

Defending Freedom:

Political | Economic | Religious



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Our Mission

Quaestus is a student-led journal presenting ideas about Liberty, Faith, and Economics from a Christian perspective in order to promote human flourishing.

Our Vision

We aim to inspire the next generation of Christian thought leaders by addressing global issues with sound moral and economic principles.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:36

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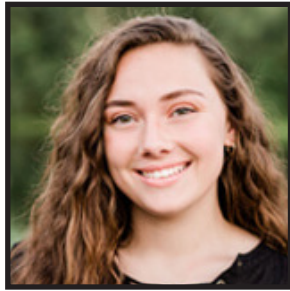
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So... What is Quaestus?

A Letter from the Editors

This periodical showcases a collection of essays inspired by the 2024 Liberty, Faith, and Economics (LFE) Summit at Concordia University Wisconsin. As part of the summit, students participated in an essay competition centered on the theme “Supporting Freedom and Liberty: Economic, Political, and Religious Perspectives.” Among the submissions, Magdalene Lane, a student of Christian Thought and Theological Languages/English, was selected as the competition winner. Her essay is featured at the conclusion of this publication. The remaining essays were contributed by Quaestus senior editors, offering diverse perspectives on the summit’s central themes.

Quaestus: A Platform for Dialogue and Discovery

Quaestus (pronounced Kway-stus) is a student-led initiative aimed at fostering meaningful conversations on critical issues. Comprising an editorial board of undergraduate and graduate students under the guidance of Dr. Scott Niederjohn, we strive to engage the campus community in thoughtful discourse. Each fall, we organize a writing contest inspired by the content of the LFE Summit. Winners, as well as other promising writers, are invited to join the editorial board, where they hone their skills in writing, editing, and publishing.

Our Dual Mission

1. Publishing Insightful Periodicals

Quaestus produces two journals annually—one in the fall and another in the spring. The fall edition showcases transcriptions from the Liberty, Faith, and Economics Summit, while the spring publication features articles authored by students and editors. Any Concordia student can submit articles which are carefully reviewed and selected by the editorial board. This structure encourages students to draw inspiration from the fall themes—centered on free speech, economics, and politics—and contribute their perspectives in the spring edition.

2. Hosting Engaging Forums

Beyond publishing, Quaestus organizes forums to encourage thoughtful dialogue on complex and often contentious topics. These forums typically feature one or more expert speakers, ideally representing diverse viewpoints. Through these events, we aim to demonstrate the value of constructive and respectful debate. Students are always invited to engage directly with the speakers during Q&A sessions. Previous forums have addressed issues such as racial relations, *Roe v. Wade*, educational reform, climate change, and transgender ideology.

A Platform for Growth and Impact

For our editorial board members, Quaestus offers invaluable opportunities to refine their skills in writing, editing, and publication. Members also benefit from networking with leading experts in various fields and participating in national and international conferences. At its core, Quaestus—a Latin term meaning “profit”—symbolizes the intellectual and personal growth gained through rigorous thinking and open dialogue. As you explore the articles within this journal, we hope you are inspired to question the world around you, engage in meaningful conversations about truth, and perhaps even contribute your own voice to our future publications. Your insights are invaluable, and we would be delighted to read and share your perspectives.

Alyssa Giese & Ella Mudge,
Co - Editors in Chief

A Contradiction in Liberty: The Death of Federalism and the Progress of American Democracy

By: James Schultz



Capitalized Republican or Democrat in this essay refers to members of the Democratic-Republican Party (used interchangeably, as is historical). Lowercase democrats or republicans are simply supporters of democracy and republicanism respectively.

History is full of contradictions. One such contradiction embroiled the early American Republic in a debate of lasting ramifications. The election of 1800 was its pinnacle, but the conflict between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans was fought decades before and after this decisive moment. The issue that most divided them was a controversy over the very meaning of liberty. The Federalist position, advocated by Alexander Hamilton and John Adams, promoted a virtuous aristocracy that was trusted to serve the common good of all. The Democratic-Republican position, most ardently defended by Thomas Jefferson, advocated an ever more democratic republic that promoted the simple greatness of the yeomen farmer. The sharp disagreement on liberty between the Federalists and Democrats characterized the new nation's dissenting views on religion, virtue, and democracy. While aspects of both parties continue to influence American political culture today, the ineluctable progress toward democracy in the nation's history has shifted the Constitutional framework from one that serves the common good to one that serves the majority. In the process, the Federalist view of liberty has been removed from American thought.

The stakes were high. One needs only to read the writings of early 19th-century Americans to see the tense political culture of the early Republic. Democratic-Republicans were exultant at the victory of Thomas Jefferson in the 1800 election. Following the election, John Leland, a

Baptist minister declared: "Heaven above looked down and awakened the American genius, which has arisen, like a lion...and roared like thunder... 'we will be free; we will rule ourselves!'" (Greene, 1845). The not-so-religiously inclined Baltimore American was equally thrilled at Jefferson's victory. They proclaimed that nothing "more completely evinces the progress of reason" than the election of 1800 (*American*, 1801). Jefferson himself called the election a "revolution" (1819), a kind of second, bloodless American Revolution that ensured American democracy for centuries to come. Federalist reaction to the election, on the other hand, was grave. One Federalist warned that unless his state of Connecticut took a stand they would be subjected to "a world full of ignorance, impurity, and guilt; without justice, without science, without affection...without worship, without a prayer, without a God!" (Dwight, 1801, pp. 28-30). In another case, a group of aristocratic New York gentlemen were recorded castigating the new president as the "god-less father of democracy...Jefferson has ruined the country!" (Grund, 1839, pp. 15-16).

Of course, the God-fearing families of New England would survive Jeffersonian leadership, but concern over the country's direction permeated the writings of Federalist leaders. They saw Jefferson as a threat to the role of Christianity. The New England states, hotbeds of Federalist support, maintained the Congregational Church as an established state church in the European tradition. Jefferson wrote the Anglican Church out of its official status in Virginia. He sparked a trend that spread through many states. Ultimately, even New England would be captured by secularism.

The role of religion in the state was not

the only issue at stake. A common Federalist fear maintained that the Democratic-Republicans, or large parts of their party, were Jacobins, who were considered traitorous conspirators bent on overthrowing societal institutions. To this end, under the Federalist Adams administration, the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed in 1798. These allowed the president to deport foreign nationals of enemy governments and curtailed free speech, specifically speech considered libelous against the government. Ten individuals were indicted and convicted under the Sedition Act, most of whom were prominent Republican newspapermen. The then-Vice President Thomas Jefferson was spared indictment, but he railed against the law and organized opposition against it. Democrats found the Act appalling, but Federalists thought the Act necessary and perfectly within constitutional bounds. Virginia and Kentucky passed legislation to nullify the law. For Adams, any proponent of radical democracy invited investigation as a subversive (Miller, 1960, pp. 235-238).

