

Do You Recognize These Tell-Tale Signs of a Worldwide Financial Crisis?

International stock markets wobble to a new low while prophecy experts align the economic signs with biblical foretelling.

“We’re not just headed for a financial crisis,” Michael Snyder says. Snyder is the author of the Economic Collapse blog. “We’re headed for the greatest financial crisis that America has ever seen, that the world has ever seen.”

Indeed, CNBC reports global stock markets hover near the worst quarter the world has seen in years.

The drop will lead to a financial reverberation so great that “America is going to be shaken to its core,” Snyder says.

America remains glued together by the grace of God, Snyder says. The clues are in these signs of a worldwide collapse. Watch the video to see more.

Oklahoma Capitol Given 13 Days to Remove Holy Monument

An Oklahoma commission voted on Tuesday to remove a privately funded granite monument of the Ten Commandments from the State Capitol grounds, after a judge ordered its removal by Oct. 12.

The Capitol Preservation Commission, which oversees art

displays in public spaces, voted 7-1 to authorize the Office of Management and Enterprise Services to remove the monument.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court in June had ordered the monument, which was erected in 2012, removed because the state constitution bans the use of state property for the benefit of a religion.

A judge earlier this month gave Oklahoma until Oct. 12 to remove the 6-foot-tall () monument, denying a request from state Attorney General Scott Pruitt to leave it in place. The monument has strong support of Oklahoma's Republican leadership.

John Estus, a spokesman for the Office of Management and Enterprise Services, said it was unclear where the monument would be placed.

Oklahoma Representative Mike Ritze, a Republican, paid \$10,000 to erect the monument, which sparked petitions from other groups for room to place their own monuments on Capitol grounds including New York-based Satanists and the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

The state Supreme Court's ruling in June prompted some conservative legislators to look at impeaching the justices or amending the Oklahoma Constitution. {eoa}

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De-Mythologizing the Culture

of the Christian Church

I was recently interviewed by *PE News*, which is the official news source of The Assemblies of God, about church culture myths that are believed and spread by many throughout the country who are both inside and outside of the church.

As I always say, facts are our friends, and when we come along a ridiculous proposition or obscene statistic that makes us wonder, we ought to proceed in wisdom and with an extra measure of discernment.

Below is the article containing the interview. James Bradford and David Drury were also interviewed in the same article, and I respect both men greatly.

In much of society and even the church, presumptions exist about evangelicalism that may not necessarily be true. PE News asked a panel of experts to debunk some of the cultural myths currently gaining currency. Those participating in the discussion are Assemblies of God General Secretary James T. Bradford; David Drury, chief of staff to the general superintendent of the Wesleyan Church; and Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research. They all answered cultural myth questions posed by PE News Editor John W. Kennedy.

Myth 1: Millennials (those born between 1981-96) are leaving the Church in droves.

Bradford: This has not been our overall experience in the Assemblies of God. At the end of 2014, those under 35 years of age constituted 54 percent of our million adherents in the U.S. Those ages 18-34 constituted 23.4 percent of all of our adherents. Over the past four years, the number of millennials in our churches has increased by 4.3 percent.

Stetzer: LifeWay Research has found the dropout rate for young

adults who attended a Protestant church regularly for at least one year in high school is about 70 percent. But of those who left, almost two-thirds return and currently attend church.

In short, millennials are becoming secular in droves, often dropping their Christian self-identification.

If you believe that many millennials once called themselves Christians are no longer doing so, you'd be correct. The next generation is much more secular. However, what is not that different is the percentage of those that are devout religious people. True believers often attend church regularly and have more conservative social values.

In short, millennials are becoming secular in droves, often dropping their Christian self-identification. Yet, there are many who are still devout believers, and that percentage has not dropped in "droves."

Drury: The reality is that each generation experiences variations in church attendance at certain ages, and somewhat predictable returns later. However, sticking our church leadership head in the sands during this time would be unwise. There are certainly cultural realities to our day that are not following a pattern from the past. Some of the reasons we hear young people leaving the church are disconcerting, and include loss of faith in God, opposition to the positions of the church on moral issues, distrust of leadership, or even questioning our evangelical view of Scripture. While the problem of young people drifting away from the church is not a new pattern, the problems we are facing are, in fact, new.

Myth 2: Overall church attendance is plummeting.

