultures during the age of discovery have been found in populations ancestral to (or related to populations ancestral to) modern Europeans. These include cannibalism⁷⁷ and human sacrifice.⁷⁸

Some cultural differences change relatively rapidly, removing differences between populations. Cultural differences between groups are often deeply engrained in the structure of their familial relationships, as Joseph Heinrich made a persuasive case for in his The Weirdest People in the World, which indicates both potential difficulties in and possibilities for changing culture. (For instance, I suspect that some groups which are currently culturally very different

indicates that Hunter Gatherer y haplogroups were dominant at the start of the movement into Britain. Note that the generalized matriarchal picture of Pre-Indo-European Europe presented by Bronze Age Pervert is incorrect. E.g. Bronze Age Mindset, Pages 62, 109-110, 192. On this point, in addition to this evidence of male-conquest prior to this evident in the preceding source, see also *Tracing the genetic origin of Europe's first farmers reveals insights into their social organization* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4389623/> which shows that a culture associated with the neolithic “longhouse” (*Linear Pottery culture Linear Pottery (LBK) culture (c. 5600-4250 BCE)* Eupedia https://www.eupedia.com/genetics/linear_pottery_culture.shtml) was likely actually patrilineal: “A patriloc residential rule was probably linked to a system of descent along the father's line (patrilineality) in early farming communities.” (This isn’t to say that if any ancient cultures are shown to be matrilineal they are thereby matriarchal in the sense he depicts, but the aforementioned evidence appears inconsistent with his description of Pre-Indo-European Europe—I am not sure how serious he was, but I get the impression that some people who’ve read his book or other statements seem to have taken his “longhouse” rhetoric as if it were actually history.)

⁷⁵ *Bell Beakers and the Replacement of the Megalith Builders in Western Europe*, Genomic Atlas April 15th, 2021 <https://genomicatlas.org/2021/04/15/bell-beakers-and-the-replacement-of-the-megalith-builders-in-western-europe/>

⁷⁶ *Bell Beakers and the Replacement of the Megalith Builders in Western Europe*, Genomic Atlas April 15th, 2021 <https://genomicatlas.org/2021/04/15/bell-beakers-and-the-replacement-of-the-megalith-builders-in-western-europe/>

See also “Peter Nimitz”, *Storms Across the Channel: The British Isles from the Magdalenians to the Normans* Nemets June 4th, 2023 <https://nemets.substack.com/p/storms-across-the-channel>

⁷⁷ *Mass Cannibalism in the Linear Pottery Culture at Herxheim (Palatinate, Germany)*.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49132749_Mass_Cannibalism_in_the_Linear_Pottery_Culture_at_Herxheim_Palatinate_Germany

⁷⁸ *Multi-scale ancient DNA analyses confirm the western origin of Michelsberg farmers and document probable practices of human sacrifice* July 5, 2017 <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0179742>
Joshua Levine, *Europe’s Famed Bog Bodies Are Starting to Reveal Their Secrets*, Smithsonian Magazine May 2017 <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/europe-bog-bodies-reveal-secrets-180962770/>

from Europeans would become noticeably more similar if they ceased systematically practicing cousin marriage.) However, this is not to say ethnicity is never deeper than current cultural practice, past cultural practices can have ongoing effects; lifestyle can have an influence on genetic traits if there is sufficient time. We can see this in farming leading an ancient population group, Anatolian Farmers,⁷⁹ to become shorter.⁸⁰ This population no longer exists as a distinct group,⁸¹ having mixed with Western Hunter Gatherers and the invading steppe peoples. However, even in modern Europe there are still differences in height between populations which are associated to some extent with how high a percentage of DNA a population has originating from the Anatolian Farmers. A cultural practice (in this case, farming or something associated with farming) can have impacts on a population after that cultural practice has ceased to be a distinguishing mark of that population. Selection for other physical traits occurred within a variety of populations and can be seen (via genetic study of ancient remains) to have occurred into historic times.⁸²

⁷⁹ For some additional context, see Stephen Shennan, The First Farmers of Europe: An Evolutionary Perspective, Pages 63-141.

⁸⁰ “Based on polygenic scores, we show that early farmers are shorter than HGs (Student t-test, $t = -2.427$, $p\text{-value} = 0.027$), and their stature declined between 8,300 and 7,000 BP (Pearson’s $r = 0.6537$, $p\text{-value} < 0.008$, Fig. S24), suggesting that selection for short stature occurred during the Neolithic expansion along the Danubian corridor.” *The mixed genetic origin of the first farmers of Europe*

<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.11.23.394502v1.full> See also *Evidence of polygenic adaptation at height-associated loci in mainland Europeans and Sardinians*

<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/776377v1.full>

⁸¹ The closest is Sardinia, however, despite that island’s people being autosomally heavily Anatolian Farmer (with very little Steppe admixture), their paternal ancestry appears to be disproportionately Western Hunter Gatherer, and so even they represent a notably mixed population. For some background information, see *Genomic history of the Sardinian population* Nat Genet. 2018 Oct; 50(10): 1426–1434.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6168346/> & *Genetic history from the Middle Neolithic to present on the Mediterranean island of Sardinia.* Nature February 24th, 2020 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-14523-6>

⁸² E.g. Iosif Lazaridis (et al.), *A genetic probe into the ancient and medieval history of Southern Europe and West Asia* Science August 25th 2022 “Light pigmentation in West Eurasia was the result of selection across time, which continued into the Historical period” https://reich.hms.harvard.edu/sites/reich.hms.harvard.edu/files/inline-files/8_25_2022_Manuscript3_HistoricalPeriod.pdf

Furthermore, the changeableness and ephemerality of ethnicity does not mean that culture may not acquire inertia as it affects what personality types and what sets of aptitudes are tending to result in more children in a given society. Mental traits are genetically influenced, genetics is not simply a matter of physical traits. Thus, one of the world's foremost experts in archaeogenetics has written (apparently warning fellow left-liberals of committing themselves to scientifically untenable positions), "If selection on height and infant head circumference can occur within a couple of thousand years, it seems a bad bet to argue that there cannot be similar average differences in cognitive or behavioral traits."⁸³ It seems certain that there have at times been differences in which aptitudes and behaviors were more likely to result in having children (or in having relatively more children) within different populations, and very likely that these different patterns of fertility resulted in differences of average distribution of cognitive traits.

A commonly cited instance where this appears to have happened is in the significantly above average performance of individuals of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry in fields requiring high verbal or mathematical aptitude; the theory is commonly that this might have been an unintended side effect of persecution limiting career options in a way which led to Ashkenazi in some intellectually demanding careers having disproportionately more children (another proposed cause is that within the Ashkenazi community intellectually demanding religious scholarship increased a man's status as a potential match for a daughter of a wealthy family).⁸⁴

⁸³ David Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here*, Page 258. (Though Reich himself would obfuscate things a bit in a politically correct way during the portion of the same book when he commented on the work of, inter alia, Nicholas Wade on Pages 260-264.)

⁸⁴ Gregory Cochran, *A Natural History of Ashkenazi Intelligence* <https://web.mit.edu/fustflum/documents/papers/AshkenaziIQ.jbiosocsci.pdf> Cf. Steven Pinker, *Jews, Genes, and Intelligence* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GexZF5VIMU> Though not addressing the issue of whether this had a genetic effect David C. Kraemer notes in passing that scholarly activity was a factor in marriage prospects, *A History of the Talmud*, Page 222.

In England (a society for which there are relatively good records⁸⁵), there was a persistent reproductive advantage among wealthy commoners relative to the poor from some point during the Middle Ages into the modern era.⁸⁶ This can be seen in several ways, including in how

“the surnames of the rich of 1600 survived much better than those of the poor in the following 250 years. By 1851 there were at the median four times as many people bearing the surnames of the richest group in 1600 as those with the surnames of the indicted in 1600. But even among the rich, the richest testators” . . . “had better reproductive success than the poorest testators. The differential becomes even stronger when we concentrate on names held in by people in 1851 in the same geographic area as their ancestors, and most likely to actually be descendants of the man observed or his close relatives.”⁸⁷

Thus, that writer argues, “the genes of the pre-industrial rich of any generation are overrepresented in the modern population.”⁸⁸ England in the Middle Ages, while peaceful relative to many societies of that time, was significantly more violent than England has been during the modern era.⁸⁹ It seems like a contributing factor might be long term selection of genetic⁹⁰ or cultural traits (or both) via the processes described above leading to changes in the average violence levels in English society.

⁸⁵ Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World*, Pages 40-41“. . .comprehensive measures of wages are available for only a few societies before 1800, and only in rare cases can we get good measures as early as 1200. “Preindustrial England, however, has a uniquely well-documented wage and price history. The relatively stability of English institutions after the Norman Conquest of 1066, and the early development of markets, allowed a large number of documents with wages and prices to survive. Using these we can estimate nominal wages, the prices of consumption goods, and thus real wages for England back to 1209.”

⁸⁶ Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World*, Pages 112-132.

⁸⁷ Gregory Clark, *The Indicted and the Wealthy: Surnames, Reproductive Success, Genetic Selection and Social Class in Pre-Industrial England* <https://faculty.econ.ucdavis.edu/faculty/gclark/Farewell%20to%20Alms/Clark%20-Surnames.pdf> Page 3.

⁸⁸ Gregory Clark, *The Indicted and the Wealthy: Surnames, Reproductive Success, Genetic Selection and Social Class in Pre-Industrial England* <https://faculty.econ.ucdavis.edu/faculty/gclark/Farewell%20to%20Alms/Clark%20-Surnames.pdf> Page 4.

⁸⁹ Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World*, Pages 126-128.

⁹⁰ Gregory Clark, *The Indicted and the Wealthy: Surnames, Reproductive Success, Genetic Selection and Social Class in Pre-Industrial England* <https://faculty.econ.ucdavis.edu/faculty/gclark/Farewell%20to%20Alms/Clark%20-Surnames.pdf> Page 23. Cf. Pages 23-24 “before we get to the long-run where the descendants of rich and poor are largely indistinguishable, the descendants of prosperous men gain a permanent advantage in numbers that is never erased by the later regression of the characteristics of their descendants to the mean of the population.”

It appears clear that rather different cultural processes took place in Britain earlier on—if the aforementioned processes decreased cultural or genetic tendencies in England towards violence, it seems clear that earlier processes, where we have evidence of violent invasions which often disproportionately affected male lineages,⁹¹ likely would have made Britain more violent. There does not appear any clear theoretical reason to suppose that all societies transitioned from a selection relatively in favor of the more violent (or that was relatively violence-indifferent) towards a selection generally in favor of the less violent at the same time or to the same degree, and looking at specific cases there is reason to believe some opposite selection pressures existed in some other societies during the period England was becoming more peaceful,⁹² and that the cultural or genetic processes towards less average violence were less strong in many other societies.⁹³

The point here is to establish that ethnicity can have a discernable reality in the world and also has a contingent aspect to it. This both undermines some of Wolfe's critics who downplay the reality of ethnicity or rhetorically downplay the degrees of difference which exist between ethnicities, and also undermines the statements of some hardline ethnonationalists who reify ethnicity. The point is not that people cannot organize in terms of ethnicity, or that current nations (whether conceptualized using ethnicity, however defined, or not) need to admit all foreigners without qualification.

⁹¹ E.g. *Bell Beakers and the Replacement of the Megalith Builders in Western Europe*, [Genomic Atlas](https://genomicatlas.org/2021/04/15/bell-beakers-and-the-replacement-of-the-megalith-builders-in-western-europe/) April 15th, 2021 <https://genomicatlas.org/2021/04/15/bell-beakers-and-the-replacement-of-the-megalith-builders-in-western-europe/>

⁹² See e.g. Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World*, Pages 129-130 (and more concisely see Table 6.4 on page 130).

⁹³ Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World*, Pages 266-271 argues that there was less downward mobility in China and less of a reproductive advantage for the rich compared to England. I do not think this is the explanation for the great divergence between Europe and Asia, and think that cultural differences directly or indirectly related to Christianity can explain much of the difference (with geographic differences and older cultural differences possibly playing a role).

A particular nation's ethnic identity or identities should be regarded as an inheritance from the past which should be handled with respect. In the same manner that one can defend the positive things one has inherited while acknowledging that some aspects of your family tree came about in immoral fashions (whether via a shotgun wedding here or there or through some sin more overt or more subtle), one can defend one's ethnic and/or national inheritance without adopting a chauvinist defense of everything it has done. The processes which gave rise to a nation can be subject to critique while still believing that the nation is the carrier of a valuable inheritance worth defending.⁹⁴ When it comes to immigration, one can recognize past migratory waves as forming a fundamental part of the history of the nation without supposing that the lesson to be taken away from that history is that mass immigration is necessarily a responsible thing for today's trustees of a nation or ethnicity's heritage to encourage.

Going back to the origins of England as an example: It was reported that British leadership "were so blinded, that, as a protection to their country, they sealed its doom by inviting in among them like wolves into the sheepfold" "the fierce and impious Saxons, a race hateful both to God and men, to repel the invasions" of the Picts and (Irish) Scots,⁹⁵ which we see reflected in English ancestry in the early medieval period⁹⁶ and today.⁹⁷ I gather that left wing British have taken up a habit of making vague references to past population movements to

⁹⁴ After writing this, I came across Wolfe making a comparison between families and nations, though he doesn't dwell on how the role of sin serves as a communication barrier and doesn't explicitly make the inferences I did elsewhere in this essay with regard to the transformation of nations as a result of grace. See Stephen Wolfe, *A Defense of Christian Nationalism: Chapter 2, Ars Politica, September 28th, 2023*, <https://ars-politica.captivate.fm/episode/a-defense-of-christian-nationalism-chapter-2> a little after the 16 minute mark.

⁹⁵ Gildas *The Ruin of Britain* in *Early Welsh Histories: Gildas & Nennius*, trans. J. A. Giles, Page 37.

⁹⁶ "At a regional scale, we observed more ancestry from Lower Saxony in eastern England than in the southwest, consistent with ancestry arriving from the east, either in one event or over a continuous time period." *The Anglo-Saxon migration and the formation of the early English gene pool* <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-022-05247-2>

⁹⁷ "There are substantial genetic differences between English regions (Fig. 5a), with less ancient continental ancestry (England EMA CNE or France IA related) evident in southwestern and northwestern England as well as along the Welsh borders (Fig. 5c). By contrast, we saw peaks in CNE-like ancestry of up to 47% for southeastern, eastern and central England, especially Sussex, the East Midlands and East Anglia." *The Anglo-Saxon migration and the formation of the early English gene pool* <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-022-05247-2>

indicate that present mass migration into Britain⁹⁸ is normal. Looking at the actual history, one might see that foolish leaders incentivized migration to address real problems, with disastrous consequences. An awareness of the contingency of existing ethnic groups and nations should rule out certain forms of ethnic chauvinism, but it does not mean that we shouldn't treat the inheritance we have as something weighty and worth preserving for the future.

Moreover, the contingency of ethnic groups does not necessarily mean that integrating ethnicities in the context of mass immigration will go smoothly. There is evidence that ethnic diversity is associated with a generalized lower level of social trust.⁹⁹ Evidence suggests that assimilation of immigrants to a new country is uneven, with some values tending to persist over multiple generations;¹⁰⁰ one study showed that county level economic performance in the U.S. was correlated to the characteristics of the nations from which the people of each county were derived (this finding remained even when setting aside certain groups considered to have suffered unusually high levels of historical mistreatment).¹⁰¹ National per capita economic performance is strongly correlated to the technology level the ancestors of its population had prior to the European age of expansion.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ After writing this, I watched this video in the course of which Wolfe calls out the silliness of many responses to immigration specifically. See Stephen Wolfe, *Responding to Kevin DeYoung* starting at around the 53:10 mark https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=3130

⁹⁹ Robert D. Putnam, *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century, The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture* <https://www.puttingourdifferencetowork.com/pdf/j.1467-9477.2007.00176%20Putnam%20Diversity.pdf> Garrett Jones, [The Culture Transplant: How Migrants Make the Economies They Move to a Lot Like the Ones They Left](#), Pages 78-100.

¹⁰⁰ Francesco Giavazzi Ivan Petkov Fabio Schiantarelli *Culture: Persistence and Evolution* https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w20174/w20174.pdf Garrett Jones, [The Culture Transplant: How Migrants Make the Economies They Move to a Lot Like the Ones They Left](#), Pages 6-25.

¹⁰¹ Scott L. Fulford, Ivan Petkov & Fabio Schiantarelli, *Does it matter where you came from? Ancestry composition and economic performance of US counties, 1850–2010* <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10887-020-09180-9>

¹⁰² William Easterly, Diego Comin, Erick Gong, *Was the Wealth of Nations determined in 1000 B.C.?* <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/200709easterly.pdf> Cf. Garrett Jones, [The Culture Transplant: How Migrants Make the Economies They Move to a Lot Like the Ones They Left](#), Pages 26-77.

The aforementioned facts highlight some areas where I am dissatisfied with Wolfe, many of his critics, and some of the ethnonationalists to Wolfe's "right" who take part in these discussions. Race and ethnicity are both malleable to a degree which poses a problem for hardline Kinists and ethnonationalists. On the other hand, race and ethnicity relate to real things in the world and admit of degrees of distance in a way which many of Wolfe's critics either fail to account for generally or neglect to account for properly in relation to Wolfe. For instance, some express skepticism about the idea of lumping Germans, Scots, and other European groups together into an "Anglo" American ethnicity.¹⁰³ Given that there is a degree of persistence of traits among population groups, it is not surprising that some groups have assimilated more easily into America than others.¹⁰⁴ Given the history of intermarriage and relatively higher levels of interaction and of migration over the past few thousand years, it is not surprising that some of the faster assimilating ethnicities have a closer historic connection to Anglo-Americans. For example, Germans have been noted as relatively fast to assimilate Anglo-American culture compared to many other immigrant groups.¹⁰⁵ In addition to many German immigrants (particularly earlier ones) having had similar religious beliefs to Anglo-Americans, Germans share roots with much of the British population that are more extensive than the connections between the British and many other European populations, for instance, "a large proportion" of early Anglo-Saxons in England were derived from what is now Lower Saxony¹⁰⁶ in Germany.

The correct reaction is to treat this as a prudential matter. According to Richard Hooker (with regard to the Mosaic law),

¹⁰³ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1582146701212921856>

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Garrett Jones, The Culture Transplant: How Migrants Make the Economies They Move to a Lot Like the Ones They Left, Page 58

¹⁰⁵ Garrett Jones, The Culture Transplant: How Migrants Make The Economies They Move to a Lot Like the Ones They Left, Page 147.

¹⁰⁶ *The Anglo-Saxon migration and the formation of the early English gene pool*
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-022-05247-2>

“The positive laws were established with careful thought for the places and persons to which they applied, as all good laws must be. Given that not all nations are the same, and God prescribed these laws with such an eye to the particular needs of Israel, how could we think that the fact that God made these laws unchangeable for one people means that they should govern all nations forever?”¹⁰⁷

In a similar way, immigration law may need to vary prudentially depending on the actual people involved as well as the history of the polity making the decisions. Treating these matters prudentially is in line with some of what Wolfe says, but he wavers a bit, perhaps because he does not sufficiently take into account all the contingent factors working to create ethnicities as they now exist in the world. Wolfe has written, “As a matter of moral principle, nations by means of civil law would deny the universal reception of foreigners.”¹⁰⁸ He makes the more qualified statement (regarding Christian immigrants), “Christian nations are not required to exclude them, but they can in principle.”¹⁰⁹ And, “A self-confident Christian nation will be hospitable to its spiritual brothers and sisters, but they will not be self-destructive or easily manipulated.”¹¹⁰

In a discussion of immigration published several months after the book, Wolfe has written:

“a people is not merely a relation of production and consumption, nor a collection of diverse vocations, but an enduring partnership of the dead, living, and unborn—linked by a handing-down of a way of life and common heritage.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Richard Hooker, *The Word of God and the Words of Man, Books II and III of Hooker's Laws: A Modernization*, ed./trans. Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, Bradley Belschner, Sean Duncan, Page 119.

¹⁰⁸ Page 166.

¹⁰⁹ Page 199.

¹¹⁰ Page 203.

¹¹¹ Stephen Wolfe, *The Virtue of Hospitality: Welcoming Strangers with Wisdom*, *American Reformer*, June 28th 2023 <https://americanreformer.org/2023/06/the-virtue-of-hospitality/> Compare to Alastair Roberts, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Final Immigration Response*, *Theopolis*, June 20th, 2019 <https://theopolisinstitute.com/conversations/welcoming-the-stranger-a-final-immigration-response/> : “Where such sharp distinctions between host and guest peoples exists and means of discrimination exist, principles of hospitality can inform our practice and the figure of the immigrant may be rather less threatening. Without such laws protecting a particular peoplehood and requiring either integration or assimilation to that people, however, immigration can function as a steady process of cultural dispossession, eroding any substantial peoplehood into a pluralistic and

And,

“Non-native residents benefit directly from the totality of national action—the benefits that arise from the interconnectedness of activity in a nation. For example, the national economy is not merely a bare relation of production and consumption, conducted by deracinated individuals in isolation from national life as a whole. It is but one part of a whole, and thereby is undergirded by immaterial norms, customs, and mutual expectations.”¹¹²

I generally agree with the above statements. (I also share some of his frustration with the current situation that he sums up as one in which, “Western man, whose birthrates have plummeted, creates well-ordered spaces and civil institutions not for himself and his natural progeny but for his replacements.”¹¹³) For Wolfe, legitimate concerns about immigration include effects on the cultural majority, even if the immigrants are Christian.

In applying his concepts of ethnicity and culture to America, Wolfe often (on twitter) makes reference to the work of Eric Kaufmann. Kaufmann classifies America for much of its history as having had an “Anglo-conformist” approach whereby other ethnicities were expected to conform to Anglo-cultural norms. Kaufmann has described the current situation in many countries as one in which,

multicultural society, often primarily optimized for the expansion of the economy. [The ‘peoplehood’ I am describing here should not be thought of in terms of a monoculture: it is a shared social fabric that protects many variations within it, valuing them as the very specific differences that they are, rather than as some ‘diversity’ as such. For instance, the character of a place like the UK depends upon the differences between the English, Irish, Welsh, and Scots, upon numerous regional differences in such things as customs, cuisine, and accents, and upon the countless distinct forms of place preserved and developed within it.]”

¹¹² Stephen Wolfe, *The Virtue of Hospitality: Welcoming Strangers with Wisdom*, American Reformer, June 28th 2023 <https://americanreformer.org/2023/06/the-virtue-of-hospitality/> Compare to Alastair Roberts, *True Hospitality and the Immigration Debate*, Theopolis, May 23rd, 2019 <https://theopolisinstitute.com/conversations/true-hospitality-and-the-immigration-debate/> “Where society becomes radically diverse and the conditions for robust civil society are diminished, societies’ capacity for self-government are weakened and they become more dependent upon the power of the state to substitute for the threadbare social fabric.” And, “Whereas in the past, Western countries could assimilate new arrivals into a thick common society as they tended to come from culturally (and geographically) proximate countries, modern multicultural societies that indiscriminately welcome all comers no longer do the same thing. The increasing power of secular liberalism, the market, technocratic managerialism, and the growing dependence upon law and government to hold society together and establish its values are in large measure a result of this.”

¹¹³ Page 169.

“Far from calling for assimilation to a majority identity, elites accepted that minorities would maintain their identities in private as society grew increasingly diverse. Implicit in this argument is that majorities should accept their ethnic decline and focus their identity on the common values which bind the civic nation. This is akin to asking the host country of a World’s Fair to close its national booth and focus its sense of community exclusively on the fairgrounds.”¹¹⁴

Kaufmann proposes an approach whereby the ethnic majority is able to celebrate its identity but does not have any privileged relationship to the state except insofar as it democratically votes to keep the existing ethnic balance of a country.¹¹⁵ “It is simply going too far to ask national ethnic groups to bleed their cultures dry so as to accommodate every wisp of minority-group alienation. On the other hand, it is not too much to ask that the host ethnic group keep its hands off the state.”¹¹⁶ Kaufmann argues that suppressing majority-group ethnic self-identification has been bad for everyone,

“In other words, the suppression of dominant-group ethnic expression alienates the majority group from ethnicity per se. This forces the mass culture to take on an individualistic hue, thereby generating an acidic social environment that erodes the structural basis of all ethnic groups.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Eric Kaufmann, Whiteshift: Populism, Immigration, and the Future of White Majorities, Pages 158-159.

¹¹⁵ “Through liberal ethnicity, individuals are encouraged to embrace both liberal and ethnic values, with the liberal values taking precedence whenever ethnicity intrudes into the realm of basic liberties. Ethnic groups should develop their particularity and yet maintain a liberal attitude to new entrants and an egalitarian posture toward those with fewer typical ethnic traits. Notice that this ethnic ideal has nothing to do with the state: states like the United States must not develop their particularity. They should not try to assimilate newcomers to anything but the most inclusive ethical precepts, and they ought to be as culturally neutral as possible, operating as explicitly multicultural entities.” “On the other hand, states are under no obligation to be open to all comers. Decisions concerning citizenship and immigration will instead be determined by a wide range of considerations. ‘Secular’ concerns about the effect of immigration (pro and con) on the economy, global justice, and the environment will play an important role. Ethnic considerations must also be taken into account, and the state needs to justly arbitrate between the cultural preferences of the state’s ethnic groups. Groups that stand to benefit demographically from a greater inflow will push for this, and those that stand to lose will attempt to limit numbers. Liberal ethnicity only asks that individuals give weight to both secular-liberal and ethnic concerns, and that the state refrain from instituting the preferences of any particular group(s).” Eric Kaufman, The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America, Pages 290-291. “However, a minimal state committed to individualism and cultural tolerance must be constructed from a thin, abstract set of symbols in order to provide a lowest common denominator for the entire citizenry. The citizens will be loyal to the state and defend it in times of stress, but in their daily existence, the abstract state cannot possibly supplant their symbolically rich, ethnic *gemeinschaft*.” Id. Page 294.

¹¹⁶ Eric Kaufmann, The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America, Page 300.

¹¹⁷ Eric Kaufmann, The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America, Page 300.

Kaufmann has indicated that national identity should be open, going so far as to say that: “The core of American national identity must take on board the contributions of the latest arrivals and place them on a par with long-standing groups.”¹¹⁸

While Eric Kaufmann deserves credit for engaging the question, his argument for “de-centring” the majority group from the state fails to take into account that the sacrifices which formed the state may disproportionately be of members of one ethnicity or group of ethnicities, or that the culture required to keep the state going, or the culture required for making the country a desirable destination for immigrants, may be particularly tied to one ethnicity or group of ethnicities. Suppose that Ireland wished to disproportionately favor Irish diaspora in either immigration or naturalization, in order to preserve the Irish nature of Ireland, on what moral principle could one demand that recently arrived groups would need to proportionately be admitted (relative to Irish diaspora immigrants) in order to allow more-recently-in-the-country groups to keep the share of the population they have had for a few years?

So, Wolfe favorably references Kaufmann’s work, but it’s no surprise he does not adopt his proposed solutions wholesale (there is, as far as I am aware, as of yet no article of Wolfe’s where he spells all of this out, these are my inferences). Instead Wolfe appears to want to retrieve aspects of the Anglo-conformist model that Kaufmann describes as the original U.S. approach.¹¹⁹ Some pushback has been that this isn’t true for all regions of the U.S.¹²⁰ Another point of pushback against such a conceptualization of America has been that this doesn’t sufficiently

¹¹⁸ Eric Kaufmann, *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America*, Page 289.

¹¹⁹ Though see here where he says, “I am not suggesting that we return to an old ‘anglo-prot conformity’”, in the context of the rest of this thread and other things he has said I take this not to be denial that he wishes to reclaim some aspects of Anglo-conforming. <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1671537414957850626>

¹²⁰ E.g. as per tweets by Dr. Miles Smith (@IVMiles). A response to this sort of criticism is found in Wolfe’s video *Responding to Kevin DeYoung* starting around the 55:44 mark: https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=3344

include African Americans.¹²¹ However, one can acknowledge that America has an Anglo (or English-speaking Northwestern European) core culture while also acknowledging that other groups have a legitimate claim on the country. Wolfe’s ambiguity on this matter, is, I suspect, partly because different African Americans may choose to relate to Anglo culture differently. As I see it, they might relate by (1) adopting the norms and identity of the majority culture, or (2) by maintaining a separate but connected American culture, or (3) attempting to repriminate an African culture, or (4) they could self-define simply by opposition to the majority culture. The negation option I have labeled “4” is obviously bad. Option “3” is understandable but undertaking it in North America seems like a project not likely to succeed except perhaps if done in a measured way to bolster aspects of option 2. Option “2” is also understandable, it’s normal for people to want to continue their traditions in the country they have lived in for generations, though I think the tradeoffs are often underdiscussed when this sort of thing is brought up in polite society, insofar as some degree of separation from the majority community is likely required to perpetuate many aspects of minority identity (perhaps this is part of what Wolfe was thinking of in his now deleted response to a question¹²² about extensive intermarriage between white and black Americans) and there are presumably going to be some opportunities which would be reduced or given up in order to achieve that. Moreover, insofar as the majority culture is more economically successful someone choosing different cultural practices should consider whether aspects of the majority culture’s success are cultural and, if so, whether there are benefits to rejecting those aspects of the majority culture that outweigh the downsides. An embrace of option “1”, while not without any potential difficulties, is probably more likely to

¹²¹ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1580993436483612673>, compare to (e.g.) <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1661128432221052934> and <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1653857764668588033>

¹²² <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533801267683905536> (The deleted response had to do with, as I recall, extensive intermarriage being undesirable because then African Americans would stop existing as a distinct group.)

lead to intermarriage between whites and blacks, and I don't think Wolfe is ideologically opposed to marriages of people of different ancestry who embrace the same culture (probably subject to similar caveats to the ones I outlined earlier). One reviewer has complained that Wolfe has adopted a sort of right wing wokism in, inter alia, thinking "that we ought to make ethnic consciousness *more* important".¹²³ However, to some extent it is contemporary Anglo-Americans and other westerners that are the weird ones here in having such a low emphasis on their particularity.¹²⁴ I don't think Wolfe has explained as clearly as I'd like how minority and majority cultures relate, but as I understand him his vision is for an "Anglo-normed"¹²⁵ America that is open to assimilation of new people into Anglo-American culture and ethnicity (albeit with significant restrictions on immigration at least in the near future) and which recognizes the existence of non-Anglos as part of the polity even though it seeks to reassert the Anglo aspect of the American tradition as a unifying factor and a central part of its heritage.

Overall, I think I'm more open to immigration than Wolfe as a matter of theory, insofar as I think some political systems and circumstances could lead to a situation in which indiscriminate admission of foreigners would be fine, but I don't think that contemporary America is such a place, and so at the present in practice support the same overall trajectory change (government policy and enforcement leading to fewer admitted immigrants) in the U.S. as Wolfe, though I think there is probably sufficient theoretical difference in our views that this would not always be the case. (I can imagine legal changes which could facilitate assimilation and deter some people who don't want to be part of our culture, like making suffrage conditional

¹²³ *The Rise of Right-Wing Wokeism Review: 'The Case for Christian Nationalism' by Stephen Wolfe, The Gospel Coalition, November 28th, 2022* <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/christian-nationalism-wolfe/>

¹²⁴ See pages 169-171, compare to Joseph Henrich, *The Weirdest People in the World* for some drivers of this difference.

¹²⁵ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1470408745947701255>

on passing literature tests which have a large number of books from our cultural tradition.¹²⁶) It is of note that the Old Testament polity of Israel had provisions for allowing in immigrants which seem relevant to the questions of economic migrants and refugees, notably providing, “You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him.”¹²⁷ Though all immigrants to Israel were subject to many restrictions in terms of conduct within the land that modern open immigration people would balk at,¹²⁸ it seems that we could give consideration to whether and how this applies in a Christian polity (I’d be curious to see Wolfe interact with Gary North’s short essay *The Sanctuary Society and its Enemies*¹²⁹). There’s a question as to whether recent massive immigration would have happened without the many government services immigrants can access in the United States and many other western countries. In terms of conservative Christian views of this, the points of view are not limited to affirming recent massive immigration as a good thing and considering massive federal direct restriction as the ideal response (for example some people strongly support the existence of multiple nations but doubt mass migration would exist in the US context but for government programs they desire to get rid of and thus they don’t regard a loosening or lack of government restrictions on movement as inherently meaning mass migration when considered apart from current government programs which they believe have the

¹²⁶ Ian Perry, *A Brief Note on Reforming Republican Democracies* <https://ibperry.wordpress.com/2020/11/02/a-brief-note-on-reforming-republican-democracies/>

¹²⁷ Deuteronomy 23:15-16 NASB 1995

¹²⁸ For a couple discussions which points out the existence of such restrictions, see Alastair Roberts, *President Trump’s Executive Order and the Moral Confusion of the Immigration Debate*, *Alastair’s Adversaria*, January 30, 2017 <https://alastairadversaria.com/2017/01/30/president-trumps-executive-order-and-the-moral-confusion-of-the-immigration-debate/>

and Alastair Roberts, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Final Immigration Response* *Theopolis* June 20, 2019 <https://theopolisinstitute.com/conversations/welcoming-the-stranger-a-final-immigration-response/>

¹²⁹ Gary North, *The Sanctuary Society and Its Enemies*, *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 13:2 (Summer 1998) Page 205 https://cdn.mises.org/13_2_7_0.pdf

effect of subsidizing it), which is worth keeping in mind as we consider the problems with the current situation in America and other affluent western countries. There are some more detailed debates about practicalities to be had, not only the nationalism verses deracinated globalism debate.

There are a range of factors which could affect what level of openness to immigration is prudent for a given country. Suppose a group of refugees or prospective economic immigrants has a different culture, looks visibly different enough that people would readily visually distinguish them from a country's core population, and has (as these things go) comparatively little recent shared ancestry with the country's core population. How to respond is a prudential matter. A stronger political and cultural system might potentially have greater ability to assimilate such outsiders, or a greater ability to live alongside non-assimilated communities without an increase in conflict. Under some circumstances, however, these factors might reasonably be taken to, together, increase the risk of social conflict once the number of such immigrants reached a certain point.

On twitter, Wolfe has drawn attention to Aquinas's statement that in Israel foreigners, "were not at once admitted to citizenship: just as it was law with some nations that no one was deemed a citizen except after two or three generations, as the Philosopher says (Polit. iii, 1). The reason for this was that if foreigners were allowed to meddle with the affairs of a nation as soon as they settled down in its midst, many dangers might occur, since the foreigners not yet having the common good firmly at heart might attempt something hurtful to the people."¹³⁰

This highlights many reasonable concerns that Christians should take into account when considering immigration and naturalization policy. (Beyond this, Aquinas elsewhere expressed

¹³⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica First Part of the Second Part, Question 105, Article 3: Whether the judicial precepts regarding foreigners were framed in a suitable manner?*
https://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.FS_Q105_A3.html

concern that interaction with foreigners could undermine the customs and civic life of a community.¹³¹⁾

Wolfe has also argued it is appropriate to love some more than others, citing Aquinas in support of this. Wolfe is correct that Aquinas does affirm that it is appropriate to love different people in different degrees. As Aquinas does so, he affirms the appropriateness of Christians giving special attention to many natural and social categories of relationships which predate Christianity. After having said that we should love some more than others on account of some being better in the sense of being more similar to God,¹³² Aquinas then qualifies this by arguing that we should love those more closely united to us more than those who are merely morally better; it is worth noting that he cites 1 Timothy 5:8 on duties to one's own household at the start of making his case for duties to those united to us.¹³³

Aquinas wrote,

“towards those who are not connected with us we have no other friendship than charity, whereas for those who are connected with us, we have certain other friendships, according to the way in which they are connected. Now since the good on which every other friendship of the virtuous is based, is directed, as to its end, to the good on which charity is based, it follows that charity commands each act of another friendship, even as the art which is about the end commands the art which is about the means. Consequently this very act of loving someone because he is akin or connected with us, or because he is a fellow-countryman or for any like reason that is referable to the end of charity, can be commanded by charity, so that, out of charity both eliciting and commanding, we love in more ways those who are more nearly connected with us.”¹³⁴

¹³¹ Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno (On Kingship)*, Paul A. Böer, Sr. Ed., Gerald B. Phelan trans, revised by I. Th. Eschmann, O.P., *Book Two, Chapter 3, Paragraph 138* (Kindle Edition) Page 73.