This exemplified a deep-rooted contradiction in liberty. The country wrestled with the very meaning of freedom. Is religion necessary for the new nation? Does virtue matter for the country's leaders? Should suffrage be extended to all citizens or withheld for those who hold a property stake in the country? Is there a limit to free speech? Or is any restriction a contradiction of the revolutionary ideal?

Obviously, the Founding Fathers were not the first to debate issues of government. The way was paved thousands of years earlier in the writings of Aristotle, with whom the founders were intimately familiar. In his treatise on the state, *Politics*, Aristotle wrote about three good and three bad forms of government. The good was kingship (monarchy), aristocracy (literally rule of the best), and constitutional government (something akin to a republic). They represent respectively the rule of one, a few, and many for the common good of society. Aristotle further posited that each has a negative counterpart: tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy. These represent the rule of one for his interests, the rule of a few for the interests of the wealthy, and the

rule of many for the interests of the majority. For Aristotle, the ideal government should be concerned not with the desires of select groups, but with the common good of society and the virtue of the individual citizen.

These two tenets pervade the early Republic's fiercest debates on governance: common good and virtue. The Federalists largely felt that only a small group of the greatest men could be trusted to pursue the common good of all society. This was reflected in the early states and the Constitution. In the early days of the Republic, only landholding males were allowed to vote; senators and the president were not directly elected. Even the Electoral College was not directly elected in most states by 1800. Instead, the state legislatures picked electors. There were layers of separation between the people and the elected leaders. While this offends modern sensibilities, there was some measure of wisdom in this arrangement. The Founders ensured that capriciousness or peculiar zeitgeists would not capture the country.

Of course, Thomas Jefferson argued that the Federalists were excessive and resembled the Lords of the Old World more than the modern statesmen of the New. In this way, there was another contradiction, this time, in Jefferson as an individual. Despite becoming the standard-bearer for democratic liberty, Jefferson was himself the owner of hundreds of human beings. The plantation system was as close to a neo-feudal arrangement as anything in the world. Much has been written about this contradiction, but the simplest answer remains the best: Jefferson was a hypocrite, a tyrant atop a brutal slave hierarchy, and one who wielded the collective oligarchic power of slaveowners which exerted outsized influence on the United States for decades. Democratic liberty was intended only for White men. Hamilton and Adams, the two great leaders of the Federalist Party, were antislavery.

Despite the many controversies, the Democratic-Republican and Federalist parties shared similarities. Each emphasized the importance of virtue in civil society. Naturally, the shape this took varied between them. While the Federalists of New England advocated the

importance of Christian morality, some more radical democrats appealed to an Enlightenment ethos inconsistent with the Christian tradition. Jefferson himself recognized the importance of Christianity to the broader populace and downplayed his Deist beliefs in the build-up to the 1800 election.

Realistically, Jefferson's election did not represent a destruction of institutions and an upheaval of traditional society, as had occurred with his beloved France of the same era. It did, however, begin the process of the country's democratization. The 1804 election was the first in most states where the people directly chose electors. Moreover, property requirements waned in the aftermath of Jefferson's election. Traditionally, it has been assumed that Andrew Jackson was responsible for the democratization of America, but the groundwork was laid in 1800. Jackson's presidency represented the culmination of a Jeffersonian democracy that had already been set in motion (Pasley, 2002, pp. 127-128).

In the same vein, 1800 did not snuff out the Federalist view of aristocratic republicanism but slowly strangled it instead. No one at the time could have predicted the dominance of the Democratic-Republican party which, after Jefferson's victory, achieved twenty-eight years of uninterrupted national supremacy. The Federalist Party largely fell apart, only remaining relevant in the Supreme Court and New England state politics. John Quincy Adams joined the Republicans, his father's rival party, to climb the political ladder and later become president. Aspects of the Federalist Party carried on in the new National Union Party. A wing of the party promoted the internal improvements advocated by the old Federalists. However, the true vision of Federalism was a unique view of the Constitution that left space for state religions, limited democracy, and the people's will subordinate to the common good. Of course, many of the trends away from the Federalist position took time to materialize. As stated previously, democratization took decades. Likewise, the last established state religion (the Congregational Church in Massachusetts) was removed in 1833. The venerable Chief Justice John Marshall, appointed

by John Adams 35 years before, died in 1835. At length, however, the Federalist view of the Constitution was displaced from American political culture forever.

Vestiges of earlier constitutional checks on democracy still exist today, mostly without their old gravitas. The Electoral College remains an official check on democracy, but lost most of its weight immediately after 1800, and generally serves as a rubber stamp to the popular vote.¹ The Senate has also diminished as an anti-democratic institution to counterbalance the more democratic House of Representatives. The Constitution provides for the election of senators by state legislatures. The tradition of bicameralism—one aristocratic, one democratic—served as a model for the Founders. Ancient Roman Senate and Assemblies and the more recent example of Britain's House of Commons and House of Lords were the chief inspirations. However, in 1913 the direct election of senators in the seventeenth amendment transformed the Senate into a smaller and nonproportional House of Representatives.²

Many will laud the progress of America towards ever greater heights of freedom and democracy as if they were goals unto themselves. *Vox populi, vox Dei*³ is the mantra that governs modern American thought. State referendums constantly see simple majorities fundamentally alter their governance. Unbridled democracy at the federal level is in large part captured by a new oligarchy of unelected bureaucrats, upon whom Congress has vested much of its original constitutional authority. Progressives today argue the country has not gone far *enough*, and that even more democracy will rescue the country from its many challenges. Presumably, the cause for democracy will continue until the electoral

1. The popular vote winner has lost twice in the current century, but over all of American history it remains quite rare—1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, and 2016.

2. The Parliament Act of 1911 and 1949 similarly undermined the role of the House of Lords in the UK.

3. Translated from Latin—"The voice of the people is the voice of God."

college is abolished and national referendums regularly decide the country's fate. The voice of an actual God must no longer be relevant to such an enlightened people.

The main problem with too much democracy, aside from Aristotle's concern that a majority does not look for the common good of all, is summed up in the oft-quoted words of John Adams: "Our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other," (Adams, 1798). The people of the United States have never been so far afield of personal virtue as exemplified by traditional Christian morality as they currently are (Wormald, 2015). In other words, as Adams would argue, they can not conceivably govern themselves. In the same letter to the Massachusetts State Militia, Adams wrote: "Because we have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion...[they] would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net," (Adams, 1798). Adams could never know how accurately he presaged the breakdown of Constitutional principles in the wake of a society bent on progress.