Drury: Overall church attendance in my movement is actually growing and has been for more than a decade. A majority of this growth can be attributed to our larger churches, but overall in the last decade we are seeing a growth in attendance (up 21 percent), conversions (up 38 percent) and

baptisms (up 48 percent), reaching record marks in those areas multiple years in a row.

Bradford: Assemblies of God major worship service attendance has increased annually 13 out of the last 14 years. Our experience is that there is less brand loyalty to the Assemblies of God than a few generations ago, but those Assemblies of God churches where people authentically encounter God, grow in understanding the Scriptures and become a part of life-giving relational communities are growing, some dramatically.

Stetzer: In 1950, according to Gallup, 39 percent of Americans said they attended church. In 2013, according to Gallup, 39 percent of Americans said they attended church. There have been fluctuations up to 49 percent (in 1955 and 1958) and down to 37 percent (in 1940 and 2011), but church attendance has remained consistently around 40 percent. Evangelicals have actually increased over the last few decades.

Myth 3: Millions of American Christians are abandoning the faith.

Stetzer: According to the most recent research from Pew, the Christian share of the American population declined almost 8 percent from 2007 to 2014. But when you look more closely at the numbers, you see those who are no longer identifying as Christians were not living out any real, vibrant faith.

As a matter of fact, when looking at evangelicals, they make up a larger percentage of the population today than they did in 1972, according to the General Social Survey. Today, 1 out of 8 Americans is a church-attending evangelical. Even in Pew's study, they found the raw number of American evangelicals has increased in the last seven years from 59.8 million to 62.2 million.

Two-thirds of American churchgoers say their church has done enough to become racially diverse.

Bradford: Over the past 25 years, we have seen 47 percent growth in Assemblies of God adherents, compared to a 29 percent population growth (according to U.S. Census statistics). The annual number of conversions to Christ through U.S. Assemblies of God churches has nearly doubled over that same period of time. We find spiritual awareness and hunger growing in the culture.

Myth 4: Christians in the U.S. don't have to worry about being persecuted.

Drury: Currently, Christians in the U.S. do not have to worry about the level of persecution that the church experienced many times throughout history or that much of the church around the world today still experiences. However, there are some concerning trends in the U.S. As of now, our churches have not had to change their practices in the face of Supreme Court rulings. However, nonprofits and Christian educational institutions have had their religious practices of conviction threatened. We should not be shrill about such threats, but to ignore these issues is to betray a lack of care and attention that is required to be not only faithful stewards but also good Christian American citizens, who believe these rights of the religious should be protected by the First Amendment.

Bradford: There is a distinct sense in which evangelical Christians have already been marginalized, stereotyped and now ridiculed. These are the first steps towards being vilified and overtly persecuted. Right now the evangelical church in America is facing the stiff headwinds of cultural secularism, moral relativism and even aggressive atheism. As a result, the margins of acceptability for the Christian worldview are shrinking in society. Some of our ministries to university campuses are feeling this in very specific ways as ministry groups are being asked to move off campus in some regions of the country.

Stetzer: There have been several recent instances where

religious liberty has been eroded in America. Christian clubs have been “derecognized” by colleges and universities. Politically and legally, we are in the midst of contentious debates over the extent of our religious freedom in terms of health care and marriage. I do not believe these should be considered persecution. When we refer to this as such, we lessen the real examples in places like the Middle East. Our current issues not rising to the level of persecution does not mean we will never experience it in the United States.

Myth 5: Sunday morning is still the most segregated time of the week in the U.S.

Bradford: A new Pew Research Center report cites the Assemblies of God as the most diverse evangelical denomination in the U.S. Pew reports Assemblies of God adults are a third non-white. Our own statistical research, based on all ages of adherents, indicates we are now 42 percent nonwhite.

Stetzer: Churches are doing better and denominations are becoming more diverse, but there is still a significant amount of improvement to be made. LifeWay Research found two-thirds of American churchgoers say their church has done enough to become racially diverse. Almost all Protestant pastors (90 percent) say racial reconciliation is mandated by the gospel. However, more than 8 in 10 congregations are made up of one predominant race. American churchgoers like the idea of cultural and ethnic diversity, more than the actual practice of it in their church.