¹³² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity Article 6. Whether we ought to love one neighbor more than another?*
<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm>

¹³³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity Article 7. Whether we ought to love those who are better more those who are more closely united us?*
<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm>

¹³⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity Article 7. Whether we ought to love those who are better more those who are more closely united us?*
<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm>

Aquinas gives particular weight to ties based on kinship, saying,

“some neighbors are connected with us by their natural origin, a connection which cannot be severed, since that origin makes them to be what they are. But the goodness of virtue, wherein some are close to God, can come and go, increase and decrease, as was shown above (24, 4,10,11). Hence it is possible for one, out of charity, to wish this man who is more closely united to one, to be better than another, and so reach a higher degree of happiness.”¹³⁵

And,

“If however we compare union with union, it is evident that the union arising from natural origin is prior to, and more stable than, all others, because it is something affecting the very substance, whereas other unions supervene and may cease altogether. Therefore the friendship of kindred is more stable, while other friendships may be stronger in respect of that which is proper to each of them.”¹³⁶

Furthermore,

“In as much as the friendship of comrades originates through their own choice, love of this kind takes precedence of the love of kindred in matters where we are free to do as we choose, for instance in matters of action. Yet the friendship of kindred is more stable, since it is more natural, and preponderates over others in matters touching nature: consequently we are more beholden to them in the providing of necessities.”¹³⁷

Even so, it is not the case that shared ancestry is, according to Aquinas, supposed to trump all other loyalties. Aquinas wrote, “in matters pertaining to nature we should love our kindred most, in matters concerning relations between citizens, we should prefer our fellow-citizens, and on the battlefield our fellow-soldiers.”¹³⁸ Aquinas defends loyalty to an officer as not contrary the love which is owed to a father: “The fact that in the battle a man obeys his officer rather than his

¹³⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity Article 7. Whether we ought to love those who are better more those who are more closely united us?* <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm> This is cited by Wolfe on Page 139 in footnote 20.

¹³⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity Article 8. Whether we ought to love more those who are connected with us by ties of blood?* <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm> This is cited by Wolfe on Page 139 in footnote 20.

¹³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity Article 8. Whether we ought to love more those who are connected with us by ties of blood?* <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm>

¹³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity Article 8. Whether we ought to love more those who are connected with us by ties of blood?* <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm>

father proves, that he loves his father less, not simply but relatively, i.e. as regards the love which is based on fellowship in battle.”¹³⁹ Moreover, Aquinas indicates that in some areas duties to others as Christians can be greater than duties to family members,

“Ambrose is speaking of love with regard to favors respecting the fellowship of grace, namely, moral instruction. For in this matter, a man ought to provide for his spiritual children whom he has begotten spiritually, more than for the sons of his body, whom he is bound to support in bodily sustenance.”¹⁴⁰

Wolfe has tweeted out that reading Aquinas will make you right wing, and he is correct that Aquinas’s account of these issues strongly affirms the value of natural relationships. In his book Wolfe, citing Aquinas, states,

“It is also evident, from both instinct and reason, that we ought to prefer our own nation and countrymen over others. This instinct is not from the fall or due to sin; it is natural and therefore, good. We are naturally drawn to what, in principle, is necessary for our complete good.”¹⁴¹

Later, Wolfe argues that organic relationships allow for radical charity.¹⁴² Wolfe is correct that there is an appropriate love for those near us that is natural and for our good and consistent with Christian faith, and he is correct that organic relationships often allow for sacrificial acts of giving to be done in a way which will have a positive effect. However, in his book¹⁴³ Wolfe does not properly factor in how Christian faith pushes us to help those outside our immediate sphere as Christians are sent to “all nations”.¹⁴⁴ In practice this has often included technological and material assistance between peoples who were formerly not united, consider the aid Paul solicits

¹³⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity Article 8. Whether we ought to love more those who are connected with us by ties of blood?* <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm>

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity Article 8. Whether we ought to love more those who are connected with us by ties of blood?* <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm>

¹⁴¹ Pages 150-151.

¹⁴² Pages 220-222

¹⁴³ He does grapple with some relevant issues here Stephen Wolfe, *The Virtue of Hospitality: Welcoming Strangers with Wisdom*, *American Reformer*, June 28th 2023 <https://americanreformer.org/2023/06/the-virtue-of-hospitality/>

¹⁴⁴ Matthew 28:19

for Christians in Jerusalem,¹⁴⁵ or, to pick a more recent example, how Presbyterian missionary John G. Paton helped advance the material situation of the people of the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) as he was ministering there.¹⁴⁶ I agree with much of Aquinas’s overall account (though not all specifics, i.e., I disagree with some of Aquinas’s statements about the hierarchy of loves within a family¹⁴⁷). Wolfe underrates, I think, the degree to which Aquinas’s view does indicate that the gospel adds some additional factors. As I noted earlier, even in terms of natural relationships, Aquinas thought that ties in society should be broadened via marriages to “strangers”.¹⁴⁸

Wolfe does not fully account for the ways in which shared citizenship in the kingdom of God changes earthly relations. Wolfe frames things in terms of a spiritual versus temporal distinction.

“fellow Christians, regardless of nationality, are united *spiritually*, as fellow members of the kingdom of God. This is chiefly a heavenly or eschatological relation, made possible by grace, not nature. The spiritual kingdom, after all, is in essence invisible or yet-to-be-revealed. Thus, all Christians share in the highest good—all being spiritually united to Christ—and thus have a spiritual brotherhood. But this brotherhood—being fit for a *heavenly* kingdom—is wholly inadequate as to its kind for cooperating to procure the full range of goods necessary for living well in this world.”¹⁴⁹

There is some truth here—and it is true that, “Though the people of God share the highest good, that does not make any random selection of them mutually suitable for civil fellowship.”¹⁵⁰ In the book, Wolfe highlights the difficulties that different groups of Protestants faced when some

¹⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, 2 Corinthians 8-9, Romans 15:26-27

¹⁴⁶ John G. Paton, [John G. Paton: The Autobiography of the Pioneer Missionary to the New Hebrides \(Vanuatu\)](#). For a modern account of how hospitality can function closer to home, I highly recommend Rosaria Butterfield’s [The Gospel Comes with a House Key](#).

¹⁴⁷ See Thomas Aquinas, [Summa Theologica, Second Part of the Second Part Question 26 Question 26. The order of charity](#) Articles 9-11 <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3026.htm>

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Aquinas, [Summa Contra Gentiles, CHAPTER CXXV—That Marriage ought not to take place between Kindred](#) <https://ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/gentiles/gentiles.vi.c.html>

¹⁴⁹ Page 199.

¹⁵⁰ Page 200.

relocated to avoid persecution to show that common Christian bonds do not necessary result in harmonious civil fellowship between different ethnic groups.¹⁵¹ (In terms of how this sort of thing applies outside the sphere of civil government, Wolfe has stated that ethnic churches are fine, but said it would be “borderline heretical” for a church to reject someone on the basis of ethnicity.¹⁵²)

Wolfe writes, “cultural Christianity does not import abstract theories of justice to critique the ‘systems’ that govern our world. Rather, it is a force for the perfection of organic communities, not subverting the foundation of them, but strengthening the natural ties that bind people together in a common life.”¹⁵³ This depends on what is meant by foundation and subvert. Commenting on a statement in the book of Jeremiah in which the prophet expressed a desire to leave his people, Calvin wrote,

“This had an emphatic bearing; for delightful to every one is his native soil, and it is also delightful to dwell among one’s own people. As then the Prophet wished to be removed into the desert, and to leave his own people, all his relatives and the nation from which he sprang, and to depart from them, it follows that they must have come to extremities.”¹⁵⁴

Serving the kingdom will often involve a great deal of work within existing national and social systems, even less than ideal ones and even ones which result from sin, though sometimes it will require opposition to such systems.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, it is worth noting that one aspect of the social and political system in which the apostles operated was the Roman imperial system in which a multitude of ethnicities were ruled by one polity. In any case, the Apostle Paul’s

¹⁵¹ Pages 201-203.

¹⁵² *Responding to Kevin DeYoung* Starting a little before the 42 minute 50 second mark. https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=2568

¹⁵³ Page 219.

¹⁵⁴ John Calvin, *Commentaries on Jeremiah and Lamentations*, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom17.xix.ii.html> *Jeremiah 9:2* (Typos that were in the cited source page edited out of this quote by me without specifically noting each correction.) Wolfe has referenced this quote repeatedly, e.g. <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1443932832146001922>

¹⁵⁵ After writing this I saw Wolfe acknowledging a similar point, *Responding to Kevin DeYoung* around the 40 minute mark https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=2400

description of individual circumstances in 1 Corinthians 7 has application with regard to weighing how to respond to the national and ethnic circumstances in which we providentially find ourselves.

“Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches. Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.”¹⁵⁶

We should note that baptism and the lord’s supper do act to overcome some of the things which, as a matter of historical record, have often served to divide nations. It may be significant here that Wolfe’s section on baptism¹⁵⁷ is in his Cultural Christianity section rather than the Redeemed Nations section—Wolfe is right to see baptism as having a significance with regard to the Christian character of a nation, but neglects to apply this to the character of how nations relate to each other.¹⁵⁸ As the mustard seed of the gospel grows into a tree and “the birds of the air come and nest in its branches”¹⁵⁹ (however one interprets that) and Jesus reigns until the last enemy death is defeated,¹⁶⁰ it seems that there will be effects on earthly relationships both generally and particularly among those who have been baptized into his name and who partake of his body and blood. Wolfe states that “my political theology is based more in human nature than in eschatology.”¹⁶¹ He does add in a footnote that “theological anthropology is not divorced from eschatology”.¹⁶² More recently, Wolfe has written that the church “administers sacred

¹⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:17-19, NASB 1995.

¹⁵⁷ Pages 217-218.

¹⁵⁸ Though he has called for giving Christian immigrants a relative priority to non-Christian immigrants, see his discussion here: Stephen Wolfe, *The Virtue of Hospitality: Welcoming Strangers with Wisdom*, American Reformer, June 28th 2023 <https://americanreformer.org/2023/06/the-virtue-of-hospitality/>

¹⁵⁹ Matthew 13:31-32 NASB 1995.

¹⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 15, Compare to Psalm 110 and Acts 2:33-36.

¹⁶¹ Page 469.

¹⁶² Page 469, footnote 13.

things that feed the soul (John 6:35), not the body” (though shortly before this he wrote “we hope for the glorification of the body promised to us in Christ”).¹⁶³ In the book, Wolfe twice describes sacred fellowship as “otherworldly”.¹⁶⁴ In a recent discussion, he stated, “I’m not postmillennialist, so I’m not claiming” . . . “that Jesus did promise that there would be Christian civil government”.¹⁶⁵ He does describe Christian culture as “a foretaste of life in the world to come”¹⁶⁶ and the Christian nation as “the complete image of eternal life on earth.”¹⁶⁷ Even so, I think that fully accounting for the fact that the redemption of humanity involves at Christ’s return the created order being transformed into a New Heavens and New Earth makes it difficult to oppose earthly and heavenly things to the degree that Wolfe does.

Though there is precedent in earlier writings for describing distinctions in terms of “heavenly” and “earthly”,¹⁶⁸ that the gospel works a change in how different nations and ethnic groups relate to each-other is not merely a modern belief. Justin Martyr listed this along with other effects of the gospel,

“And thus do we also, since our persuasion by the Word, stand aloof from them (i.e., the demons), and follow the only unbegotten God through His Son —we who formerly delighted in fornication, but now embrace chastity alone; we who formerly used magical

¹⁶³ Stephen Wolfe, *The Church Among the Nations*, *American Reformer*, August 1st, 2023 <https://americanreformer.org/2023/08/the-church-among-the-nations/>

¹⁶⁴ Pages 63 and 77.

¹⁶⁵ Stephen Wolfe, *Responding to Kevin DeYoung* starting around the one hour 55 minute 34 second mark https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=3994

¹⁶⁶ Page 222.

¹⁶⁷ Page 223.

¹⁶⁸ See e.g. Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* for early examples of such oppositions. For some statements which remember to frame things in terms of the New Heavens and New Earth see e.g. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration VII: Panegyric on His Brother S. Caesarius* *Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen*, Translated by Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207/npnf207.iii.vi.html> “Why behave like a mere creature of a day? I await the voice of the Archangel, the last trumpet, the transformation of the heavens, the transfiguration of the earth, the liberation of the elements, the renovation of the universe.” and Id. *Oration XXI: On the Great Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria* https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207/npnf207.iii.xi.html#fna_iii.xi-p5.2 “this last shaking is none other than the second coming of Christ, and the transformation and changing of the universe to a condition of stability which cannot be shaken.”

arts, dedicate ourselves to the good and unbegotten God; we who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into a common stock, and communicate to every one in need; we who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not live with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the ruler of all.”¹⁶⁹

Starting by discussing the consanguinity all humans share by virtue of having the same first parents, Calvin wrote, “consanguinity and the same original ought to have been a bond of mutual consent among them; but it is religion which doth most of all join men together, or cause them to fly one another’s company.”¹⁷⁰

Wolfe argues,

“Christ did not come, as Calvin said, to ‘mix up nature’ in this life. But superiority and inferiority of rank in the civil and domestic spheres are irrelevant to one’s right to receive the things of the kingdom of Christ, for in Christ ‘there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.’”¹⁷¹

As we interpret passages like this, we need to be careful to note that the spiritual relationship found in Christianity does have effects on temporal relations, and also careful to note that the effects do differ somewhat between different types of relationships. Hardline ethnonationalists and liberals often deny this in different ways, and I invite Wolfe to explicate that his position disagrees from each on this point—in my account here, I make a positive case for how to

¹⁶⁹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, *Chapter XIV* <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/anf01.viii.ii.xiv.html>

¹⁷⁰ *Acts 17:26 Calvin's Commentary on the Bible* <https://www.biblecomments.org/c/6/calvins-commentary-on-the-bible/acts/17/26> thanks to Steven Wedgworth for drawing attention to this statement by Calvin via quotation on twitter. Note also how Calvin said in the same commentary, “Now, we see, as in a camp, every troop and band hath his appointed place, so men are placed upon earth, that every people may be content with their bounds, and that among these people every particular person may have his mansion. But though ambition have, oftentimes raged, and many, being incensed with wicked lust, have past their bounds, yet the lust of men hath never brought to pass, but that God hath governed all events from out of his holy sanctuary.”

¹⁷¹ Page 305.

interpret scripture on these matters, hoping to get some participants in this debate to modify their framing of these issues. Though Galatians treats the issue of male and female alongside Jew and Greek, when we look at the scriptures as a whole, or even just Paul's letters as a whole, it is clear there are differences in how the scriptures treat ethnicity and gender, and differences in the implications of the New Covenant for these things today.

The heavenly and spiritual do not necessitate treating male and female the same as nations. The relationship between male and female is a fundamental aspect of human nature, any given group of people is a contingent result of the fruitfulness of that relationship. Christian spiritual equality has the effect of opening up all church offices to men of all ethnicities. In a way greater than the historically contingent distinction between any two ethnicities, the nature of men and women images Christ and his Church. Wolfe's rhetoric of a strong earthly versus heavenly difference in the effects of the gospel is not needed to defend the distinction between male and female.

As Alastair Roberts discussed in his audio commentary on Galatians Chapter 3,

“In Baptism we are all buried with Christ so that we might be raised with Him. Baptism also unites us with all of the other people who have been baptized as a united people in the church that baptism marks out, whatever our background and whatever our identity. In this new people old divisions, like the divisions the gentiles were re-erecting by turning to the law, are overcome and we all become one. Modern readers tend to read verse twenty-eight as a statement about equality, or even in some cases interchangeability, and this does not quite grasp Paul's point. Paul's point is not the equality of detached individuals with varying characteristics, but a declaration of the unity of formerly opposed or alienated groups in a new solidarity. While there are some clear senses in which a form of equality follows from this (we're all recipients of the promised Holy Spirit and stand on the same ground of grace before God, for instance) it is not an axiomatic equality, a radically generalizable equality, nor yet an equality that renders people interchangeable. Paul's point is not that human beings have always been equal. Rather, his point is relative to this event of God in Christ those things that would once divide us no longer define our existence and have ceased to be the barriers that they once were. The result of all of this is not a lot of detached and equal individuals, but

various and differing members of a single and undivided family. This new family in Christ is the fulfillment of the promise that was made to Abraham.”¹⁷²

As the oppositional nature of differences is overcome by the Gospel, there are or should be different effects within different types of human relationships. Male and female are not opposed to each-other as such, rather there are natural differences which conflict with each-other because of sin. Differences between old and young are a natural difference which would exist even in the absence of sin, and some distinction between them is appropriate in a Christian community (as Paul teaches) while the gospel serves to unite the generations. The differences between nations are the results of God’s providence and in many cases should be redeemed, Christians working within rather than against existing nations, but many aspects of national difference are more closely connected to sin than are some other differences that exist in the Christian community (the situation of nations in 1500 A.D. is more predictive of current differences between nations than 0 A.D. or 1000 B.C., I suspect the reasons for this include not only the nearer timeframe but also the significant time Christianity had to change some cultures during that 1500 years¹⁷³).

The Bible presents linguistic divisions as related to sin, however when these are undone in Acts it is by everyone hearing the gospel in his own language,¹⁷⁴ rather than a simple amalgamation into everyone speaking one language; at the same time overarching Roman political power provides a significant aspect of the background for a variety of ethnicities hearing the gospel in the New Testament. Not every polity has the same historic relationship to ethnic

¹⁷² Alastair Roberts, *Galatians 3: Biblical Reading and Reflections - Part 352, June 18th, 2020* <https://audio.alastairadversaria.com/sermons/10547/galatians-3-biblical-reading-and-reflections/> starting a little after the 20 minute mark. Cf. Alastair Roberts, *True Hospitality and the Immigration Debate*, *Theopolis*, May 23rd, 2019 <https://theopolisinstitute.com/conversations/true-hospitality-and-the-immigration-debate/> “The Church represents—not the abstract and deracinated cosmopolitanism of the placeless liberal subject—but a new international solidarity, bound to the particularity of Jesus of Nazareth, the world’s true Lord, in the concreteness of local communities.”

¹⁷³ William Easterly, Diego Comin, Erick Gong, *Was the Wealth of Nations determined in 1000 B.C.?* <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/200709easterly.pdf> Garrett Jones, *The Culture Transplant: How Migrants Make the Economies They Move to a Lot Like the Ones They Left*, Page 51. Cf. Joseph Henrich, *The Weirdest People in the World*.

¹⁷⁴ Acts 2:1-21.

identity. The degree to which distinction from other nations should be reinforced by the laws of a given nation is a prudential matter, though there are some biblical guardrails which ban or militate against certain approaches. It seems that there are some things which are properly valued because they (in a way not inherently tied to ongoing sin) illustrate the diversity that God has encouraged to flourish among peoples. To me it seems intuitive that particularly ancient and relatively unique ethnic distinctiveness is often particularly worth preserving (i.e., more would be lost if Basques and their language were absorbed by romance culture and language than would be lost if one Iberian romance language were subsumed into another). There are, I believe, some ethnic traits which are closely tied to ethnic self-conception without that being a sin and there are also some distinctive tendencies of particular ethnic groups that a member of that ethnic group might wish to accept as a distinctive gift of providence and “lean into” without supposing that all groups should seek to cultivate those traits to the same degree.

The gospel allows us to offer human things back to God, to transform the creation and offer it back to God, and to transform human cultures and offer them back to God.¹⁷⁵ As we prepare the “kings of the earth” to “bring their glory”¹⁷⁶ into the heavenly city, we should work to redeem creational categories from the sin which has often pit these differences into opposition with each other. In interacting with the human cultures it is established among, a Christian political order should both restore creation and look forward to the new creation.

3: Hierarchy, Representation, Differences Between the Sexes

Wolfe presents society as naturally hierarchical. Wolfe’s vision for hierarchy is one whose goal involves free men working together, with free men of higher rank serving to coordinate and

¹⁷⁵ See Peter Leithart, *Theopolitan Liturgy, To the Reader*

¹⁷⁶ Revelation 21:24

provide a structure in which free men of other vocations can labor productively so that each man can contribute to his own and society's good. Wolfe states that "slavery violates a principle of human nature and so is forbidden in the state of integrity."¹⁷⁷

Wolfe correctly argues that hierarchy is natural to man and flows out of the inequality of gifts which would exist even in the absence of sin. Wolfe states that hierarchy "is good in itself, even of higher worth than egalitarian arrangements."¹⁷⁸ I would add the qualification that given human fallenness, some limitations on hierarchy reflect a more advanced Christian understanding of statecraft.

Wolfe presents a Christian prince as properly having a role in giving effect to the collective national will for its good via specific commands.¹⁷⁹

"When we designate any prince as a *Christian* prince, we are not simply referring to his religion. Nor are we saying that his office is fundamentally of grace, as if 'Christian prince' is entirely a creation of the Gospel. The Christian prince occupies the natural office of civil ruler; it is not fundamentally a new office, though the office is Christianized by his service to Christ. The Christian prince retains everything pertaining to the office of civil ruler, considered generically."¹⁸⁰

This contrasts to the view of another modern writer, Oliver O'Donovan, who argues that political authority is radically restructured in terms of Christ such that some of its original purposes no longer apply.¹⁸¹ Oliver O'Donovan argues that in the New Covenant, "the whole rationale of

¹⁷⁷ Page 68.

¹⁷⁸ Page 68.

¹⁷⁹ Pages 277-280.

¹⁸⁰ Page 292.

¹⁸¹ "political authority in all its forms – lawmaking, war-making, welfare provision, education – is to be re-conceived within this matrix and subject to the discipline of enacting right against wrong. My expression intends to sum up two contrasted but complementary assertions characteristic of the Christian tradition. In the first place, the terms on which the bearers of political authority function in the wake of Christ's ascension are new terms. The triumph of God in Christ has not left these authorities just where they were, exercising the same right as before. It imposes the shape of salvation-history upon politics. The operations of the Holy Spirit in the world drive the political leaders back upon the tasks of justice, and so effect a transformation. This offers a distinctive perspective on the evolution of political forms in history. For the hero-warriors of Troy the ultimate test is the survival of the city, for the warrior monarchs of Beowulf the survival of the tribe; but that is ground we can never re-occupy. Even

government is seen to rest on its capacity to effect the judicial task.”¹⁸² O’Donovan contrasts this to both Old Testament Israel (with a focus on government as safeguarding “Israel’s existence in relation to the land and the law”) and “the classical world” where “the end of government was the protection of the polis.”¹⁸³ O’Donovan indicated that the New Testament’s definition of civil authority forbids rulers to pretend to “the consummation of the community’s identity in the power of its ruler.”¹⁸⁴ His position seems difficult to square with the emphasis the New Testament places on the existence of peoples as the gospel goes out, both in terms of the observable connection of rulers to peoples as we look at the world and in terms of the connection made between peoples and rulers in the book of Revelation and its statement about the kings of the Earth bringing their glory into the heavenly city.¹⁸⁵ According to O’Donovan’s interpretation of the New Testament,

“Membership in Christ replaced all other political identities by which communities knew themselves. No respect can be paid to the role of government, then, as a focus of collective identity, either in Israel or in any other community. Judgment, on the other hand, must be respected, for it is the form in which God expresses his wrath; and that wrath cannot cease yet, as we will learn from Paul elsewhere, it is a restraining element in society which preserves the social order that furthers the spread of the gospel.”¹⁸⁶

were the same conditions as once prevailed in Magna Gaecia or Scandinavia to prevail again, we could not return to that state of mind in innocence, for something about our human vocation has been shown to us: we are called to a final destiny in the life of the new Jerusalem, subject to the throne of God and the Lamb. Only of that throne can it be said that by its sheer prevailing it gives life. All other thrones need further justification; their role is subordinated to the task of preparing the way for that final one. This was the ground of the distinction that arose within a Christian view of history between secular and spiritual authority, this-worldly and ultimate rule.

“In the second place, political leaders are not simply denied their authority, but are constituted, on these new terms, as a secondary theatre of witness to the appearing grace of God, attesting by their judicial service the coming reality of God’s own act of judgment. In the light of Christ’s ascension it is no longer possible to think of political authority as sovereign; but neither is it possible to regard them as mere exhibitions of pride and lust for power.” Oliver O’Donovan, The Ways of Judgment, Page 5.

¹⁸² Oliver O’Donovan, The Desire of Nations, Page 148.

¹⁸³ Oliver O’Donovan, The Desire of Nations, Page 148.

¹⁸⁴ Oliver O’Donovan, The Ways of Judgment, Page 4.

¹⁸⁵ Revelation 21:24.

¹⁸⁶ Oliver O’Donovan, The Desire of Nations, 148.

Wolfe had noted much earlier in the book that “Adam and his progeny’s work on earth was always penultimate; it was subordinate to a higher end obtained *only* by grace.”¹⁸⁷ So, Wolfe and O’Donovan’s views might be partly reconciled by noting by noting the contingency of human relationships generally in the light of the coming New Heavens and New Earth, though they differ in Wolfe’s strong affirmation of Christian rulers’ proper role in upholding the agency and identity of earthly communities. I differ with O’Donovan in thinking that expressing national particularity can be a good of a civil government and differ with O’Donovan in seeing a much greater continuity of the proper roles of government prior to the incarnation and after. I differ with Wolfe in being comfortable considering looking forward to the New Heavens and New Earth as restructuring earthly relationships.

Wolfe believes leadership is naturally masculine. “Feminine virtues *greatly* benefit individuals and society; they are indispensable. But they operate for good only when complemented with masculine leadership.”¹⁸⁸ I agree that this is true in a wide variety of contexts, though I believe there are some additional facts which need to be taken into account which cause me to differ in some ways from his depiction of how this should work.¹⁸⁹ He argues that, even in a sinless state, “civil society is a composition of households and men are the head of households, the public signaling of political interest (whether by voting or other mechanisms) would be conducted by men, for they represent their households and everyone in it.”¹⁹⁰ He thinks

¹⁸⁷ Pages 43-44.

¹⁸⁸ Page 451.

¹⁸⁹ For someone who, reviewing a different and less-positive-about-women author than Wolfe, independently raises a similar concern while having some major differences of approach, cf. “Certainly, women as warriors or battle leaders is laughable, but women upon occasion in the councils of power, and constantly of great influence behind the scenes, is the historical reality, and recognizing that in the structures of a renewed society is critical.” Charles Haywood’s review of *Bronze Age Mindset (Bronze Age Pervert)* <https://theworthyhouse.com/2019/09/23/bronze-age-mindset-bronze-age-pervert/>

¹⁹⁰ Page 73.

this would likely also be the case for vocational associations.¹⁹¹ I think here he oversimplifies. People have multiple sets of relationships in society, there are a number of ways in which, absent sin, the individual would interact with society in a way which did not go through the household. The household is one aspect of human sociality; as a matter of prudence and convenience the leader of a household or a larger kin-group has often been privileged in relationship to signaling views within the civil polity, but absent sin there does not appear to be any clear reason to suppose that men and women would not have participated in political and vocation institutions both in an individual and in a household-representational manner. Biblically, it is true that male leadership is not simply a matter of the fall, as may be seen in Paul's reference to both the fall and the order of creation in a discussion of it;¹⁹² in the same manner, we have reason to believe that male leadership has both a necessity-as-result-of-sin aspect and a creational aspect. Many of the taboos about female participation in society were related to sin—in a society with no crime, women would, in some contexts, be less dependent on their fathers and husbands and other men—women might go to market on their own and give feedback about the situation there without fear of crime or other sinful mistreatment. Some of the limitations on communications which interfered with women's direct input on civil matters are a result of sin, and some limitations may be, while not necessarily a result of sin, influenced by the technological development of society (greater ease of communications may make individual input easier in some cases in which it was formerly not practical).

Acknowledging that there is a sin-contingent aspect of gender differences in public participation does not mean giving a reductionist account of gender differences in relation to public life—there are clearly a range of such differences which are not a matter of sin.

¹⁹¹ Page 73.

¹⁹² 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

Looking at the data available to us about men and women, we have many reasons to think men are naturally more suited to political power than women. The difference in strength is widely known, though because discussion of this has become influenced by broader social taboos against discussing natural differences between men and women¹⁹³ many people are likely unaware of how extreme the difference in average upper body strength is between men and women.¹⁹⁴ There are a variety of behavioral and cognitive differences between men and women which are relevant to leadership in society. This may be seen in the greater success of men in more abstract fields across a wide variety of domains of human endeavor;¹⁹⁵ most people are too unaware of this trend for it to influence the allocation of resources sufficiently to explain the difference, and in any case it can be seen across fields with a wide variety of difference in the ease of entry. Different levels of allocation of resources are insufficient to explain patterns such as how “sex differences in mathematics tend to be small when the material is more closely aligned with what is taught in school, whereas it tends to be larger when the items are not matched to the curriculum.”¹⁹⁶ On average, men are relatively more oriented than woman to exploring the unknown.

In addition, there are significant differences in how men and women construe their social relationships which make men more suited to generate power—women’s tendency to prefer smaller more intimate social groups is more suited to raising small children, whereas men’s tendency to larger and looser social networks is more suited to the creation of military and civil

¹⁹³ On natural differences generally, a good overview is provided by Alastair Roberts in his article *What Socialization and Social Construction Can’t Explain*, *Alastair’s Adversaria*, January 22nd, 2018 <https://alastairadversaria.com/2018/01/22/what-socialization-and-social-construction-cant-explain/>

¹⁹⁴ See Figure 1. in *Explaining the sex difference in depression with a unified bargaining model of anger and depression Evolution, Medicine, and Public Health*, Volume 2016, Issue 1, January 2016, Page 117 <https://academic.oup.com/emph/article/2016/1/117/2802593>

¹⁹⁵ Charles Murray, *The Inequality Taboo*, *Commentary Magazine*, September, 2005 <https://www.commentary.org/articles/charles-murray/the-inequality-taboo/>

¹⁹⁶ Diane F. Halpern, *Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities (Fourth Edition)*, Page 335

governmental power.¹⁹⁷ (Consistent with this, knowledge of political facts is on average higher among men than is the average among women.¹⁹⁸)

Men show a greater interest in things than do woman¹⁹⁹ and we see this in the careers people prefer to choose.²⁰⁰ It's reasonable to infer some of the differences we see in knowledge of different domains are influenced by this (i.e. the people who perform the best in competitions regarding geographic knowledge tend to be male²⁰¹). I think the thing orientation of men is a factor in men being the ones who form certain basic societal institutions, insofar as it often involves thinking about human interactions in a way that is a few steps removed from the specifics of a given relationship with a specific person (perhaps the thought involved has aspects that are more like thinking about a system or unexplored territory than like the immediate experience of friendship with one person).

¹⁹⁷ Alastair Roberts, *Feminism, Equality, and Authority*, [Alastair's Adversaria](https://alastairadversaria.com/2014/08/28/feminism-equality-and-authority/), August 28th, 2014.
<https://alastairadversaria.com/2014/08/28/feminism-equality-and-authority/> Alastair Roberts, *A Crisis of Discourse—Part 2: A Problem of Gender*, [Alastair's Adversaria](https://alastairadversaria.com/2016/11/17/a-crisis-of-discourse-part-2-a-problem-of-gender/), November 17, 2016.

<https://alastairadversaria.com/2016/11/17/a-crisis-of-discourse-part-2-a-problem-of-gender/>

¹⁹⁸ Jeffery J. Mondak and Mary R. Anderson, *The Knowledge Gap: A Reexamination of Gender-Based Differences in Political Knowledge*, [The Journal of Politics](#), Vol. 66, No. 2, May 2004, Page 492 (The articles notes that the difference consistently shows up, and argue that approximately half the difference can be shown to come from men being more ready to guess than woman, but state that the remaining difference remains unexplained.)

¹⁹⁹ See e.g. Rong Su, James Rounds, Patrick Armstrong, *Men and Things, Women and People: A Meta-Analysis of Sex Differences in Interests*, [Psychological Bulletin](#), November 2009 135(6):859, Page 873: “Our study revealed substantial sex differences in vocational interests that parallel the composition of males and females in educational programs and occupations. Men and women differed by almost a full standard deviation in the Things–People dimension. This mean difference of 0.93 indicates that only 46.9% of the male and female distributions of interest on the Things–People dimension overlaps or that up to 82.4% of male respondents have stronger interests in things-oriented careers than an average female. Men have stronger Realistic, Investigative, and STEM interests, and women have stronger Artistic and Social interests that parallel the Things–People sex difference. These differences were large, with the mean effect size of .84 for Realistic interests and 1.11 for engineering interests, equal to a 50.9% and 40.7% overlap of male and female distributions, respectively. The mean effect size for Social interest (d 5 20.68) was moderate, equal to a 58.4% overlap of distributions. In other words, only 13.3% of female respondents were more interested in engineering than an average man, whereas 74.9% of female respondents showed stronger Social interests than an average man.”

²⁰⁰ See e.g. Rong Su, James Rounds, Patrick Armstrong, *Men and Things, Women and People: A Meta-Analysis of Sex Differences in Interests*, [Psychological Bulletin](#), November 2009 135(6):859

²⁰¹ See e.g. Kate Zernike, *Girls a Distant 2nd In Geography Gap Among U.S. Pupils*, [The New York Times](#), May 31st, 2000.

Note that societies with more liberal views on gender actually see bigger differences between the sexes than less liberal societies on a number of metrics (the currently common invocation of socialization to explain differences in male and female behavior is insufficient as an explanation).²⁰² Female political leaders will tend to be empowered by networks of men in a way that men are not empowered by networks of women (think, for example, of how political leaders, male or female, depend on the physical strength of military servicemen and policemen) and operate within political regimes that were disproportionately created by men.²⁰³

These differences are relevant, and make men, as a group, the sex which is naturally more oriented towards civil politics—our political institutions should formally and openly acknowledge this. So, I agree with Wolfe that male leadership is necessary insofar as the world is created in such a way that men are naturally oriented towards leadership in a way that women generally are not. However, society is not merely a federation of households simply,²⁰⁴ this is one aspect of society which gains prominence under certain conditions. I don't think that all forms of female involvement in political power are inherently unnatural, though an attempt to hide or efface the natural unequalness of men and women's relationship to political power is unnatural. (On this and some other subjects, I have some notable disagreement with Wolfe's framing while still holding "cancelable" views myself.) In the Bible, we find rule of women and children mentioned together negatively,²⁰⁵ even though it elsewhere also recounts particular cases in which such rule was good. We should leave room for celebrating the occasional

²⁰² Marco Balducci, *Linking gender differences with gender equality: A systematic-narrative literature review of basic skills and personality*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, February 2023

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9978710/>

²⁰³ Alastair Roberts, *Feminism, Equality, and Authority*, *Alastair's Adversaria*,

<https://alastairadversaria.com/2014/08/28/feminism-equality-and-authority/>

²⁰⁴ Contra Wolfe on Page 73.