A contradiction in liberty once existed in the early days of the Republic. It provoked fierce debate between the country's first political parties, and progress triumphed over the forces of restraint in 1800. As the presidencies of Washington and Adams became a distant memory, aristocratic republicanism concerned with virtue and the common good was refuted. Jefferson was not the complete radical Adams feared, but the ensuing generations would carry on the "Revolution of 1800." The Constitution now lies behind glass, diluted and disregarded, as democratic progress continues its steady march toward the fruition of human reason.

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The Intersection of Fine Art and Freedom of Speech

By: Michelle Gain



What is “speech” in the context of the First Amendment? Does one need to speak it, or can it be something wordless? Are visual arts and performing arts protected under this amendment of the Constitution? These are questions that many grapple with when determining if the First Amendment protects the fine arts. For some, morals are extremely prevalent concerning whether fine art is obscene, offensive, or neither. The interpretation of art is up to artistic intent and viewer appreciation. That begs the question: When is it artistic intent, and when is it obscene or offensive?

It is essential to define what “fine art” is. “Art” as a concept does not necessarily correlate with thought-provoking works. It encompasses many different mediums including crafts, decorative, and fine arts. Crafts and decorative art, however, fail to accomplish what fine art does. “Fine” in this situation does not equate to “good” or “right” but instead notes the kind of art in which the integrity of artistic pursuit becomes the audience’s focus. Artwork should evoke emotions or intellectual ideals through aesthetics alone. In short, fine art encompasses a multitude of art forms, such as “visual arts...music, architecture, poetry, and performing arts” (Cole, 2022). This dialogue will focus on the fine art mediums of photography and music, as the breadth of this topic is far too extensive to express in a few short pages.

Obscenity is not protected under the First Amendment, and many are concerned with what criteria protect fine art. The U.S. Department of Justice uses the *Miller* test, or the three-pronged obscenity test, to determine if the

material is obscene or not¹. The *Miller* test came from *Miller v. California* when the Supreme Court modified the test for obscenity established initially in *Roth v. United States* and *Memoirs v. Massachusetts* (*Miller v. California*, 1973). In short, the *Miller* test requires the average person to apply contemporary adult community standards to the material in question. If the material meets all three criteria, it is determined to be obscene and, therefore, not protected under the First Amendment. Of the three, the final prong of the *Miller* test is the most important regarding freedom of speech because it inspects the intent of the material. It states, “Whether a reasonable person finds that the matter, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). The material would be deemed obscene without intending to create the quoted values within these categories. This is a reference point that will be used periodically throughout this paper.

Photography is a popular medium because it has become much more accessible to the average person. With increasing access to smartphones, it is more common for people to have a camera on their person. Even with how commonplace photography is now, it can be challenging to master within the context of fine art. Despite this low entry bar, American photographer and artist Andres Serrano claims to have mastered it. His photography transcends the everyday use of cameras and is undoubtedly qualified to be fine art. From plants to nudity to bodily fluids, Serrano is notorious for his controversial photographs. The scenes he captures depict images that often shock or disgust those

1. See here for what the Miller test entails fully: <https://www.justice.gov/criminal/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-law-obscenity>

who see them. Serrano, conversely, asserts that shock is not his intent: “I choose to make beautiful objects, even if they’re about things that make you uncomfortable. If my work didn’t have that urge, that duality, the contrast between the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, it would be just making pretty pictures” (The Art Story Foundation, 2011). He emphasizes the importance of quality in his work over the emotional response many artists focus on.

Notably, Serrano’s series *A History of Sex* accentuates the questions of obscenity in his artwork². *A History of Sex* illustrates the range of human sexual expression and was inspired by Renaissance paintings that depicted people in the nude (Serrano, 1995-1996). Here, Serrano pushes the line between what is art and what is obscene. Serrano is making both political and artistic statements through his photography. In this sense, he does not fulfill the third point of the *Miller* test since his statement fits within the protected values. Remaining within the bounds of obscenity law, Serrano uses his freedom of speech to emphasize the individuals within the artwork. Much of his work is a commentary on human experience and what it is like living in a society with unrelenting behavioral standards. *A History of Sex* challenges when society is comfortable discussing sexual behavior and when it is not. It is meant to be jarring, but that is not the entire interpretation. He leaves the remaining interpretation of the work up to the viewer. As mentioned previously, fine art can create strong emotions through aesthetics alone, and Serrano certainly understands that.

It is not uncommon for artists to leave the interpretation up to the viewers. Andres Serrano’s work evokes backlash and a vast multitude of dissatisfaction with particular pieces. This is most notable in *Piss Christ*, a photograph from his series titled *Immersion* (Serrano, 1987). This controversial photo captured a crucifix within a vat of Serrano’s own urine. Many Christians believed this piece of art was blasphemous and targeted defamation against Christianity (Shine, T., 2015, p. 28). Regardless of how the

2. Viewer discretion is advised. Please take precautions looking up these photographs (if desired) as they depict images some may find controversial and lewd.

photo might seem like a blasphemous suggestion, Serrano has roots in Catholicism and is influenced by that background even when making strong statements like those depicted in this image.

Serrano defends his use of the crucifix by claiming, “A crucifix represents the crucifixion of a man who was tortured, humiliated, and left to die on a cross for several hours. In that time, Christ not only bled to death, he probably saw all his bodily functions and fluids come out of him” (The Art Story Foundation, 2011). It is quite possible that the title of the piece was chosen to evoke a strong reaction towards the image. The urine surrounding the crucifix is seen as distasteful and a dishonor against Christianity. Despite many Catholics claiming this piece of art to be offensive and repulsive to them, it is protected under the freedom of speech clause. The piece’s title, along with the image itself, shows that Serrano thought diligently about how his art would be received. He walks the line between obscenity and an artistic statement, calling forth such complex emotions. And, once again, Serrano’s work does not fulfill the *Miller* test as there is clear artistic intent.

In the same fashion as photography, music is another artistic medium that can bring freedom of speech discussion into a new focus. Music is highly prevalent within culture, whether one notices it or not. It is found in commercials on T.V., the radio, and in social media posts. The freedom of speech played a significant role in the foundation of what music is today. Like Serrano’s racy photography, certain music artists use offensive or obscene language to make a statement. This can be seen in 2 Live Crew’s album “As Nasty as They Wanna Be,” which incorporates over 380 counts of vulgar language and 87 references to oral sex (Kasper, E.T., 2023, p. 220). At the first court ruling, the Circuit Court found the album obscene and met the three criteria of the *Miller* test (*Skywalker Records v. Navarro*, 1990). Despite this initial ruling, the court of appeals reversed the obscenity ruling, noting that “this case is apparently the first time that a court of appeals has been asked to apply the *Miller* test to a musical composition, which contains both instrumental music and lyrics” (Fischer, P., 2023; Kasper, E.T., 2023, p. 225; *Skywalker Records v. Navarro*, 1990). This is a groundbreaking

acknowledgement as applying the *Miller* test to music drastically changed the expression of this medium.