Drury: The church in America has been a slowly awakening giant in matters of race. Some of the reason that reconciliation has been so slow to take root is that the non-African-American church has not participated in the process wholeheartedly. Too often African-American churches are asking for this journey, and the rest of us are not involved enough and are unwilling to give up the power to others and humble ourselves to the realities.

One area I am seeing great hope is how the church is beginning to respond to our immigrant neighbors in North America. God can break chains of racism. In America, we now have a diverse Pentecost opportunity right in front of us.

Myth 6: If we elect the right political candidate, this nation will turn around.

Stetzer: Jesus is not coming back riding a donkey or an elephant, so let's not get too excited about a political savior.

Yet, Christians are called to be good citizens and engage in the political process. But we must always be aware that our hope and true citizenship rests in the kingdom of God, not in an American politician. Too often our confusion of the two results in our hindering the spread of the gospel. If we are not careful, we can make it appear as if the only way you are welcome at church is if you belong to a certain political party. As citizens of the United States we have certain First Amendment rights, but as citizens of God's kingdom we have a responsibility to lay down those rights if they interfere with the mission of our King. And He is the one who will ultimately set all things right.

Drury: That hasn't worked before and I don't suspect it will this time. I don't hold out for hope in government, but instead hold out hope for Jesus. The solution to the world's problems lies not in a political party or ruling policies, but in the hearts of men and women surrendering to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We know that our citizenship is of a higher variety, and our highest allegiance is to the Father in heaven, above any flag on earth.

Bradford: The heart of spiritual renewal lies in people coming to repentance and faith in Christ. Cultural, political and economic forces can play a limited role in preparing people's hearts, but it is a work of the Holy Spirit to bring authentic

spiritual renewal.

Ed Stetzer is the executive director of Lifeway Research. For the original article, visit [.](#)

What the Latest Clinton Email Drop Will Bring

The latest batch of emails from the private server Hillary Clinton used as U.S. secretary of state is due to be released on Wednesday, days after she lamented that months of unflattering headlines about the setup were largely out of her control.

A federal judge has ordered the State Department to release all of Clinton's work emails in monthly batches through to January 2016 after a Vice News reporter sued the department under freedom of information laws.

Criticism about Clinton's decision to set up an email account connected to a server in her New York home for her work as the nation's top diplomat have dogged her for more than six months, sometimes overshadowing her campaign to become the Democratic nominee for the November 2016 presidential election.

"Well, it is like a drip, drip, drip," Clinton said on Sunday in an interview with NBC News when asked about a series of incremental revelations about her email arrangement that have followed since its existence was first reported in March. "And that's why I said, there's only so much that I can control. But what I have tried to do in explaining this is to provide more transparency and more information than anybody

that I'm aware of who's ever served in the government."

Clinton apologized for the email arrangement this month, saying it was allowed but unwise.

About a quarter of the roughly 30,000 emails she returned to the State Department last year have been released so far. The State Department must produce at least another 6,000 or so on Wednesday, according to the order by U.S. District Judge Rudolph Contreras.

The contents of the emails released so far range from the quotidian business of an office job—in one exchange with an aide, Clinton struggles for several minutes to send a fax—to information the U.S. government says is classified, and redacted in the public copies, to protect national security.

The government forbids transmitting classified information outside secure, government-controlled channels.

Nearly 200 emails sent and received by Clinton contain classified information, although the State Department and other government agencies are currently arguing over how much of the information, if any at all, was classified at the time it was sent.

The Federal Bureau of Information is examining the server to see whether government information was mishandled. {eao}

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An Open Letter to Justin

Bieber About Living Like Jesus

Justin,

I read excerpts of your new interview in *Complex* magazine, and like many others, what jumped to my attention was that you want to live like Jesus—and you weren't ashamed to say it.

Those are powerful words, and I believe you sincerely mean it.

I'm just wondering, though, if you understand what it really means to live like Jesus.

Can I take a moment and share some of my personal story? You might find it helpful on your own journey.

I became a follower of Jesus at the age of 16 in 1971.

At that time I was a long-haired, LSD-using, heroin-shooting, hippie rock drummer (hey, we're both drummers!), and Jesus completely rocked my world.

It wasn't just a matter of getting rid of drugs and drinking.

It wasn't just a matter of cleaning up my filthy mouth and saying no to fleshly desires.