²⁰⁵ Isaiah 3:12

Deborah²⁰⁶ while still thinking that Israel was following God’s design in having a general pattern of male leadership, and without being perplexed by the pattern of male leadership in the New Testament church,²⁰⁷ and without trying to reduce the pattern of male leadership in the Bible to incidental things like educational levels. I think the effacement of differences between the rights and responsibilities of men and women has gone too far and needs to be revised.

Wolfe notes some unpopular but true facts with regard to these issues, “Western nations are leading themselves into decline, (especially demographically) as feminine empathy, which is suitable for the domestic sphere, enacts gynocratic contradictions and self-destructive inclusivist civil policies.”²⁰⁸ In the footnote, he says,

“Gynocratic practical contradictions, which result from overzealous empathy, include forbidding active policing (the absence of which leaves women more vulnerable), support for trans athletes (who have a clear advantage over biological females in most sporting competitions), lax immigration controls (which has led to a rise in sexual assault in places like Germany and Sweden and other European countries), and restrictive COVID policies (which has exacerbated women’s already fragile mental health).”²⁰⁹

Treating men and women as interchangeable when in fact they differ with regard to their aptitude for politics and some other similar institutional contexts is a recipe for disfunction. I think the solution is to restore male leadership in a number of institutions, and to return some institutions to being either wholly or-but-for-some-exceptions male; the military being the most obvious case where tradition was more grounded in reality than is current practice.²¹⁰ The presence of women

²⁰⁶ Alastair Roberts, *Some Lengthy Thoughts on Women Leadership*, *Alastair’s Adversaria*, December 8th, 2011. <https://alastairadversaria.com/2011/12/08/some-lengthy-thoughts-on-women-leadership/>

²⁰⁷ Alastair Roberts, *A Closer Examination of Junia, the Female Apostle*, *Alastair’s Adversaria*, December 10, 2011. <https://alastairadversaria.com/2011/12/10/a-closer-examination-of-junia-the-female-apostle/>

²⁰⁸ Page 291.

²⁰⁹ Page 291.

²¹⁰ For short summaries of examples relevant to this, see e.g. Eyder Peralta, *Marine Corps Study: All-Male Combat Units Performed Better Than Mixed Units*, *NPR*, September 10th, 2015 <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo->

in the military, is, I think, something which poses grave risks to its functioning (which risks are relatively more opaque to many Americans because of the distance of the majority of Americans from America's wars and because of our technological superiority over our recent opponents), and even if the military does benefit from the presence of specific women, the military must be recognized as a normatively male institution regardless of whether exceptions are made for certain roles or under certain circumstances. Women in the military, even if for some reason it is deemed that their roles should be done as members rather than as civilian employees, should be there with the understanding that they are to support and not hinder its functioning as a brotherhood of men.

This does not entail that all political spaces need to be solely male. We need to carefully think about what aspects of society are represented by civil institutions and consider which aspects of society are most established by or reliant on male sociality or other male traits and order our institutions in ways which facilitate those traits being both free to be healthily expressed and put to work to build up society. The male nature of the military provides one possible starting point for giving expression to the male aspect of political power—a Christian realm which included women's suffrage for many offices might, say, reserve one house of the legislature for selection by an electorate of male military veterans. Such a move would help to keep politics anchored in several fundamental things about human nature which are necessary for a state to function—male sociality and male willingness to take risks in service of a brotherhood, channeled in a way which serves society generally. At the same time, under modern technological conditions, the greater ease of communications makes it easier for women's social

way/2015/09/10/439190586/marine-corps-study-finds-all-male-combat-units-faster-than-mixed-units, Gil Ronen, *IDF Admits Problems with Women in Combat*, Israel National News, July 30th, 2015
<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/198853>

role to be paralleled by women being part of the political process via an individual vote for preferred political representatives.

So, in a U.S. context, perhaps these things could be given expression via constitutional amendments providing for an all-male Senate combined with an open-to-both genders House of Representatives (preferably with some basic requirements as a prerequisite for voting for either one²¹¹). Ideally, women help to advise men, even in areas where men have greater aptitude for being in leadership roles; the preceding suggestion is an attempt to take that into account under current technological conditions. I am not disputing that a revision needs to take place, but I am trying to put the arguments for it on a sounder theoretical basis—some right wing authors (including Wolfe, I think) have argued for undoing changes to gender roles without properly accounting for how technological changes (such as improved communications) and technology-influenced social changes may have made some (but not all) change from tradition both feasible and reasonable.²¹²

4: State Formation and the Possibility of Just Revolution

Stephen Wolfe's discussion of revolution and the nature of civil power within a nation is another area I'd like to engage with at length. I think he leaves his defenses of civil disobedience and

²¹¹ See my *A Brief Note on Reforming Republican Democracies* <https://ibperry.wordpress.com/2020/11/02/a-brief-note-on-reforming-republican-democracies/>

²¹² In his recent book, Andrew Isker emphasizes the point that voting serves as a proxy for war and uses that as an argument against women's suffrage. [The Boniface Option: A Strategy For Christian Counteroffensive in a Post-Christian Nation](#), (Kindle Edition) Pages 59-61. He is correct insofar that is one aspect of voting (I would tend to frame the proxy-for-physical force aspect more in connection with it being a proxy for capability for service to the country in its policing and outward facing military capacities than domestic conflict, but that isn't to deny the reality of the potential for domestic conflict), and he is correct insofar as our current system obscures this and leads to disfunction. However another aspect of voting is an information communication mechanism. These different functions are not both served well by our current system, however simply rolling back women's suffrage totally would not properly account for the social and information communicative aspects of voting and thus would, in my judgement, under modern technological conditions be less stable than the system I have proposed. Isker is correct to note that men used to have unequal rights with regard to civil power (Id. Page 60), but I don't think he factors in how widespread male suffrage (even with the caveats he perhaps would want to add to it) would destabilize entirely excluding women's suffrage.

revolution underqualified, however he gets at some important issues. How the issue of revolution is treated has implications for the formation of civil power. People who oppose all overthrowing of civil power run into a serious theoretical problem when it comes to describing how a given civil power becomes legitimate in the first place.

Wolfe argues that civil power is natural and would have existed in the pre-fall state.²¹³ According to Wolfe, the use of force is an “augmentation”²¹⁴ of the role of civil power in response to sin but is not inherent to it. Wolfe notes that the Christian tradition is divided on this issue.²¹⁵ I do not have a strong opinion on it, though I lean towards agreement with the view that some sort of civil authority would have existed in the absence of sin. My other points of agreement and disagreement with Wolfe in the rest of this section apply, I think, regardless of whether one agrees with Wolfe on the particular issue of whether there would have been a separate civil power even in the absence of the fall.

I do have some concerns about Wolfe’s view of the effects of the fall on civil authority. Firstly, Wolfe’s account of the image of God needs clarification, it appears that Wolfe agrees with theologians who describe the image of God as (in some sense) being lost by Adam’s sin.²¹⁶ Even if Wolfe believes the work has already been done by theologians, it would have been

²¹³ Page 70.

²¹⁴ Page 88. It may be relevant that in his doctoral dissertation he describes the views of New England Puritan Samuel Willard saying, “The sinful state of man “augmented the necessity” of government; it did not create the necessity for civil government, nor introduce new principles. The moral principles originate and continue to operate for the attainment of natural civil ends. But since sin disrupts and undermines the pursuit of happiness, God authorizes civil government to suppress the outward manifestation of sin. Thus, the *means* of government are expanded to deal with a new hindrance to happiness. The origin, principles, and end of civil government remains the same.” Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789 (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Page 120.
https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations Some additional discussion can be found Stephen Wolfe, *A Defense of Christian Nationalism: Chapter 2, Ars Politica*, September 26th, 2023, <https://ars-politica.captive.fm/episode/a-defense-of-christian-nationalism-chapter-2> a little after the 13 minute mark.

²¹⁵ Page 70

²¹⁶ Page 94.

helpful for him to specify more clearly the sense in which he believes this is true. Wolfe has affirmed that civil authority is not contingent on one being a Christian.²¹⁷ Perhaps I should infer that Wolfe thinks that the image of God in some sense remains in unbelievers and in some sense has been damaged; it would have helped me follow his argument if he had stated this explicitly (or, if he believes something else, had stated that explicitly). Looking back on his doctoral dissertation, he does describe and appears to affirm a view which describes the image of God as lost in unbelievers.²¹⁸ There did seem to be an ambiguity in how he treated the authority of unbelievers and how he treated the image of God in The Case for Christian Nationalism—I hope he will clarify this.

Wolfe had in an article published prior to the book articulated a view of civil authority which seemed overly limited—grounding obedience on a rebuttable presumption that rulers have a good reason for what they do.²¹⁹ While I thought this was too narrow a grounding, I thought that was interesting in that it provided a theoretical justification for revolt which also provided a way to ground legitimate state authority. Certain expansive notions of deference to a state are initially easy to reconcile with Paul’s broad statement of deference in Romans 13 but create a problem in that they do not provide a way to determine whether a state authority is legitimate or not. This puzzle is left for us in the Bible, but it does seem like something that Christian political

²¹⁷ See page 328, “. . . non-Christian rulers still have true civil power, and resisting them is resisting God. Similarly, the question is not whether a Christian nation can revolt against rulers on account of their heresy or infidelity or excommunication, for possession of legitimate civil power does not depend on theological orthodoxy or on one’s proper standing in the visible church.” See also Page 113, “God forbade Israel from dispossessing any nation outside of Canaan. These nations possessed the land by God’s forbearance and by a *civil* right granted to them. Willard repudiates the ‘error’ of those who ‘pretend [that] dominion is founded in grace’ and who thereby ‘usurp the possession of his ungodly neighbor.’ He writes that ‘so long as they [the ungodly] keep within the bounds of civil righteousness, their claim *ad hominem* is as good as that of the godly’” . . .

²¹⁸ Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789, (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Pages 103-104.

https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations

²¹⁹ Stephen Wolfe, *Classical Reformed Theonomy*, July 4th, 2022 <https://www.thelondonlyceum.com/classical-reformed-theonomy/>

reflection should meditate upon and come to a solution for. (The words of Proverbs 25:2 come to mind, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”)²²⁰

Oliver O’Donovan grappled with some of the relevant issues and described a situation when sovereignty is being contested, but he had much less specifics to offer by way of explanation of when it is legitimate for it to begin to be contested.²²¹ Elsewhere O’Donovan (engaging with an older writer) described a situation in which a tyrant has effectively left a vacuum of lawful authority,²²² though I do not think he considers that to be necessarily the only potential situation in which an authority may lawfully be revolted against.²²³ I found O’Donovan’s discussions engaging but they left the issues less resolved than I had hoped. In the same way that Christian pacifists might leave the dirty work of running the state to non-believers or to sinning Christians, a Christian political theory which has no place for revolution risks leaving the task of forming a state to non-believers or unfaithful Christians. While in practice states have often been formed by unbelievers or unfaithful Christians, it seems like something has gone wrong if we are left to say, at a theoretical level, that states can only be formed by unbelievers or unfaithful Christians, but that once they are formed good Christians have a duty to be obedient. So, Wolfe’s theory of state power as a matter of presumed sufficient reasons is attractive—even though I think the theory is insufficient. There is a biblical responsibility to bear

²²⁰ NASB 1995.

²²¹ See Oliver O’Donovan, The Ways of Judgment, Pages 141-142 and that chapter (*Political Authority*) more broadly.

²²² Oliver O’Donovan, The Desire of Nations, Page 138.

²²³ See his discussion of the breakup of the Soviet Union in The Ways of Judgment, Pages 147-148.

with some unjust commands out of respect for an office²²⁴—though perhaps this can be understood as respect for the just commands the office is still supporting or giving.

For instance, Wolfe describes the authority of Nero in terms of his just commands. “Though Nero was indeed a tyrant, worthy of violent removal, he still had true authority to command what is just, and many civil commands of the Roman empire were indeed just.”²²⁵

Wolfe relies on ideas in the Christian tradition which teach that an unjust law is not really a law.

It is true that we can see unjust commands described as not really law in some parts of the Christian tradition.²²⁶ Aquinas writes,

“laws may be unjust in two ways: first, by being contrary to human good, through being opposed to the things mentioned above---either in respect of the end, as when an authority imposes on his subjects burdensome laws, conducive, not to the common good, but rather to his own cupidity or vainglory---or in respect of the author, as when a man makes a law that goes beyond the power committed to him---or in respect of the form, as when burdens are imposed unequally on the community, although with a view to the common good. The like are acts of violence rather than laws; because, as Augustine says (De Lib. Arb. i, 5), ‘a law that is not just, seems to be no law at all.’ Wherefore such laws do not bind in conscience, except perhaps in order to avoid scandal or disturbance, for which cause a man should even yield his right, according to Mt. 5:40,41: ‘If a man . . .

²²⁴ In addition to Romans 13 which discusses civil government directly, this seems implied in number of passages. See also Acts 23:5 where it seems implied even if we think Paul was understating the scope of what he could properly say in this particular case.

²²⁵ Page 351. Cf. Samuel Rutherford, Lex, Rex: The Law and the King, *Question 30* (The Canon Press Edition) Page 367.

“If a lawful prince do one or more acts of a tyrant, he is not a tyrant for that, yet his action in that is tyrannical, and he does not that as a king, but in that act as a sinful man, having something of tyranny in him.”

²²⁶ See e.g. “It is a wonder that inferior judges should be formally judges, insofar as they act conform to the will of a mortal king, and not insofar as they act conform to the will of the King of kings, seeing the judgment they execute is the King of kings’, and not the judgment of a mortal king (2 Chron. 19:6).” And, “Royalists cannot endure the former distinction as it is applied to the king, but they receive it with both hands as it is applied to inferior judges; and yet, certain it is, that it is as ordinary for a king, being a sinful man, to act sometimes as the lieutenant of God, and sometimes as an erring and misinformed man, no less than the inferior judge acts sometimes according to the king’s will and law, and sometimes according to his own private way”. Samuel Rutherford, Lex Rex: The Law and the Prince, *Question 43*, Page 570 of the Canon Press Edition. Rutherford says that higher powers are not higher powers insofar as they command unlawful things. Samuel Rutherford, Lex, Rex: The Law and the King, *Question 30* (The Canon Press Edition) Page 366.

take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him; and whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two.”²²⁷

And,

. . . “a law that inflicts unjust hurt on its subjects. The power that man holds from God does not extend to this: wherefore neither in such matters is man bound to obey the law, provided he avoid giving scandal or inflicting a more grievous hurt.”²²⁸

However, I think one should be careful in overreading Aquinas’s statements on unjust law not binding the conscience—the qualification regarding scandal is one he clearly assigned more weight to than many modern revolutionaries. Moreover, though Aquinas taught that an unjust law did (in some sense) not bind the conscience, he paid attention to the legal form of a regime when, in his On Kingship, he indicated that proper responsibility for addressing the situation varied depending on the form of the regime (who had responsibility for selecting the king), and indicated that there were circumstances in which there was not currently anyone who could properly remove the ruler.²²⁹ Denying that there is any sense in which (under some circumstances) one has an obligation to obey an unjust law enacted by otherwise legitimate authority would not be consistent with the full scope of Aquinas’s statements on these issues. More importantly such a denial is insufficient biblically in that there is clearly a duty to obey foolish commands under some circumstances; it also appears clear that biblically there is a duty to suffer injustice under some circumstances.²³⁰ Now, I don’t say all circumstances—if we say that, we end up with the problem of state formation as a dirty unchristian task.

²²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Of the Power of Human Law (Six Articles): Whether human law binds a man in conscience? Summa Theologica*, <https://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/FS/FS096.html#FSQ96OUTP1>

²²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, First Part of the Second Part, Question: 96, Of the Power of Human Law (Six Articles)* <https://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/FS/FS096.html#FSQ96OUTP1>

²²⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno (On Kingship)*, Paul A. Böer, Sr. Ed., Gerald B. Phelan trans, revised by I. Th. Eschmann, O.P., *Book One, Chapter 7, Paragraphs 47-52* (Kindle Edition). Pages 27-28.

²³⁰ See 1 Peter 2:18 and consider how this could also apply to civil government.

The focus of early Protestant defenders of revolt was on the civil power causing people to do what was wrong, “If God commands one thing, and the king commands the contrary, where is that proud man who would term him a rebel who refuses to obey the king, when else he must disobey God?”²³¹ The author of Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos also says,

“First, they do not absolutely refuse to obey, provided that they be commanded that which they may lawfully do, and that it be not against the honor of God.

“They pay willingly the taxes, customs, imposts, and ordinary payments, provided that with these they seek not to abolish the tribute which they owe unto God. They obey Caesar while he commands in the quality of Caesar; but when Caesar exceeds his bounds, when he usurps that dominion which isn't his, when he attempts to assail the Throne of God, when he wars against the Sovereign Lord, both of himself and the people, they then think it reasonable not to obey Caesar.”²³²

In the same work, that writer generally denies that private individuals have a right to take up arms:

“private individuals must be informed that nothing can excuse them if they obey any command that offends God, and yet they have no right nor permission of any sort to take up arms by their private authority, unless it is absolutely clear that they have extraordinary vocation to do so”²³³

The focus in the Vindiciae is on people charged with political power resisting commands which require people to disobey God. That said, that author does believe there is a place for defense of property, “the law of nature teacheth us, that kings were not ordained to ruin, but to govern the commonwealths,”²³⁴ Earlier he had written that,

²³¹ Junius Brutus, Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants), Page 12.
<http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²³² Junius Brutus, Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants), Page 26.
<http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²³³ Junius Brutus, Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants), Page 33.
<http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²³⁴ Junius Brutus, Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants), Page 75.
<http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

“If, on the contrary, they themselves forage and spoil their subjects, and instead of governors become enemies, as they leave indeed the true and essential qualities of a king, so neither ought the people to acknowledge them for lawful princes.”²³⁵

One summary definition of a tyrant that author gives is that,

“seeing the condition of men is such, that a king is with much difficulty to be found, that in all his actions he only agrees at the public good, and yet cannot long subsist without expression of some special care thereof, we will conclude that where the commonwealth's advantage is most preferred, there is both a lawful king and kingdom; and where particular designs and private ends prevail against the public profit, there questionless is a tyrant and tyranny.”²³⁶

He cautions,

“although the prince observe not exact mediocrity in state affairs; if sometimes passion overrule his reason, if some careless omission make him neglect the public utility; or if he do not always carefully execute justice with equality, or repulse not with ready valour an invading enemy; he must not therefore be presently declared a tyrant.”²³⁷

Samuel Rutherford, though holding to a notably more expansive (and more similar to Wolfe) understanding of the right to revolt than the author of the *Vindiciae*, wrote “The people are to suffer much before they resume their power”²³⁸ and in a later part of that work wrote,

“When the matter is lighter, as in paying tribute or suffering a buffet of a rough master, though unjustly, we are not to use any act of re-offending. For though I be not absolute lord of my own goods, and so may not at my sole pleasure give tribute and expend monies to the hurting of my children, where I am not, by God's law or man's law, obliged to pay tribute and though I be not an absolute lord of my members, to expose face, and cheeks, and back to stripes and whips at my own mere will, yet have we a comparative dominion given to us by God in matters of goods, and disposing of our members (I think I may except the case of mutilation, which is a little death) for buffets, because Christ, no doubt to teach us the like, would rather give of His goods, and pay tribute where it was not due, than that this scandal be in the way of Christ, that Christ was no loyal subject to lawful emperors and kings.”²³⁹

²³⁵ Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants)*, Page 69.
<http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²³⁶ Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants)*, Page 81
<http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²³⁷ Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants)*, Pages 84-85.
<http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²³⁸ Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex: The Law and the Prince, Question 9* (The Canon Press Edition) Page 105.

²³⁹ Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex: The Law and the King, Question 30* (The Canon Press Edition) Page 396. Note that this occurs after he says, “all divines say I may rather kill before I be killed, because I am nearer by the law of

Wolfe does, like the author of the *Vindiciae*, affirm that not all failures make a ruler a tyrant, “One or two tyrannical acts do not make one a tyrant, just as one act of vice does not make one vicious.”²⁴⁰ I think his chapter on revolution should have spent more time affirming the authority of non-Christian rulers and discussing prudential issues with revolution. He does note, “In deciding upon forcible reclamation in any situation, we should consider the justice of and in war: the feasibility of success, the acceptability of the consequences, and the suitability of return, given the circumstances. Many revolutions are militarily successful but politically disastrous in the aftermath.”²⁴¹ I wish he had spent more time on the moral responsibilities associated with this and other reasons not to revolt against unjust authority, and I wish Wolfe had distinguished between acts which command us to do injustice and acts which result in us suffering it (perhaps with some discussion of how the latter can in some circumstances be a form of the former).

For his framing of the issue of whether to revolt as prudential, Wolfe has gotten some criticism as not being in line with the Reformed tradition from a different direction. One Anglican writer, James Clark, points out, “most of the Reformed authors Wolfe cites on the subject insist that rebellion against tyranny is not only a right but a duty.”²⁴² Clark also says, “It is not clear on what grounds Wolfe departs from the Reformed tradition on this point.”²⁴³ However, while it is true that language of duty is used in some places by resistance writers like

nature and dearer to myself and to my own life than to my brother,” Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex: The Law and the King, Question 30* (The Canon Press Edition) Pages 394-395.

²⁴⁰ Page 332, citing Althusius.

²⁴¹ Page 345.

²⁴² James Clark, *Book Review: "The Case for Christian Nationalism"*, *The North American Anglican*, November 30th, 2022 <https://northamanglican.com/book-review-the-case-for-christian-nationalism/>

²⁴³ James Clark, *Book Review: "The Case for Christian Nationalism"*, *The North American Anglican*, November 30th, 2022 <https://northamanglican.com/book-review-the-case-for-christian-nationalism/>

the *Vindiciae*,²⁴⁴ prudential considerations were allowed for by resistance theorists. For example, the author of the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* wrote,

“many times it is not expedient that the people do all that which may lawfully be done; for it may oftentimes chance that the medicine proves more dangerous than the disease. Therefore it becomes wise men to try all ways before they come to blows, to use all other remedies before they suffer the sword to decide the controversy.”²⁴⁵

The concerns outlined in this quote from the *Vindiciae* are consistent with some discussion of resistance to tyrants found prior to the reformation, Aquinas wrote,

“Indeed, if there be not an excess of tyranny it is more expedient to tolerate the milder tyranny for a while than, by acting against the tyrant, to become involved in many perils more grievous than the tyranny itself. For it may happen that those who act against the tyrant are unable to prevail and the tyrant then will rage the more. But should one be able to prevail against the tyrant, from this fact itself very grave dissensions among the people frequently ensue: the multitude may be broken up into factions either during their revolt against the tyrant, or in process of the organization of the government, after the tyrant has been overthrown. Moreover, it sometimes happens that while the multitude is driving out the tyrant by the help of some man, the latter, having received the power, thereupon seizes the tyranny.”²⁴⁶

James Clark’s essay is operating from a position which categorically discountenances violent revolution, which falls into the theoretical problem of, by absolutizing obedience to legitimate authority, creating a problem with regard to discerning legitimate authority. (In addition, I believe that the Books of Homilies²⁴⁷ it references have a conflict of interest on this particular

²⁴⁴ E.g. “Saint Paul, teaching of the duty of particular Christian men, and not of magistrates, teaches that Nero must be obeyed. But if all the principal officers of state, or divers of them, or but one, endeavour to suppress a manifest tyranny, or if a magistrate seek to free that province, or portion of the kingdom from oppression, which is committed to his care and custody, provided under colour of freedom he bring not in a new tyranny, then must all men with joint courage and alacrity run to arms, and take part with him or them, and assist with body and goods, as if God Himself from heaven had proclaimed wars, and meant to join battle against tyrants, and by all ways and means endeavour to deliver their country and commonwealth from their tyrannous oppression. For as God does oftentimes chastise a people by the cruelty of tyrants, so also does He many times punish tyrants by the hands of the people.” Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants)*, Page 95.
<http://www.yorku.ca/comminel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²⁴⁵ Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants)*, Pages 85.
<http://www.yorku.ca/comminel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno (On Kingship)*, Paul A. Böer, Sr. Ed., Gerald B. Phelan trans, revised by I. Th. Eschmann, O.P., *Book One, Chapter 7, Paragraph 44* (Kindle Edition) Page 25.

²⁴⁷ James Clark, *Book Review: "The Case for Christian Nationalism"*, *The North American Anglican*, November 30th, 2022 <https://northamanglican.com/book-review-the-case-for-christian-nationalism/>

issue as a result of having such a close connection with the government—I also, for what it’s worth, think the summary of the Anglican position in the review can be met with some historical counter-examples even though the Anglican formularies are opposed to Revolution— Bishop John Ponet presumably counts as a traditional Anglican, and wrote a book supporting a right of Revolution in the 1550s²⁴⁸, and other Anglicans have supported a right to Revolution.²⁴⁹) Wolfe on the other hand, puts less weight on legitimacy than does a sizable portion of the Christian tradition.

Wolfe does think that an authority such as a lesser magistrate is necessary to effect a revolution but appears to believe the authority can be selected after the movement towards revolution is already underway.²⁵⁰ The *Vindiciae* has a more limiting view, saying,

“God nor the people have not put the sword into the hands of particular persons; therefore, if without commandment they draw the sword, they are seditious, although the cause seem never so just.”²⁵¹

And,

“the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who, though he were King of Kings, notwithstanding, because he conversed in this world in another quality, to wit, of a private and particular man, paid willingly tribute. If the magistrates themselves manifestly favour the tyranny, or at the least do not formally oppose it; let private men remember the saying of Job, ‘That for the sins of the people God permits hypocrites to reign,’ whom it is impossible either to convert or subvert, if men repent not of their ways, to walk in obedience to God’s commandments; so that there are no other weapons to be used, but bended knees and humble hearts. Briefly, let them bear with bad princes, and pray for better, persuading themselves that an outrageous tyranny is to be supported as patiently, as some exceeding damage done by the violence of tempests, or some excessive overflowing waters, or some such natural accidents unto the fruits of the earth, if they like not better to change their habitations, by retiring themselves into some other

²⁴⁸ See John Ponet, *A Short Treatise on Political Power*.

²⁴⁹ See Cal Crucis, *Bishop William White: Anglican Patriot*, *The North American Anglican*, January 17th, 2023. <https://northamanglican.com/bishop-william-white-anglican-patriot/>

²⁵⁰ See 348-349.

²⁵¹ Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*, Pages 93-94. <http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

countries. So David fled into the mountains, and attempted nothing against the tyrant Saul, because the people had not declared him any public magistrate of the kingdom.”²⁵²

Wolfe’s understanding of the right to revolution appears more expansive than some of the tradition (though perhaps he could defend his view as consistent with the tradition by arguing he is articulating revolution by “the people” rather than private persons as such).

At one point, Wolfe affirms that a Christian minority can under some circumstances justly engage in a revolution. He states,

“The reason is that although civil administration is fundamentally natural, human, and universal, it was always for the people of God. Civil administration was created to serve Adam’s race in a state of integrity, as an outward ordering to God. Today, those who are restored in Christ are the people of God. Thus, civil order and administration are for them.”²⁵³

Wolfe writes, “The Christian’s posture towards the earth ought to be that it is *ours*, not theirs, for we are co-heirs in Christ.”²⁵⁴ Now, actually I can imagine situations in which a Christian minority could rightly revolt (setting aside regional secession of a local majority, which does not appear to be what Wolfe here means by minority). For example, suppose middle-level political rulers in some realm had been converted, and the government broke its own rules to suppress them—in some political systems there might be a prudential case to revolt which was consistent with local traditions of governance. Likewise, this issue could require consideration in cases where an electoral majority was created through illegal methods or via ignoring violations of the law. There does appear to be some support for a minority revolt in the Christian tradition, Samuel Rutherford cites Augustine saying, ““If the people should prefer their own private gain to the public good and sell the commonwealth, then some good man might take their liberty from

²⁵² Junius Brutus, Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants, Pages 94-95.
<http://www.yorku.ca/comminel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²⁵³ Page 346.

²⁵⁴ Page 346.

them, and against their will erect a monarchy or an aristocracy.’’²⁵⁵ Aquinas’s discussion of kingship also has some relevant material.²⁵⁶ While not entirely foreign to the tradition, the idea of a minority revolt could readily lead to applications which are outside the tradition Wolfe is grounding himself in and I wish he had more extensively outlined reasons why such a revolt could be bad and qualified it with greater discussion of reasons to bear with injustice. I can imagine situations in which such a revolt might be just (depending on such issues as the structure of civil society in the realm), but in a wide range of cases it would not be so, and the book needed to state that at more length. Recall our Lord’s words to Peter,

“‘the sons are exempt. However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.’’²⁵⁷

The discussion of these issues needs to account for the risk of anarchy, setting a precedent for disrespecting all authority, scandalizing people, or preempting the peaceful conversion of hostile realms.

This chapter needed a bit more care for a frustrated and immature person who might read it and need the consequences spelled out for him to avoid applying it wrongly. Note how the Magdeburg Confession puts it:

“‘True though this opinion about defense is, we do not put it forth with any pleasure, especially because we think that many wicked men in the external society of the Church can seek to make this pious reason a pretext for some impious attempt of their own, and also that even good men are sometimes carnally impatient of injuries, and can badly abuse opinions that have been rightly handed down to them by employing them at the wrong time or place.’’²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex: The Law and the Prince, Question 9*, (The Canon Press Edition) Page 93.

²⁵⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno (On Kingship)*, Paul A. Böer, Sr. Ed., Gerald B. Phelan trans, revised by I. Th. Eschmann, O.P., *Book One, Chapter 7, Paragraph 50* (Kindle Edition) Pages 27-28.

²⁵⁷ Matthew 17:26-17 NASB 1995.

²⁵⁸ The Magdeburg Confession, Matthew Colvin, trans., Page 53.

I do not mean to say that earlier authors' view of authority do not need any refining (for example, the *Vindiciae*'s view of a requirement for a magistrate's support for a just revolt is combined with an advocacy of Christian rulers intervening in the affairs of other realms²⁵⁹ that is excessive and needed more qualifications to avoid potentially supporting, among other things, some of the same problems as anarchical rebellions within a country). More theoretical work on the issues of legitimacy, state formation, and revolution needs to be done (or, if the issue has been covered properly somewhere, more work of retrieval and popularization needs to be done), but Wolfe, while adding to the conversation, has not hit the balance exactly right.

Wolfe ends his chapter on revolution stating,

“Many want me to end with a word of caution, perhaps to reassure everyone that these are academic conclusions, that they are not serious. Instead, I'll say this: It is to our shame that we sheepishly tolerate assaults against our Christian heritage, merely sighing or tweeting performative outrage over public blasphemy, impiety, irreverence, and perversity. We are dead inside, lacking the spirit to drive away open mockery of God and to claim what is ours in Christ. We are gripped by a slavish devotion to our secularist captors. But we do not have to be like this. We have the power and right to act. Let us train the will and cultivate our resolve.”²⁶⁰

Actually such a call is needed, in context Wolfe does not appear to be simply saying that the will is to be trained with regard to violent revolution. (I appreciate that his work emphasizes not being passive,²⁶¹ and emphasizes activity in a variety of spheres, from physical training and bodily fitness²⁶² to political organization.) However, in the absence of more clearly spelling out

²⁵⁹ Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants* Pages, 96-105
<http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/3020pdf/vindiciae.pdf>

²⁶⁰ Pages 351-352.

²⁶¹ After writing this and shortly before posting this essay, I noticed how, in his short forward to Groen Van Prinsterer, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: A Refutation of Liberalism* (translated by Jan Adriaan Schlebusch), he pointed out, “But the people of the United States and the West generally are not powerless; they are not defeated. Groen's work here is a call for Christian action. He [Groen Van Prinsterer] writes, ‘Patience is a Christian virtue, but where the opportunity for action exists, passivity would be most inappropriate.’” (Kindle Edition), Pages 10-11.

²⁶² “We have to do better. Pursue your potential. Lift weights, eat right, and lose the dad bod. We don't all have to become body-builders, but we ought to be men of power and endurance. We cannot achieve our goals with such a flabby aesthetic and under the control of modern nutrition. Sneering at this aesthetic vision, which I fully expect to happen, is pure cope. Grace does not destroy T levels; grace does not perfect testosterone into estrogen. If our

the many moral concerns which will often weigh against violent revolution, there is a risk of actually making sustained directed action to improve the country more difficult, as many effective grounds for action will often be found by applying our wills and resolve to non-revolutionary means. Many elections are lost for want of time spent knocking on doors, and many institutions are lost to left-liberals because conservatives did not devote sufficient zeal to using every legal means to preserve them. I don't think Wolfe disagrees with resolute use of such means to reorder the state (though coming across his footnote to another chapter which says, among other things, "I prefer Caesarism in our time",²⁶³ gives me pause), but a lack of sufficiently cautioning his followers about potential problems with defying authority may lead to efforts to restore or create a Christian commonwealth being done in a more haphazard way than might otherwise be the case, as some people neglect to do more mundane but fortitude-dependent things to right the political process because they have not sufficiently considered the moral and other difficulties of a revolution at some point in the future. And, if a revolution is required, the energy needed for it might be dissipated if opponents of injustice go off half-cocked rather than giving proper weight to respect for existing authorities and patiently attempting to resolve the situation through non-revolutionary means first.

opponents want to be fat, have low testosterone, and chug vegetable oil, let them. It won't be us." Page 470. This is something I also appreciated about Andrew Isker's [The Boniface Option](#). Unlike Kevin DeYoung (*The Rise of Right-Wing Wokeism Review: 'The Case for Christian Nationalism' by Stephen Wolfe, The Gospel Coalition, November 28th, 2022* <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/christian-nationalism-wolfe/>) I think that the encouragement to work out is perhaps appropriate and could benefit many readers (including myself), even though the PCA is far from the worst offender when it comes to flabby leaders.

²⁶³ Footnote 2 to Chapter 7, *The Christian Prince*. Wolfe's defense of the language of Caesarism to in the main text to which this is a footnote can be found here (though in the context of the footnote I don't think the concern is fully addressed by this discussion): *Responding to Kevin DeYoung*, a little after the one hour 12 minute 6 second mark https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=4326 and see a little after the one hour 23 minute 15 second mark https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=4996

*5: American Circumstances, Contemporary Application of the Role of the Magistrate with
Regard to Religion, Christian Governmental Policy and Judaism*

Wolfe has framed his project as applied to America as simply a return to earlier American practice, rather than an attempt to replicate pre-American Christian political practice. For instance, on a podcast,

“Christian nationalism in one place is, like I said earlier, is going to look very different than Christian nationalism in another place” . . . “16th Century Geneva looks certainly different than 19th century America. And I think what a lot of people missed overall about the book is they think, ‘Oh Wolfe is Calvinist appealing to these old guys, he wants to bring in Calvin’s Geneva into America.’” . . . “part of the reason I have Chapter 10 is to say, well no, I’m an American, I have an interest in American Christian nationalism, and the principles and definition of Christian nationalism can be applied in the American context we just have to kinda skip some of the secularization that violate[d] those principles in the 20th century. So we have to kinda in a way jump back to the 19th century and the founding era itself. . .”²⁶⁴

Looking back on other things Wolfe has written, it appears that the trend in Wolfe’s writing has been towards progressively stronger statements of a connection between the American Revolution and classical Reformed thought. In a master’s thesis Wolfe wrote,

“This is where a balance needs to be struck between the ‘Christian America’ advocates, who see the Founding a Christian founding, and the secular or deistical understandings of the Founding. My argument here suggests that the Founding is not uniquely or exclusively a Christian founding, but at the same time it is not inconsistent with Christianity, including Reformed Christianity. In this way, the Founding was indeed a compromise by Reformed Christians, but it was not an *unprincipled* one.”²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ *A Defense of Christian Nationalism, Part I (Introduction)*, *Ars Politica*, March 8th, 2023, a little after 39:00 <https://ars-politica.captive.fm/>

²⁶⁵ Stephen Wolfe, *John Witherspoon and Reformed Orthodoxy: Reason, Revelation, and the American Founding*, (2016). LSU Master's Theses. 1807. Page 63. https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2806&context=gradschool_theses

In his doctoral dissertation, he wrote, “The events of the founding era were Protestant political acts.”²⁶⁶

The doctoral dissertation set out to refute the exaggerated difference between early America and classical Protestant theology which is often made by some contemporary streams of thought²⁶⁷ which Wolfe correctly chastised for a lack of exploration of earlier Protestant political theology. In his master’s thesis on Witherspoon, he had emphasized Witherspoon’s consistency with earlier Reformed thought²⁶⁸ and in a separate article he defended the consistency of one of Witherspoon’s major influences with earlier Reformed thought.²⁶⁹ In his dissertation Wolfe argued against commonly received accounts of the development of the relationship between church and state in colonial America,²⁷⁰ and argued the omission of establishment at a national level in the new country was for many founders on account of leaving this issue to the states.²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789, (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Page 164.

https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations

²⁶⁷ See here for a discussion of mine on related issues from 2016: *Historic Natural Rights*,

<https://ibperry.wordpress.com/2016/09/13/historic-natural-rights/>

²⁶⁸ Though he does note, “one could question the prudence of both his refusal to cite classical, medieval, and Reformed sources in the lectures and his failure to provide a more nuanced and precise defense justifying an orthodox Christian conducting such an inquiry.” Stephen Wolfe, John Witherspoon and Reformed Orthodoxy: Reason, Revelation, and the American Founding, (2016). LSU Master’s Theses. 1807. Page 55

(https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2806&context=gradschool_theses). Cf. Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789, (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Page 195 “his recommended reading list exclusively had recent works.”