Comparatively, in the 1980s, multiple “inciteful speech” cases against Ozzy Osbourne were made. In one, a family claimed that Osbourne’s song “Suicide Solution” was the cause of an individual’s death (Kasper, E. T., 2023, p. 208). The court had to decipher whether this case concerned offensive speech directed toward a specific individual or with general subliminal messaging. The court concluded that while subliminal messages were not found, the song contained “preconscious suggestions” in semi-unintelligible speech. The court determined that Osbourne was not intentionally causing the injury with the words of the song (“Get the gun and try it, Shoot, shoot, shoot”) (*Waller v. Osbourne*, 1991). The overseeing judge stated, “Music in the form of entertainment represents a type of speech that is generally afforded First Amendment constitutional protection” (Kasper, E.T., 2023, p. 212). These examples demonstrate how artists in both photography and music push the boundaries of speech protection under the First Amendment.

By and large, it is impossible to say that art is not speech because fine art weaves together creative expression and the opportunity to make one’s ideas known. Fine art often has the power to express what words cannot and challenges political norms. Overall, this can tread the line of obscenity, as seen in Andres Serrano’s photography, while simultaneously providing an avenue for critical discourse. Music brings the question of offensive and explicit language use in the public to light, as seen in both 2 Life Crew’s and Ozzy Osbourne’s lyrics. All things considered, where is it socially acceptable to challenge society’s ideals and intentions? As agents within the free market, we ultimately have the power to decide what we consume and accept into our lives. Historical evidence and the realities of our First Amendment and market economy freedoms in the United States all demonstrate the fact that opposing views will clash in the public square. Fine arts are a powerful means to spark this conversation.

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Wasted Freedom and Captive Minds

By: Temish Christiansen



American freedom is superfluous. Useless. Pointless beyond belief. At least, it is insofar as it is used today by the people who are alive to use it. The United States of America were founded on the idea that a population of free men would do good things if they had the freedom to do so. After all, “political society exists for the sake of noble actions, and not of living together,” as Aristotle says (2011, p. 456). This, however, is entirely forgotten, and the common themes of 21st century life are designed to make people forget the good they ought to be doing. The freedom – political, economic, and religious – which is promised to Americans is lost when their minds are enslaved by vain pursuits and false promises. The only solution to this malady is an education in the liberal arts which makes them free in mind. The freedom guaranteed by the American Constitution requires a population of Christians to act and think with free minds, because freedom of politics, economics, and religion only leads to ruin without an understanding of what is Good, namely, the Good found only in the revealed true God, Jesus Christ.

The amount of freedom permitted to those who live in the American republic is shocking and, when untethered from a moral foundation, quite dangerous. Freedom itself does not make one justified in what they do; it merely allows them access to the action. Freedom is typically considered to be the ability to choose and to act in a way which reflects what one wills. As John Locke describes it “In this, then, consists freedom, viz., in our being able to act or not to act, according as we shall choose or will” (2011, p. 204). This is a good definition of freedom, but it also illustrates how what one chooses is in no way considered when one acts freely. Is it a good use of freedom for one to do drugs, commit

acts of homosexuality, or descend further into his own depression via “doomscrolling” and pornography? All of these are acts which people choose and act upon willingly, yet they have destructive and harmful consequences. If one truly believes that “my right to swing my fist ends where your nose begins” then there is absolutely no grounding to forbid the use of drugs or of any kind of degeneracy. Yet if one does forbid these practices, this is a qualified freedom – and that will be pointed out as hypocrisy immediately by all who oppose the idea. Anything less than total freedom is entirely unpalatable to Americans, and yet it seems that poorly used freedom leads only to shame and vice, and suffering in general.

Freedom is a shocking force multiplier for human action – both the good and the bad. Economic freedom allows any motivated individual to pursue the ends and means which he chooses, allowing for unprecedented mobility from the lower to higher class (and from higher to lower, too, if he makes poor decisions). Political freedom allows one to act publicly in the way which they see fit, influencing society in a way consistent with their views. Religious freedom allows one to worship as they please, but also to hold any viewpoint they like about what is to be considered the highest good. These three dimensions of freedom allow for one to choose any way they would wish to live and act on that choice, limited only by what would limit others’ freedom or cause them harm. These freedoms allow for great goods, but also for evils and bad desires to be acted upon. Those who are virtuous can live excellent lives, but those who are vicious can produce even greater vices.

John Adams, seeing this dilemma, made the claim that America is meant only for a religious and moral people, explicitly in the

context of handling vice and virtue in society: “Because We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, Ambition, Revenge or Gallantry, would break the strongest Cords of our Constitution as a Whale goes through a Net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other” (Adams, 1798). This is due to the simple fact that no particular law or piece of legislation can make a person live or act morally, nor can a society ruled by its own people stay pure if those people are evil. A house built of rotting planks will fall, regardless of how well-designed the architect’s blueprints were. Adam and Eve had a perfect life with only one commandment to keep, and even they sinned. This is a compelling argument for the case Adams was making, namely that this kind of freedom is only beneficial in a society made up of those who have a strong moral compass and a conviction to follow it: Christians being the obvious example.

For Christians, this is an excellent opportunity to live out the quiet, peaceful life, in loving service to one another. Christians need not fret over whether they have worldly freedom of any sort, as they know they have eternal freedom in Christ. In order to secure a blessed and good life for their neighbors and themselves, Christians are to love their neighbor and seek their freedom as well, politically, mentally, and spiritually.

Yet, even within the Church, Christians pursue all kinds of evil ends and are filled with vices. Plenty of Christians do evil things: watch pornography, swear, steal, slander. Leaders betray the trust of their people, church and school administrators use their office to commit adultery or embezzle, students grow lazy in their study. Families split apart over political differences, or harm each other with lies and abuse. Christians perpetrate all of these evils, and are even more wretched and worse off because of the depths of the fall, from the heights of knowing God’s love to self-idolatry and sin, because they ought to be exemplars of morality, but are just as fallen as the rest of mankind. Thanks be to God for his means of grace by which he forgives his people, and his

Spirit by which he perfects them.

