

2 Timothy 3:4 - treacherous, thoughtless, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

v. 5 - holding to an external appearance of piety, although they have denied its power. Avoid such men as these.

10. Similar passages include these and other areas of degeneracy in the human soul, e.g., Romans 1:18-32, 2 Peter 2, and most of the Book of Jude.

Historical Trends and the Lust for Power:

1. When loss of thought occurs in the soul, one of the early casualties is distrust of positions of authority beginning with God and His Word.
2. From this emerges distrust or rejection of human systems of authority and their representatives.
3. Absent the order that authority provides, the individual chooses to arrogate authority to self.
4. Containing human wisdom at best, that person is bound to establish his position of authority from his present inventory of ideas.
5. With a need to validate his position of power, he must use his inventory to self-justify his status. This leads to power lust.
6. From that position, he begins to challenge legitimate systems of authority and those who function within them.
7. Believing himself qualified to possess a desired system of authority those who legitimately hold that position are attacked.
8. The initial system of authority is parents. Failure to orient to parental authority results in disorientation to other systems later on, such as, the teacher in the classroom, the pastor in the pulpit, the policeman on patrol, the supervisor on the job, or the umpire on the diamond.

9. Also included are those in elected or appointed positions of political authority, a category addressed by Paul in Romans 13:1-7.
10. But there are far more people who lust for power than there are positions to fill. Therefore, the greatest threats to a free people are those who develop a lust for power.
11. The place where this problem is first recognized is a child's rejection of his parents' authority over the household.
12. The shattered, broken, and ignored homes of this client nation are producing an ever-enlarging population of arrogant people whose self-importance and self-justification are an all-out assault on every system of authority.
13. Far too many such types have come into political power through the "bottom-up, top-down" process. For them, the power they possess is of a greater interest than the stability of the system in which they are required to function.
14. For most of those presently in positions of governmental authority in this country, from its lowest level to the highest, are driven by a lust for power. There are exceptions for sure, but those that are not are tearing this client nation to shreds.

What Evils Have They Wrought?

1. About this at this early date, *National Review* has spoken, this from Larry Kudlow: "Is a Taxpayer Bailout in the Cards?" regarding *King v. Burwell*:

Obamacare enrollment is coming up short while the program is unable to sustain an adequate risk pool. Expert health-insurance analyst Robert Laszewski find(s) that exchanges are succeeding in enrolling low-income individuals, but are struggling to attract middle- and higher-income enrollees.

Meanwhile, it appears that the healthy Millennials are not buying enough Obamacare to finance the older and less healthy — especially those with preexisting conditions.

So if the sign-ups are lower and the risk pool is shorter and the hoped-for redistribution from young to old isn't happening, insurance companies are forced to jack up premium rates. Again, not surprising. But the crisis is coming earlier than expected.

Laszewski reports that Texas Blue Cross wants a 20 percent rate hike, Maryland Blue Cross a 34 percent hike, Oregon's biggest insurer Moda a 26 percent hike, and Blue Cross in Tennessee a 36 percent hike.

Not every state is experiencing this. But bad news has a way of spreading. Plus, insurance companies are increasingly worried that the government won't back them through risk corridors or claim reinsurance or risk adjustments. So the dirty secret here is that a major taxpayer bailout is in the cards.

Look, government-run health insurance, or government-run anything, won't work. Only free-market competition with free consumer choice will adequately set prices, premiums, and other costs. Obamacare mandates reduce freedom and raise costs.

Meanwhile, hospitals, doctors, and patients will suffer from lower reimbursements. Doctors are leaving in droves. The worst health care, Medicaid, which is completely government run, is exploding.

All this is why the system must be scrapped. And it won't be missed. In the latest NBC/Wall Street Journal poll, 65 percent of Americans think Obamacare needs either modifications or a major overhaul, just 8 percent say it is working well, and 25 percent say it should be eliminated.¹

2. While the economic impact is staggering, the potential ramifications of *Obergefell v. Hodges* are threatening to the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment.
3. National Review's David French looks at this in his column, "The Supreme Court Ratifies a New Civic Religion that Is Incompatible with Christianity":

"Marriage responds to the universal fear that a lonely person might call out only to find no one there."

—Justice Anthony Kennedy
Obergefell v. Hodges

This isn't constitutional law, it's theology — a secular theology of self-actualization — crafted in such a way that its adherents will no doubt ask, "What decent person can disagree?" This is about love, and the law can't fight love. Justice Kennedy's opinion was nine parts romantic poetry and one part legal analysis (if that).

¹ Larry Kudlow, "Is a Taxpayer Bailout in the Cards?" *National Review*, accessed June 27, 2015. <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/420418/obamacare-economics-supreme-court>

And that's what makes it so dangerous for religious liberty and free speech. Practitioners of constitutional law know that there is no such thing as an "absolute" right to free speech or religious freedom in any context — virtually all cases involve balancing the asserted right against the asserted state interest, with "compelling" state interests typically trumping even the strongest assertions of First Amendment rights. And what is more compelling than this ode to love?

The challenge for orthodox religious believers is now abundantly clear: For years, they've been standing against "history," "equality," and — yes — love itself. Now, all of that rhetoric has been constitutionalized, embedded in the secular scripture of our land.

To be sure, Justice Kennedy did at least nod in the direction of the orthodox, declaring:

Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered.

But this rhetoric, as he knows, is legally meaningless in the face of the potent combination of emotion and legal doctrines that have long deemphasized religious freedom. Justice Kennedy's rhetoric will slide neatly into existing balancing tests, leaving defenders of religious liberty grasping for persuasive rhetoric to counter the irresistible tide of the new, civic religion.