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2806&context=gradschool_theses

²⁶⁹ “The similarities between Pictet and Turretin demonstrated above provide good reasons to doubt much of the recent scholarship on Pictet. His theology, as [sic] least with regard to the relationship of faith and reason and natural theology, is the same in substance as Francis Turretin’s, and they differ only in the model of presentation on account of Pictet’s principled and pragmatic response to changing circumstances.” Stephen Wolfe, *Bénédict Pictet: Small Steps toward Rationalism?* Journal of Reformed Theology 11 (2017), Page 203, Page 221.

²⁷⁰ “Despite popular narratives about the New England Puritans and Williams, it was Cotton the religious persecutor, not Williams the hero of religious liberty, who affirmed the spiritual brotherhood of institutionally incompatible churches.” Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789, Page 87. https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations

²⁷¹ “Most of the Framers assumed not an anti-establishment principle; rather, they believed that religion was the sort of good best left to state regulation. The Federal government, therefore, did have a religious end in consequence of its design, though it served that end indirectly—by securing the states, which had a direct role in supporting religion.” Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789, Page 27. https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations

He argued that Madison's view of religious liberty conflated some traditional distinctions,²⁷² but argued both that Madison's influence is exaggerated²⁷³ and that Madison's approach could be defended on more orthodox grounds.²⁷⁴

“The question is whether experience and prudence render an active government in religion good or bad for civil society and religion. Founders such as Witherspoon, Mason and Henry argued that it is (or can be) good overall and Madison argues that it is overall bad. Either way, the dispute is a matter of judging the *experience* offered from history and judging by *prudence* the possibilities offered in present circumstances. This means not only that all parties followed the same (Protestant) principles, but that all are in continuity as to principle with the Puritans of the 17th century.”²⁷⁵

Thus in the book Wolfe argues, “Americans in the 19th century, for example, who wanted to Christianize the Constitution with a Christian amendment sought not to overthrow secularist principles embedded in the Constitution but to *correct a mistake of omission* and thereby bring the Constitution fully in line with American principles.”²⁷⁶

His own sympathies are clearly with the founding-era establishmentarians. In his book, after discussing the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, he describes common elements of founding era religious establishment support as including the idea “that civil government should suppress violations of natural religion, such as blasphemy and impiety, and prevent one sect from

²⁷² “What many scholars have missed about Madison's argument is that he is conflating inward opinion and opinion's outward expression—a distinction affirmed not only by his opponents but also the Protestant tradition.” Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789, Page 241.

²⁷³ “Even if Madison represents discontinuity of principle, his importance in the founding era on religious liberty is usually exaggerated.” Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789, (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Page 245. “Throughout the 1780s, as the colonies revised their constitutions, they adopted language not from the Virginia Statute, but from the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780.” Id. Pages 246-247.

https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations

²⁷⁴ “The problems in Madison's abstract argumentation can be rectified by adding experience as an essential premise.” Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789, (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Page 242.

https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations

²⁷⁵ Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789, (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Pages 244-245.

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²⁷⁶ Pages 429-430. I think this characterization is insufficient, as per Joseph S. Moore's discussion of the history in Founding Sins: How a Group of Antislavery Radicals Fought to Put Christ into the Constitution (I note that Wolfe cited this book on pages 80 and 250 of his doctoral dissertation.)

harming another. The advocates for establishment in the founding era and Cotton Mather share the same principles.”²⁷⁷ Elsewhere in the book he wrote, “although my conclusions will not be shared by all Christian nationalists, the reader will discern here a spirit of pan-Protestantism and will have the patience and forbearance for cooperation when our time comes.”²⁷⁸ And, “An *implicit* Christian nation is an unfaithful nation, one that lacks the will to explicitly place itself under God, to conceive of itself as a Christian nation, and to will for its Christian good.”²⁷⁹ Wolfe clearly affirms that the governing authorities should be Christian, and since publishing the book he has said, “I want us to say that you're gonna be a civil leader over us, you better be Christian, I'm okay with” . . . “religious tests and that sort of thing.”²⁸⁰

He appears to be arguing for, in a U.S. context, an official recognition of Christianity which tolerates Protestant practice generally.

“Protestant harmony amidst diversity does not require disestablishment. But granting religious liberty to all orthodox Christians, if deemed suitable, would effectively end dissension, as I've defined it, and create a sort of pan-Protestant civil society. This is precisely what I hope for future arrangements in North America. Still, there are times when establishment is necessary and good.”²⁸¹

A bit earlier, he had written “Protestant magistrates ruling a Protestant people have principled flexibility when faced with religious diversity. Denominational unity might be the best situation, but achieving harmony among differing Protestants is good enough.”²⁸² He thinks there could be an officially established denomination but is not advocating that for the United States. He clearly

²⁷⁷ Page 418. The last clause regarding sects seems to mark a shift (perhaps already underway in the day of Cotton Mather) from the Puritan days.

²⁷⁸ Page 322.

²⁷⁹ Page 177.

²⁸⁰ *A Defense of Christian Nationalism, Part I (Introduction)*, *Ars Politica March 8th, 2023* <https://ars-politica.captive.fm/> (starting around 31:56).

²⁸¹ Page 394.

²⁸² Page 375.

thinks that some non-Protestant Christian practice could in principle be banned, though I am not sure whether he thinks that is desirable in the context of the United States.

“How can we insist that regular Christians have confidence in Trinitarian doctrine, justification by faith alone, and the infallibility of the Scriptures and yet deny that confidence to Christian magistrates? And presumably, the Christian magistrate (though not a theologian) would be no regular Christian but educated. He is, therefore, in a good and confident position to decide between disputes as to fundamentals.”²⁸³

That noted, I infer that Wolfe supports religious tolerance for Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox in the context of the modern United States as a prudential matter. Regarding how the state interacts with heretics,²⁸⁴ Wolfe writes that punishments are justifiable in principle, then says,

“And perhaps a Christian people may consider some heretics harmless, or they might conclude that suppressing heresy is, in at least some cases, more harmful than the heresy itself. The crucial point here is that civil action against heretics is justified in principle but the practice of it requires considerable discernment, care, gentleness, and prudence. I say this not to place doubt on the action but simply to establish the appropriate principles and heart toward error and the proper process in addressing it.”²⁸⁵

In the past, we can find many instances of Christian governments taking an activist approach in legislating on these matters. For an early example read the historian Sozomen’s description of the reign of Emperor Theodosius I,

“The emperor enacted a law prohibiting heretics from holding assemblies, from giving public instructions in religion, and from conferring ordination. Some of the heterodox were expelled from the cities and villages, while others were disgraced and deprived of the privileges enjoyed by other subjects of the empire. Great as were the punishments adjudged by the laws against heretics, they were not always carried into execution, for the emperor had no desire to persecute his subjects. He only desired to enforce uniformity of religion through the medium of intimidation. Those who voluntarily renounced heretical opinions received great commendation from him.”²⁸⁶

²⁸³ Page 377.

²⁸⁴ He defines heretics as follows: “Heretics are those who profess the Christian religion but have religious opinions that are either soul-damning or, if not in themselves damning, dangerous to the soul.” Page 387.

²⁸⁵ Page 391.

²⁸⁶ Sozomen, The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen: From AD 324 to AD 425, (translated by Edward Walford), Page 280.

I take Wolfe to be saying that this sort of approach is defensible in some circumstances but is not what he is advocating for the modern United States.

For my own opinion, I note that with regard to some matters, like a number of issues relating to sacramental validity, it seems that the magistrates enforcing a position would in many contexts threaten to confound the church's attempts to reason about things with whatever the contemporary political concerns are in the realm at this time. I think Glen Moots' book, Politics Reformed, provides a good history of how a strong view of the Christian Magistrate's role in suppressing heresy and upholding ecclesial unity did not work out in practice among Protestants. This isn't to say the civil authorities should ideally be strictly neutral between all conceivable competing interpretations of Christianity—for example, if someone was planning a new community and there was limited space or a limited number of people initially participating, it might be helpful to the long-term health of the community to plan for a church to be located in an accessible location and have some doctrinal perimeters for what sort of church (i.e. if I were part of a project to plant a Mars colony I'd want a church in a prominent and accessible location and would strongly prefer it be a church which, for instance, recognizes my baptism)—but that's different than banning people from choosing to worship elsewhere.

As far as other religions, Wolfe indicates that the appropriate analysis is similar to that for heretics (how much liberty to grant them in the practice of their religion is considered a prudential question).²⁸⁷ Recently he has described the American founding as the “culmination of Protestant experience with regard to religious liberty.”²⁸⁸ In his dissertation, Wolfe himself noted a couple Reformed theologians who “affirmed a sort of free exercise of religion for Jews in the

²⁸⁷ Pages 391-392.

²⁸⁸ Stephen Wolfe, *Responding to Kevin DeYoung*, at a little after the one hour 22 minute 30 second mark https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=4950

late 16th century.”²⁸⁹ At the start of that dissertation, Wolfe listed Jews among previously-distrusted groups to whom George Washington had written letters as president (exemplifying the change towards support for religious liberty that had occurred in America by that time).²⁹⁰ His book does not specifically address what his position is with regard to this issue in the near future North America.

The issue of other religions is one in which Wolfe’s statements send mixed signals, on the one hand Wolfe has reassured people he does not simply want to go back to the 1500s. However, he has repeatedly referenced 1500s and 1600s era theologians with regard to the issue of tolerating Judaism. On twitter, he has repeatedly queried how someone can claim to follow these theologians while rejecting modern people who make anti-Judaic statements and has repeatedly referenced anti-Jewish laws that were advocated by prominent early Protestants (prior to the publication of the book, he posted a number of such things and deleted many of them, I notice that it seems that his practice now is to leave posts referencing such laws up).

A young member of the LCMS, Ryan Turnipseed, wrote an article in which he indicated he was opposed to church discipline against Nazis: “Millions of Lutherans also fought for the National Socialist regime by volunteering or conscription, and many more voted the party into power. All of them are now condemned, according to President Harrison”.²⁹¹ In context, one of the people he was defending was Cory Mahler, who has expressed support for Hitler,²⁹² among

²⁸⁹ Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789 (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Page 229 (footnote 17 of Chapter 8).

https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations

²⁹⁰ Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789 (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Page 2.

https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations

²⁹¹ Ryan Turnipseed, *Here I Stand: The LCMS Subverted*, Gab News, March 4th, 2023.

<https://news.gab.com/2023/03/here-i-stand/>

²⁹² Here he is saying “Hitler’s order was a good work” of the decision to execute Detrich Bonhoeffer.

<https://twitter.com/CoreyJMahler/status/1645520093940514834> Here is Mahler arguing that Hitler is in Heaven:

other ways via posting quotes from Hitler trying to make him appear to be a Christian²⁹³ and arguing Christians in Germany had owed Hitler obedience²⁹⁴ which in the context of other things Mahler has written appears an endorsement of Hitler rather than merely an extremely pro-deference to government understanding of Romans 13.²⁹⁵ For instance, we may consider that Mahler denounced Bonhoeffer for trying to overthrow Hitler, but has said Romans 13 does not apply to the U.S. government.²⁹⁶ Ryan Turnipseed was confronted by leadership in his church about interactions with Mahler and associates (as I write this I am not sure if the aforementioned article was one cause of the meeting or merely mentioned by his pastor afterward,²⁹⁷ from the documents Ryan Turnipseed has posted online²⁹⁸ I get the impression the article was not specifically mentioned during the meeting²⁹⁹) and posted recordings of the confrontation on twitter. (Turnipseed indicated he thought he was being attacked because of other concerns he had about the LCMS.) In the recordings it had been demanded that Ryan Turnipseed denounce (inter alia) Mahler.³⁰⁰ Wolfe posted “Young rw Lutherans ordered to disavow Luther by Lutheran ministers or face expulsion from the Lutheran church”.³⁰¹ So, Wolfe implicitly compared

<https://twitter.com/CoreyJMahler/status/1611588056162922496> (His interpretation that Bonhoeffer denied the resurrection is wrong, but if you disagree with me on that point I hope you can still see the problem with the rest of this. For a better interpretation of Bonhoeffer see: <https://twitter.com/NoJesuitTricks/status/1673432861125246976>)

²⁹³ I.e. <https://twitter.com/MahlerLCMS/status/1441565120564535304>

²⁹⁴ <https://twitter.com/MahlerLCMS/status/1441637045315805184>

²⁹⁵ <https://twitter.com/MahlerLCMS/status/1351951693181710337>

<https://twitter.com/MahlerLCMS/status/1347924435219722244>

<https://twitter.com/MahlerLCMS/status/1442698126171820037>

<https://twitter.com/MahlerLCMS/status/1478850236386840577>

²⁹⁶ Compare <https://twitter.com/MahlerLCMS/status/1398696813511774211> to

<https://twitter.com/CoreyJMahler/status/1672354060890959873> .

²⁹⁷ A screenshot of his pastor mentioning the article while following up on the meeting is here, but it isn't clear to me when the pastor became aware of that article <https://twitter.com/TurnipMerchant/status/1659306632780677122> Ryan Turnipseed appears to infer it was a cause of the meeting on the basis of the timing of the request for a meeting: <https://twitter.com/TurnipMerchant/status/1659276678273593344>

²⁹⁸ E.g. <https://twitter.com/TurnipMerchant/status/1659308440617984000>

²⁹⁹ <https://twitter.com/TurnipMerchant/status/1659286716685991936>

³⁰⁰ <https://twitter.com/TurnipMerchant/status/1659297434852290586>

³⁰¹ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1659584539943903234>

demanding a categorical denunciation of Mahler to demanding a categorical denunciation of Luther.

Now, on the impression gleaned from the recordings, and subsequent screenshots posted by Ryan Turnipseed, I can think of reasonable concerns one might have about how it seemed the church leadership went about this, and I don't think that someone who argues that a person with terrible ideas shouldn't be excommunicated should ipso facto be himself subjected to church discipline (there are a number of factors to be taken into account, in some cases this is necessary, though not all). Moreover, my impression from the little I have seen online (including a video Mahler posted³⁰²) is that Mahler's own church conducted the church discipline against him in an irregular or at least clumsy way,³⁰³ even though church discipline was indeed appropriate in Mahler's case.

It seems wise to make clear the scope of one's concern if one is going to jump into this controversy and complain about the conduct of contemporary Lutheran church leaders. If one thinks Luther has much to contribute to Christian thought, it seems odd to compare him to fans of Nazism like Mahler in this way. (And note that Mahler has said a number of other things incompatible with Christianity, such as, after he was already under church discipline, saying "Interracial marriage is tantamount to murder."³⁰⁴—he's not just some idiosyncratic historical revisionist.) I'll get to Luther in detail in a moment, but first I'll note that the two cases are differentiated by the manifest contradiction to basic Christian doctrines of Nazism in terms of its

³⁰² Corey Mahler, *First Lutheran: 2023-02-19* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNf4Tz8zS1M>

³⁰³ I'm reminded of this clip from *A Man for All Seasons*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDBiLT3LASK>

³⁰⁴ <https://twitter.com/CoreyJMahler/status/1652364323073736707> Lest someone think I am taking him out of context (and aware of the risk his account will be suspended again and people not be able to look for themselves) I note that the following tweet of his says, "The exceptions are not even worth mentioning, because they virtually do not exist in the modern context." <https://twitter.com/CoreyJMahler/status/1652364326496268291> In a follow up discussion (transcript here <https://aac.coreyjmahler.com/01-may-2023/>) he said, "interracial marriages are not sinful per se. However, in the modern context, they are virtually always sinful per quod."

core ideology (which was manifest even prior to the mass murder³⁰⁵ of Jewish men, women, and children under the Nazi regime). Hitler was under the influence of a race-reifying Neopagan stream of thought, so Hitler endorsed an approach which treated at least parts of the Old Testament as suspect, and “argued that he 'would not vouch for the fact that everything in [the Bible] is completely true, because we know that Jewry worked on it very freely.’”³⁰⁶ Nazis adopted the Swastika as a pagan symbol,³⁰⁷ and so they signposted this aspect of their ideology on their (personally designed by Hitler³⁰⁸) flag. Though Hitler was willing to invoke Christianity, his vision allowed for only a “Christianity” completely incompatible with classical Protestantism, some of his statements made this more clear than others, such as when he said, “The Christian religion is created only for the Aryans; for other peoples it is absurd.”³⁰⁹

Wolfe isn't endorsing Nazism.³¹⁰ That said, he has repeatedly responded to specific attempts to pushback on anti-Jewish statements by indicating that would mean that one would also need to condemn the reformers.³¹¹ More broadly, Wolfe has claimed that various protestant luminaries would be excommunicated were they alive today (or that this would happen to people with the same views).³¹² Among other issues, I think Wolfe's statements on this issue neglect to take into account the reformers' willingness to accommodate themselves to their social context

³⁰⁵ For one short summary, see Steve Sailer, *Could the U.S. Have Stopped the Holocaust? No, Because It Was Mostly Over by the End of 1942*, The Unz Review, July 8th, 2023 <https://www.unz.com/isteve/could-the-u-s-have-stopped-the-holocaust-no-because-it-was-mostly-over-by-the-end-of-1942/>

³⁰⁶ Samuel Koehne, *Were the National Socialists a "Völkisch" Party? Paganism, Christianity, and the Nazi Christmas*, *Central European History*, Page 760, Page 776. To see an anecdote of such ideas filtering into the popular level, see Corrie Ten Boom, The Hiding Place, Page 74, “His first morning at work he came upstairs for coffee and Bible reading with the other employees; after that he sat alone down in the shop. When we asked him why, he said that though he had not understood the Dutch words, he had seen that Father was reading from the Old Testament which, he informed us, was the Jews' 'Book of Lies.’”

³⁰⁷ Samuel Koehne, *Were the National Socialists a "Völkisch" Party? Paganism, Christianity, and the Nazi Christmas*, *Central European History*, Page 760, Page 785-787.

³⁰⁸ Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (Diamond Pocket Books Edition, Accessed Via Google Play Store), Page 633.

³⁰⁹ Samuel Koehne, *Were the National Socialists a "Völkisch" Party? Paganism, Christianity, and the Nazi Christmas*, *Central European History*, Page 760, Page 785.

³¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1678384592758222849>

³¹¹ For example, <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1706358883084558344>

³¹² <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1662445521083027459>

and to human authorities, and risks feeding a hyper-individualistic rebellious attitude which many (not necessarily all) of the reformers would have opposed even if statements of theirs on some topics would offend modern protestant leaders. I am fairly certain that many of the reformers and other early Protestant leaders would have considered it appropriate to take a care for the immediate historical context of the words they used. To respond to Wolfe's point about the relationship of Christianity and Judaism, I will now go deeper into the sources and historical context than (as far as I am aware) Wolfe's interlocutors have heretofore done when engaging with him. It is true that some of Wolfe's critics should probably put more effort into explaining how they relate to theological forebears who supported anti-Judaic laws (or, if they agree with me, perhaps they can endorse the arguments I provide here). So, Douglas Wilson cites Bucer as a reformer who hoped for the conversion of the Jews.³¹³ Yet Bucer, as Wolfe has repeatedly referenced,³¹⁴ advocated anti-Judaic laws.³¹⁵ At least some people took note of this at the time, given that Bucer was portrayed as a bad guy by the leader of the Jewish community in the Holy Roman Empire.³¹⁶

So Wolfe has repeatedly referenced Luther and Bucer's rhetoric and positions on this issue. Before going into Luther's later statements in detail, let's consider what he had to say in 1523,

“I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from Holy Scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians and turn again to the faith of the prophets and patriarchs. They will only be frightened further away from it if their

³¹³ Douglas Wilson, *The Case of Owen and the Memorials* [Blog and Mablog](https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/the-case-of-owen-and-the-memorials.html), September 25th, 2023

<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/the-case-of-owen-and-the-memorials.html>

³¹⁴ In addition to statements on twitter, see e.g. Stephen Wolfe, *An Unhelpful Review of "What are Christians for?"* by Jake Meador [Sovereign Nations](https://sovereignnations.com/2022/03/02/unhelpful-review-what-are-christians-for/), March 2nd, 2022

<https://sovereignnations.com/2022/03/02/unhelpful-review-what-are-christians-for/> (Though this review, unlike some of the things he has said elsewhere, does not include the implication that Bucer's views should be tolerated and merely uses it to contextualize other things Bucer said.)

³¹⁵ Hastings Ells, *Bucer's Plan for the Jews*, [*Church History*](#), Jun., 1937, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Jun., 1937), Page 127.

³¹⁶ See e.g. Debra Kaplan, [*Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg*](#), Pages 153-154.

Judaism is so utterly rejected that nothing is allowed to remain, and they are treated only with arrogance and scorn. If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the Gentiles. Since they dealt with us Gentiles in such a brotherly fashion, we in our turn ought to treat the Jews in a brotherly manner in order that we might convert some of them. For even we ourselves are not yet all very far along, not to speak of having arrived.

“When we are inclined to boast of our position we should remember that we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ. We are aliens and in-laws; they are the blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord. Therefore, if one is to boast of flesh and blood, the Jews are actually nearer to Christ than we are, as St. Paul says in Romans 9. God has also demonstrated this by his acts, for to no nation among the Gentiles has he granted so high an honor as he has to the Jews. For from among the Gentiles there have been raised up no patriarchs, no apostles, no prophets, indeed, very few genuine Christians either. And although the gospel has been proclaimed to all the world, yet He committed the Holy Scriptures, that is, the law and the prophets, to no nation except the Jews, as Paul says in Romans 3 and Psalm 147, ‘He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; nor revealed his ordinances to them.’”³¹⁷

Near the end of this work he wrote,

“Therefore, I would request and advise that one deal gently with them and instruct them from Scripture; then some of them may come along. Instead of this we are trying only to drive them by force, slandering them, accusing them of having Christian blood if they don’t stink, and I know not what other foolishness. So long as we thus treat them like dogs, how can we expect to work any good among them? Again, when we forbid them to labor and do business and have any human fellowship with us, thereby forcing them into usury, how is that supposed to do them any good?

“If we really want to help them, we must be guided in our dealings with them not by papal law but by the law of Christian love. We must receive them cordially, and permit them to trade and work with us, that they may have occasion and opportunity to associate with us, hear our Christian teaching, and witness our Christian life. If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either.”³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Martin Luther, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*, in Luther’s Works: Volume 45, The Christian in Society II, translated by Walther I. Brandt, Pages 200-201. (Editorial brackets deleted.)

³¹⁸ Martin Luther, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*, in Luther’s Works: Volume 45, The Christian in Society II, translated by Walther I. Brandt, Page 229. Eric W. Gritsch, in his Martin Luther’s Antisemitism: Against His Better Judgment, notes that the friendly statements in *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* were not isolated and that Luther made other such statements during this period, see the subsection of Chapter 2 titled *An Interlude of Pastoral Evangelism*. For some other relevant context other than Luther’s statements specifically about Jews, see Steven Wedgworth, *Martin Luther’s Farewell to Arms: The Two Kingdoms and the Rejection of Crusading*, Ad Fontes, April 25th, 2018. <https://adfontesjournal.com/church-history/martin-luthers-farewell-arms-two-kingdoms-rejection-crusading/>

It does not appear very coherent to affirm both this and his later statements (I think if we try to excuse it as a matter of change of circumstance, we'll be excusing impatience or other vices too much). Even if we consider Luther to have here underestimated the ease of converting Jews to Christianity in large numbers, I don't think we can defend his later statements as more scriptural. Luther published his most infamous works related to Judaism in 1543; he had published another work related to Judaism in 1538.³¹⁹ Possibly more significant is his reaction when, in 1537, Wolfgang Capito had written to Luther (in trying to arrange a meeting so that a leading Jew could appeal for a recent expulsion of Jews from the Elector of Saxony's lands to be rescinded³²⁰), "We should also treat them honourably, insofar as they do not blaspheme against God, because they are descended from the holy race and were possessors of the promises and the covenants. . . ."³²¹ Luther refused to help.³²² Perhaps we can take Luther's general practice of hyperbole as a mitigating factor in how we read some of the following statements, however there is a limit to how far we can press that mitigation. There were real-world issues which were implicated.

Luther's work On the Jews and Their Lies includes a lengthy defense of Christianity which might have been made without the statements which made the tract infamous (and indeed, he included many of the same arguments in his more friendly That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew and more neutral Missive Against the Sabbatarians Addressed to a Good Friend³²³). After this he

³¹⁹ Martin Luther, Missive Against the Sabbatarians Addressed to a Good Friend (Translation Published in two parts in the Theological Quarterly) <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/LutherAddressedToAGoodFriend.pdf> (First Part, Published in *Volume IX, July 1905*), <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/LutherMissiveSabbatarians.pdf> (Second Part, Published in *Volume IX, October 1905*).

³²⁰ Debra Kaplan, Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg, Pages 152, 155. Kenneth Austin, The Jews and the Reformation, (Kindle Edition) Page 72.

³²¹ Kenneth Austin, The Jews and the Reformation, (Kindle Edition) Page 73.

³²² Kenneth Austin, The Jews and the Reformation, (Kindle Edition) Page 73. See Eric W. Gritsch, in his Martin Luther's Antisemitism: Against His Better Judgment, (Kindle Edition) Location 793-804.

³²³ Martin Luther, Missive Against the Sabbatarians Addressed to a Good Friend (Translation Published in two parts in the Theological Quarterly) <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/LutherAddressedToAGoodFriend.pdf> (First Part,

published Vom Schem Hamphoras, where he treated a document which attacked Jesus as exemplifying normative Jewish belief.³²⁴ (Later in 1543 he also published a defense of the Trinity, The Last Words of David,³²⁵ which included some anti-Judaic statements but not to the degree found in the two works on Judaism published earlier that year.) His harsh statements regarding the Jews did not stop in 1543, however, and Luther preached a sermon a few days before his death in which he indicated Christians should not accept unconverted Jews living among them.³²⁶

The portion of his On the Jews and Their Lies which contains specific proposals includes many things which appear not only incompatible with the New Testament, but also incompatible with the vision of freedom of conscience Stephen Wolfe has affirmed.

Luther proposed taking Jews' money from them and then giving money back to Jews who converted.³²⁷ Luther did claim not to force people to believe and even in this work spoke positively of the peaceful expansion of the gospel,³²⁸ but in practice his proposals would have tended to coerce an affirmation of faith and moreover encouraged an attitude at odds with the gospel.

Published in Volume IX, July 1905), <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/LutherMissiveSabbatarians.pdf> (Second Part, Published in Volume IX, October 1905).

³²⁴ <https://www.mori.bz.it/Luther-Vom%20Schem.pdf> For some relevant discussion of how another reformer, Wolfgang Capito, responded to the document, see Debra Kaplan, Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg, Pages 125-126. However, for a contrasting statement on the influence of the document in question, "the tract Toledot Yeshu, which was widely disseminated in the Middle Ages and the early modern period and became the major source for Jewish knowledge about Jesus." Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Page 3. See also Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Pages 87, 109 for references to its dissimulation several hundred years before.

³²⁵ Martin Luther, The Last Words of David, (translated by Henry Cole) <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.ah3v2p&view=1up&seq=183>

³²⁶ Eric W. Gritsch, Martin Luther's Antisemitism: Against His Better Judgment, (Kindle Edition) Location 1097.

³²⁷ Martin Luther, On the Jews and Their Lies, (Eulenspiegel Press Edition), Page 98 (Part 14).

³²⁸ "the apostles used no spear or sword but solely their tongues. And their example has been followed in all the world now for fifteen hundred years by all the bishops, pastors, and preachers, and is still being followed." Martin Luther, On the Jews and Their Lies, (Eulenspiegel Press Edition), Page 118 (Part 16).

“We cannot help it that they do not share our belief. It is impossible to force anyone to believe. However, we must avoid confirming them in their wanton lying, slandering, cursing, and defaming. Nor dare we make ourselves partners in their devilish ranting and raving by shielding and protecting them, by giving them food, drink, and shelter, or by other neighborly acts, especially since they boast so proudly and despicably when we do help and serve them that God has ordained them as lords and us as servants.”³²⁹

He also wrote,

“we must not consider the mouth of the Jews as worthy of uttering the name of God within our hearing. He who hears this name-from a Jew must inform the authorities, or else throw sow dung at him when he sees him and chase him away. And may no one be merciful and kind in this regard, for God's honor and the salvation of us all, including that of the Jews, are at stake!”³³⁰

And,

“But what will happen even if we do burn down the Jews' synagogues and forbid them publicly to praise God, to pray, to teach, to utter God's name? They will still keep doing it in secret, if we know that they are doing this in secret, it is the same as if they were doing it publicly. For our knowledge of their secret doings and our toleration of them implies that they are not secret after all, and thus our conscience is encumbered with it before God.”³³¹

Would I condemn such propositions, and would I rebuke any minister of the Gospel who proposed such a thing? Yes! Luther's statements go beyond merely taking a theological position against lending at interest, or a position on immigration policy, or naturalization policy, or even a position against allowing non-Christians to publicly worship. So yes, I think we can rightly say that some of the language Luther uses in this book is not language we want our pastors using.

Opposition to such statements of Luther should not be merely dismissed as just the imposition of a post-war speech code. Justas Jonas, the best man at Luther's wedding and a translator of Luther's works apparently in 1542 attempted to dissuade Luther from at least some of his anti-Jewish writings which were published in 1543.³³² Reformer Andreas Osiander

³²⁹ Martin Luther, On the Jews and Their Lies, (Eulenspiegel Press Edition), Page 101 (Part 14).

³³⁰ Martin Luther, On the Jews and Their Lies, (Eulenspiegel Press Edition), Page 110 (Part 16).

³³¹ Martin Luther, On the Jews and Their Lies, (Eulenspiegel Press Edition), Page 111 (Part 16).

³³² Heiko Oberman, The Roots of Anti-Semitism: In the Age of Renaissance and Reformation, Page 48

reportedly wrote to Luther in to criticize Luther’s anti-Jewish writings in 1543.³³³ In a letter sent to Martin Bucer, with regard to one or more of Luther’s anti-Judaic works Bullinger (though he himself was not a supporter of religious tolerance, having advocated for the killing of Servetus,³³⁴ and he later would indicate he preferred for the civil government not to tolerate Judaism³³⁵) wrote “He writes against the Jews and argues, not altogether foolishly and uselessly, for the well-known Christian faith; but he renders a happy and plausible argument unappealing, nay, inept, by his foul dictums and scurrility”³³⁶. After discussing two or three of Luther’s anti-Judaic works of 1543, with a focus on some statements in Luther’s On the Last Words of David about the transmission of the biblical text believed to undermine the authority of scripture,³³⁷ Bullinger went on to write,

“Certainly, after reading those books, we took his condemnation against us with more equanimity, who in this matter do not wish to be his consorts and allies. Yes, we attribute to the just judgment of God that in extreme old age the theologian writes so much and acts immodestly. For posterity will judge from these that Luther was a man, indeed a man subject to harmful affections, and they will read many of the man's writings with scrutiny and care.”³³⁸

Strasbourg even banned the publication of some of Luther’s writings. Regarding On the Jews and Their Lies and Vom Schem Hamphoras,³³⁹ a Jewish leader “wrote two letters, in May and July 1543, to the Strasbourg city council, expressing his disgust at Luther's works, and requesting that they prohibit their circulation” . . . “The Strasbourg city council agreed, and the

³³³ Heiko Oberman, The Roots of Anti-Semitism: In the Age of Renaissance and Reformation, Page 10.

³³⁴ *The Burning of Michael Servetus (1511-1553) Servetus used to bring discredit to the Reformation* New Focus December 28th, 2005 <https://go-newfocus.co.uk/articles/app/category/history/article/the-burning-of-michael-servetus>

³³⁵ Kenneth Austin, The Jews and the Reformation, (Kindle Edition) Pages 93-94

³³⁶ Heinrich Bullinger Werke, Band 13: Briefe des Jahres 1543, Bullinger to Bucer, December 8th, 1543, Page 333, Page 335 http://teoirgsed.uzh.ch/SedWEB.cgi?Alias=Briefe&Lng=1&aheight=910&PrjName=Bullinger+-+Briefwechsel&fld_418=1825 (Translated using Google Translate.)

³³⁷ Heinrich Bullinger Werke, Band 13: Briefe des Jahres 1543, Bullinger to Bucer, December 8th, 1543, Page 333, Page 336 http://teoirgsed.uzh.ch/SedWEB.cgi?Alias=Briefe&Lng=1&aheight=910&PrjName=Bullinger+-+Briefwechsel&fld_418=1825 (Translated using Google Translate.)

³³⁸ Heinrich Bullinger Werke, Band 13: Briefe des Jahres 1543, Bullinger to Bucer, December 8th, 1543, Page 333, Page 337 http://teoirgsed.uzh.ch/SedWEB.cgi?Alias=Briefe&Lng=1&aheight=910&PrjName=Bullinger+-+Briefwechsel&fld_418=1825

³³⁹ Brooks Schramm, Kirsi Stjerna, Martin Luther, the Bible, and the Jewish People: A Reader, Page 181

various works were forbidden.”³⁴⁰ Note that Strasbourg had expelled Jews from the city in the 1300s³⁴¹, initially in the context of Jews being massacred in Strasbourg³⁴² while the bubonic plague was afflicting neighboring cities,³⁴³ and a ban on their residence within the city itself³⁴⁴ was in place during the subsequent centuries all the way up to 1791.³⁴⁵

This brings us to an additional problem with following Luther in this—some of his anti-Jewish argumentation put weight on factual error, and he was writing in an environment where such errors had already influenced some anti-Jewish legislation. Claims about Jews poisoning wells occurred in the context of ignorance of the way in which the black death spread, and in that context people misattributed the plague to Jews³⁴⁶ and both murdered them and enacted legal measures against them. In his previous work he had apparently ridiculed a superstitious belief that Jews used Christian blood to preserve their own health from a curse God had inflicted on

³⁴⁰ Kenneth Austin, [The Jews and the Reformation](#), (Kindle Edition), Page 67 See also Debra Kaplan, [Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg](#), Pages 104-105.