Nevertheless, all of this is to show that even in a nation of Christians, evil can and does occur. It is not enough for a nation to consist of those who call themselves Christians. Those people must act in accordance with the Law — both human and divine. When it comes to the question of economic, political, or even religious freedom, these things fall well into the realm of Law: there is no forgiveness in freedom. Freedom does not bring one to Christ, but rather, the inverse is true: Christ brings one freedom from sin and death. Americans are often tempted to think that life will be perfect with complete freedom, but in doing so, they mistake freedom for God. Freedom does not, by itself, produce goodness or virtue, it does not forgive or justify any kind of sin, and it does not even instruct one what the right things to do are. All that freedom provides is the ability for one to live the way he would like, unimpeded, whether good or evil.

If Christians, who are the “moral and religious people” to which John Adams was referring, can and do live out such great vices and evils, how can the nation stand? If those called “Christian” can still sin and do wrong to this degree, it is not the title “Christian” which matters, but the ends which those people pursue. Of primary concern, then, is what someone, particularly the freed Christian, seeks to do with his freedom.

The ancient philosopher Boethius believed that “Every concern of man, which he pursues in his many efforts and seeks by various paths, aims nevertheless at the single goal of blessedness. For when man acquires that good, there is nothing left that he can desire. This is truly the highest of all goods, containing all good things within it, since there is nothing beyond it which anyone could wish to obtain” (2012, pp. 64-65). This might seem like some lofty ideal, but it is a simple concept: people pursue that which they think is the highest good.

Everyone has their idea of what is best, and will live in a way as to obtain that best – but this does not preclude anyone from being incorrect about their goal. Boethius continues: “The desire for the true Good has been planted naturally in the

minds of all men, but deceitful error leads men astray to things that are false.... And these are the things that men want to acquire; they desire riches, honors, rule, glory, and pleasures, because they think that through them they will acquire sufficiency, respect, power, fame, and joy” (2012, pp. 65, 67).

These five pursuits encapsulate all of what man has wanted and still wants today. These desires captivate one’s time, energy, and activity, and can only effectively be sought if one is free to pursue them; man devotes his freedom to gain that which he thinks will bring him true happiness, or as Boethius terms it, blessedness. This, however, does not mean that people will think intelligently about their desires. Sometimes, people will go after what is in front of them as it is presented; at other times, however, people will plot carefully how to achieve a goal they have improperly valued.

Consider some of our own most prominent instances of Boethius’ five pursuits. Social media, whether for fun or profit, is an exercise in gaining fame by giving pleasure. Politics and social posturing give fame, respect, or power depending on the situation. Riches come from tireless work or mandated equal distribution. The sexual revolution was meant to bring pleasure but has now been used to bring glory to promiscuity. The Internet, likewise, is built around getting people that they want, when they want it, exactly how they want it, giving people the feeling of power, and pleasure in getting their way. Even universities have turned from their goal of pursuing the truth into a place to gain honor. A degree – a fancy piece of paper – is meant to win one the honor and respect needed to land a good job, which is itself a method of acquiring wealth and power. How many students at CUW today are only in attendance to get a job? How many at other schools? Nearly every aspect of American culture – and use of freedom – is designed around people pursuing one of these five goals.

These five pursuits, when sought on their own or for the sake of one another, captivate one’s interest and enslave one’s mind, relentlessly pushing one to a goal which cannot be satisfied. Sufficiency by wealth is never enough, as wealth

requires more wealth and power to secure. Honors are contingent – that is, dependent on someone else – and fall short of what is needed to have respect, as honor can be quickly turned to shame. Fame and glory, likewise, only last as long as one’s name is known and lauded, and ever-declining attention spans render that memory short-lived. Rule for the sake of power fails because the escalation of power is never ending, and there will always be another to challenge and usurp. Pleasure fails to bring joy, if for no other reason than that pleasures can be taken away, and not all pleasure is moral. Each of these five pursuits fall short of what they are promised, and demand more and more attention and time in their never-ending goal of filling the void.

These vain pursuits are just that: vain. They are a striving after wind, as King Solomon puts in Ecclesiastes. They do not last, nor do they bring that happiness or goodness which they promise and that man seeks. Yet modern society is built around acquiring them. One must finish school to get a degree (honors) to get a job (power and wealth) so that they can live a happy model life (fame and pleasure). While one has the ability to choose otherwise, few do, as their reason is not free enough to show him the true goal of these five: blessedness.

Rather than chasing in vain after that which is merely presented as good, a free man must look for that which is *truly* good. This goodness, as mentioned above, contains all other goods to itself, providing those things which men think will make them happy: sufficiency, respect, power, fame, and joy. Yet this good is unknown to many, and if unknown then unattainable. One then is led to wonder by what means they could learn about this true blessedness—how to know it, and then seek to attain it. If that which one seeks is the Good, and that which is commonly understood to be desirable is often not, then one must start a more serious investigation into the Good that moves beyond common or conventional understanding. Education itself, and the universities formed to pursue it, are built on the foundational question, “What is Good?” In answering this question one finds freedom from the slavery of pursuing vain and failing things.

An education in the Liberal Arts was named as such not because it was about progressivism, but because such an education made one free. “Liberal” in this sense is meant in the same way as “liberty,” that is, freedom: an education such as this is meant to make one free in mind as well as body.

Although the term did not exist yet, this idea (of both liberty and education bound together in the Liberal Arts) is what led Plato to set forth the Allegory of the Cave. The allegory is simple: Men are trapped in a cave, bound and chained to only see the shadows dancing on the wall in front of them, believing from birth that these shadows are the real things. Once one is freed, he sees the fire and puppeteers and knows that the shadows are just that: shadows. After the man is dragged out of the cave, he sees the reflection of true things in water, and then after that the real things themselves, and critically, the sun in all its glory. This sun is meant to represent the Good, the highest possible truth and beauty, and the light by which all things are known.

The parallels to the liberal arts education are clear: one leaves the false appearances presented to them and discovers the Good, which is at the same time True and Beautiful. In doing this, one is freed from the bondage which they were in and joins a larger, freer world than what they had known. The correction of one’s knowledge from shadows to reflections to reality also shows how one moves from lower desires to higher ones. The shadows one sees are false appearances, a mimicry of what is real and good; in the same way, one might pursue something like wealth simply because it is presented as desirable or able to bring pleasure. When one leaves the cave and sees a reflection of reality, they see more than shadows but not the real thing; in the same way, one sees that they want sufficiency more than riches; no one wants special green paper or bricks of weak yellow metal, only what those currencies can acquire and provide. Finally, when one sees the Sun, the true goodness and reality is revealed; in the same way, one learns that wealth, providing sufficiency, is only a small part of a truly blessed life. Wealth and sufficiency are an example, but this mode of thought applies to everything which

someone thinks is good. After one learns that the lower desires are insufficient, they proceed to desire greater and higher things, pursuing the Good itself.