The old Mike Brown died—not just my outward sins but me myself—and from that moment on, Jesus was my Lord and Master and I lived to do His will.

That was almost 44 years ago, and I've never regretted it for a split second. What an incredible adventure! What an amazing life!

You see, when you find Jesus—I mean really find Him—everything changes.

You just don't add Him in to make things better.

You just don't follow His example and try to be nice to people.

You yourself are transformed.

The old Justin Bieber dies and a new Justin Bieber lives, and the new version of you is so much different than the old one that it's hard to believe you were ever that other person.

Not only so, but there's a change in ownership too.

You are no longer your own; you have been bought with a price; you now belong to God, and you live to please Him.

Unfortunately, a lot of preachers in America have this all wrong.

The way they preach you'd think that God is here to please us. They've turned the whole thing upside down.

We are here to please Him, and I can tell you based on 44 years of experience that there is no greater joy, no greater inner harmony, no greater fulfillment, no greater peace than living to please God.

And living to please God is where you'll find your real purpose, which is not to be famous or have beautiful girls throwing themselves at you or having access to the world's best drugs or putting out another viral video or lighting up social media with your latest post.

No, God's purpose for you is to be a world-changer, to use the gifts and talents He has given you and to really live like Jesus, which means a radical, revolutionary, holy lifestyle.

Of course, you could try to live like the contemporary version of Jesus—a really nice guy who loved everybody (except the religious people) and who was super “tolerant” and

“inclusive.”

Or you could take out your Bible and spend a few months reading through the gospels over and over again. Talk about a radical leader!

You'd hear Him say, “Enter at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who are going through it, because small is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

(I know this might sound narrow, but I'll give you an example. You mention wanting to live like Jesus, which, you say, would mean you wouldn't cheat on your girlfriend. It would also mean you wouldn't sleep with your girlfriend either—did you realize that?—and she wouldn't even be your girlfriend if she didn't love Jesus too.)

You'd hear Jesus say, “If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16:24-25).

That's pretty extreme too, since the person who took up His cross was never coming back.

Are you ready to take that one-way trip, never to return to the old life, living that radically new life in Him?

From the outside, it looks like drudgery—a bunch of religious traditions put together by religious people who just want to make everybody else as miserable as themselves.

I hate that form of religion too.

But from the inside—when you really come to know the Lord—you're exploding with life. Love so amazing you want to pinch yourself to see if it's real. Joy so intense you feel like you're going to burst. And a sense of purpose and destiny

beyond anything you've ever known.

Have you ever experienced what I'm talking about?

Have you ever known beyond any possible doubt that your sins are forgiven because of what Jesus did on the cross—the guilt is totally gone!—and you stand absolutely clean in God's sight?

Have you ever been so overwhelmed by God's love that all you can do is love Him back with tears of gratitude?

Justin, I'm sure you have a lot of yes-men surrounding you—after all, you're one of the most famous people in the world—and you probably have some "Christians" who will tell you what you want to hear.

But a real Christian will tell you the truth even if it hurts.

That's what love does, and that's what you need to hear more than anything: the truth.

So let me leave you with this (if you're actually reading this letter, that will be a miracle already).

Get alone one day when no one is around.

Turn off your cell phone and every other distraction.

And say this prayer to God from the depths of your heart: "Heavenly Father, whatever it takes, whatever it means, whatever the cost or consequence, I want to be your son and live like Jesus all the days of my life. If you show me the way, I will follow."

If you really mean it, you'll never be the same, and you'll never look back.

Jeb Bush: The Catholic Church 'Has Grounded Me and My Beliefs'

Millions of American Catholics, like me, are excited that Pope Francis is making his first journey to the United States. In our Holy Father, we have a model of personal holiness and deep concern for the most vulnerable among us. He reminds us to speak out for the persecuted, advocate for the unborn, comfort the afflicted and welcome the stranger.

Catholicism has grounded my own life. In Catholic teachings, the family is a "domestic church," and the Catholic faithful are a kind of extended family. The Catholic Church has always bound my own family together.

Even before my own conversion, we attended Mass together, sharing as a family the message of hope and love, praying for peace and grace. My wife was raised in the Catholic faith, we were married in a Catholic student center, and we in turn raised our children as Catholics.