³⁴¹ “in 1349, the city’s burghers expelled Strasbourg’s Jews. Though a few families were readmitted two decades later, by 1390, all Jews were expelled from Strasbourg.” Debra Kaplan, [Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg](#), Page 3. A Jewish community at existed in the town for around two centuries or more. Id. Page 26.

³⁴² Kenneth Austin, [The Jews and the Reformation](#), (Kindle Edition) Page 14. Debra Kaplan, [Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg](#), Page 27.

³⁴³ “In 1349, after the Black Death had hit several neighboring cities, the city’s residents expelled the local Jewish community. The magistrates allowed several families back into the city in 1369, only to expel the Jews once again in 1390.” Debra Kaplan, [Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg](#), Page 3. See also Id. 28-29 for additional detail.

³⁴⁴ Jews regularly entered the city for a variety of reasons during much of this time. Debra Kaplan, [Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg](#), Pages 7-10, 70, 75, 80-88, 165-168. See 80-83 for a ban on Jews entering the city and resulting negotiation to allow them to do so. See 83-84 for Jews being given refuge within the city under some circumstances. See pages 90-92 for other bans and restrictions. See also Id. 118: “after 1570, daily Jewish-Christian interactions inside Strasbourg diminished as the magistrates sought to implement restrictions on the Jews’ commercial presence in the city. Such contacts could only take place in designated areas, under watch, outside city walls, or illicitly.” And see 119, “The beginning of the Reformation led to a flourishing of Christian Hebraism in the city, abetted by the participation of local Jews. As the Reformation progressed, however, contacts between Jews and Hebraists ceased. Starting in the latter half of the sixteenth century, Christian leaders deliberately solidified the boundaries between the communities as they adopted Lutheran orthodoxy in the city.” And 143, “By the late sixteenth century, both clerics and magistrates endeavored to sever the ties, both economic and intellectual, that had brought Jews into the city of Strasbourg.”

³⁴⁵ Debra Kaplan, [Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg](#), Page 1.

³⁴⁶ Kenneth Austin, [The Jews and the Reformation](#), (Kindle Edition) Page 14.

them³⁴⁷ (stories of supernatural events surrounding Jews that almost no Protestant would take as accurate accounts formed part of the background for some of the popular hostility towards them).³⁴⁸ However, in his On the Jews and Their Lies, while not embracing the magical version of belief in Jewish ritual murder, Luther used claims of Jews killing children and claims of them poisoning wells to support his argument; he waffled a bit on whether he thought they actually did it, but indicated that they wanted to do so.³⁴⁹

“This gives you a clear picture of their conception of the fifth commandment and their observation of it. They have been blood thirsty bloodhounds and murderers of all Christendom for more than fourteen hundred years in their intentions, and would undoubtedly prefer to be such with their deeds. Thus they have been accused of poisoning water and wells, of kidnapping children, of piercing them through with an awl, of hacking them in pieces, and in that way secretly cooling their wrath with the blood of Christians, for all of which they have often been condemned to death by fire.”³⁵⁰

During parts of the argument he treated such claims as evidence of Jewish perfidy.

“I have read and heard many stories about the Jews which agree with this judgment of Christ, namely, how they have poisoned wells, made assassinations, kidnapped children, as related before. I have heard that one Jew sent another Jew, and this by means of a Christian, a pot of blood, together with a barrel of wine, in which when drunk empty, a dead Jew was found. There are many other similar stories. For their kidnapping of children, they have often been burned at the stake or banished (as we already heard). I am well aware they deny all of this. However, it all coincides with the judgment of Christ which declares that they are venomous, bitter, vindictive, tricky serpents, assassins, and children of the devil who sting and work harm stealthily wherever they cannot do it openly. For this reason I should like to see them where there are no Christians.”³⁵¹

Andreas Osiander had already used his own knowledge of Jewish culture to (discreetly³⁵²) write against the absurdity of charges related to ritual murder prior to Luther’s more vitriolic anti-

³⁴⁷ “slandering them, accusing them of having Christian blood if they don’t stink, and I know not what other foolishness.” Martin Luther, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*, in Luther’s Works: Volume 45, The Christian in Society II, translated by Walther I. Brandt, Page 229.

³⁴⁸ See e.g. Heiko Oberman, The Roots of Anti-Semitism: In the Age of Renaissance and Reformation, Pages 97-100.

³⁴⁹ Martin Luther, On the Jews and Their Lies, (Eulenspiegel Press Edition), Page 62 (Part 9).

³⁵⁰ Martin Luther, On the Jews and Their Lies, (Eulenspiegel Press Edition), Page 94 (Part 12).

³⁵¹ Martin Luther, On the Jews and Their Lies, (Eulenspiegel Press Edition), Page 103 (Part 14).

³⁵² Andrew L. Thomas, The Apocalypse in Reformation Nuremberg: Jews and Turks in Andreas Osiander’s World, Pages 184-186.

Judaic writings.³⁵³ Some version or other of the view that Osiander set out to refute was apparently relatively widespread at the time; Luther's prominent Roman Catholic opponent Johann Eck took the time to write an attempt at refuting Osiander's refutation of ritual murder claims after this work of Osiander was (anonymously) published.³⁵⁴

The origin of the ritual murder accusations is unclear, one speculation is that Christians were primed to believe such stories after hearing of Jews who, when confronted by (extralegal³⁵⁵) demands for forced conversion during the 1st Crusade, engaged in a mass murder-suicide in which they killed their own children.³⁵⁶ Another (not contradictory) hypothesis is that Christians interpreted aspects of the Jewish festival of Purim as a "mockery of the crucifixion"³⁵⁷ and were thus more ready to believe such allegations.

³⁵³ Andreas Osiander, *Whether it is true and believable that the Jews secretly murder Christian children and use their blood: An Appropriate Treatise Presented on each Judgment. 'Whoever sheds human blood, their blood should also be shed.'* Available as an Appendix in Andrew L. Thomas, [The Apocalypse in Reformation Nuremberg: Jews and Turks in Andreas Osiander's World](#), Page 233. Osiander was not the first to oppose these, see e.g. Anna Sapir Abulafia, [Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom](#), (Kindle Edition), Page 185, mentioning a Holy Roman Emperor having such claims investigated and found false around three hundred and fifty years before.

³⁵⁴ Andrew L. Thomas, [The Apocalypse in Reformation Nuremberg: Jews and Turks in Andreas Osiander's World](#), Pages 189-192.

³⁵⁵ See e.g. R. I. Moore, [The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe](#), (Kindle Edition) Location 570. Speaking of the Holy Roman Emperor, "Having tried, ineffectually, to punish the perpetrators of the massacres of 1096 Henry placed all Jews under imperial protection by the peace of Mainz in 1103." (Though Cf. Id. location 1066 for the same emperor banning Jews from possessing weapons in the same year as the massacres.) See also Id. Location 1462 for the military nature of the attacks on Jews during the Crusade. See Anna Sapir Abulafia, [Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom](#), (Kindle Edition), Page 140, noting that "attacks against Jews occurred where crusading armies were least effectively controlled by their commanders."

³⁵⁶ John M. McCulloh, *Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth*, [Speculum](#), July 1997, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Jul., 1997), 698, Page 738. Cf. R. I. Moore, [The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe](#), Locations 440-446 for more details about these murder-suicides. Cf. Robin R. Mundill, [The King's Jews : Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England](#), Pages 79-80 (and the image of a plaque on 82) for discussion of murder suicides that happened under similar circumstances in England almost 100 years later.

³⁵⁷ John M. McCulloh, *Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth*, [Speculum](#), July 1997, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Jul., 1997), 698, Page 737. See Anna Sapir Abulafia, [Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom](#), (Kindle Edition), Page 168 discusses this argument (providing a late Roman historical incident in which this was so considered, see Id. 170, 172 for further discussion of this theory).

So accusations of Jews murdering people formed part of the context for Luther's statements about tolerance of Jews, and that's something I'd expect a modern pastor to be more discerning about. It is true that anti-Judaic measures had advocates other than him during the Reformation, such as Bucer.³⁵⁸ It is also true that there is a long history of Christian laws limiting the practice of Judaism. Let's consider the history for a bit.

The Christian Roman emperors legislated various restrictions on Jews (albeit, in a context where Jews were already subject to legal restrictions prior to Christianity's political ascendance³⁵⁹), particularly with regard to converting Christians, which was specifically named as a crime.³⁶⁰ At the same time, the early Christian emperors acknowledged Jewish institutions, which during the early Christian empire included a Patriarchate,³⁶¹ and Jews were more tolerated than some religious groups.³⁶² Theodosius I's son Honorius banned the construction of new

³⁵⁸ "While Bucer expressed such extreme opinions on the matter of tolerating the Jews, it is doubtful if he really took the affair to heart. It seems to have been merely a minor episode in his life. In his voluminous correspondence with the landgrave after this time, there is no mention of the Jews. Never afterwards, so far as is known, did he try to make Philip change the mildness of the policy adopted in the orders to the city of Cassel, and in none of his books did he take occasion to attack the Jews. He was not interested in pushing a policy of intolerance. His opinion was called for, he gave it with candor and care, and then let the matter drop." Hastings Ells, *Bucer's Plan for the Jews, Church History, Jun., 1937, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Jun., 1937), Page 127, Page 135*. I think this understates the facts as described by the rest of the article (as it recounts things, Bucer both published a reply to the intentional rejection of the advice from a group of pastors he had participated in drafting, (Id. Pages 129-132) and then published an additional defense when people presented the Prince's opinion as opposing that of him and the other pastors who had drafted the letter of advice, and published the three documents from his side in a book together (Id. Page 133. See also Debra Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg*, Pages 63-65.) As far as I can tell, the documents have not been translated into English. Wolfe has referenced Ells on this (as supporting Bucer's position being "anti-Semitism, not just anti-Judaism" <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1479557850804461571>) Cf. Debra Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg*, Pages 153-156. Regarding Philip of Hesse's response, see Kenneth Austin, *The Jews and the Reformation*, (Kindle Edition) Pages 75-76.

³⁵⁹ See Peter Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, Pages 132-133.

³⁶⁰ See e.g. the laws collected here: https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/Jews_Scott.htm, for instance, Honorius and Theodosius II, "to Asclepiodotus, Praetorian Prefect. Jews who are proved to have circumcised any man belonging to our religion, or to have directed this to be done, shall be condemned to the confiscation of their property, and to perpetual exile. Given on the day before the Kalends of February, during the Consulate of the Emperor Theodosius, Consul for the seventeenth time, and Festus, 439."

³⁶¹ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Pages 217-218. Cf. R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe*, (Kindle Edition) Location 413 (referencing Jews post destruction of the temple having "a hereditary patriarch who resided at Tiberius in Palestine, until the line failed in 429"). See also Jacob Neusner, *Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism*, Page 158.

³⁶² Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Pages 219-220.

synagogues,³⁶³ and this policy was included in the Justinian code.³⁶⁴ Justinian banned synagogue readings of the Mishnah.³⁶⁵ The Justinian Code declared converting Christians to Judaism to be a capital crime.³⁶⁶ Justinian issued an order to confiscate the synagogues in North Africa after his conquest of the Vandal Kingdom there due to local Jewish opposition to the reconquest,³⁶⁷ though this appears to have been largely unenforced.³⁶⁸ The default practice in the empire continued to be to tolerate existing Jewish sites of worship.

Looking outside the empire, the first Visigothic ruler of Spain to convert to Trinitarian Christianity continued a general tolerance of Jewish worship that had existed under his Arian predecessors.³⁶⁹ After him, the policy of Visigothic rulers went back and forth as kings (often with a tenuous grasp on the throne) changed, ranging from having Jewish government officials to attempting to force the Jews to convert or leave the realm,³⁷⁰ a large Jewish community remained

³⁶³ R. I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, (Kindle Edition) Location 418.

³⁶⁴ Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Page 22.

³⁶⁵ Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Pages 24-25. David C. Kraemer indicates that this is the earliest recorded external mention of the authority of the Mishnah, A History of the Talmud, Page 179.

³⁶⁶ Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Pages 33.

³⁶⁷ Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Pages 33-35. Cf. Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Pages 26.

³⁶⁸ Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Page 35.

³⁶⁹ Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Page 5-7. Prior to him, Arian Visigoths had generally tolerated Jewish worship. "According to the Breviary of Alaric, Jews were to be considered Roman citizens and were to live under Roman law. In several instances, however, Jews were accorded special treatment. This legislation was intended to insure Jewish privilegia in two specific areas: religion and law. In the former, no action was to be permitted that hindered Jewish religious observances, and in the latter, Jewish judicial autonomy was to be respected. The Breviary also took into account the vigorous efforts of Jews to convert both pagans and Christians to Judaism and laid down several laws to hinder such activity." Id. Page 4. He adds: "It is difficult to ascertain whether Alaric's code was enforced with regard to the Jews of the Visigothic kingdom during much of the first quarter of the sixth century because Theodoric the Great, the Ostrogothic monarch, ruled there through his agents from ca. 508 until his death in 526. As will be seen in the next chapter, Theodoric pursued a policy intended to insure the Jews their *privilegia* under the law, and he tended to ignore those previous enactments designed to limit Jewish activities."

³⁷⁰ Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Pages 7-24.

in the realm and played a significant role both in conflicts within the realm and during the Muslim conquest.³⁷¹

In Italy, the Bishop of Rome during the latter 500s and start of the 600s, Gregory I, encouraged clergy to tolerate existing Jewish sites of worship,³⁷² for instance writing to the Bishop of Naples,

“Those who with pure intent desire to bring to the true faith aliens from the Christian religion should study kindness, and not asperity; lest such as reason rendered with smoothness might have appealed to should be driven far off by opposition. For whosoever act otherwise, and under cover of such intention would suspend people from their accustomed observance of their own rites, are proved to be intent on their own cause rather than on God’s. To wit, the Jews dwelling in Naples have complained to us, asserting that certain persons are endeavouring unreasonably to drive them from certain solemnities of their holidays, so that it may not be lawful for them to observe the solemnities of their festivals, as up to this time since long ago it has been lawful for them and their forefathers to keep and observe them. Now, if this is true, these people appear to be taking trouble to no purpose. For what is the use, when even such long unaccustomed prohibition is of no avail for their faith and conversion? Or why should we lay down rules for the Jews as to how they should observe their ceremonies, if we cannot thereby win them? We should therefore so act that, being rather appealed to by reason and kindness they may wish to follow us, and not to fly from us; and that proving to them from their own Scriptures what we tell them, we may be able, with God’s help, to convert them to the bosom of Mother Church.

“Wherefore let thy Fraternity, so far as may be possible, with the help of God, kindle them to conversion, and not allow them any more to be disquieted with respect to their solemnities; but let them have free licence to observe and celebrate all their festivals and holidays, even as hitherto both they and their forefathers for a long time back have kept and held them.”³⁷³

The early Carolingian rulers stabilized Jewish policy within their area of influence at the comparatively tolerant end of the spectrum (indeed, getting rid of some late Roman anti-Judaic laws and having some laws which arguably discriminated in favor of the Jews under some

³⁷¹ Bernard S. Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe*, Pages 24-26.

³⁷² See e.g. Bernard S. Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe*, Pages 35-39.

³⁷³ Philip Schaff ed. *NPNF-213. Gregory the Great (II), Ephraim Syrus, Aphrahat*, Page 226, *Epistle XII. To Paschasius, Bishop of Neapolis (Naples)* <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/npnf213/cache/npnf213.pdf>

circumstances³⁷⁴). In line with encouraging Jews to immigrate into the empire, Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious disregarded a late Roman law which forbid the construction of new synagogues.³⁷⁵ Restrictions were placed on holding markets on Saturday in order to protect Jewish traders.³⁷⁶ Louis the Pious not only allowed Jews to own Christian slaves, he even required that the permission of a Jewish owner be given before a slave could be baptized.³⁷⁷ "Louis made no effort to stop Jews from proselytizing among free people through preaching in public, through disputation, and through the dissemination of literature hostile to Christianity."³⁷⁸

In Byzantium there were a few cases of emperors making statements to the effect of or actually trying to force the Jews to convert between the 600s to the 900s,³⁷⁹ after which policies stabilized in favor of the general toleration of existing Jewish communities,³⁸⁰ though not of proselytization.³⁸¹ Byzantine Jews were generally allowed to own land and pursue the occupation of their choice.³⁸²

³⁷⁴ In addition to the restriction on proselytizing Jewish slaves mentioned below, see also Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Page 95-96 regarding exemptions from tolls.

³⁷⁵ Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Page 86.

³⁷⁶ Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Page 94. Cf. R. I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, (Kindle Edition) Location 1041.

³⁷⁷ Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Pages 86-87, see also 92-94, 99-100.

³⁷⁸ Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Page 87.

³⁷⁹ See Bernard S. Bachrach, Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe, Page 39. Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Pages 48, 53, 61, 65-67, 82-101.

³⁸⁰ See Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Pages 108-109. "The second reason for the beginning of the migration was also a question of security-the security given to Byzantine Jews by Constantine VII. It was not disturbed by his successors. The Macedonian persecutions were never resumed: the ruling institution finally became reconciled to the impossibility of removing the Jewish anomaly by force."

³⁸¹ Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, at e.g. Page 124: "On the other hand, however good the conditions in Byzantium the apostate from Christianity was still subject to the death penalty decreed by Leo VI."

³⁸² Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Page 17. This appears to have become unstable around the mid-1100s, see Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Pages 152-157.

“Jewish landholders and agricultural workers were not uncommon around 1000” in a variety of parts of Western Europe.³⁸³ In that period, “Jewish artisans were found in all trades”, albeit likely particularly in ones linked to international commerce.³⁸⁴ “The fate of the Jewish landholders and cultivators of the early eleventh century is not recorded”³⁸⁵ but it appears that (to the extent they hadn’t converted) in a significant part of Latin Christendom their land was usurped or otherwise lost over the next few generations by some means or other.³⁸⁶ The church disapproved of Jews engaging in certain business relationships with Christians, such as employing Christian servants, which sometimes resulted in civil rulers implementing these restrictions³⁸⁷ and likely hampered Jews in some business endeavors. Starting around the 1000s or 1100s and continuing for several centuries thereafter³⁸⁸ much of European trade and craft was

³⁸³ R. I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, (Kindle Edition) Locations 1047-1053.

³⁸⁴ R. I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, (Kindle Edition) Location 1053.

³⁸⁵ R. I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, (Kindle Edition) Locations 1079-1084.

³⁸⁶ R. I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, (Kindle Edition) Locations 1084-1091. Though see Id. Locations 1097-1103 for Jews owning property in England during the 1100s and part of the 1200s. See also, William Chester Jordan, The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians, Page 26 “A broader shift in northern Europe (indeed, to a degree, in European culture) lay behind the developments in the Ile de France. Jews were progressively turning away from other pursuits, especially agricultural ones. This shift: has been attributed to the Christian ethos of high medieval ‘feudalism’ (as opposed to the rough-and-ready feudalism of immediate post-Carolingian times) and to the strict legal relationships accompanying the fief, especially the feudal oath. These relationships could not be accommodated to Jews, who were therefore constrained to give up their interests in land in inhospitable rural environments and become a much more urban and/or commercial minority than they might otherwise have become.” See Id. Page 186 for a jurisdiction in France which Jordan believes the Jews probably owned land in the late 1200s prior to being expelled, and see Id. Page 211 distinguishes (at the time of the expulsion of 1306) between Jews in the South of France (as owning land) and in the North (as typically leasing it).

³⁸⁷ See e.g. William Chester Jordan, The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians, Page 135.

³⁸⁸ “They had their heyday in the later Middle Ages, from about 1000 to about 1500,” Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The Economics of Guilds*, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Volume 28, Number 4 Fall 2014 Page 169, Page 170. “Local guilds of wholesale merchants reappeared in most European societies after the Dark Ages, from the early eleventh century onwards.” Id. “Guilds of craftsmen reappeared after the Dark Ages a bit later, typically from around 1100 onwards” Id. 171. Cf. Sheilagh Ogilvie, The European Guilds: An Economic Analysis, Pages 8-16. Id. Page 9, “European guilds came definitively back into view with the resurgence of trade and industry, together with public record- keeping, after about 1000, and they became virtually universal across Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.” Cf. Id. Pages 29-30.

subjected to monopolistic³⁸⁹ guilds which were typically not open to (inter alia) Jews,³⁹⁰ thus pushing them out of a variety of occupations throughout many European realms.³⁹¹ In much of Western Europe³⁹² this provides context for Jews being left disproportionately reliant on money lending.³⁹³ So in this and other ways, during the 1000s and the centuries immediately following, the situation of Jews became worse than in the immediately preceding centuries across several

³⁸⁹ “Guilds regulated market competition. Each guild possessed legal privileges endowing its members with exclusive rights to practice particular economic activities in a particular geographical area. These privileges typically consisted of a monopoly over producing specific goods and services, together with a monopsony over purchasing particular inputs. The merchant guild of a particular town secured for its members exclusive rights over trade in particular wares, transaction types, trade routes, or trading destinations. The weavers’ guild of a particular place reserved for its members the exclusive right to weave fabrics made of particular materials, to sell them to consumers or merchants, to purchase raw or semifinished inputs such as wool and yarn, to employ the relevant labor including apprentices, journeymen, and freelance spinners, and to use the relevant equipment such as looms, fulling-mills, and bleaching-fields.” Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The Economics of Guilds*, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Volume 28, Number 4 Fall 2014 Page 169, Page 174.

³⁹⁰ Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The Economics of Guilds*, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Volume 28, Number 4 Fall 2014 Page 169, Pages 173, 182-183. For a revealing exception, see Robin R. Mundill, The King's Jews : Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England, Page 118, where it mentions “the admission of Benedict of Winchester into the merchant’s guild of that city in 1268. Despite the fact that he could not take the usual vow, Benedict was admitted to the fraternity by the mayor, Simon le Draper.” Cf. Sheilagh Ogilvie, The European Guilds: An Economic Analysis, Pages 7, 25.

³⁹¹ R. I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, (Kindle Edition) Location 1097. For more information about England, see Robin R. Mundill, The King's Jews : Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England, Page 109: “In 1271, further legislation even forbade Jews to enjoy a freehold in manors, lands, tenements, fees or tenures of any kind. This effectively only left the Jews cash and commodities in which they could legally deal, and quite possibly resulted in higher interest charges on loans.” See also, William Chester Jordan, The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians, Pages 26-27: “The concentration in specific aspects of commerce and trade was also stimulated, it is said, by the influence of churchmen on the attitudes and behavior of lay people in favor of increased separation between Christians and Jews. This pressure was mounting in the course of the twelfth century, but it was not decisive. We have already seen that in numerous areas people of the two confessions worked and associated with each other. Still, the pressure was there and growing: what was occurring by the late twelfth century was a slow but steady attrition of the Jewish presence in those commercial occupations or professions that were thought of by churchmen as inappropriate to them” . . . “A final factor that may help account for this widely observed shift in the Jewish occupational profile is the evolution of guilds with their quasi-religious association. In these organizations there was usually no place for Jews. Since there was no place for them, and since the guilds tended to articulate an economic program that restricted to members only the commercial activities or trades that their guilds engaged in, Jews tended to be pushed out of these occupations.”

³⁹² Andrew Sharf, says Jews in Byzantium were not associated with money lending, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Page 17. On the other hand, Jews in Iberia were associated with it (Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 55-60), despite not being subject to the same restrictions as much of the rest of Western Europe.

³⁹³ R. I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, (Kindle Edition) Location 1097. See William Chester Jordan, The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians, Pages 148-149, discussing how removing Jews from moneylending in mid-1200s France would have, in effect, limited them to jobs with other Jews as a market. See Id. Page 250, stating that with regard to Jews fleeing to Paris to escape the wave of violence in Iberia that year, “by 1391 there was virtually no livelihood to be earned there licitly.”

realms.³⁹⁴ These changes did not happen everywhere to the same degree or at the same rate,³⁹⁵ and Jews in some jurisdictions had rights not guaranteed to them in others even though ultimately under the same sovereign.³⁹⁶ It was a commonplace in Christian theology during this time that Jews would eventually convert,³⁹⁷ with various effects on the treatment of Jews. During the 1200s the papacy would officially support various anti-Judaic measures, including declaring that Jews should be forbidden to go out in public “the last three days before Easter and especially

³⁹⁴ See e.g. R. I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, (Kindle Edition) Location 463.

³⁹⁵ See Anna Sapir Abulafia, Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom, (Kindle Edition), Pages 37-57, discussing the Holy Roman Empire and Id. Pages 61-62 comparing Germany and France. See also William Chester Jordan, The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians, Page 27, “it is not accurate to think that all these trends had come to fruition by the 1180s or that there were no countervailing tendencies. Throughout the thirteenth century intelligent people in authority would still argue that the Jews ought to be allowed to carry on ‘honorable’ trades, an idea that could imply a limit on the absolute application of the monopolist ideology of the guilds. Moreover, the ‘ideal’ programs of both radical churchmen and Christian merchants and artisans were far from determining social relationships: Jews continued to sell wine to Christians, to engage in the marketing of meat, to provide medical services, and so on.

“It remains true nonetheless that many of these activities, in hindsight, were largely atavistic. More and more Jews began to earn more and more of their living from supplying credit. To a degree this was an outgrowth of their involvement in commerce and trade in general. But the provision of credit, both in the productive sector of the economy and even more certainly on the consumer side (lending at interest for convenience and distress; pawnbroking) was not an ‘ordinary’ occupation like merchandizing.” See Id. Pages 155, 167, referencing Jews in Narbonne involved in maritime-related business, and Id. Page 228 referencing Jews in Marseilles involvement in a variety of occupations, as well as noting some restrictions there (and see Id. Page 230 for subsequent opposition to certain Jewish business activities by the ruler of Provence). See Sheilagh Ogilvie, The European Guilds: An Economic Analysis, Page 164, mentioning Jewish business activities in a town in Provence in the 1400s.

³⁹⁶ Friedrich Lotter, The Scope and Effectiveness of Imperial Jewry Law in the High Middle Ages, Jewish History, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring, 1989), Page 31, Page 32. See also Anna Sapir Abulafia, Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom, (Kindle Edition), Pages 37-57. See also Id. Page 158: “German Jews were less heavily involved in moneylending than the Jews of northern France during this period.” And Id. Page 215, . . . “moneylending steadily became the stable activity of Jews in England and northern France by the end of the twelfth century” . . . See also Id. Page 221 summarizing Jews in Germany as “to a certain extent” more economically diversified than Jews in France and England. William Chester Jordan, The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians, at e.g. Page 222 contains references to a decline in the situation of Jews in at least one of the jurisdictions referenced by Lotter. Cf. Cf. Sheilagh Ogilvie, The European Guilds: An Economic Analysis, Page 40, listing Jews as among the groups opposed during various guild struggles in “late medieval German cities”.

³⁹⁷ So, for instance, Robert Grosseteste wrote, “Truly in the last times, together with all peoples, just as it says in the scriptures, they will enter in and turn to the faith. Then all Israel, that is the Jewish people – will be saved through their faith and will come to true liberty from their captivity.” Robin R. Mundill, The King's Jews : Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England, Page 14. But see Id. Pages 129-130 for his negative view of Jews making money from usury.

on Good Friday”, that they should be made to wear distinguishing clothing, and that temporal rulers should be punished if they committed a public offence to a Jew.³⁹⁸

In England a number of Jews were murdered on the occasion of Richard I’s coronation in 1189,³⁹⁹ which (despite royal disapproval of this act) was followed by a series of massacres in 1190.⁴⁰⁰ One factor in the 1100s and 1200s was accusations (already discussed in relation to later figures) which claimed Jews ritually killed Christian children.⁴⁰¹ Such accusations were referenced in justifying expelling the Jews from the king’s territory within France during part of the reign of Philip Augustus (though his father had dismissed them as groundless).⁴⁰² This sort of accusation (i.e., of the Jews as having a “constant, usual practise of crucifying children almost every year, in contempt and reproach of our crucified Saviour, by common consent”⁴⁰³) would continue to be a factor in Christian treatment of Jews for hundreds of years afterward, even being

³⁹⁸ Medieval Sourcebook: *Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV 1215, Canon 68 and Canon 69* (see also *Canon 67*). <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/lateran4.asp>

³⁹⁹ Robin R. Mundill, *The King's Jews : Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England*, Pages 75-76.

⁴⁰⁰ Robin R. Mundill, *The King's Jews : Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England*, Pages 75-80. For royal punitive action taken as a result of one of these massacres, see Id. Pages 80-81.

⁴⁰¹ See e.g. R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society. Authority and Deviance in Western Europe*, (Kindle Edition) Locations 514-538. Cf. Robin R. Mundill, *The King's Jews : Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England*, Pages 72-75, 82-88. See Id. Page 87 for one specific example of such a story being refuted (long after people had been executed because of it). Though see William Chester Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians*, Page 136, stating that this was not a factor in the program of Saint Louis and his mother, but see Id. Pages 146-147 mentioning such an accusation during the reign of that king as he prepared for a crusade, and Id. Page 191 indicating royal disbelief in such accusations during the period in question.

⁴⁰² R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society. Authority and Deviance in Western Europe*, (Kindle Edition) Locations 582-587. (Referring to statements by “The king’s biographer, Rigord”.) It may be significant that the King was still a teenager when this act was taken. William Chester Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians*, Pages 30-32. On the expulsion of 1182 being from the royal domain and not France more broadly see Id. Pages 33-34. (Though see Id. Page 40 noting subsequent expulsions by lesser lords prior to the Jews’ readmittance into the royal domain.)

⁴⁰³ William Prynne, *A short demurrer to the Jewes long discontinued barred remitter into England Comprising an exact chronological relation of their first admission into, their ill deportment, misdemeanors, condition, sufferings, oppressions, slaughters, plunders, by popular insurrections, and regal exactions in; and their total, final banishment by judgment and edict of Parliament, out of England, never to return again: collected out of the best historians and records. With a brief collection of such English laws, Scriptures, reasons as seem strongly to plead, and conclude against their readmission into England, especially at this season, and against the general calling of the Jewish nation. With an answer to the chief allegations for their introduction.* Pages 32-33
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ebo/A56206.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>

cited by the Puritan leader William Prynne, as he argued against letting the Jews again legally reside in England⁴⁰⁴ from whence they had been expelled by my ancestor⁴⁰⁵ Edward I (Longshanks) in 1290.⁴⁰⁶

In the reconquest of Iberia from the Muslims, Christian rulers encouraged Jews to settle areas that they had conquered.⁴⁰⁷ As the Muslims were pushed back, Jews were among those granted lands and at least during some periods among those expected to carry weapons.⁴⁰⁸ Jews participated on the Christian side in the fight to capture Toledo in 1085.⁴⁰⁹ A few years later, “when the Christian knight Rodrigo de Vivar—the famed ‘El Cid’—briefly conquered Valencia” . . . “he appointed a Jewish vizir to govern the city.”⁴¹⁰ Starting around this time, Christian Spain welcomed a larger number of Jews as they fled persecution from the two Berber dynasties which

⁴⁰⁴ Kenneth Austin, [The Jews and the Reformation](#), (Kindle Edition) Page 201. The work itself may be accessed here: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A56206.0001.001?view=toc>, “I told him, *The Jews had been formerly great Clippers and Forgers of Mony, and had crucified three or four Children in England at least, which were principal causes of their banishment.* To which he replied, *That the crucifying of Children was not fully charged on them by our Historians, and would easily be wiped off.* Whereto I answered, *He was much mistaken*”, William Prynne, [A short demurrer to the Jewes long discontinued barred remitter into England Comprising an exact chronological relation of their first admission into, their ill deportment, misdemeanors, condition, sufferings, oppressions, slaughters, plunders, by popular insurrections, and regal exactions in; and their total, final banishment by judgment and edict of Parliament, out of England, never to return again: collected out of the best historians and records. With a brief collection of such English laws, Scriptures, reasons as seem strongly to plead, and conclude against their readmission into England, especially at this season, and against the general calling of the Jewish nation. With an answer to the chief allegations for their introduction.](#) *To the Christian Reader*,

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A56206.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext> The main argument relays a number of claims of completed or attempted ritual murder as if they were fact:

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A56206.0001.001/1:3?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>

⁴⁰⁵ Assuming the accuracy of the Ancestry.com genealogy in which I discovered this connection.

⁴⁰⁶ Robin R. Mundill, [The King's Jews : Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England](#), Pages 156-159.

Compare with R. I. Moore, [The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe](#), (Kindle Edition) Location 610, see also Id. location 2296. See Robin R. Mundill, [The King's Jews : Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England](#), Pages 164-165 where he indicates that France is the likely abode of the majority of Jews exiled from England.

⁴⁰⁷ Bernard S. Bachrach, [Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe](#), Page 39. Andrew Sharf, [Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade](#), Pages 68-70, Pages 141-142. Jonathan Ray, [The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia](#), Pages 19-21.

⁴⁰⁸ Andrew Sharf, [Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade](#), Page 70 (discussing Carolingian troops during the earlier part of this process). Jonathan Ray, [The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia](#), Page 18.

⁴⁰⁹ R. I. Moore, [The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe](#), (Kindle Edition) Location 1053.

⁴¹⁰ Jonathan Ray, [The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia](#), Page 16.

successively took control of the Muslim portion of the peninsula.⁴¹¹ Under various circumstances a number of new synagogues were built during and after the period of reconquest.⁴¹²

In addition, Iberian Jews purchased lands from Christians sufficiently frequently for the Pope to mention it in a complaint to the King of Castille (apparently because Jewish lands in Castille were not at that time subject to a mandatory tithe to the church).⁴¹³ Jewish landholding was widespread enough that the payment of tithes on Jewish lands was a contentious issue across several of the Christian kingdoms of Iberia during the 1200s.⁴¹⁴ The situation differed from that in a typical modern liberal democracy in a number of ways, i.e., Jewish land grants from the crown, though frequent, were or at least became by the 1100-1200s or thereabouts typically subject to restrictions on sale to non-Jews due to the nature of their relationship to the ruler⁴¹⁵ and were often not automatically heritable.⁴¹⁶

Jewish landholding continued in Iberia during the 1300s.

“At the Castilian Cortes held at Alcalá de Henares in 1348, Alfonso XI explained that the Jews would continue to be allowed to own land: ‘Because it is our desire that the Jews remain in our dominion, as is commanded by the holy Church, since they might still turn to our faith and be saved as prophesied, and so that they might have sustenance and a way to live and flourish in our dominion, we order that they may possess and buy land for themselves and their heirs in all the cities and towns of our realm.’”⁴¹⁷

⁴¹¹ Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 11, 15-16. Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, Pages 141-142. Anna Sapir Abulafia, Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom, (Kindle Edition), Page 109.

⁴¹² Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 99-101.

⁴¹³ Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 46-47.

⁴¹⁴ Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 46-52.

⁴¹⁵ Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 42-43.

⁴¹⁶ Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 43-44.

⁴¹⁷ Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 53-54.

Furthermore, Jews in the Christian Iberian kingdoms were involved in a wide variety of occupations during this period,⁴¹⁸ in addition to trade⁴¹⁹ and lending.⁴²⁰ So, though Jews in Iberia were subject to some restrictions that are notable relative to modern life and some of the restrictions seen in other places would see a parallel increase in Iberia,⁴²¹ we can bracket Iberia from some of what was said above,⁴²² or at least say the chronology was different there in some key ways—relations between Jews and Christians apparently deteriorated by the late 1300s⁴²³ and Fernando and Isabella famously gave a decree in 1492 expelling them.⁴²⁴

Poland (though not geographically Western European) forms another country which can be bracketed in discussions of Jewish legislation in Latin Christendom.

“Jewish legal status was first defined in 1264 by Prince Bolesław the Pious who” . . .
“granted the Jews of Great Poland a charter of rights, which defined Jews as servi

⁴¹⁸ Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 60-62, 67-71, 89.

⁴¹⁹ Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 62-66.

⁴²⁰ Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 55-60.