Once one sees this Goodness, it also becomes the light by which one sees the rest of the world. In the cave, one only sees shadows of objects, without a light. Once they see the fire, they see that the light which produces the shadows is present, but failing, showing that there must be a still-yet-brighter light which does not flicker or die out. Outside of the cave, one finally has the Sun as their light, and they can see the rest of the world clearly by it, through direct sight, reflection, or even shadow once again. Without the Sun, one sees in a mirror dimly, but once they have seen what Goodness is, they see fully, face-to-face (1st Corinthians 13:12).

The English language has been blessed with having the words “Sun” and “Son” be so closely related that the comparison is impossible to miss. Christians know that great Light to be Jesus Christ: “the true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him” (John 1:9-10). Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6); Jesus Christ is the Good, the Truest Word become incarnate, the most Beautiful Son by which man sees everything. Therefore, if man wishes to know the Good, and to attain it, what else is there to do than to follow the Word of God and live according to Him? Being a Christian does not automatically make one educated, nor will their actions automatically be good, but if one wishes to be educated, they must know the Good, and see that the Good became flesh. With the knowledge of Christ as Goodness itself as a basis, one can easily reorient their desires towards that Good by which Boethius recommends men guide themselves. He correctly identifies the Good with God, the highest thing which contains all goods to itself, and shows how only according to this can one truly orient themselves correctly.

In the light of this Son, shadows are cast away and there is no need for lesser lights, revealing how God has ordered the world. One’s freedom becomes a blessing meant for service

to one's neighbor, rather than the source and end goal of civic life. Those who trust in Christ as the one who sets them free know that their freedom on earth is a valuable tool, but is not an end in itself, certainly not an end to be idolized. With the knowledge of what is necessary for one to live properly, and a rightly ordered and educated desire for the Good, one can only then live as a productive citizen, acting in the way John Adams commends Americans to live.

Thus, the American Constitution requires a population of Christians to act and think with free minds, because freedom of politics, economics, and religion only leads to ruin without an understanding of what is Good: God, the highest good by which all others are named. A world without morals or knowledge of how to live them will burn itself to the ground; whether through ineptitude or malice, it will not flourish if it pursues imperfect things. Man pursues imperfect things because he does not know the perfect thing to pursue: the Good. The freed mind knows not to pursue these imperfect things and how to seek the Good: to be best educated, one must study this Good, and by God's grace, discover that this Good became flesh and dwelt among men. With this knowledge, a person can rightly order themselves towards that which is good, and pursue that good thing and benefit his neighbor in doing so, having a freed mind to supplement his free citizenship. Only then will freedom be valuable; only then will freedom not be in vain.

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True Crime: Privacy and Freedom of Information in the Digital Market

By: Eleanor Mroczenski



True crime is the most common topic among top-ranked podcasts, with 24% of top podcasts focusing on true crime in 2022, and 34% of U.S. adults regularly listening to these true crime podcasts (Pew Research, 2022). Thanks to the growing true crime genre, non-fiction accounts of horrific and violent crimes, including kidnappings, murders, and rapes, are now commonplace in American media. Networks like NBC and Netflix capitalize on the growing fascination with true crime in popular shows like *Dateline* and *Making a Murderer*, while true crime podcasts, like *Crime Junkie* and *The Binge Crimes*, allow individuals to join and profit from the media trend. Social media fans the flames of true crime consumption as accounts share and dissect these macabre tales. The popularity of true crime is a phenomenon at the crux of issues about privacy in the digital age and the commodification of tragedy for entertainment and profit. To truly understand the legal and ethical dilemmas presented, one must first examine why true crime is popular, why it is problematic, and how it relates to issues of privacy and freedom of information laws.

The Popularity of True Crime

Psychologists point to a myriad of reasons for people's interest in true crime. Some suggest that the genre's combination of problem solving, suspense, and adrenaline provides a psychologically pleasurable sense of risk in a relatively low-risk, safe environment (Bishton, 2019). Because these crimes are beyond the scope of most individual's experiences, there is also a "lurid fascination" with these events, a dark curiosity to understand the motives of the perpetrators (Bishton, 2019; Vicary & Fraley,

2010). Other psychologists point to how the largely female audience cites worry and fear of victimization as a reason for increased discussion and education about the realities of crime. Such listeners hope to learn about how to best respond to these situations so that they can be better prepared. (Gray, 2023; Vicary & Fraley, 2010). Boredom and voyeurism are also often listed as motives for true crime media consumption (Boling & Hull, 2018). Regardless, many people consume true crime media because they are simply attracted to true, compelling, and entertaining stories that provide a sense of much sought after authenticity (Gray, 2023). These reasons for watching may be concerning as they raise questions about what respect and dignity is provided to victims and their loved ones through these practices as well as who benefits from the publication of true crime media as a source of simple entertainment.

The Problems with True Crime Media

Underlying the popularity of the true crime genre is a debate about how ethical this media truly is. Some suggest that it provides a voice and legacy for victims, increases awareness and safety-minded practices, and can be consumed ethically (Holmes & Hines, 2024). Others suggest that ethical viewing must remove romanticization of perpetrators, dramatization of events, and privacy violations before it can begin to be fit for mindful consumption. Despite the oft stated ethical concerns and accommodations, the motives for consuming true crime media typically boil down to entertainment, which can dehumanize the real events and people. It removes the dignity and privacy of the victims, reducing their lives to gossip and stories for millions to unthinkingly consume, while they and their loved ones continue

to suffer the effects of such tragedy.

Adjacent to careless viewing, one of the largest complaints about the true crime genre centers on privacy, especially as true crime media producers rarely obtain consent from victims or their loved ones before story usage. Open record laws mean that many court documents are available to the public upon request, and there are no laws that require notification of victims and next of kin when their cases are used (McNulty, 2023). Open records are more accessible for anyone to request because of the internet, leaving more opportunities for that access to be misused. Post-mortem defamation, right of publicity, and privacy laws that be used in response to such cases are complicated and underdeveloped for their role in the digital age. Therefore, true crime media often leaves victims and their loved ones without any control over if and how their stories are shared, while media producers profit from these tales of tragedy. For instance, the podcast *My Favorite Murder* made an estimated \$15 million in 2019. Their content is taken from public domain cases and open records to produce substantial profits, but the families of victims are not typically solicited for commentary or even notification of the finished product (Brennan, 2024). This is legally permissible, yet it is concerning that people use some of the deepest tragedies of others' lives for profit without permission or service to victims and their families.