For many believers, this new era will present a unique challenge. Christians often strive to be seen as the "nicest" or "most loving" people in their communities. Especially among Evangelicals, there is a naïve belief that if only we were winsome enough, kind enough, and compassionate enough, the culture would welcome us with open arms. But now our love — expressed in the fullness of a Gospel that identifies homosexual conduct as sin but then provides eternal hope through justification and sanctification — is hate.

Christians who've not suffered for their faith often romanticize persecution. They imagine themselves willing to lose their jobs, their liberty, or even their lives for standing up for the Gospel. Yet when the moment comes, at least here in the United States, they often find that they simply can't abide being called "hateful." It creates a desperate, panicked response. "No, you don't understand. I'm not like those people — the religious right."

Thus, at the end of the day, a church that descends from apostles who withstood beatings finds itself unable to withstand tweetings. Social scorn is worse than the lash.

This is the era of sexual liberty — the marriage of hedonism to meaning — and the establishment of a new civic religion. The black-robed priesthood has spoken. Will the church bow before their new masters?²

4. The assumptions pastors have regarding the free-exercise clause, mentioned above in Kennedy's obligatory mea culpa followed by Mr. French's "this rhetoric is legally meaningless" retort causes Christians to wonder. "What happened to the revered 'stare decisis'?"
5. This legal term is defined for us by Henry Campbell Black:

Stare Decisis. Latin: To abide by, or adhere to, decided cases. The doctrine that, when court has once laid down a principle of law as applicable to a certain state of facts, it will adhere to that principle, and apply it to all future cases, where facts are substantially the same.³
6. In view of that, I would hope, without much confidence, to appeal to the Majority Opinion by Justice Hugo L. Black in *Everson v. Board of Education*:

No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs.
7. In view of the obvious fact that the Supreme Court is no longer a Judicial branch of government, but a political one, my hopes hang on a very thin thread.
8. May pastors, from the pulpits to which they are assigned, be allowed to exegete Scripture from its original languages and apply that revelation when pastoral duties involve their parishioners?
9. If not, will I be forced to consider my wildest desire as a pastor and cease from performing wedding ceremonies for anybody, straight or gay. Welcome to the new paradigm.

² David French, "The Supreme Court Ratifies a New Civic Religion That Is Incompatible with Christianity," *National Review*, accessed June 27, 2015.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/420376/marriage-christians-religion-love>

³ Harry Campbell Black, *Black's Law Dictionary*, rev. fourth ed. (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1968), 1577.

Conclusion:

1. If historical trends of a client nation are determined by the spiritual advance or decline of believers, then what part have we played in the current demise?
2. This is impossible to know. Each of us must evaluate our devotion to the study, inculcation, and application of what we have learned and applied.
3. We do know from the Barna Group's surveys that the younger generation, some of whom are referred to as Millennials, are dropping out of traditional churches.
4. There is a lack of interest in serious Bible study and an increased interest in Bible Lite accompanied by praise music and emotionalism.
5. The "Christian music" that is preferred to is a form of rock 'n' roll lite with lyrics that primarily sing to God rather than the hymns that principally sing about God.
6. Progressivism has taught that there are no absolutes, therefore the absolutes of Scripture are interpreted as suggestions rather than mandates which when obeyed please God Who is the One in charge of our lives.
7. The Bible gives guidance to how a person should think and from that inventory to make good decisions from a position of strength. Scripture has a lot to say about behavior emphasizing what should be done and what should not be done.
8. The Zeitgeist, heavy on blatant depictions of sexual immorality, presents these behaviors as normativity and implies that there is nothing wrong with it.
9. Submission to these ideas damages the right-man right-woman principle of marriage. Fornication and adultery are rampant; divorce is on the increase while "living together" is on the advance.
10. Children are born out of wedlock; divorce often results in children having multiple families with no one or two particular parents in charge at all times.

11. There is a disbelief in such things as the Angelic Conflict, the presence of angels, and the fact that all three Members of the Trinity indwell the believer.
12. Yet, most of the younger generations are drawn to fictitious characters portrayed in movies and television, many of whom are depicted as superhuman while the power of God in their lives is ignored.
13. Those reared in biblically oriented churches only attend until they can break free following high school or college with the brief return associated with an upcoming marriage.
14. Many members of doctrinal churches spin off for various reasons, none of which is a legitimate reason to do so.
15. Warnings about the necessity of staying with doctrine are dismissed as if what the Bible forecasts and which are certified by historical trends are ignored.
16. I never count heads regarding who attends the services at Grace Doctrine Church, but I do take note and often make the point that seventeen on weeknights and 30-40 on Sundays are not going to be enough for a church our size to make its historical impact.
17. True, those not consistently coming may be logging on, but there are many in Doritoville who long for the opportunity to attend a local church and study doctrine, face-to-face.
18. Everyone at GDC may be doing his part, but each of us must perform a serious and objective evaluation as to whether he or she has really been serious about the study of the Word of God as Priority One.
19. The Supreme Court has tossed the glove and formed the gauntlet through which we are now obligated to run.
20. We must trust the Word and replace fear with faith, a principles taught by William H. Bathurst in the hymn "O For a Faith that Will Not Shrink."

O for a Faith that Will Not Shrink

O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly foe.

That will not murmur or complain,
Beneath the chastening rod
But in the hour of grief or pain,
Will lean upon its God.

A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt.

Lord, give us such a faith as this;
And then what e'er may come,
We'll taste even here the hallowed bliss,
Of an eternal home.⁴

(End LM15-01 and the conclusion of the study.)

⁴ William H. Bathurst, "O for a Faith that Will Not Shrink," in *Then Sings My Soul*, Robert J. Morgan, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 102.