⁴²¹ See Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 147-151 for attempts of Christian monarchs to limit Jewish residence to the Jewish quarters, particularly in the early 1300s (see e.g. Id. 154-155 for an example of a more tolerant policy yielding to a more restrictive one in one location during the later part of the 1200s.). See Id. Pages 156-164 for instances of increased restriction (as well as some instances of royal pushback against papal attempts to impose such restrictions) on Jewish clothing during the 1200s.

⁴²² This is not to say Jews were never subject to any restrictions in Iberia at all in the period in question, See e.g. Jonathan Ray, The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia, Pages 59-60 for a specific town in Portugal banning Jews from residing there.

⁴²³ Though apparently even during this period they remained more economically free in Iberia than in many parts of Europe. See Norman Roth, *The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492*, The Historian, Vol. 55. No. 1 (Autumn 1992), Page 17, Page 21 (indicating that “Jews continued to play an import role in business and trade, but to a lesser extent in agriculture, medicine, and government service” during the 15th century prior to the expulsion.) And see Id. 22 regarding “The existence of contracts between Christian and Jewish families to apprentice their minor children to live with each other for periods of ten years or more to learn a trade” during the 1400s, see Id. 28 for things continuing like this up “until the very eve of the Expulsion.” Though see Id. 23-24 regarding legal discrimination against people with Jewish ancestry during part of the 1400s.

⁴²⁴ The stated reason in the *Alhambra Decree* was that Jews were converting Christians to Jewish beliefs and practices. <https://www.fau.edu/artsandletters/pjhr/chhre/pdf/hh-alhambra-1492-english.pdf> See Norman Roth, *The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492*, The Historian, Vol. 55. No. 1 (Autumn 1992), Page 17, Page 29 referencing more localized expulsions prior to that.

camerae principis, and guaranteed them physical security, freedom of worship and movement and economic rights equal to Christian merchants.”⁴²⁵

This law included privileges for Jews on the Sabbath,⁴²⁶ and protection for synagogues.⁴²⁷ A broadly similar approach received legal support in Poland through the later medieval and early modern period.⁴²⁸

From this short history of Jewish-Christian relations, I draw out these points against those who would uncritically appropriate Luther or Bucer’s approach to Judaism, or demand that all early Protestant approaches to Judaism be considered as opinions that are at least acceptable to be taught within our institutions, over and above the points already made about the inconsistency of Luther’s language with his own previous statements and with that expected of a leader even by many of his contemporaries. As noted, Luther’s arguments were supported by factual error, such as claims of Jewish well poisoning which had been used as an explanation of the bubonic plague, or the belief in ritual murder that was part of stories of Jewish murder he referenced. When we read of Bucer having proposed that Jews be put under a number of restrictions (as far as I am aware his writings on the subject have not yet been translated into English and I am relying on secondary sources), we should note that this was in a context in which economic restrictions on Jews had been put into effect due to the proliferation of economically harmful

⁴²⁵ Anat Vaturi, *Security, Accommodation and Integration: The “Law of the Land” and Jewish Privileges in Old Poland*, *Studia Judaica* 19 (2016), nr 2 (38), Page 199, Page 201. See Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The European Guilds: An Economic Analysis*, Pages 164-165 mentioning Jewish economic activities areas that were Polish or under Polish control.

⁴²⁶ Isaac Lewin, *The Protection of Jewish Religious Rights by Royal Edicts in Ancient Poland*, *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April, 1943), Page 556, Page 558.

⁴²⁷ Isaac Lewin, *The Protection of Jewish Religious Rights by Royal Edicts in Ancient Poland*, *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April, 1943), Page 556, Page 564.

⁴²⁸ Anat Vaturi, *Security, Accommodation and Integration: The “Law of the Land” and Jewish Privileges in Old Poland*, *Studia Judaica* 19 (2016), nr 2 (38), Page 199, Pages 201-202. Isaac Lewin, *The Protection of Jewish Religious Rights by Royal Edicts in Ancient Poland*, *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April, 1943), Page 556, Page 558-561. Id. Pages 564-565. See Id. Pages 565-569 for insulting or disadvantageous practices with regard to the oaths Jews were required to take in legal cases and royal pushback against this. See David C. Kraemer, *A History of the Talmud*, Pages 221-223 for some discussion of Jewish life in Poland.

rent-seeking⁴²⁹ guilds which excluded Jews and also excluded many Christians.⁴³⁰ The same restrictions had likely encouraged further hatred of the Jews by to some degree or other increasing the proportion of them engaged in the despised profession of money-lending (one can look at the Chinese in Southeast Asia to see that such hostility to successful minorities in niche economic roles is not limited to Jews⁴³¹). When Bucer wrote his recommendations for Hesse, he was writing while having his main area of work in a city which did not have Jews living inside the city proper as part of the aftermath of a massacre based on hysterical fear and ignorant scapegoating of them for the plague.

This leaves unaddressed claims of Jews cursing Christians or speaking ill of Christ, Mary, or the church. Part of Luther's anger was based on his perception that the Jews (in addition to being legalistic) blasphemed Christ and slandered the Virgin Mary, and that the rabbis obscured the true meaning of the Old Testament.⁴³² Here, while some of his specific points were not correct, there was some reality.

⁴²⁹ "Guilds were so widespread and long-lived because they offered a highly effective way for two sets of powerful beneficiaries— rulers and businessmen— to redistribute larger slices of the pie to themselves, even at the cost of diminishing its overall size. Craft guilds were institutions that enabled business- owners and rulers to negotiate and manage a complex, two- way flow of benefits which neither party could have extracted from the premodern economy without the cooperation of the other." Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The European Guilds: An Economic Analysis*, Page 80 (summarizing evidence presented over the course of a chapter).

⁴³⁰ Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The Economics of Guilds*, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Volume 28, Number 4 Fall 2014 Page 169. "The default situation was for guilds to exclude applicants who were themselves currently Jews." Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The European Guilds: An Economic Analysis*, Page 104 (Ogilvie doesn't discuss how her characterization relates to the pre-expulsion situation in Spain, when Jews were involved in many occupations, her statements about Spain on this page appear to focus on the post-expulsion period, compare to her reference to rules implemented in the 1400s or so in Spain on Page 109.) See Id. Pages 164-165 for further discussion of guilds and Jews generally. See also Id. Page 140 for a specific example.

⁴³¹ For some background see e.g. *Chinese in Southeast Asia*, [Encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com),

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/chinese-southeast-asia>

⁴³² Similarly, Pope Innocent IV had written to the King of France in 1244 of the Talmud: "It is a big book among them, exceeding in size the text of the Bible. In it are found blasphemies against God and His Christ, and obviously entangled fables about the Blessed Virgin, and abusive errors, and unheard of follies." Jonathan Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia*, Page 128.

It is true that Rabbinic Judaism is not simply the religion of the Old Testament.⁴³³ The destruction of the temple and opposition to Christianity were fundamental occasions for the self-definition of Rabbinic Judaism.⁴³⁴ In Rabbinic Judaism, authority became invested in the Mishnah⁴³⁵ (completed by around 200 A.D.⁴³⁶ and promulgated by the Jewish Patriarch⁴³⁷), to

⁴³³ Though disagreeing with parts of his framework, note, for example, these statements from a contemporary scholar at a Jewish institution, “Before the first century of the common era, Judaism was, with variations, biblical Judaism, a Judaism defined by the library of books that had been accepted as canonical not long before. Jews at this time overwhelmingly believed in the one God of Israel, whose will was recorded in the Torah (the five books of Moses, from Genesis to Deuteronomy) and other inspired scriptures, the most public worship of whom took place at the Temple in Jerusalem. Many of the observances and even beliefs of rabbinic Jews who lived just a century or two later would have been unrecognizable to Jews of this period.

“But after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, a small group of scholarly men, known as the rabbis, gathered and, based upon received traditions, written and unwritten, began to develop forms of interpretation and practice that would ultimately lead Jews in unforeseen directions.” David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Pages 1-2. “With the emergence of the Talmud, however, which Jews also considered to be Torah, Jews had hitched their allegiance to a new controlling tradition, the bulk of which Jesus never knew – one that offered a full-fledged alternative to the Christian covenant. The Talmud – ‘Oral Torah’ in its fullest flowering – itself claimed to be the manifestation of the True Jewish covenant. If fact, it claimed that God’s covenant with Israel had all along been primarily realized in the Oral Torah”. Id. Pages 203-204.

⁴³⁴ “The Temple itself (or, rather, its destruction), is one of the crucial factors that explains the epistemic shift. While the Temple stood, it served as a focus of sectarian controversy but at the same time formed a unifying roof under which all the competing groups stood together, *including the earliest Christians*, and excluding, perhaps, only Qumran, who had seemingly rejected it completely. Once, however, this unifying center was gone, new modes of religious identity formation became necessary. I would suggest that the parallel legends of the ‘abandonment’ of Jerusalem by Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, on the one hand (to Yavneh), and the Jerusalem Church, on the other (to Pella), represent these new formations of identity. This, together with the challenges to “Jewish” identity provided by the growing development and importance of Gentile Christianity (that is, the Christianity of those who were neither genealogically Israel nor observers of the commandments but claimed, nevertheless, the name *Israel*), formed the background for the invention of Jewish orthodoxy by the Rabbis.” Daniel Boyarin, Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity, Page 62. Cf. Jacob Neusner, Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism, Page 88, “Israelite civil society without a Temple is not stable or normal, and not to be imagined. And the Mishnah is above all an act of imagination in defiance of reality.” And see Id. Pages 90-91, “The precipitating event for the Mishnaic system was the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70, the question turned obsession with the defeat of Bar Kokhba and the closure of Jerusalem to Jews. The urgent issue taken up by the Mishnah was, specifically, what, in the aftermath of the destruction of the holy place and holy cult, remained of the sanctity of the holy caste, the priesthood, the holy land, and above all, the holy people and its holy way of life?” . . . “The Mishnah’s system therefore focused upon the holiness of the life of Israel, the people, a holiness that had formerly centered on the Temple.” See also, David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Page 40, “Without the Temple, there was nowhere that Israel could approach God. On the contrary, the destroyed Temple signaled that God had withdrawn from Israel”.

⁴³⁵ See Jacob Neusner, Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism, Pages 158-160 for problems in the reception of the Mishnah related to unclarity of the nature of its authority and several ways of dealing with it. He then goes through the ways in which the Mishnah treated uniquely in rabbinic Judaism “First the Mishnah as a document acknowledged no prior writing, except – and then only episodically – for Scripture itself. Second, the Mishnah alone among Rabbinic documents itself received sustain and systematic commentaries in the model of those accorded to Scripture. Every document that followed the Mishnah, that is to say, the entirety of Rabbinic literature except for the Mishnah, took shape as a commentary to a prior document, either Scripture or the Mishnah itself. So the entirety of Rabbinic literature testifies to the unique standing of the Mishnah, acknowledging its special status, without parallel or peer, as the oral part of the Torah.” Id. Page 163.

some extent in the Talmud of the Land of Israel (completed by around 400 A.D.), and the Babylonian Talmud (completed by around A.D. 600),⁴³⁸ with the Babylonian Talmud becoming accepted as authoritative in the majority of Jewish communities by around 1000 A.D.⁴³⁹ (Though in some areas of the medieval world, prominently within Christendom the Byzantine Empire,⁴⁴⁰ there were still notable numbers of non-Rabbinic Jews, who did not accept the Talmud.⁴⁴¹)

The rabbis gained authority which arguably relativized that of the biblical text.⁴⁴² It does appear to be the case that their thought, or at least some expressions of it, tended to a form of

⁴³⁶ Jacob Neusner, Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism, Pages 79, 158. For comparison of this view and a different view, see David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Pages 83-91, who appears to lean towards the Mishnah having actually received its completed form at some point later in the 200s.

⁴³⁷ Jacob Neusner, Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism, Page 168.

⁴³⁸ Jacob Neusner, Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism, Page 157. David C. Kraemer, in A History of the Talmud, Pages 142-143, supports sometime between 531 and 579 as the likely date of completion of the Babylonian Talmud because of the stability and peace in the region under the Persian monarch who reigned then. However he seems to think the text to did receive its final form till a bit later than A.D. 600, see Pages 181-182.

⁴³⁹ David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Page 6.

⁴⁴⁰ Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade, makes mention of a number of significant Karaite Jewish communities within Byzantine territory, which formed a substantial minority of Jews in many parts of that realm.

⁴⁴¹ See e.g. David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Page 186. “The growth of the Talmud’s authority did not mean that it, or those who sponsored it, were accepted by all Jews. On the contrary, beginning in the eighth century, and gaining strength in subsequent centuries, various ‘sects’ refused the hegemony of rabbinic authority, setting out practices and paths that were far more connected to Hebrew scripture. The earliest of these groups were followers of Anan ben David, an Iraqi Jewish scholar with Rabbanite origins who was active in the latter part of the eighth century. Beginning in the ninth century, other Jews began to consolidate into a movement resisting the rabbinic-Talmudic version of Judaism, taking for themselves the name ‘scripturalists’ (*‘bnai Miqra’* or *‘kara’im’* = Karaites). Karaites and Ananites were not, originally, one movement, but in the tenth century the Karaites reformulated their narrative to tie their origins back to Anan.” And Page 187, “distinct identities often develop *in reaction to* other identities, and when the rabbis began to claim their right of way – to assert claims of authority as true interpreters of Torah – non-rabbinic Jews were challenged to respond. In response to the Rabbanites’ allegiance to an ‘oral Torah,’ traditional Jews consolidated around their allegiance to *the* Torah, gaining, in the process, the identity of scripturalists.”

⁴⁴² See Daniel Boyarin, Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity Chapter 7 The Yavneh Legend of the Stammain: On the Invention of the Rabbis in the Sixth Century Rabbinic Judaism claims to have at its center “Scripture, and the oral tradition sages themselves received from Sinai and handed on to their disciples.” Jacob Neusner, Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism, Preface, Page X. “The Ages of the Mishnah, Midrash, and Talmuds read the Torah in the light of the other, specifically the written in the light of the oral.” And, “contemplating the names of the authorities of their own tradition in the account of Sinai’s Torah, they explained in other than historical language what they meant in maintaining, the writings of their own time and place, the Mishnah, Talmuds, and Midrash, found a place in Sinai’s revelation.” Id. Page 4. “The heavenly government, revealed in the Torah, was embodied in this world by the figure of the sage. The meaning of the salvific doctrine just outlined becomes fully clear when we uncover the simple fact that the rule of Heaven and the leaning and authority of the rabbi on earth turned out to be identified with one another. It follows that the salvation for Israel depended upon adherence to the sage and

salvation by law,⁴⁴³ and furthermore a significant strand of Talmudic thought would (consistent with some of Luther's polemics) link the advent of the Messiah to their law-obedience and repentance.⁴⁴⁴ Jewish leaders appear to have policed the boundaries of Jewish thought to exclude conceptions of the doctrine of God that were more similar to Christianity or which at least involved interpreting certain passages in ways which overlapped with Christianity.⁴⁴⁵ Talmudic

acceptance of his discipline. God's will in Heaven and the sage's words on earth – both constituted Torah. And Israel would be saved through Torah, so the sage was the savior." Id. Pages 206-207.

⁴⁴³ See Jacob Neusner, Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism, describing the thought of the Jewish "sages of the Mishnah and Talmuds", as he frames things on the previous page before going on to say, "what distinguishes Israel from Adam is that Israel possessed the Torah, which held the power to transform the heart of man and so turn man from rebellion to loving submission. And when the Israelite man, regenerate in the Torah, fully conformed to the Torah, then Israel would recover its Eden, the land of Israel." Page 17. A few pages later he says, "The sages chose to show that, in the very context of the crisis of Man's fall, the Torah would bring about in the here and now of everyday life that very regeneration that, in Paul's system, faith was meant to accomplish." Id. Page 19. See John M.G. Barclay, Paul and the Gift, for a nuanced discussion of the nature of Paul's argument for salvation by faith relative to Jewish opponents that takes into account recent scholarship and pushes back on some excesses within that scholarship.

⁴⁴⁴ "Now, with the reappearance of the Sabbath and hence the restoration of Eden's perfection, two things are happening here. First, the system of religious observance, including study of Torah, is explicitly invoked as having salvific power. Second, the persistent hope of the people for the coming of the Messiah is linked to the system of rabbinic observance and belief. Restorationist theology reaches its climax. In this way, the austere program of the Mishnah develops in a different direction, with no trace of a promise that the Messiah will come if the system is fully realized. Here a teleology lacking all eschatological dimension gives way to an explicitly messianic statement that the purpose of the law is to attain Israel's salvation: 'If you want it, God wants it too.' The one thing Israel commands is its own heart; the power it yet exercises is the power to repent. These suffice. The entire history of humanity will respond to Israel's will, to what happens in Israel's heart and soul. With the Temple in ruins, repentance can take place only within the heart and mind." Jacob Neusner, Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism, 204. "Sages maintained that keeping the law now signified keeping the faith: the act of hope. This means that the issues of the law were drawn upward into the highest realm of Israelite consciousness. Keeping the law in the right way is represented as not merely right or expedient. It is the way to bring the Messiah, the son of David." Id. Pages 209.

⁴⁴⁵ "the 'gnostic' myth of the evil demiurge was not the cause of rabbinic denunciations of Two Powers in Heaven heresy but rather was a warped version of the Jewish theologoumenon of Two Powers in Heaven, a.k.a. Logos theology. It was the Logos that the Rabbis sought to give over to the Christians and Christianity, thereby defining Jewish orthodoxy, not the gnostic evil demiurge. The 'orthodox' Rabbis expel what the 'orthodox' Christians appropriate." Daniel Boyarin, Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity, Page 56. "Throughout the rabbinic period, there is evidence of a vital form of Judaism that was not only extrarabbinic but which the Rabbis explicitly named as a heresy, the belief in 'Two Powers in Heaven;' in our terms, Logos theology. This doctrine became for the Rabbis, as it had been for orthodox Christian writers from Justin on-from the exactly opposite point of view-the touchstone of orthodoxy." Id. Page 89. "in these early centuries there were non-Christian Jews who believed in God's Word, Wisdom, or even Son as a 'second God;'" Id. Page 90. "Reexamining the historical trajectories of Logos theology has consequences for historiographic representation of the 'parting of the ways.' If anything, this investigation will raise the distinct possibility that Christian theology, far from 'gradually draw[ing] away from Judaic tendencies;' actually maintained a more conservative Judaic approach to the doctrine of God than did the Rabbis, and that it is they-if anyone-who drew away from earlier Jewish theology." Id. Page 92. See also Id. 105 "The characteristic move that constructs what will become orthodox Christianity is, I think, the combination of Jewish messianic soteriology with equally Jewish Logos theology in the figure of Jesus." And see, "the Targums, as products of the synagogues, in contrast to the House of Study, were *not* rabbinic in their religious ethos. The synagogues, themselves, as has been often pointed out in recent scholarship were not under the control of the Rabbis probably until the Middle Ages. The leading candidate for the Semitic Logos is, of course, the Memra of God, as it

passages indicated that Jesus was a bastard,⁴⁴⁶ and the Babylonian Talmud relayed the statement, “Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and deceived and led Israel astray.”⁴⁴⁷ The overall Talmudic presentation of Jesus and his followers is negative in other ways, “Jesus and sexual offense seem to be a recurrent theme in the (later) talmudic treatment of Christianity”.⁴⁴⁸ In the discussion of Jesus’ execution which is contained in the Babylonian Talmud,⁴⁴⁹ it is indicated Jesus was a sorcerer and enticed the people to idolatry and was executed for that,⁴⁵⁰ and the narrative distorts some aspects of Jesus’ execution in a way which if anything magnifies the Jewish role in Jesus’ death.⁴⁵¹ Another story from the Babylonian Talmud depicts Jesus as suffering a postmortem punishment⁴⁵² involving “boiling excrement.”⁴⁵³ Some stories in the Talmuds show Jesus’ name associated with a healing power that is nonetheless treated as illegitimate.⁴⁵⁴ Writing prior to the composition of either Talmud, Justin Martyr indicated that

appears in these synagogal, pararabbinic Aramaic translations" of the Bible, in textual contexts that are frequently identical to ones where the Logos hermeneutic has its home among Jews who speak Greek." Id. Page 116. And, "In the Targum, as in Logos theology, this Word has been hypostasized, treated as an actual divine person." Id. Page 126. "The finally definitive move for the Rabbis was to transfer all Logos and Sophia talk to the Torah alone, thus effectively accomplishing two powerful discursive moves at once: consolidating their own power as the sole religious virtuosi and leaders of 'the Jews;' and protecting one version of monotheistic thinking from the problematic of division within the godhead." Id. Page 129. Though Boyarin does also say, "In an astonishing convergence, however, Nicene orthodoxy also effectively "crucifies the Logos." While not ceasing to speak of the Logos, in the move to a trinitarian theology within which the entire trinity is both self-contained and fully transcendent, Athanasius and his fellows insist that God alone, without a mediator, without an angel, without a Logos, is the creator. Logos theology is, ultimately, as thoroughly rejected within Nicene Christianity as within orthodox rabbinism." Id. 139. See also Alan F. Segal, Two Powers in Heaven, Pages 148, 263-264 (though Segal's framing of the timeline and relationships between these groups was somewhat different; where they differ my characterization is closer to Boyarin's than to Segal's earlier and more tentative account).

⁴⁴⁶ Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Pages 15-24, 97-99.

⁴⁴⁷ Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Page 35.

⁴⁴⁸ Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Page 48.

⁴⁴⁹ Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Page 63.

⁴⁵⁰ Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Page 68. "Jesus, the Talmud tells us, was both: he not only enticed some individual but all of Israel to become idolaters. To make things worse, he was also a sorcerer in the sense defined more precisely in the Mishna: someone who really practices magic and not just 'holds people's eyes' (*ha'-ohez et ha'-enayim*), that is, who deludes people by optical deception (which is permitted)."

⁴⁵¹ Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Pages 71-74.

⁴⁵² There are arguments for interpreting this as a temporary punishment prior to annihilation, or as eternal. See Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Compare Pages 86-90 to pages 93-94.

⁴⁵³ Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Page 85. See later Pages 89-90 and 142-144 for arguments that the versions of this text which directly refer to Jesus represent the earlier version of this document.

⁴⁵⁴ Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Chapter 5, *Healing in the Name of Jesus*

some Jews “have anathematized and do anathematize this very Christ in the synagogues”.⁴⁵⁵ As early as Justin Martyr, Christians took note of Jews cursing them in the synagogue liturgy,⁴⁵⁶ and this appears to have had a factual basis,⁴⁵⁷ though I am not sure how much this varied across time and space (there are records of both liturgical statements which appear to have had Christians in mind, and some prayers which may have acquired an anti-Christian focus in certain contexts but which were not inherently anti-Christian).⁴⁵⁸

Given the size of the Talmud⁴⁵⁹ (hence my relying on secondary sources for my discussion of it in this essay), as well as its style (“Dialectical argument – the movement of

⁴⁵⁵ Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Chapter XLVII.—Justin communicates with Christians who observe the law. Not a few Catholics do otherwise. <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/anf01.viii.iv.xlvii.html> See also his statement, "Assent, therefore, and pour no ridicule on the Son of God; obey not the Pharisaic teachers, and scoff not at the King of Israel, as the rulers of your synagogues teach you to do after your prayers" Id. Chapter CXXXVII.—He exhorts the Jews to be converted.

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/anf01.viii.iv.cxxxvii.html#fna_viii.iv.cxxxvii-p1.2

⁴⁵⁶ Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Chapter XVI.—Circumcision given as a sign, that the Jews might be driven away for their evil deeds done to Christ and the Christians.

<https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/anf01.viii.iv.xvi.html> Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Chapter XCVI.—That curse was a prediction of the things which the Jews would do.

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/anf01.viii.iv.xcvi.html#fna_viii.iv.xcvi-p2.2 Daniel Boyarin argues that the *birkat hamminim* postdates this. Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity, Pages 67-72. Daniel Boyarin appears ambivalent on how to interpret Justin Martyr’s statement. “one possible scenario that emerges is that it was the threat of Gentile Christianity to the borders of Jewish peoplehood in Asia Minor, represented by the new second-century Christian claim to be *Verus Israel* (first attested in Justin, but surely not originated by him), that may have given rise to nonliturgically formalized or even popular curses on Gentile Christians and to the reviling of Christ in the synagogues. That development may very well have taken place first in the areas in which Jews and Gentile Christians were in intense and tense contact, that is, precisely in an area such as western Asia, that is, Asia Minor. The custom might have developed in Asia and spread later to Palestine, for all we know and have been instituted as part of formal rabbinic practice only much later.” Id. Page 71. I’m not convinced by his argument for a later dating.

⁴⁵⁷ Daniel Boyarin, Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity, Pages 124-125. Alan F. Segal, Two Powers in Heaven, Page 152. Discussing a later period, see also “To be sure, the negative terms or anti-Christian invectives are not peculiar to the chronicles; they occur regularly in medieval Hebrew liturgical writing and prayers.” Anna Sapir Abulafia, Christian Jewish Relations 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom, (Kindle Edition) Page 144. See also William Chester Jordan, The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians, Pages 139-141. Cf. Birkat Ha-Minim Jewish Virtual Library <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/birkat-ha-minim>

⁴⁵⁸ Anna Sapir Abulafia, Christian Jewish Relations 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom, (Kindle Edition) Pages 198-201 has a discussion of prayers which might have acquired an anti-Christian connotation or been taken as offensive to Christians, or in some cases been written with Christians in mind.

⁴⁵⁹ See e.g. “Given the vastness of the Talmud, it was impossible for the students in the academies to take in the whole work, except, theoretically, over significant periods of time. If we recall that covering the Talmud quickly, one standard printed page a day, takes approximately seven and a half years, we will recognize that those who engaged in careful study of the text would have been hard pressed to attain even this theoretical ideal, and it would have been the rare scholar who mastered the Talmud as a whole. In practice, most students of the text studied it only

thought through contentious challenge and passionate response, initiative and counter-ploy – characterizes the Talmud of Babylonia in particular”⁴⁶⁰), I am not sure what percentage of the Rabbinic Jewish population in Luther’s day or today actually are familiar with all of the above-referenced statements.⁴⁶¹

“They are not told as an independent and coherent narrative but are scattered all over the large corpus of literature left to us by the rabbis. Even worse, only very rarely do they address Jesus, the object of our inquiry, directly; in many cases the immediate subject of the rabbinic discourse has nothing to do with Jesus and his life: he is mentioned just in passing, as a (minor) detail of an otherwise different and more important subject, or else he and his sect are carefully disguised behind some codes that need to be deciphered.”⁴⁶²

Moreover, “the Talmud of Babylonia was elitist in the extreme – an elite that was rarer than one in a thousand (if you will, ‘the .01 percent’).”⁴⁶³ And, “this is a document by and for the elite of the rabbinic elite”.⁴⁶⁴ “In the generations of the Bavli’s formation, and for centuries thereafter, the Bavli can only have been the property and pursuit of this elite. Whether it was oral or written, its acquisition required that one find a master to help one access it and understand it.”⁴⁶⁵ Even allowing for these caveats, having an intellectual elite whose distinctive authoritative book⁴⁶⁶ was opposed to Christianity in this way is something that we, as Christians, can consider to be a

in the course of seasonal gatherings that focused on selected sections of tractates. Furthermore, for practical and other reasons, certain tractates took priority. The evidence suggests, in fact, that texts may even have been studied in abbreviated versions.” David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Page 182.

⁴⁶⁰ Jacob Neusner, Four Stages of Rabbinic Judaism, Page 174. “What characterizes the dialectical argument in Rabbinic literature is its meandering, its moving hither and yon. It is not a direct or straight-line movement, e.g., thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Rather, the Rabbinic dialectical argument – the protracted, sometimes meandering, always moving flow of contentious thought – raises a question and answers it, then raises a question about the answer, and, having raised another question, then gives an answer to that question, and continues in the same fashion. Id. Page 175.

⁴⁶¹ See David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Page 3, regarding some variableness in the state of Talmud study over the medieval and early modern period.

⁴⁶² Peter Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, Page 95.

⁴⁶³ David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Page 157.

⁴⁶⁴ David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Page 176.

⁴⁶⁵ David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Page 177.

⁴⁶⁶ “The Talmud is *the* Jewish classic, arguably the most influential text in Jewish history. Judaism as we know it would not exist without the Talmud. It is largely on account of the Talmud – its approaches, methods, and assumptions – that the forms of Judaism dominant in the century or so before Jesus’ birth yielded, in the early medieval world and beyond, to the Judaism of the rabbis, a related but utterly transformed religious formulation. To understand Judaism as it has been known for the last millennium and a half, one must understand the Talmud.” David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Page 1.

negative fact about Rabbinic Judaism. As noted, the Babylonian Talmud's authority was accepted by around 1000 A.D. (or earlier) among the majority of medieval European Jews, and it appears to have been the main object of study among Ashkenazi Jews by around 1100⁴⁶⁷ (its study changed to become comparatively less elitist in that context⁴⁶⁸), and (though it would often be subjected by Christian authorities to destruction or censorship starting in the 1200s⁴⁶⁹) the Babylonian Talmud was followed to the displacement of other post-Biblical authorities among Ashkenazi (and at least to some extent Sephardic) Jews during the later Middle Ages.⁴⁷⁰ (In the modern era there are additional complications with regard to the Talmud, with Zionists having dismissed the Babylonian Talmud as a diaspora document unsuited to their project⁴⁷¹ and some European Jews wishing to integrate with modern society seeing the Talmud as an obstacle.⁴⁷²)

As I am sure Stephen Wolfe would affirm, if stated in this way, other religious groups having embraced some really evil doctrines does not necessarily mean that we need to require our civil authorities to punish their wickedness. There's a question of attitude, we follow Jesus who prayed for his enemies as he was being crucified. We should take care not to be like James and John when they asked Jesus whether they should command fire to come down from heaven on a Samaritan village which had not received him, but not knowing what spirit we are of.⁴⁷³ Moreover, in the context of the Gospel we have added reasons to hope for the conversion of people ensnared by serious error. ("In the old covenant, unholiness was contagious, and in the

⁴⁶⁷ David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Pages 193-194, 199. (He describes Sephardic study of the Talmud as, at least originally, more elitist than Ashkenazi study, see Id. Pages 190-193, 199.) See Id. 221-222 for how the printing press would further change things.

⁴⁶⁸ David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Pages 194-195, 199.

⁴⁶⁹ See e.g. David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Pages 204-207, for early modern actions of this nature, see Id. 217-221.

⁴⁷⁰ David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Pages 199-203. For some caveats see. Id. Pages 206-207. See Id. Pages 226-230 for some cases of early modern Jewish movements which affected how the Talmud was treated.

⁴⁷¹ David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Pages 246-247.

⁴⁷² David C. Kraemer, A History of the Talmud, Pages 243-244.

⁴⁷³ Luke 9:51-56.

new covenant, it is the *holiness* that is contagious.”⁴⁷⁴) Paul spoke of God’s promise for the Jews contextualizing Christian relations with them even while (presumably) a number of the very Jews who were involved with Jesus’ death were still alive.

“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?”⁴⁷⁵

We should take into account reasonable prudential concerns (such as regarding the relationship of religion to assimilation in the context of immigration and naturalization policy) while at the same time guarding against descending into Gerardian scapegoating⁴⁷⁶ on the basis of ethnicity. As far as how to define scapegoating of other ethnic and ethno-religious groups, we can consider factors such as using factual distortions to demonize all members of another group, using uneven weights and measures to reduce another group to its worst members, attacking another group in a way which displaces the spiritual war the Bible teaches is not ultimately against “flesh and blood”⁴⁷⁷ and replaces it with a carnal opposition to another ethnic group.

Luther certainly made statements about the Jews which did descend into scapegoating. We should not adopt an absolute principle that a reformer doing or saying something means that our clergy may be allowed to do or say it regardless of whatever the negative consequences of

⁴⁷⁴ Douglas Wilson, *Mere Christendom*, (Kindle Edition), Page 164.

⁴⁷⁵ Romans 11:17-24 NASB 1995.

⁴⁷⁶ See René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*

⁴⁷⁷ Ephesians 6:12.

the reformer's actions may have been. I assume Stephen Wolfe would not censure modern clergy if they excommunicated someone for engaging in secret bigamy, despite Bucer (and, with lesser degrees of complicity, several other reformers) not using church discipline in the case of Philip of Hesse's bigamy.⁴⁷⁸ Does resourcement mean that we determine the precise level of complicity Martin Bucer had in the bigamous marriage of Philip of Hesse and then declare that similar behavior under the same circumstances will be acceptable conduct among ministers in our churches? I don't think that, because of the example of Bucer, we must claim that we cannot condemn secret bigamy by a prominent Christian layman⁴⁷⁹ as a sin, nor do I think the example of Bucer means that we cannot discipline clergy who promise not to discipline a civil ruler for bigamy so long as it is kept secret.⁴⁸⁰ In the same way that secret bigamy leads to consequences that contradict other principles embraced by the reformers, some of Luther and the other

⁴⁷⁸ Martin Bucer responded to Philip, Landgrave of Hesse by allowing that bigamy could under some circumstances be a means of avoiding sin. Hastings Eells, *The Attitude of Martin Bucer Toward the Bigamy of Philip of Hesse*, pages 87-100 (on these pages is a summary of a work by Bucer that as best I can tell has not been translated into English). Cf. John Alfred Faulkner, *Luther and the Bigamous Marriage of Philip of Hesse*, *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Apr., 1913), Page 206 (see the letter on pages 213-216). (The situation was complicated and Philip of Hesse appears to have somewhat ambushed Martin Bucer and Philip Melancthon with a request to be present at the bigamous wedding, see Hastings Eells, *The Attitude of Martin Bucer Toward the Bigamy of Philip of Hesse*, Pages 103-104.) Bucer also, if the non-primary source I am relying is summarizing things correctly, asked for people who discussed the event to be punished (Id. Pages 112, 230.) Martin Bucer responded to Philip, Landgrave of Hesse by allowing that bigamy could under some circumstances be a means of avoiding sin. Hastings Eells, *The Attitude of Martin Bucer Toward the Bigamy of Philip of Hesse*, Page 108, and see Page 220 for a later statement in opposition to polygamy.

⁴⁷⁹ Hastings Eells, *The Attitude of Martin Bucer Toward the Bigamy of Philip of Hesse*, Pages 126-127, 130-131. Note also how Phillip Melancthon suggested Henry the VIII undertake a bigamous marriage. Hastings Eells, *The Attitude of Martin Bucer Toward the Bigamy of Philip of Hesse*, Pages 35-36. To be fair, I can imagine some situations in which I would think the Old Testament precedent of toleration of polygamy was relevant, such as a pagan tribe which has existing polygamous marriages converting (John G. Paton, as he discusses in his autobiography, broke up such marriages with apparent success because he did so in a society with a large surplus of single men and associated violence, however for all I know perhaps other missionaries who did differently had encountered situations which made this less feasible). However, even taking a broad view of exceptional circumstances (even if one agreed with Melancthon's advice to Henry VIII, or, say, thought the Old Testament's allowance could be applicable to a situation where there was a massive shortage of men because of a war), Philip of Hesse's situation was not such a circumstance.

⁴⁸⁰ When Philip (albeit, I think, contrary to what Bucer would have preferred) actually did engage in bigamy, Bucer tried to avoid scandal by urging Philip to keep the matter quiet. Hastings Eells, *The Attitude of Martin Bucer Toward the Bigamy of Philip of Hesse*, Pages 115-116. Bucer also advised Philip of Hesse to accuse anyone who accused him of bigamy of being a liar. Hastings Eells, *The Attitude of Martin Bucer Toward the Bigamy of Philip of Hesse*, Pages 150-151.

reformers' statements about how to interact with Jews would lead to practical effects contrary to their other teachings. As in the case of Bucer's actions during the bigamy situation,⁴⁸¹ we can also look to disagreement from other reformers as a sign that our concerns aren't just a matter of post-World War 2 ideology. (Though presumably the concern of some 16th and 17th century Protestant leaders to have laws appropriate for a given context would be consistent with a concern that the speech of church leaders be contextually appropriate—and the murder of Jews by a paganizing-but-in-a-historically-Christian-country regime is part of the context in our recent history.)