The often profitable and highly public use of these tragic stories without notice or respect illustrates that there has become a commodification of human stories and tragedies. Human stories have anthropologically held clear value across times and peoples. At times, this value is economic, as in the case of documentaries, memoirs, and more, and true stories are passed on in various cultures for the sake of legacy and shared wisdom. True crime media, however, is a perversion of said stories. It emphasizes the economic value of true stories, while negating the deeply personal value of the stories' origin. The true crime genre sacrifices the personhood of victims and their families to exploit their stories and privacy for curiosity, money, and publicity. There are advocacy and legacy efforts in the true

crime industry to support victims and prevent further tragedy, but these are few and far between. Ultimately, true crime media is often problematic and unethical because it invades the privacy of victims and their families, dehumanizing and re-traumatizing them in the process, for the sake of entertainment and financial gain.

Privacy and Freedom of Speech and Information in the Digital Age

As most true crime media uses the stories of others without permission for the sake of profit, the genre reflects similar problems found in data mining and social media surrounding privacy: What ownership do we have over our information and stories in the digital age? How long does that ownership last? How do we maintain freedom of speech and information while also respecting personhood and privacy?

In true crime media, victims and their families' stories are exploited for economic gain due in part to complicated privacy rights. To understand the legal protections of those affected, privacy must first be defined. On a philosophical level, John Stuart Mill suggests that "There is, or ought to be, some space in human existence thus entrenched 'around', and sacred from authoritative intrusion, no one who professes the smallest regard to human dignity will call in question: the point to be determined is, where the limit should be placed; how large a province of human life this reserved territory should include" (Mill, 1870). Mill's notion of privacy is one that goes hand in hand with freedom of speech; the realm of privacy includes the individual's information and whether they choose to share it. Privacy affords individuals control over their public image, the dignity to not bare all to the public sphere. Thus, for Mill, privacy is a basic right to occupy and control, to one's best effort, the space one's reputation lives within. In modern words, this is the restricted access definition of privacy, where privacy is "citizens' ability to regulate information about themselves" (Gormley, 1992). In the United States, privacy rights stem from provisions in the First, Fourth, and Fifth amendments and mainly pertain to proper confidentiality and information usage by the organization or individual who holds

access to one's information and data (United States, 2009). Privacy, therefore, is a central part of freedom of speech in the United States, which includes a right not to speak or be spoken of without consent in certain contexts; accordingly, citizens are free to formulate their own image and reputation. It is important to note, however, that privacy does not correspond to secrecy or lying regarding illegal activity, such as in cases of fraud. Thus, privacy is often indirectly protected as it overlaps with rights to freedom of speech, confidentiality in medical and educational records, and more.

Such definitions of privacy are complicated within true crime media due to the post-mortem spread of information about individuals. For celebrities, this is controlled through post-mortem right of publicity laws at the state level, addressing celebrities' "right to be left alone" and right to dictate how and by whom their image is used in commercial contexts (Klein & Cohn, 2022). However, these right of publicity claims often fail because the right of publicity is not rooted in an individual's right to privacy but rather in commercial intellectual property rights, meaning that non-public figures and those who do not intend to profit from their own case are not likely to win in court (Brennan, 2024). Therefore, most victims covered in true crime media rarely hold the required commercial value to be qualified in these protections.

To subvert the issue of privacy and publicity laws in the case of true crime media, victims and their families can make defamation claims, but if the story is accurately represented, these often do not go far in court in the name of free speech. Therefore, most cases fall under post-mortem privacy, or "the right of a person to preserve and control what becomes of his reputation and dignity after death" (Buitelaar, 2017). Post-mortem privacy is increasingly relevant in the age of the internet, where digital memory prevents personal information from being forgotten from human memory (Kohl, 2022). Currently, however, there are no federal laws about post-mortem privacy, yet given the exploitation of tragedy in true crime media, it is clear that there must be some regulations over how

certain information can be accessed and used. The challenge is heightened by the longevity of digital memory, increased access to information, and high demand for entertainment and content in the digital age. The market changes with the Internet, so the buying and selling of personal information, particularly through media platforms, is a new economic landscape we must learn to ethically navigate.

Evidently, the current approach to privacy needs to change. On the legal level, more secured privacy rights and post-mortem privacy considerations would be beneficial, but change must also occur on a social level, beginning with individuals who conscientiously interact with true crime content. However, legal and social changes are difficult to institute because open records laws help keep governments and their agencies accountable, and privacy does not afford secrecy or misinformation. Ultimately, the balance between privacy and censorship is difficult, but preventing the spread of information differs from preventing the exploitation of information. In the case of true crime media, the exploitation of information is a more prevalent issue, and one that does not invoke as many cautions of censorship or issues with freedom of information. Economic freedoms are important to preserve with the booming digital market, but intellectual and personal property of ideas and information can be complicated "goods" to trade, especially when they are sold at the expense of others. Thus, true crime media presents privacy dilemmas that are in the crucible of the digital age, requiring careful balance between truth, respect, accountability, and freedom of information to avoid the commodification and dehumanization of personal information as well as censorship and secrecy.

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A Christian Nation in a Secular World

By: Magdalene Lane



Alexis de Tocqueville, in his work, *Democracy in America*, claims that the greatest influence on the United States is the religion of its people. As he states, “nothing better demonstrates how useful [religion] is to man, since the country where it has the widest sway is both the most enlightened and the freest.” (1835, p.386) The Declaration of Independence itself begins with the proposition that all men are given natural rights by their Creator, suggesting that humans have innate worth on a divine scale. Largely based off of this fact, according to a survey done by the Pew Institute, up to 60% of Americans believe that America was intended by its founders to be a Christian nation, and four in ten believe that it ought to be so. Indeed, nearly a third of the American population believe the United States to be a Christian nation now (Goldman, 2022) Those who believe the United States ought to be a Christian nation are known as “Christian nationalists.” They believe that the closer a nation comes to being a theocracy, that is, a state governed solely by God and his representatives, the better it will be for both the citizens and the rulers. Further, they will present this view with a sense of moral imperative. In other words, they believe it is one’s duty to ensure that America either remains or becomes a Christian nation. This, however, is an unrealistic and unnecessary expectation. Creating a Christian nation cannot be successful, because there is no blueprint describing how it is to be done successfully; furthermore, scripture does not command it, and common sense discourages it.

Christian nationalists will often support their belief by citing John Adams’ declaration that the constitution of the United States is specifically intended for a moral and religious

people, assuming those people to be Christians (Adams, 1798). What Adams means by this is that the morals which the Constitution encourages can be aligned with a Christian worldview and cater to the flourishing of Christianity within the country it governs. The individuals it governs are given freedoms and rights according to their innate value as human beings, not based on their personal attributes or circumstances. This is a noble and valuable sentiment, but not a specifically Christian one, as certain other religions, such as modern Judaism, claim the very same thing. The Constitution is certainly intended for a people adhering to a Judeo-Christian moral code. It is difficult, however, to define the United States, or indeed any nation, as fully and successfully Christian, as the very meaning of the term has been heavily and inconclusively debated. To form such a nation would be a complex, if not impossible, task.

Firstly, it is difficult to say whether a nation’s religious identity should be based on the position of its government or on the practices of its people. Historically, those nations referred to as “Christian” have been populated by those professing, at least outwardly, the Christian faith. Certainly, this was the case in America three hundred years ago, when it was populated largely by Protestant Christians of various denominations. As the population increased, however, and post-Enlightenment thinking gained a foothold, the Protestant population waned. Today, Christians comprise less than sixty percent of America’s population, becoming increasingly divided between denominations (Goldman, 2022). Moreover, contrary to what has historically been the case in European states, the government in America shares no power with the church,

which has become a private enterprise. While the government permits the Christian church, and indeed any religious institution, to worship as it sees fit, it does not openly support it financially or politically. This suggests national religious neutrality.

This balance between government and governed, church and state, has been heavily debated for centuries. The Holy Roman Emperor, Charlemagne, during his reign in the 9th century, attempted to merge their authority as much as possible by forming a partnership of church and state. While the king supported church rights and authority by making doctrine into state law, the church commended loyalty to the king as a virtue. This is perhaps one of the better and more virtuous attempts at a Christian nation, but the tentative balance struck was ultimately destroyed after Charlemagne's death through the corruption of his successors.

Under Charlemagne, the state, though in partnership with the church, held itself apart as a separate entity with its own sphere of power and control. Some Protestant reformers, such as John Calvin, however, suggested that this partnership of church and state was not enough to form a perfectly Christian nation. Rather, Calvin proposed that the church ought to be the state, holding the governed to a moral as well as a civic code.

Religious toleration was never seen as a hallmark of Christian nationalism. Under Calvin, the city of Geneva was ruled by a pastor. In theory this would seem to represent the ideal of Christian nationalism, namely, that the people are governed only by God and His representatives, as St Paul encourages. Paul says, "For the one in authority is God's servant for your good." (*English Standard Version, 2001, Rom. 13:4*). Put in context, however, Paul is speaking about government authorities, which have been instituted by God specifically to govern and protect the people. The church, despite the many charges laid on it by the scriptures (namely, to preach the word and administer the sacraments) has never been commanded by God to rule people as government authorities do. Calvin's new "Christian nation," by ignoring these distinctions, opened the door to multiple methods of corruption and distinctly

un-Christian legislation. Citizens were imprisoned for whistling, singing, and a host of small "sins" which certainly did not merit governmental interference. This level of church control did not last long after Calvin's death.

Attempts to form a Christian nation are not, however, always corrupt. Often, they will simply give out against the pressure of the secular, progressive world. The Massachusetts Bay Colony, for instance, is a strong example of Christians governing themselves independently using only the laws provided in the Scriptures. This way of life was mutually agreed upon by the settlers of the territory. Sadly, the attempt did not withstand the next few generations, which splintered into different denominations and territories as convenience required (American History Central, 2023).

When people are asked to define a Christian nation, the first criteria listed frequently involve freedom of religion in some way. This, however, presents significant challenges. It is important to note that many states which historically identified as "Christian," such as Calvin's Geneva and the Massachusetts Bay Colony, did not practice religious toleration, but enforced strict observance of Protestant religious practices. America, with its open and tolerant laws, permits full freedom of religion without interference, allowing Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and many other religions to mutually flourish. While the government might itself be called Christian, the governed are divided.

These conflicting interpretations of a Christian nations make it impossible to judge clearly how such a nation can be formed. Often, the goal of Christian nationalists seems to be to create a small heaven on earth, namely, to govern an earthly nation as God governs his heavenly kingdom, following His divine standard. As de Tocqueville points out, "a man will always... seek to harmonize earth with heaven." (1835, p.219) This is a difficult goal, as humans have not been granted to know the inner workings of the divine kingdom, which makes this governmental system difficult to imitate. Furthermore, it allows very little room to account for the natural depravity of humans. Certainly, Christians are to be imitators

of Christ in every aspect of their lives, but man is sinful and fails often. To put men in authority over vast nations in His name is a precarious situation, one which has always succumbed to manipulation, pride, and a misrepresentation of Christ's reign. If man is able to corrupt an earthly system of government, such as communism or imperialism, or even the superior earthly government created in America, how can he expect to succeed in maintaining a heavenly one? Finally, the church and Christians in general have been given no command to wield secular authority, but rather to submit to it. That is to say, the church has its own special role, which is separate from that of the government. The one is charged by God with guarding its people's souls, and the other is entrusted with their bodies.

Christians ought not be surprised to hear this. As St. Augustine notes, man is perpetually torn between the kingdom of earth and the kingdom of heaven. Of these two, "the former glories only in itself and its power, while the latter delights only in Christ" (426, p.39). The needs of earthly kingdoms are not wrong or invalid, however they can never achieve heavenly standards. As Thomas Aquinas notes in his treatise, *On Kingship*, "Thus, in order that spiritual things might be distinguished from earthly things, the ministry of [the heavenly] kingdom has been entrusted not to earthly kings but to priests," (1266) and according to de Tocqueville, "Society has nothing to fear or hope from another life," (1835, p.388) implying that society is and will always be a secular institution and its government indifferent to eternal truths or consequences. In other words, God has not established the government for the care of our souls.

This is not to say that American Christians ought to abandon any hope of Christ in their country. On the contrary, a nation that is utterly without Christian principles is a thoroughly corrupt and unsafe institution. As Psalm 127 states, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." (*ESV, 2001, Ps. 127:1*) The peace, equality, and freedom that we enjoy as Americans must, like every good thing, stem from the essential Christian truths recognized by the founding fathers, namely that humans are

created and that they deserve fundamental rights and privileges. To remove this Christian-inspired premise from the American constitution would destroy this peace and prosperity.

It is foolish, however, to say that America is or can be entirely Christian, simply because some Christian truths are universal. As every attempt so far has been unsatisfactory, and since scripture has given separate roles to church and state, a fully Christian nation is very difficult to envision on this side of heaven. It is likely it can only truly be understood when we reach the freedom of Christ's theocracy in heaven.

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