Wolfe has been repeatedly indicated that an American Christian Nationalist government should tolerate Baptists. Intolerance of Jews typically was combined with intolerance of other Christians.⁴⁸² If we, unlike some reformers, can tolerate Baptists, who regularly commit sacrilege by engaging in purported baptisms of the already baptized, what is the principle by which we must ban the sacrileges of non-Christians? Now, Wolfe would say this is a matter of prudence, not principle (his arguments have not been that we have to ban Judaism, but he seems to be indicating we should tolerate leaders who have anti-Judaic ideas or want anti-Judaic laws and he has not offered much in the way of a limiting principle). However, Wolfe appears to single out discontinuity between the views of modern pastors and many early Protestant leaders with regard to Jews in a way he does not with regard to Baptists. As I was nearing completion of this essay, I noticed that Wolfe has recently quoted Samuel Rutherford's opposition to tolerating Jews having

⁴⁸¹ Incidentally, Bullinger and Osiander also both disapproved of Philip of Hesse's bigamy, Andrew L. Thomas, [The Apocalypse in Reformation Nuremberg: Jews and Turks in Andreas Osiander's World](#), Page 37. Hastings Eells, [The Attitude of Martin Bucer Toward the Bigamy of Philip of Hesse](#), Pages 213-217.

⁴⁸² See e.g. Debra Kaplan, [Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg](#), Pages 99-102. Note how William Prynne in his [A Short Demurer](#) Page 69 uses laws in force against Roman Catholic practice and clergy as an argument against the legality of admitting Jews into England (though he distinguished them as not being protected by laws offering liberty to non-Roman Catholic Christians, Id. Pages 69-70). Compare *Thomas Aquinas's Letter to Margaret of Flanders* <https://thomistica.net/letter-to-margaret-of-flanders> and Thomas Aquinas, [Summa Theologiae, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 11, Article 3](#). <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3011.htm#article3>

(among other things) synagogues.⁴⁸³ However, if it is the case that, “This intolerance extended to other Reformed Protestants”,⁴⁸⁴ I am not sure that people who reject significant parts of his approach to intra-Christian relations (in the case of members of churches which adhere to the American revisions to the Westminster Confession of Faith, this rejection is in the authoritative version of their church’s doctrinal standards) are being inconsistent in wanting to require their pastors to also reject his approach to the Jews (if they claim to agree with the unamended Westminster Confession⁴⁸⁵ I suppose this might highlight some inconsistencies or areas where further explanation or examination of the views of other participants in the Westminster Assembly is needed).

The context for the differences with some Christian views of Jews is to some extent a post wars (of religion) thing, not just a post-World War 2 thing. The historical experience of Protestants led to a reconsideration of how religious differences between Christians were treated, which, though it was not the only factor, helped lead to a difference in how other religions were treated.

When someone complained of Andrew Torba’s repeated negative statements about Jews, Wolfe replies, “By this standard, very few famous theologians in Christian history were true

⁴⁸³ I.e. <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1716451372688654613>

⁴⁸⁴ Steven Wedgworth, “*The First Fair Trial*”: *The Genealogy of the Separation of Church and State*, Ad Fontes March 21st, 2017, <https://adfontesjournal.com/church-history/first-fair-trial/> I’d heard of the work in question before, but have not read it (if I read the whole thing later and find I’ve misinterpreted I’ll note that, and if anyone who has read it believes my summary is mistaken please correct me). The work says Jews should not be allowed to have synagogues, but considering that it opposes toleration of “Sects” in the title and glancing through the rest of it appears to confirm that it is advocating for at least some suppression of at least some other Protestants, it seems incompatible with Wolfe’s vision for a pan-Protestant America. A Free Disputation Against pretended Liberty of Conscience Tending To Resolve Doubts Moved by Mr. John Goodwin, John Baptist, Dr. Jer. Taylor, the Belgic Arminians, Socinians, and other Authors contending for lawless Liberty or licentious Toleration of Sects and Heresies: https://thirdmill.org/newfiles/sam_rutherford/sam_rutherford.FreeDisputation.html

⁴⁸⁵ Douglas Wilson, *Westminster XXIII: Of the Civil Magistrate*, Blog and Mablog November 16th, 2006 <https://dougwils.com/the-church/s16-theology/westminster-xxiii-of-the-civil-magistrate.html> (Though I agree with Douglas Wilson insofar as there are some areas of unclarity in the American revisions.)

Christians.”⁴⁸⁶ Now, in context, one of the statements referenced was Torba appropriating the term “Judeo-Bolshevik” which many people would associate with Nazism; the point is not that Torba approves of Nazi ideology or that a mere similarity of terms makes one a Nazi, however when one highlights the high representation of Jews in left wing ideology, one doesn’t have to use a term with those associations and if one does similar things over and over it invites questions. The point is not primarily the use of a particular term in one case, but this is an illustration of Torba’s habitual rhetoric (which rhetoric is particularly frustrating for me because Torba’s enthusiasm for technology and advocacy for Christians proactively engaging with it⁴⁸⁷ is something which, considered apart from the aforementioned rhetoric, I’d like to see more of—if he reads this essay and changes his rhetoric and continues on his Christian technology projects without that baggage it would make me happy). I suspect many (not all) of the reformers would be more circumspect in how they habitually talked. Perhaps Wolfe’s idea, in part, is that anything allowable in principle according to reformation-era or 1600s-era Protestant theology should be something Protestants are allowed to advocate for today, even if it’s not a good idea prudentially. A particular concern of Stephen Wolfe, if I am inferring correctly from various things he has said, is that after World War 2 people have developed habits of framing ideas with regard to Nazism (and associated concerns) rather than taking them either on their own terms or in relation to the Christian tradition, and that Protestants have allowed framing in terms of Nazism and other such things to eclipse evaluating things in terms of either the broader Christian tradition or the particular subset of it of which they are adherents. Recently Wolfe noted, “after World War 2, when we talk about the post war consensus, one aspect of the post war consensus is simply” . . . “any resemblance that is in our minds somehow even when its like of Hollywood,

⁴⁸⁶ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1676571971104931841>

⁴⁸⁷ See e.g. Andrew Torba, *A Christian Perspective on AI*, Gab News, February 23rd, 2023. <https://news.gab.com/2023/02/a-christian-perspective-on-ai/>

pure Hollywood, we go, ‘Oh, that’s fascism.’ And we do the same thing with communism and socialism.”⁴⁸⁸ A related concern of Wolfe is that, as argued in Rusty Reno’s Return of the Strong Gods, western society has normed weakening of many natural ties in a misguided attempt to prevent a return of Nazism (and other totalitarian ideologies) via emptying the public square and national identity of things which create strong emotional reactions of affection towards a particular identity. However, Torba invites the association with his habitual rhetoric. Andrew Isker and Andrew Torba had a chapter which presented a fairly standard historic Christian approach to evaluating Judaism, which hoped for the conversion of Jews.⁴⁸⁹ Torba’s rhetoric undermines the potential positive effect of this chapter’s relatively more evenhanded statements with his constant anti-Jewish rhetoric. He comes across as constantly attacking Jews in a way which pathologizes them as a people (though he will also on occasion make statements about desiring their conversion). There’s a fine line between getting some subject matter expertise about an issue and then talking about it more and an unhealthy fixation—one way to distinguish which is whether you are careful to develop an increased ability to speak with accuracy about the area you are choosing to speak about more. Torba, in my judgment, does not present that sort of accuracy (i.e. I recently saw him retweet a thread which tried to place all the blame for legalized abortion on Jews, ignoring as best as I can tell the secularized Protestant contribution to this); because he deletes his tweets it’s harder to keep track unless one goes out of one’s way to screenshot them, which I have not (though others have screenshotted some, such as a case where he retweeted someone who might be taken to be praising Nazism⁴⁹⁰), but if he’s still carrying on

⁴⁸⁸ *Responding to Kevin DeYoung* Starting around the 19 minute mark: https://youtu.be/2_Wfi8NugEM?t=1141

⁴⁸⁹ Andrew Torba, Andrew Isker, *This is not a ‘Judeo-Christian’ Movement: A Preface for Lazy Journalists, Christian Nationalism: A Biblical Guide for Taking Dominion and Discipling Nations.*

⁴⁹⁰ https://twitter.com/jacobhuneycutt_/status/1591561385112117250

like he's been when you read this, I will likely be able to point to some fresh occasions if a reader wishes to challenge me.

It is true, as was described in detail earlier, that contemporary Rabbinic Judaism includes anti-Christian statements in its authoritative post-Old Testament writing. It is true that many Christians have supported Israel because of errant ideas like thinking that the promise to bless those who bless Abraham applies to the modern state of Israel (which is both in theological error because that promise is fulfilled in Christ, and factually dubious because it appears that both modern Jews and Palestinians have ancient Israelite ancestry⁴⁹¹). It is also true that evangelical positive feelings about Jews are, as a general average, not reciprocated.⁴⁹² It is also true that the inclusion of Jews in leadership and institutional loss of Christian identity appear associated (though I am not sure how much of the secularization typically happened in elite institutions first, it does seem pretty clear that Jewish leaders tend to support policies which keep elite American institutions away from their Christian roots). From listening to Jewish statements over the years in various media, I have gotten the impression that a relatively high number of Jews feel threatened by any strong affirmation of national or ethnic identity on the part of non-Jewish people of European descent, and that in an American context the sort of American who is most likely to have had family who fought for America in World War 2 against the Axis is likely also, if he strongly affirms his heritage, to be associated in the minds of many American Jews with Nazism. Jews can often be found celebrating Israeli national identity, while Jews are also prominent in ideologies that fear the expression of other national identities—these are not always

⁴⁹¹ For a quick summary, see: <https://twitter.com/MiroCyo/status/1712260642089160765>

⁴⁹² “Evangelicals also hold very positive views of Jews, with white evangelical Protestants giving Jews an average thermometer rating of 69. Only Jews themselves rate Jews more positively. But that warmth is not mutual: despite evangelicals’ warm feelings toward Jews, Jews tend to give evangelicals a much cooler rating (34 on average).” *How Americans Feel About Religious Groups Jews, Catholics & Evangelicals Rated Warmly, Atheists and Muslims More Coldly*, **Pew Research Center**, July 16th, 2014 <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2014/07/16/how-americans-feel-about-religious-groups/>

the same Jews (there are Jews who are unhappy with Israel's actions or even anti-Zionist, and there are Jews who both support Israel's national identity and affirm the national identity of other nations), but sometimes they are.

One thing that's going on is simply that Jews, particularly Ashkenazi Jews, are unusually represented (relative to their proportion of the overall population) in the upper levels of a variety of contradictory movements⁴⁹³ because of the unusually high average IQ in that community (presumably well-supplemented by a cultural work-ethic). If we right wing white Americans get annoyed when we are reductively assigned blame for economic disparities involving groups which on average test lower than our average in various measures of intellectual aptitude, it seems like we should employ equal weights and measures and be willing to be cautious about embracing conspiratorial explanations of the achievements of groups which on average test higher than our average on the same measures. The unusually high average IQ of Ashkenazi Jews unsurprisingly results in them being overrepresented in a number of roles, a factor which facilitates their preferences wielding disproportionate-to-population-share influence. Moreover, while these days it is cliché to say that historically oppressed or marginalized groups are resilient (even when, after objectively looking at the facts, little more than fear of appearing to be mean keeps us from pointing out that that doesn't appear to be the case), in the case of Jews such a claim of resilience has a factual basis. The conflict between Christian norms and the norms they are likely to support is something to be aware of without falling into some sort of scapegoating ideology. To the extent secularized or otherwise liberal WASP norms have empowered Jews to wield influence that is out of proportion to their investment in the country, we should be aware

⁴⁹³ One can consider the mutually contradictory ideas of, say, Leon Trotsky, Ayn Rand, and Yoram Hazony (whose fairly positive description of Stephen Wolfe's [The Case for Christian Nationalism](#) is on its cover) as an example of the variety of approaches to politics people of Jewish background have taken.

that some of the pathologies which are disproportionately displayed in some Jewish circles are also disproportionately displayed in some WASP-descended circles, and urban liberals from each background often have some significant similarities in their preferences. For example, as Eric Kaufmann notes, “Jews and Anglo-Saxons in the interwar New York intellectual community were united by their shared rejection of ethnic ties in favor of a postethnic ‘avant-garde’ identity”⁴⁹⁴

Going back to policy and what attitude we should have on state action in matters of religion, I have similar concerns with Stephen Wolfe’s view of state power as I do with Bradford Littlejohn and some other thinkers associated with the Davenant Institute, as not providing a clear limit to state power, even though I am not persuaded of many of the specific arguments used by some theologians for a very specific role for civil government limited to explicit commands of scripture and specific inferences from them, or the exegetical arguments for limited government offered more recently by, for instance, Douglas Wilson (i.e. the argument he shares in common with some of the theologians who influenced him that the government biblically should limit itself to ten percent taxation is attractive, but I am not convinced the Bible would actually ban taking more in some situations).⁴⁹⁵ When Bradford Littlejohn and some of his associates argued for broad authority for governments to act against Covid, I found myself unpersuaded by some of the exegetical or historical theology foundations of some of the pushback—Littlejohn had a point that was grounded in the tradition. But, at the same time, I feel like the critics of the approach were getting at something even if they used arguments that could not bear the weight that was being put upon them. I feel somewhat similar about Wolfe’s view of

⁴⁹⁴ Eric Kaufman, The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America, Pages 226-227. Cf. <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1671533676742557698>

⁴⁹⁵ Douglas Wilson, Mere Christendom (Kindle Edition), Page 36.

blasphemy laws and suppressing false religion. A number of scriptural verses and concepts that many opponents probably gravitate toward likely were not designed to bear the weight that they are being assigned in opposing Wolfe's vision of government power, but I feel there's still a legitimate concern in people's discomfort with some of his statements about the scope of the power of Christian rulers, even if often not articulated well. Perhaps the correct response to exegetical or philosophical claims which appear to support government overreach is often going to be to show a principle with some scriptural verses, but then, rather than try to put the full weight of the argument on that, use historical examples and other reasons to make a cumulative case that the position one is opposing leads to an overreach of government action which is likely in practice to conflict with what the Bible is teaching.

My own position is that the government and civil ceremonies should recognize Christianity, but that Christian governments should generally not punish religious practices which conflict with the New Testament except insofar as those practices disrupt public order or violate natural law in a way which can be suppressed without undermining other goods. Having Trinitarian oaths in some civil contexts is different than using civil power to suppress prayers which don't invoke Christ or the Trinity that are conducted by residents of a polity on their own initiative outside of a civil context. I do think that concerns about public order in a Christian polity can include the good of orienting the public order of society towards Christ; depending on the authority entrusted to a particular ruler and the constitutional structure of a polity, this might be taken into account in say, which parades to close down streets for and under what circumstances to grant exceptions to a municipal noise ordinance for sounds regularly intentionally broadcast into the public space from a place of worship (the benefits to supporting Christian public order of church bells might be given consideration). My position on government

suppression of religious practices that violate natural law is similar to Wolfe's—it's a prudential question which can be resolved differently in different countries, but in practice I'd often be willing to let a bit of idol worship go on legally in order to limit the risk of crowding out opportunities for peaceful conversion. There is overlap between some of the prudential questions involved in addressing religious practices which do and do not violate natural law, insofar as it is generally good to allow space for peaceful persuasion towards the gospel, though religious practices which manifestly violate creational norms and those where error manifests more as a mere failure to recognize the incarnation require somewhat different analysis. (I will add a caveat that I can imagine that there could be an existential polity crisis in the aftermath of non-Christian mass immigration which might require some factors be considered in more detail than I do here, though the United States is not the country most likely to have such a crisis.) The apostles themselves at times joined unconverted Jews at places of worship (though I realize there are significant arguments that could be made that the period between the resurrection and the destruction of the temple was still a transitional period on this issue). A Christian magistrate should not make it illegal to pray on Saturday, a Christian magistrate should not make it illegal to pray without specifically mentioning Jesus' name on Saturday, and I believe that attempting to legislate against non-civilly-endorsed gatherings in which prayer is offered without mentioning Jesus has a particular danger of attempting to police internal dispositions.

In a Christian form of a political system like America's, having some of the offices (say, President and Vice President, Speaker of the House, Supreme Court) reserved for people who affirm the Apostles' Creed and can take a Trinitarian oath, combined with some other measures (such as suffrage requiring passing tests on literature which include, inter alia, the Bible and

subsequent Christian writings),⁴⁹⁶ might be sufficient—I think it might be better to let people with a range of non-Christian opinions hold rank-and-file House seats (assuming they could get elected), for example, as it might be better to provide a public outlet for such people to air their concerns and to debate with them, while still constructing the political system such that Christ is clearly acknowledged as atop its hierarchy (if, say, some executive officers are non-Christian, but still report to someone who has publicly sworn allegiance to Christ, I think it's still possible to uphold Christ's teaching as the public standard by which other practices are judged tolerable or not).

This is not to say that the classical Protestant view of the magistrate as defending the faith could not inform challenges to some private entities. Frankly, if we were going to change from contemporary American norms on purporting to treat all purportedly religious practice as the same, one of the more defensible changes would be, assuming there were the votes to pass a constitutional amendment, an amendment to transfer ownership of buildings and institutions founded by Protestants but now subverted into supporting LGBT ideology. Cracking down on that ideology insofar as it has captured once-Christian institutions, including denominations, has less risk of a purity spiral than other actions against false religions for several reasons. One is that many of the assets are tied to creation during a period of identifiable formal theological commitments which obviously contradict their current use. Another is the extreme anti-nature position of that ideology; it is inherently corrosive of many of the social functions that even false religions perform, and inherently corrodes the common good even according to a minimalistic natural law view of things. So, if Christian political leaders made appropriate constitutional changes to transfer to orthodox institutions all buildings built before a certain, constitutionally

⁴⁹⁶ See my *A Brief Note on Reforming Republican Democracies* <https://ibperry.wordpress.com/2020/11/02/a-brief-note-on-reforming-republican-democracies/>

declared date (along with related assets) from certain constitutionally named apostate denominations and certain named once-Christian educational institutions, those properties and assets could be given to institutions closer to the original mission of the groups which had originally established them. So, if we are going to revive some assertive aspects of the traditional Protestant view of the magistrate as defender of true religion while still operating within the American tradition, cracking down on a corrosive ideology (which subverts the American tradition at a basic level) by restoring institutions to their original purpose, seems like a way less likely to lead to a re-hash of the thirty years war or the English civil war than a crackdown on another monotheistic faith's expression within institutions its adherents have established on their own in a non-civil context.

6: Christian Nationalist Alliances and Speech on the Internet

In this section I'll get into some matters which may seem inappropriate for inclusion here to whichever readers have borne with me this long (and even more likely to seem inappropriate, I suspect, to someone skimming down here before having read the previous parts of this long essay). However, the main problem with Stephen Wolfe's project is, perhaps, how he often conducts himself on the internet and how he has dealt with some types of conflict. The degree to which his behavior is discouraging to me is magnified precisely because Wolfe, the well-spoken PhD who is also a graduate of West Point, has many qualities which otherwise would make him someone to look to for leadership and because I agree with so much of his overall project; it's frustrating and saddening to see him waste or undermine the good in his position with a number of things he's done persistently and habitually in his online behavior (he and I do have one mutual friend who knows us both from different in person contexts, and this friend, though not particularly right wing and not associated with nor, as far as I am aware, very familiar with

Wolfe’s current project, speaks very highly of Wolfe’s in-person behavior—assuming that perception is reflective of how Wolfe generally is in-person, then perhaps he should behave online somewhat more like he does in person).⁴⁹⁷ I think much of Wolfe’s work is worth reading, but if I recommend his work the response I get will, I suspect, if someone is engaged online, likely to be affected by Wolfe’s online behavior, so that’s one more reason to go ahead and talk about it directly.

In his response to Kevin DeYoung, Wolfe complains about being read by many who would otherwise oppose a hermeneutic of suspicion with that very hermeneutic.⁴⁹⁸ I see why he would say that. However, similarly, Wolfe, from the various comments I have seen from and around him over a lengthy period of time, seems to have often read others uncharitably, and is now often read uncharitably by others. This isn’t to say that everyone needs to be equally irenic online or that agonism can’t serve a good purpose. I take Wolfe’s punchy phrases (“the moderate man⁴⁹⁹”, “Punch Right; thoughtfully engage Left”⁵⁰⁰ etc.) as, to an extent, something he has to contribute which helps keep the discourse from being sloppy and stagnant. However, often he seems to get in fights in a way which pours gasoline on a fire which obscures more than it edifies. He (though he isn’t the worst offender on the online right) repeatedly speaks in ways which frame divisions as larger and escalates the stakes of conflicts. (I am not saying he does this with every conflict, but enough to have had some serious consequences on how a number of

⁴⁹⁷ Perhaps it has indeed been his experience that “face-to-face interaction is generally more honest and authentic”. Stephen Wolfe, Small-Scale Production and Meaningful Work: Toward a Community of Gift and Craft (2019). LSU Master’s Theses. 4990. Footnote 66 on Page 49.

https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6032&context=gradschool_theses

⁴⁹⁸ *Responding to Kevin DeYoung* Starting a little after the 3 minute mark:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_Wfi8NugEM

⁴⁹⁹ “The wisdom of the moderate man is the art of being wrong in the right way. Or to be more precise it is the art of asserting things in such a way so that when their assertions prove to be false (as they often are) the moderate man’s credibility remains untarnished.” <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1306242729756766210> Cf.

<https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1392473473801457666>

⁵⁰⁰ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1299706263425691648>

people are relating to each-other!) As best as I can tell he seems too ready to be antagonistic towards people who have done work which helped prepare the way⁵⁰¹ for his own project (I do also get the impression that he's let some offline disputes have some negative influences on how he speaks online, though as of the date of this writing I've avoided investigating by asking people one-on-one in order to be able speak freely without having to worry about whether anything I said was breaking a confidence). At some key moments, he refused to clarify his own position and then neglected to act to defuse conflicts resulting from these refusals. I've spent a bit of time trying to carefully describe his positions and fear that what follows may appear to undermine this interaction with personal discussion, but I think that the verbal conduct of his I am describing has the potential both to greatly damage Wolfe's project, and if Wolfe wins and succeeds in prompting significant change in society, these patterns of speech, insofar as his supporters and any institutions he leads could be influenced by this behavior, could have a negative influence on the resulting society.

It is true and correct to recognize that contemporary American public discourse does not weigh sins the way the Bible does; likewise it is good to recognize that much of American public discourse is not operating from a properly Christian view of forgiveness. Race is a bit of a third rail in much of the contemporary West in part because of real oppression that has taken place in the past. However, it is also a third rail in part because politicians and other leaders want to build a coalition of diverse groups in polities which are already diverse, and frank discussion of some issues might break apart coalitions which keep them in power (an honest and objective assessment of a particular statement or action related to race is often displaced because of these

⁵⁰¹ Stephen Wolfe, Protestant Experience and Continuity of Political Thought in Early America, 1630-1789 (2020). LSU Doctoral Dissertations. 5344. Page iii.
https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6421&context=gradschool_dissertations
Cf. <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1288915123231502343>

concerns). The Bible’s approach differs from modern politically correct norms (for instance, Paul used a stereotype that Cretans were liars).⁵⁰² The emphasis issues of racial injustice or animus are given in America and many other Western countries is shaped by a zeal partially derived from Christianity, but it doesn’t manifest a balanced Christian approach.

After years of leftists and some conservatives selectively using offensive statements to destroy people’s reputations and positions in society, some intellectuals have decided to just not pay so much attention to racially charged statements. Now, if someone thinks America has an unhealthily low emphasis on its own particularity, or that Anglo-Americans have an unhealthily low affection for their own particularity, it is understandable that one not think it appropriate to simply “cancel” any co-ethnic that has an excessive love of particularity or who loves his own particularity to the disparagement of others. If leftists are able to ally with their own extremists, but rightists cancel anyone who wants to limit immigration and is rude about it, there’s an obvious potential for leftists to undermine the effectiveness of their opponents because any movement is likely to include a few people who take things too far or who are trying to accomplish a goal for reasons that a number of their allies would consider bad. That said, I’m not persuaded by the framing of politics as simply about friends and enemies as an inherent statement of the natural condition within a polity.⁵⁰³ Given the creational grounding of civil government which Wolfe defends, distinctions between friend and enemy should not be the primary filter we use when approaching political disputes. We should not trivialize the reality of

⁵⁰² Titus 1:12 (Compare to Polybius’ analysis of the actions of some Cretans in Book 8 of his Histories).

⁵⁰³ Though I don’t think Carl Schmitt should be our guiding light here, from what I have read from him this isn’t actually what he teaches about politics in a healthy state—the healthy state is able to define enemies externally. According to Schmitt, domestic politics in a healthy state is not actually, if I have read him right, a conflict in which the different groups within the state are friends and enemies, though his thought is invoked by some people online as if perpetual domestic conflict between friend and enemy was the takeaway. See The Concept of the Political (Expanded Edition) (Kindle Edition), Pages 32, 37-38, 43, 46 in support of my claim that an internal friend-enemy dynamic is a case of disfunction according to him rather than inherent to domestic politics.

enemies in the fallen world, but our approach to how to deal with the enemy should remain subordinated to our positive doctrines of creation and of the role of government. Moving outside of the Overton Window does not mean I should ally with everyone else outside of the Overton Window, given that I took positions outside of the Overton Window because of principles which exclude some of the people present discourse excludes, and I desire to move discourse in a particular direction, not merely to seek change for the sake of change. Any movement which wishes to set a trajectory based on its principles, and not be simply reactive, needs to have boundaries on sides other than the one which distinguishes it from those currently in power. Bad ideologies aren't guaranteed to stay at any given level of relative influence and in some contexts allying with comparatively powerless advocates of horrible ideologies might give them an opportunity to get more followers. (Sometimes it is better to spend some energy to oppose a bad ideology before it gathers sufficient support to become a major faction that one has to reckon with as a powerful group.) It will not always be possible to do such self-definition privately. However, it is true that in political conflict there is going to be a prioritization of whose influence to oppose, and some allies on political issues will, assuming a lack of a likeminded majority on all the issues of the day on our part, be people with whom we have some major disagreements.

The issue is not simply that Wolfe engages with people with whom he disagrees or engages with people who hold unchristian views. The issue is that he has engages with some issues in a confusing way and stirs up conflict in ways which don't edify, and then doesn't display sufficient awareness⁵⁰⁴ about or concern for how he's stoking antagonisms or priming others to associate him with views that he's not endorsing, and often has not displayed sufficient willingness to clarify his public remarks to avoid senseless conflict. On some matters regarding

⁵⁰⁴ For some levity and perhaps self-awareness see <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1701943730243096646>

his own view of race and ethnicity (taking his still-somewhat-vague statements about Judaism as primarily about religion) Wolfe has offered a number of clarifications and I think his position is clearer than it was during much of 2022, though some senseless conflict resulting at least in part from previous vagueness has had ongoing effects.

The aforementioned commenting on conflict within the LCMS is one recent case which illustrates a pattern. An older leader like Wolfe could help a young man caught up in such a situation sift any reasonable concerns he had from the bad aspects of his trajectory, but instead Wolfe seemed to just egg on Turnipseed without encouraging any discernment.⁵⁰⁵ To pick a small, less sensitive instance which is illustrative of a pattern of magnifying difference, I note how he described Peter Leithart as saying that the only Christian nation is the church.⁵⁰⁶ Though Leithart puts less weight on nations than Wolfe does,⁵⁰⁷ Leithart has written such things as an article titled “Baptizing Nations”.⁵⁰⁸ Of course this apparently distorted characterization is fairly minor; some of the magnification of difference is much more antagonistic, to say the least.

I’m hesitant to mention one of the bigger cases of Wolfe manifesting a number of these habits, for fear of memorializing the conflict and making it less likely to fade away, but this conflict has been brought up many times and keeps being brought up, and is linked to a number of previous instances of such behavior. Relitigating other people’s disputes is often a bad idea,⁵⁰⁹ but a number of other people seem intent on rehashing this over and over and Stephen Wolfe isn’t tamping down the flames from what I’ve seen, and given that I am both am interested in

⁵⁰⁵ Compere to Proverbs 15:18.

⁵⁰⁶ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1686364549392334848>

⁵⁰⁷ Peter Leithart, *Stay in the Story: A Response to Alastair Roberts*, *Theopolis*, June 13, 2019 <https://theopolisinstitute.com/conversations/stay-in-the-story-a-response-to-alastair-roberts/>

⁵⁰⁸ Peter Leithart, *Baptizing Nations*, *Theopolis*, March 28th, 2022.

https://theopolisinstitute.com/leithart_post/baptizing-nations/

⁵⁰⁹ See e.g. Proverbs 26:17.

Wolfe’s work and have long followed at least one of the other major participants’ works and am sure to recommend them to others in the future, this dispute is likely to be brought up to me regardless of whether I want to rehash it or not. So I’ll go ahead and discuss it in uncomfortable detail now.

Wolfe spent months posting what seemed to me to be antagonistic comments at Alastair Roberts and several people associated with him (including the woman Alastair has now married), Wolfe posted a number of comments which might be interpreted to support reviving early modern anti-Judaic laws,⁵¹⁰ avoided clarifying his position when asked, and then became denunciatory after people made negative inferences about his positions and acted accordingly. I suspect Wolfe might be (or may have been) unsure about his substantive position on some of the controversial issues he’s raised and have been frustrated with how others responded, but if so, there’s still got to be a better way to deal with people’s discomfort. Wolfe has expressed disdain for performatively denouncing or distancing himself from others⁵¹¹—and there are good reasons to be careful about doing such things—and watching people do it is indeed often “boring”.⁵¹² However, he has not sufficiently acknowledged how his own statements have generated confusion about what he believes and what sort of laws his project has as a goal.

A pattern of magnifying and expanding the circle of controversy can be seen months before the dispute entered its most bitter phase, when Stephen Wolfe complained about Alastair Roberts not weighing in on a controversy (as it happened, Alastair was or had just been on his

⁵¹⁰ Many of the tweets on this subject by Wolfe during this period are deleted, the posts were noticed and complained of: <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533775148142186496> and <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533855208509407234> and <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1550952179284033541> and <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533857078799998978>

⁵¹¹ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1587635068754862082>

<https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1687129458950438913>

⁵¹² <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1344035376520949761>

honeymoon⁵¹³) and was retweeted by one of the participants (William Wolfe), who of course had no clue Alastair Roberts had been on his honeymoon (and my impression is, not much clue who he was) and thus most people probably wouldn't be complaining about him not weighing in on a controversy right then. Alastair did respond, and in the course of the resulting conversations complained about (among other things) Stephen Wolfe's podcast cohost's book⁵¹⁴ and asked whether Stephen Wolfe was a Kinist.⁵¹⁵ This dispute would be the occasion of at least one of the comments which led people to think Wolfe was opposed to interethnic marriage (in response to a question from Alastair on what he thought about widespread intermarriage between blacks and whites⁵¹⁶). In the over-a-year since this, William Wolfe has continued to post antagonistic comments at Alastair, I infer at least partly as a result of a dispute which was as far as I can tell originally occasioned by Stephen Wolfe complaining that Alastair hadn't commented on something (around the time of his honeymoon).

A few months later Alastair publicly interpreted Wolfe's position charitably after he clarified his position on interethnic marriage, and from his public response appeared fairly satisfied that Wolfe was clarifying how he differed with Kinists.⁵¹⁷ I think this response highlights that Alastair Roberts was willing to modify his view of Stephen Wolfe depending on what Wolfe said and how he conducted himself. However, upon, several weeks later, discovering that Wolfe's podcast cohost, Thomas Achord, had written a couple of pseudonymous articles⁵¹⁸ on topics related to ethnicity which might be interpreted to take a position similar to that Roberts

⁵¹³ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533775128118665217>

⁵¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533825790781292545>

⁵¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533800324653363200>

⁵¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533801267683905536>

⁵¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1585038644922159104>

⁵¹⁸ "Tulius Aadland," *Spiritual Kinship: Rekindling Hope as a Christian White Nationalist Faith & Heritage* July 25, 2018 <https://web.archive.org/web/20220429012953/https://faithandheritage.com/2018/07/spiritual-kinship-rekindling-hope-as-a-christian-white-nationalist/> Tulius Aadland, *White Antifragility Identity Dixie* September 18th, 2021 <https://web.archive.org/web/20220121031346/https://identitydixie.com/2021/09/18/white-antifragility/>

had initially expressed concern Wolfe held, as well as a number of pseudonymous posts expressing hostility to (inter alia) black people, Alastair publicly complained and expressed suspicion that Wolfe (who at that time was a twitter follower of the pseudonymous account and a friend of a Facebook account with the same pseudonym) held the same views as his cohort.⁵¹⁹ One of the articles was satire,⁵²⁰ though recognizing it as satire wouldn't necessarily resolve a good-faith reader's concerns about the point the satire was trying to lead people to. A number of people accused Alastair of having libeled Achord, who had first acknowledged some of the tweets (describing them as a reductio ad absurdum)⁵²¹ and then denied they were his.⁵²² Achord lost his job as a headmaster of a classical Christian school (maintaining publicly he was the victim of impersonation⁵²³). In response to the accusations he had libeled a man and cost him his job for statements he had not made, Alastair posted a lengthy defense of his accusation with supporting evidence (including one key piece which turned up as a result of the initial controversy⁵²⁴), he also included a link to a fundraiser people friendly to Achord were promoting to support the man and his family.⁵²⁵ At this point, Achord admitted he had made the posts.⁵²⁶

⁵¹⁹ Since then, Alastair Roberts has stated regret for the timing bringing this up, "The timing of my initial revelation, just before Thanksgiving, was very unfortunate. While there is no ideal timing for such significant revelations, I quite regret, for all parties involved, unintentionally having so disrupted the holiday weekend. In the UK, the fourth Thursday in November is just another workday, leaving me unmindful of the impact that this would have. I apologize to everyone that this affected." Alastair Roberts & Susannah Black Roberts, *Nº 5: The Cosmos in a Tent The Tabernacle as the seed of a new creation. Also, Whit Stillman, Cicero, and Ethnonationalism. The Anchored Argosy, December 12th, 2022.* <https://argosy.substack.com/p/5-the-cosmos-in-a-tent>

⁵²⁰ "Tulius Aadland," *Spiritual Kinship: Rekindling Hope as a Christian White Nationalist Faith & Heritage July 25, 2018* <https://web.archive.org/web/20220429012953/https://faithandheritage.com/2018/07/spiritual-kinship-rekindling-hope-as-a-christian-white-nationalist/>

⁵²¹ <https://twitter.com/NeilShenvi/status/1595938026873569280>

⁵²² Thomas Achord, *My Story* (November 25th, 2022)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221125180719/https://medium.com/@thomasachord/my-story-43e8238dbfdd>

⁵²³ Thomas Achord, *My Story* (November 25th, 2022)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221125180719/https://medium.com/@thomasachord/my-story-43e8238dbfdd>

⁵²⁴ <https://twitter.com/roddreher/status/1596747464794685442>

⁵²⁵ Alastair Roberts, *On Thomas Achord, Alastair's Adversaria, November 27th, 2022*

<https://alastairadversaria.com/2022/11/27/the-case-against-thomas-achord/>

⁵²⁶ Thomas Achord (November 28th, 2022)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221130014526/https://medium.com/@thomasachord/from-the-start-of-this-controversy-i-have-tried-to-find-the-truth-of-the-matter-and-i-have-an-e18b7e6f560e>

Wolfe said he joined Achord in repudiating those posts,⁵²⁷ and said he had been a bad friend and failed to be aware of and help his friend during a dark time in Achord's life.⁵²⁸ I would likely pass this over or consign it to a brief mention (given that Achord, according to what I have seen said, repentantly submitted to church authority), however Wolfe has denounced as "bad and resentful people"⁵²⁹ the people whose complaints occasioned his cohost losing his job—he did this before his cohost confessed, and, unlike many of his own posts which appear to have triggered the suspicions which made a number of people less ready to interpret the situation in a way charitable to him, he, as of the date of this writing, has not deleted it. His rhetoric (the aforementioned "bad and resentful people" statement is only one instance) has effectively stirred up angry internet crowds, many of whom don't have the full history of the interaction and at least some of whom might respond differently if they had the context, and there doesn't seem to be any way to point out the unfairness in his engagement with critics without bringing up past social media behavior. I suspect if Wolfe had simply declared that as a matter of principle he didn't believe in religious liberty for non-Christians, or as a matter of principle that all views tolerated by the magisterial reformers should be tolerated by us even if we disagree with their prudence, or said that he was unsatisfied with other people's arguments in favor of religious toleration though he was undecided on it himself, I suspect Alastair Roberts, who has a long history of calmly interacting with unpopular positions,⁵³⁰ wouldn't have reacted this way, but Wolfe's mix of statements about ethnicity and ambiguous statements about Jews and vagueness in response to questions combined together to raise some alarm bells,⁵³¹ I gather from what I have seen online.

⁵²⁷ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1597350847620739072>

⁵²⁸ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1597351427781070848>

⁵²⁹ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1596104544160710656>

⁵³⁰ Alastair Roberts, *Answers to Unusual Questions*, *Alastair's Adversaria*, September 11th, 2017
<https://alastairadversaria.com/2017/09/11/answers-to-unusual-questions/>

⁵³¹ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533802004472012800>

<https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/153385707879998978>

Even if Alastair was motivated by the sort of bad motive Wolfe and some others have attributed to him, it would be well to take to heart the biblically informed principle, “Receive correction even if you suspect it is motivated by envy.”⁵³²

Alastair’s stated reasons for bringing Achord’s statements to light were that he believed Achord’s project, “to be a corruption of ideas which I think are very good and important indeed.”⁵³³ And,

“Much of my determination in challenging the influence of people like Achord has arisen from my concern that they are corrupting and undermining the reputation and character of institutions and movements about whose ministries, visions, and members I care deeply. I think this movement is too important to allow that to happen—to allow it to be tarnished by such things.

“Many who oppose us believe Christian nationalism—indeed, any kind of retrieval or renewal of the great Christian and Classical traditions that shaped the West—to be nothing more than a fig-leaf for white supremacy. To the best of my ability, I will not allow that to be the case on my watch. Accusations are nothing. What we are responsible for is making sure that they are not true. What we are responsible is standing for, and fighting for, an intellectual and social world that is real and sane and whole and good.”⁵³⁴

So apparently Alastair Roberts was afraid of a sort of entryism, that refusing to denounce this stuff publicly would leave institutions and movements he or his friends had contributed to open to capture by racist ideologues. Some may complain that this is gatekeeping, but as Aaron Renn said in a different context, “At some level every group” [gatekeeps] “or tries to. I don’t think it’s inherently illegitimate so long as it’s done within the boundaries of Christian ethics”.⁵³⁵ In the past, Alastair has defended anonymity in a variety of cases;⁵³⁶ regardless of

<https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533858657447837696>

<https://twitter.com/suzania/status/1587819700636901376>

⁵³² Michael Foster & Dominic Bnonn Tennant, *It’s Good to Be A Man*, Page 204.

⁵³³ Alastair Roberts, *On Thomas Achord*, *Alastair’s Adversaria*, November 27th, 2022

<https://alastairadversaria.com/2022/11/27/the-case-against-thomas-achord/>

⁵³⁴ Alastair Roberts, *On Thomas Achord*, *Alastair’s Adversaria*, November 27th, 2022

<https://alastairadversaria.com/2022/11/27/the-case-against-thomas-achord/>

⁵³⁵ Aaron M. Renn, *Who is A Fundamentalist?* July 19th, 2023 <https://www.aaronrenn.com/p/who-is-a-fundamentalist>

⁵³⁶ *Internet Anonymity*, *Mere Fidelity* August 30th, 2022 <https://soundcloud.com/mere-fidelity/internet-anonymity>

See also: <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/882771538596028416>

whether his judgment was correct in this case, I don't think he is hypocritical in this or has changed his position, rather I think he deemed this a special case in which preserving anonymity was not appropriate under the particular facts of the situation.⁵³⁷

“I thought that it was appropriate (indeed, probably morally obligatory) to bring these things to attention given his sharing in the public project of Christian resourcement, to which I am devoted and to which many institutions I deeply care about are committed. I would not have done so had he been a purely private person or in a role of any less gravity.”⁵³⁸

Alastair and a variety of people around this incident have been repeatedly denounced as “doxxers”.⁵³⁹ It is true that there are many situations in which it would not be appropriate to expose someone's online identity.⁵⁴⁰ There are often context-dependent statements and jokes which might be misinterpreted when removed from that context (sometimes the offensiveness of a statement is part of the joke); a mob of people biased against a position can develop on the internet in which there is a reigning unawareness of any elements of humor, satire, parody, self-parody, or other factors which might make the person they are angry at appear less bad. Aside from that, if I'm friends with someone who is posting anonymously and who has some bad ideas, it would generally be counterproductive to give his identity away. Instead I, by accepting this limit he had attempted to place on the interaction, could choose to try and persuade the person while he spoke in a format distanced from the rest of his life. That does not mean if someone is cultivating political influence under his own name it's not potentially fair to note pseudonymous

And Cf. *Alastair Roberts, How the Internet Has Brought Us Too Close Together (and the Wisdom of Trolls)*, *Alastair's Adversaria* July 20th, 2015. <https://alastairadversaria.com/2015/07/20/how-the-structure-of-the-internet-produces-dysfunction-the-internet-that-we-left-behind-and-the-underappreciated-virtues-of-trolls/>

⁵³⁷ Cf. <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1709762363673522272>

⁵³⁸ Alastair Roberts, *On Thomas Achord*, *Alastair's Adversaria*, November 27th, 2022 <https://alastairadversaria.com/2022/11/27/the-case-against-thomas-achord/>

⁵³⁹ I.e. <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1663545855364964354>
<https://twitter.com/BonifaceOption/status/1661143257861214208>

⁵⁴⁰ Aaron Renn calmly highlights some here which are worth considering regardless of whether one uses the same terminology, *Newsletter #71: A Primer on Doxxing*, <https://www.aaronrenn.com/p/newsletter-71-a-primer-on-doxxing>

statements on related subjects he has made, particularly when the connection is discovered via public means (not, say, a betrayal of a confidence given by the Anon). The occasion for the discovery of the connection between Achord and the articles and the anonymous twitter account was Achord (temporarily) changing the name of his known account to the same name as his anonymous articles and the handle of the anonymous account, which resulted in a friend of Alastair noticing the anonymous articles and then Alastair finding the twitter account (his known account's twitter handle was also suggestive of the anonymous account's handle).⁵⁴¹ If I wrote anonymous articles and created an anonymous account then changed my known account (while posting on similar subjects) to the same name and someone else noticed they were from the same guy and pointed that out, would that be that doxing? Or is the definition of doxing governed by the effect, by whether someone loses his job? How far are we going to go with this? Under these rules can someone say, create a thousand burner accounts in an attempt to astroturf his views into popularity and any connection of him with these accounts will render one an enemy of the right wing community⁵⁴² so long as those views are both broadly classified as right wing and sufficiently unpopular with that person's employers? In that case, can people's anonymous writings be outed if their employers don't mind their opinions too much, but there is no acceptable public feedback on one's combined in-one's-own-name and pseudonymous online activity so long as one's opinions are sufficiently odious to one's employer?

However, it wasn't simply for anonymous statements that Achord received this response.

It was not the case that Alastair had a grievance against Wolfe, was committed to Javert-like

⁵⁴¹ Alastair Roberts, *On Thomas Achord, Alastair's Adversaria*, November 27th, 2022 <https://alastairadversaria.com/2022/11/27/the-case-against-thomas-achord/>

⁵⁴² For such statements see Charles Haywood, *On The Principle "No Enemies on the Right", The Worthy House, October 2nd 2023* <https://theworthyhouse.com/2023/10/02/on-the-principle-no-enemies-on-the-right/> (I wrote much of this section prior to reading through this, but I've seen many similar statements elsewhere online and this makes an argument for their correctness, albeit while saying some things about Dreher likely to lead readers to a mistaken conclusion about Dreher's actions.)

hunting him down (as noted, he seemed willing to accept Wolfe's retraction related to interethnic marriage⁵⁴³), and then just randomly looked for some old quote from his cohort. Thomas Achord had already coauthored a book which purported to describe natural relations via a set of quotes and links to sources. Alastair Roberts was one of the people quoted⁵⁴⁴ (and Wolfe's book cites this book⁵⁴⁵ and also quotes the same statement from Alastair⁵⁴⁶ that is quoted in the Achord book). It seems like it might be pretty normal for someone to note that people are publishing books quoting him to support their points and be curious about the nature of their project.

Someone who speaks boldly but carefully regarding sensitive subjects might be frustrated to see his words put into a context where they appeared to support something he deemed bad. Some have wondered how the book could be racist, given that it is a collection of sources. However, glancing at the selection and arrangement of sources (I purchased a Kindle copy after the controversy but prior to it being removed, apparently by the author, though I have just clicked through it to get an idea what's there), as well as some of the editorial comments provided by the author (i.e. "This suggests that racial mixing could lead to social problems greater in severity to those currently present in our predominantly African-American inner cities"⁵⁴⁷), it seems like people inferred the sources were selected and arranged (and in some cases commented on) to lead people to a Kinist conclusion (or maybe they accepted Kinist promotion of the work as Kinist as accurate⁵⁴⁸). It's not wrong to quote things from the past that contradict modern

⁵⁴³ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1585038641466068993>

⁵⁴⁴ Thomas Achord and Darrell Dow, Who Is My Neighbor?: An Anthology In Natural Relations (Kindle Edition), Page 626.

⁵⁴⁵ In footnote 16 to the Introduction).

⁵⁴⁶ Pages 166-167.

⁵⁴⁷ Thomas Achord and Darrell Dow, Who Is My Neighbor?: An Anthology In Natural Relations (Kindle Edition) Page 543. During the controversy, Achord noted that he is he is half Mexican. Thomas Achord (November 28th, 2022) <https://web.archive.org/web/20221130014526/https://medium.com/@thomasachord/from-the-start-of-this-controversy-i-have-tried-to-find-the-truth-of-the-matter-and-i-have-an-e18b7e6f560e>

⁵⁴⁸ "jetbrane", *I Get By With A Little Help From My Friends*, Iron Ink, January 21st, 2021

<https://ironink.org/2021/01/i-get-by-with-a-little-help-from-my-friends-2/> (Compare to its citation by Alastair

sensibilities, and summarizing an article using somewhat taboo language doesn't necessarily mean that one has an insidious goal, but you can likely see how people who weren't out to get Achord might still take such things in a negative light. Moreover, Achord (though he was capable of thoughtfully engaging with controversial topics) posted numerous things on his publicly known account which would tend to reinforce such an impression.⁵⁴⁹ I myself, after noticing several such posts, asked him in a non-inflammatory way about one post (as it was a quote attributed to someone, Lothrop Stoddard, who I had not read and I didn't want to infer the worst), but, taking into account the context of who wrote it, appeared to be referencing "enemies" in racial terms. I asked, "Why pick this person to quote specifically?"⁵⁵⁰ The quote was deleted without explanation, which could be taken a number of ways. If Achord posted it without being aware of the context, I'm still left wondering in what context he was coming across such a thing and trusting that it was worth posting. The point is not that he owed me an explanation of a tweet, or that quoting a figure with bad views means he ipso facto held them, but rather to illustrate that someone didn't need to have animus against Achord (I certainly didn't) to wonder what was going on. (Frankly given some of the other things Achord had said under his own name in a public context, someone, especially if someone overestimated the influence of white nationalism in America, might have inferred that this additional round of statements coming to light wouldn't necessarily result in him being fired.)

Roberts, *On Thomas Achord, Alastair's Adversaria*, November 27th, 2022

<https://alastairadversaria.com/2022/11/27/the-case-against-thomas-achord/>

⁵⁴⁹ I wasn't the only one to notice such things, see e.g. "Esther O'Reilly" (Bethal McGrew), *The Thomas Achord Affair (and What it Taught Us)* *Young Fogey: Notes From a Student of Human Nature* December 3rd, 2022

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/youngfogey/2022/12/the-thomas-achord-affair-and-what-it-taught-us/> (And some things under his own name came to light after the controversy:

<https://twitter.com/JoSLaughon/status/1597298882819477505>)

⁵⁵⁰ <https://twitter.com/IanBurkePerry/status/1562683593209524224>

Regardless of what scripture one thinks applies most directly on these facts (there's not agreement among Christians, on whether Matthew 18:15 "go and show him his fault in private" or Ephesians 5:11 "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them"⁵⁵¹ is more applicable in such a situation), it's not the case that Alastair was just hunting down a random associate of Wolfe in order to stain Wolfe's reputation. Wolfe had repeatedly made a number of statements that confused people of good faith about his position, Achord had made a number of "what did he mean by that" public statements, and Wolfe had recommended Achord's book a few days before his pseudonymous activity was publicly complained of. Alastair Roberts' stated intent was to publicly push back on a public project, if he had gone privately to Achord's employer, then people would have a different ground for complaint—so, given that attacking Achord's employment was, for Alastair, not the point,⁵⁵² how do they think he should have responded, given that he deemed a response appropriate? (This question gets back to whether Ephesians 5 or Matthew 18 is more applicable here.)

Some people have spoken of this as if Alastair Roberts was intentionally trying to attack Achord's ability to be employed, however Alastair Roberts has already denied he contacted Achord's employer or even raised the issue of his employment prior to Achord losing his job.

"At this point, I should also make it clear that I did not contact Achord's school and Achord's school did not contact me. I made no association between Achord and his role in the school in my thread nor in any subsequent online conversations prior to receiving news of his firing/resignation (he describes it as the latter). I only addressed Achord as a public voice of a certain form of Christian nationalism.

"I have no driving desire to deplatform people and strip fellow Christians of their livelihoods. I do not want to see Achord and his family immiserated, and in fact, if you feel led to do so, you can support them here. [with a hyperlink to a fundraiser included via the "here".] Please also pray for their well-being, as I have done and continue to do. However, I do not want to see Achord accepted as a wise voice in Christian political

⁵⁵¹ NASB 1995

⁵⁵² Cf. <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1533881671942021121>

discourse. I do not want to see him forming the minds of the young or old. More broadly, I want us to be far more careful in protecting our churches, movements, and institutions from both dangerous ‘stowaways’ that could easily destroy movements and institutions, and versions of Christian nationalism which contain insufficient guardrails to prevent such co-opting and subversion—which would render any movement so co-opted as not just destructive but utterly politically ineffective.”⁵⁵³

A parent of students who had gone to the school (and whose wife, now divorced from him, had worked for the school) stated that it was he who had informed the school of the controversy (as it happened this was a relatively well-known person, Rod Dreher).⁵⁵⁴

“When I first read on Twitter the allegations that Achord was Tullius, I arranged for this information to get into the hands of the Sequitur board at once, with the message that they had better be aware of this and start looking into it, because it was blowing up. *This came not from Alastair Roberts, but from me* -- and not because I believed that Achord was guilty, but because I didn't want the board of a small school I cared about to be blindsided by a controversy emerging on Twitter about its headmaster. I figured they would look into it, and ask Achord about it. I don't really know Achord -- he is a very quiet, modest, friendly man; I can't recall ever having had a conversation with him of more than a few words -- but I certainly didn't suspect that he would be behind this account. The only thing I knew about him, aside from his position, was that in the great 2016 flood in the Baton Rouge area, he went out in his boat to rescue people, until the local authorities made him and other private boaters stop. Cajun Navy stuff. It's a good man who does that.”⁵⁵⁵

Some people have spoken of this as if Roberts and Dreher conspired together to get Achord fired. However, they are two different people who entered this controversy at different times with somewhat differing interests. Dreher is not a Protestant and thus didn't precisely share Alastair's concern about protecting the character of Protestant resourcement. Dreher had a preexisting connection to the school and wanted to protect it. As noted above, Dreher stated that he contacted the leadership of the school so they were aware of the controversy.⁵⁵⁶ He also stated that the school's board determined that a particular picture in a tweet from that account proved it

⁵⁵³ Alastair Roberts, *On Thomas Achord*, [Alastair's Adversaria](https://alastairadversaria.com/2022/11/27/the-case-against-thomas-achord/), November 27th, 2022

<https://alastairadversaria.com/2022/11/27/the-case-against-thomas-achord/>

⁵⁵⁴ <https://twitter.com/roddreher/status/1596747464794685442>

⁵⁵⁵ Rod Dreher, *The Thomas Achord – Alastair Roberts Mess*, [The American Conservative](https://www.theamericanconservative.com/the-thomas-achord-alastair-roberts-mess/), November 27th, 2022

<https://www.theamericanconservative.com/the-thomas-achord-alastair-roberts-mess/>

⁵⁵⁶ Rod Dreher, *The Thomas Achord – Alastair Roberts Mess*, [The American Conservative](https://www.theamericanconservative.com/the-thomas-achord-alastair-roberts-mess/), November 27th, 2022

<https://www.theamericanconservative.com/the-thomas-achord-alastair-roberts-mess/>

was Achord,⁵⁵⁷ and that he (after finding out that Achord was fired⁵⁵⁸) made other people aware of this.

I suspect reasons for the reaction (putting them in their best light) are that statements involving racial hostility are likely to be disproportionately punished relative to other sins which are, all things considered, of greater gravity. Furthermore, Achord made many (but not all!) of the statements in question in or in the year immediately after 2020 when a wave of anarchical (or, in light of the selective and biased application of the law in many places which allowed this to happen, one might say, anarcho-tyrannical⁵⁵⁹) violence was sweeping the country purportedly in support of black people. If everyone who made a rude statement about black people during or in the aftermath of the riots lost his or her job (while many enablers or supporters of the riots retained theirs even as the cultural and political environment they helped to create led to a significant increase in black deaths⁵⁶⁰), that would be an unjust result. Some would say, given that Kinists have no power, and left wing promoters of (say) aberrant gender ideologies do have power, it isn't constructive to spend energy going after such right wing errors (this is understandable to a degree, but I'd caution that what's true nationally is not necessarily true and certainly cannot be guaranteed to remain true in every institutional context, and changes in what the pressing political threats are not guaranteed to change uniformly and at the same rate in every institution and region). Given the present moral imbalance in the public square, people are understandably frustrated that bringing these things up publicly often leads to judgment from

⁵⁵⁷ Rod Dreher, *The Thomas Achord – Alastair Roberts Mess*, The American Conservative, November 27th, 2022 <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/the-thomas-achord-alastair-roberts-mess/>

⁵⁵⁸ <https://twitter.com/roddreher/status/1596748293047918595> Compare to Rod Dreher, *Sometimes You Do Have To Punch Right A reflection by The Odious Rod Dreher™*, September 29th, 2023 <https://roddreher.substack.com/p/sometimes-you-do-have-to-punch-right>

⁵⁵⁹ Stephen Wolfe, *Anarcho-Tyranny in 2022 IM-1776* <https://im1776.com/2022/03/18/anarcho-tyranny/>

⁵⁶⁰ Steve Sailer, *The Racial Reckoning on the Roads*, Taki's Magazine, June 8th, 2021.

<https://www.takimag.com/article/the-racial-reckoning-on-the-roads/>

Steve Sailer, *The Floyd Effect*, Taki's Magazine, November 02, 2022. <https://www.takimag.com/article/the-floyd-effect/>

people who, at best, haven't gotten the log out of their own eye, and at worst are trying to destroy most of the things we love.

One complaint is that Alastair himself has associations with people who have heretical views on sexuality. Some have argued it is inconsistent for Alastair, while criticizing Wolfe for cohosting a podcast with Achord, to himself cohost a podcast with Matthew Lee Anderson who was at the time of the dispute on the advisory board of Revoice (which has participants who have said strange or unorthodox things about sexuality). However, Matthew Lee Anderson has vocally defended the orthodox Christian view of sexuality, and if I understand him correctly he in a sense might be taken to be more conservative on sexuality than many Protestants given that he is an opponent of birth control.⁵⁶¹ So, if anything, the comparison would be between Anderson and Wolfe and their respective associations (Revoice being a bit of a mixed bag, albeit with, I gather, a bad trajectory), not Alastair's association with Anderson. Aside from that, Alastair is and has long been a vocal defender of Christian orthodoxy on sexuality. Wolfe had prior to the most bitter phase of this dispute already complained about Alastair (and associates) interacting with Tara Isabella Burton,⁵⁶² who had promoted sexually immoral stuff—this seems fairer in response to Alastair's complaints about Wolfe's quoting Sam Francis—as an example of how someone can appreciate some things a writer writes without affirming other things they write, a person with insight into contemporary society with heretical or unchristian views on sexuality seems a fair comparison to a person with insight into society who also said some awful things related to race, Wolfe doesn't seem careful to narrowly target this point, though. After the dispute, Alastair and his wife began a book project on the subject of Charles III's Coronation

⁵⁶¹ For example, see his essay *Procreation and Children* in [Protestant Social Teaching: An Introduction](#)

⁵⁶² E.g. <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1582733219346010112> (I think I might have been mistaken when I said I hadn't listened to the podcast he posted in reply—in any case, I listened to her book [Strange Rites](#) after hearing about it via some online venue in this or an adjacent circle of people.)

with John Milbank as someone whose interview they would publish; John Milbank, Wolfe pointed out,⁵⁶³ has heretical views on sexuality.⁵⁶⁴ One can question the wisdom of including John Milbank in this book project (Milbank has heretical views on other things, like the nature and authority of the Old Testament,⁵⁶⁵ considering how much of the background relevant to Christian considerations of a coronation is in the Old Testament, aside from concerns about his views on sexuality, he definitely wouldn't generally be my first go-to for such a thing—I suppose he might have something extremely insightful to say and any heresy seeping into his perspective might be balanced out by other things in the book), even so, it's not the same as posting a bunch of tweets which leave people confused as to your own views on a subject and then cohosting a podcast with someone who makes statements which sound like the views your statements have left them afraid you hold. The Roberts have both been extremely clear on their support for Christian orthodoxy in matters related to sexuality (in Alastair's case articulating Christian orthodoxy on this subject it is one of his major projects). The problem is not that Wolfe points out potential inconsistency in which collaborative projects and associations are considered inappropriate, there are some reasonable questions to ask, but he too regularly does it in a way which leaves people confused about the facts and too often communicates in a way which has the effect of inciting his followers based on that distorted picture of the facts⁵⁶⁶ (so, it appears that many people sympathetic to him who have encountered his side of the controversy now have the quite-contrary-to-the-facts impression that the Roberts have a pro-LGBT view of sexuality).

There are some things Alastair could have done differently which might have somewhat shrunk the circle of opponents generated by his bringing up Achord's statements. In the months

⁵⁶³ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1651570744973721601>

⁵⁶⁴ Bradford Littlejohn, *A statement on Moral Orthodoxy and Editorial Policy*,

⁵⁶⁵ <https://twitter.com/johnmilbank3/status/1026877122097360897>

⁵⁶⁶ <https://twitter.com/PerfInjust/status/1651954982646603776>

prior to the bitter phase of this dispute, he'd jumped into some other internet conflicts a bit too aggressively (i.e. preemptively complaining prior to the event that a conservative journalist would be discussing pastors in an inappropriate way at a political gathering, instead of waiting to see if there was anything to complain about⁵⁶⁷), which may have primed some people to interpret him in a bad light here. He might have engaged with Achord when Achord replied to Alastair's initial mention of him in June 2022 and invited him to go on a podcast and discuss (so I recall, and I recall Achord's polite response being one reason I followed Achord on twitter). Of course, given Alastair's assessment of Achord's book, he (even without the other things which came to light a few months later) likely did not want to boost Achord's profile; even so, Alastair could have engaged in the comments. Once Alastair knew of the pseudonymous publications and tweets, he, even deeming a public venue the right one because of the public nature of the statements, could have directed his complaint at Achord and invited a reply from him. He could have been slower to suggest it was likely that Wolfe held similar views (as he did in his initial twitter thread,⁵⁶⁸ though he was more measured in his essay a few days later). I wouldn't have recommended Alastair delete his own pseudonymous account at this time (particularly as he referenced a conversation Wolfe had with him on that account⁵⁶⁹), however I can attest that Alastair's posts there were consistent with what he posts on his own name, albeit delving into subjects which are less in his area of expertise or that he doesn't feel as called to speak on generally (I followed that account prior to realizing it was Alastair, I do recall one post or thread related to American history which made me sad when I came across it after realizing Alastair was the owner of that account). It would probably have been better not to publicly complain

⁵⁶⁷ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1560796264379416577>

⁵⁶⁸ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1595412004885389314>

⁵⁶⁹ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1596573201811017729>

about Canon Press “standing by their man”⁵⁷⁰ after their press release in response to the controversy and apparently to his contacting them.⁵⁷¹

In other contexts, many of Alastair’s opponents would recognize the need to dial down conflicts even if the other party is in the wrong.⁵⁷² Even if one considers Alastair’s behavior to be wildly inappropriate, does it really make things better for any of the people involved to try and engage in a “cancellation” of Roberts (or, given that that doesn’t appear likely to happen given that he’s doing work in a context where people trust him more than his opponents, constant attacks on him as a substitute for that)? Of course one might say that Alastair Roberts had particularly vicious motives which deserve exemplary punishment,⁵⁷³ however an examination of both the immediate context of this dispute and his writings as a whole make that very implausible.

The fact Alastair Roberts is willing to publicly take unpopular positions is easily seen by anyone who has followed his writing. Though more prominent for opposing gender ideology, Alastair has also opposed left wing racial ideology and has a history of writing calmly about

⁵⁷⁰ <https://twitter.com/zugzwanged/status/1596573204864270342>

⁵⁷¹ *Canon Press With a Christian Nationalism Press Release* <https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/canon-press-with-a-christian-nationalism-press-release.html>

⁵⁷² Andrew Isker writes, “To begin with, in your own life, you have family. You have people you are related to. They might still be trapped in this fake and gay trans-ed world. They might still believe everything the TV says to them. They might have made movie or sports fandom (or political fandom) and consuming product as a replacement for anything meaningful in their lives.

“Your duty is to be patient with them. Your duty is not to argue with them or be repulsed by their deep loyalty to this fictional reality. Their attachment to it exists in part because they have no flesh and blood people to transfer that loyalty to. They are that way because they (at least perceive) they don’t have anyone who truly loves them. Your duty is to love your family. To repair relationships that have been undone by sin and bitterness and envy and betrayal, sometimes for decades. You must forgive your father for his failures and his foibles and his sins against you. Whatever he has done, you must not hold it against him. You must show him that you respect him and hold him in high regard, even if that respect has not been earned. You must hold no bitterness toward your mother, no matter what she has said or done to you. You must forgive her and show her you love her, even if she does not deserve it. You must forgive your siblings for however they have sinned against you and do what you can to give them time and attention you have withheld from them.”

The Boniface Option: A Strategy For Christian Counteroffensive in a Post-Christian Nation, (Kindle Edition) Pages 96-98.

⁵⁷³ E.g. <https://twitter.com/TheWorthyHouse/status/1711102241564774686>

sensitive issues related to race.⁵⁷⁴ I suspect some are angry precisely because they assumed his previous statements meant he must also be okay with their projects and (perhaps not having carefully noted distinctions and cautions already present in his handling of taboo topics) won't consider that perhaps they crossed a red line that was both already there and was not simply a matter of accommodating the left. How lengthy a trail of writings under his own name is needed to show Alastair's primary concern is not appeasement of the left? How many times and over how many years must someone put "politically incorrect" ideas under his own name in order for his concerns about right wing excess to be considered sincere and not driven by left-pandering?

Wolfe has made some good and neglected points intelligently while also, at some key points, excessively expanding conflict in a way which undermines the effectiveness of his project. I've personally seen serious damage done by people who were adherents of strong Christian principles because they did not calmly address conflict. (I have more knowledge than I'd like of the reality of the verse, "Like a city that is broken into and without walls Is a man who has no control over his spirit."⁵⁷⁵) I suggest Wolfe look at the history of some of the disputes within Christian Reconstructionism and consider if (with regard to some of the online behavior I've complained of in this and the previous section of the essay) perhaps he's facilitating something similar, albeit with a more classically Protestant understanding of the relationship of the scriptures and natural law. The 17th century is widely considered as being a high-water mark

⁵⁷⁴ Alastair Roberts, *Trumped Up? Is the Donald's Support Really Driven by Racist Xenophobia?* Mere Orthodoxy, February 1st, 2016. <https://mereorthodoxy.com/donald-trump-evangelicals-working-class>
Alastair Roberts, *Escaping the Prison of Social Sensitivity*, Alastair's Adversaria, May 11th, 2017
<https://alastairadversaria.com/2017/05/11/escaping-the-prison-of-social-sensitivity/>
<https://curiouscat.live/zugzwanged/post/203762562>
<https://curiouscat.live/zugzwanged/post/225471362>
<https://curiouscat.live/zugzwanged/post/226845834>

After writing most of essay (November 2nd, five days before posting), I came across a long comment of Alastair's which, when discussing immigration, made some taboo arguments similar to ones I have made here (albeit in a much more concise format). Alastair Roberts, comment to Ian Paul, *Are we allowed to fear immigration?* Psephizo, March 15, 2016 <https://www.psephizo.com/life-ministry/are-we-allowed-to-fear-immigration/>

⁵⁷⁵ Proverbs 25:28 NASB 1995.

of Protestant theological reflection. If one believes this, one should perhaps consider whether mishandling of conflicts between Christians (including between different groups of Protestants) may have undermined the long-term effectiveness of the theological work which was done in the 1500s and 1600s and led to a decline. In any case, it is not enough to be right, we need to carefully consider how we go about advocating for and implementing what we have good reason to consider to be right.

7: Conclusion

Wolfe presents a particular vision for a virtuous America, one which requires active implementation and in which the state promotes justice. Wolfe frames the urgency of addressing these issues partly as a matter of protecting the weak.

“Perhaps *you*, being a strong, independent adult, can withstand the moral degeneracy of our time. But try raising kids in today’s social environment. Or perhaps *you* are exceptional at protecting your children; you can afford to send them to a Christian school, effectively paying an ideological security service. But most people are not exceptional; most people are average; and most cannot pay to secure their kids from society’s ideology. Oh, if only they bought your parenting book or sat through your church seminar or sermon series or listened to all your ideas. If only they put their kids in all your church programs . . .”⁵⁷⁶

The correct response is to take action now, rather than waiting on these issues to be righted later.⁵⁷⁷ “America is not lost”⁵⁷⁸ Wolfe urges his readers. He advocates a vision in which the past can inform a future in which people overcome obstacles and live well in a national community that they love and transmit to their children.

Given the pushback I have made to Wolfe’s use of certain sources and my introduction of sources which oppose his point of view, someone might take this as an opportunity to say that

⁵⁷⁶ Page 223.

⁵⁷⁷ Page 471.

⁵⁷⁸ Pages 472, 474.

resourcement doesn't matter because people will just pick and choose the sources that match their own views.⁵⁷⁹ Given that people are sinful it is not surprising that they will sometimes gravitate towards authorities they like in a biased and unfair way (this is true of authorities generally, not just old texts, it's not a problem unique to resourcement). I don't think that this bad news about human bias is all there is to the story. I think that people with limited time reasonably rely on authorities, and to the extent there is a mistaken notion about what those authorities taught or the degree to which they agreed it can lead to errors of judgment.

Resourcement can force people to rethink ideas that they had come to accept based on mistaken beliefs about what previous authorities believed. If clear thinking has already been done, it is good to highlight it. (Richard Muller's work on predestination and free will illustrates several of these things in another context.⁵⁸⁰) Moreover, the historical record can sometimes help us see the practical consequences of ideas as they were put into action.

Further synthesis remains to be done with regard with regard to Christian political resourcement and political theory. As I noted, Wolfe's account of state authority is interesting but there are issues which need to be more properly accounted for. An unexplored theoretical tension in Wolfe's work, or at least, a tension with between the implications of some aspects of the book and the views of many of Wolfe's supporters, is with regard to Young Earth Creationism. Wolfe is fond of quoting Calvin's statement that "piety and spiritual doctrine do not

⁵⁷⁹ E.g. <https://twitter.com/Abathurchan/status/1717708517573005474>

⁵⁸⁰ For example, a number of contemporary Reformed Christians deny free will (or affirm it as merely the ability to choose in line with preexisting desires) because they mistakenly believe that was the original Reformed position (with this error propagated through such works as R. C. Sproul Sr.'s Chosen By God and Jonathan Edwards' The Freedom of the Will), and/or that there is no other way to affirm what the Bible teaches about predestination. Pointing out, as Richard A. Muller has, that Jonathan Edwards' determinism was not the view of earlier Reformed believers, and that earlier believers have worked out a way to uphold both free will and God's providential control of everything can thus both disrupt the false heuristic (the mistaken view that Edwards' views was that of the reformers) and provide a better alternative. See Richard A. Muller, Providence, Freedom, and the Will and Richard A. Muller, Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought.

confer a knowledge of human arts.”⁵⁸¹ In the light of extra-scriptural knowledge (such as, to pick just one example, the utility of an approach informed by deep time in finding oil⁵⁸²), it appears that the methodology Wolfe applies to politics would militate against Young Earth Creationism if applied to the natural sciences—which raises questions as to how to integrate that in the framing of history of humanity in, say Wolfe’s account of nations.⁵⁸³ I have tried to do some work relevant to that here, but there are many important issues left unaddressed.

Much of what Wolfe has to offer in his book is needed. Its combination of erudition and call to action is needed (these virtues make me all the more frustrated by some of Stephen Wolfe’s online behavior, particularly that discussed in the 5th and 6th sections of this long essay). A typical politically informed American Christian who reads Wolfe’s book will come away better informed than he or she was before. I’d be happy if more people read it, despite my concerns and areas of difference. My pushback against some of Wolfe’s statements reflect areas where I wish Wolfe would be persuaded. I hope I can prompt some additional refinement and clarity on such issues as the relationship of the image of God to sin and the legitimacy of dominion which may be held by non-Christians, reasons for bearing with unjust impositions from authorities, the nature of ethnicity, Christian approaches to Judaism, and a recognition that the New Heavens and New Earth will in fact come down to transform the present world in the eschaton, and that some of that reality is active today.

⁵⁸¹ *1 Corinthians 6 verse 2*, Calvin’s Commentary on the Bible, <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/cal/1-corinthians-6.html>

⁵⁸² For a Christian discussion, see e.g. *Pilgrim Faith (Episode 4: Bradley Belschner)* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fy0q78JDry4>

⁵⁸³ Though I did notice that in a recent article (*National Diversity in an Unfallen World*, American Reformer, November 1st, 2023. <https://americanreformer.org/2023/11/national-diversity-in-an-unfallen-world/>) Wolfe credited a resource from a non-Young Earth Creationist for a Calvin quote supporting his belief that humans ate meat before the fall. Bradley Belschner, *The Birth Pains of Creation: Animal Death and Suffering Before the Fall of Man* Cognitive Disinhibition, March 22nd, 2016. <https://cognitive-disinhibition.blogspot.com/2016/03/the-birth-pains-of-creation-animal.html>