After I lost my first campaign for governor of Florida in 1994, I took stock of my life and my beliefs, and I decided to fully embrace the faith that had been guiding my family and me for many years. I attended Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults classes. I gained a deeper appreciation for the sacraments of the church and the grace they impart. I studied Catholic Church doctrine, and how it is renewed in every age. The more I learned, the more I appreciated the rich history of the Church and its teachings, and my heart was changed by God's hand.

In the 20 years since my conversion, the Church has given me the faith and hope to cope with life's many challenges.

Members of my family were blessed to meet Pope John Paul II, one of the truly great saints of our time. I vividly remember 1979, when Saint John Paul, in solidarity with the Polish people, gave communion to more than 1 million Catholics in Warsaw, nourishing their faith and encouraging their determination to live in truth. He set a fire of liberty that led to the freedom of Poland and the end of Soviet domination.

I have witnessed the power of God, through His church, to touch lives and transform the world—both on the world stage and in my own heart. The church has grounded me and my beliefs in a deep way of thinking about mercy, penance and the dignity and potential of every life, young and old, rich and poor, born and not yet born.

The power of that Catholic faith can be seen today, not only in the crowds that will greet Pope Francis in the coming days, but in the millions of men and women who heal the sick, comfort the lonely, work for peace and feed the hungry. It is a faith that touches heart and mind, and it brings comfort to all who listen to its message of hope. And it is a faith that I am proud to call my own.

Reprinted from .

This Former Presidential Candidate Explains Why He

Endorsed Ted Cruz

U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, on Tuesday named former U.S. Congressman Bob Barr National Chair of the “Liberty Leaders for Cruz” coalition.

Barr represented the 7th District of Georgia in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1995 to 2003, served as a U.S. Attorney under President Ronald Reagan and was the Libertarian Party presidential candidate in 2008.

The campaign also released a video of eight leaders in the Liberty movement who are actively working for the Cruz campaign, featuring their personal stories of why they supported Ron Paul, and why in 2016, they support Ted Cruz for President. He currently practices law in Atlanta and serves on the Board of Directors of the National Rifle Association.

“I am truly honored to be asked by Sen. Cruz to chair ‘Liberty Leaders for Cruz,’” said Barr. “More than any other candidate for president in 2016, Cruz understands that the oath the president takes is a solemn commitment to always act in accordance with the Constitution, which is after all, the mechanism whereby our individual and collective freedoms as a country are secured. It is that commitment to the Constitution and to liberty that has drawn me to serve Sen. Cruz.”

“The U.S. government is crushing liberty at nearly every turn. Our Constitutional rights are under attack like never before and we must fight back,” Cruz said. “I am thrilled to have Congressman Barr, a proven defender of liberty in this country, chair our Liberty Leaders coalition. Bob’s long history of protecting our Constitutional freedoms and his consistent, conservative record make him best equipped to lead this important coalition.”

The Surprising Reason America Is Not a Theocracy

The beginning of American law, the concepts of independence and freedom, is rooted in the belief that moral absolutes exist within a universal standard of justice independent from political rulers. The Judeo-Christian faith is not separate from but foundational to just and fair public policies that encourage human flourishing.

More than 2,000 Bible verses teach civics, providing examples of good and evil rulers, judges and political authorities. These instructions on civics are informed by approximately 500 verses on salvation, 400 on hell and 250 on heaven—with the overall foundation that right living best leads to a peaceful, thriving society.

Six of the Ten Commandments specifically define civil law. The Western concept and definition of murder, manslaughter, theft, assault, marriage, birth, and other civil and criminal matters are defined and ascribed judicial punishment under Mosaic law. Religious freedom and self-governance are defined in the first commandment, family governance in the second, private property rights in the fifth and a fair trial with witnesses in the sixth.

The Founding Fathers knew this, recalling Exodus 18 and 21, Leviticus 18, Ezekiel 3 and Isaiah 33:22, among others, understanding the Judeo-Christian God, the Lord, as lawgiver, judge and king. Following this model, they devised three branches of government. Congress, the legislative branch—represents the lawgiver; the judicial branch—the judge and the executive branch—the king, primary ruler, head of

government.

But the Founding Fathers also knew the danger of authoritarian rule that some Puritans had tried to implement in 17th-century American colonies.

For example, a non-Puritan and someone who didn't agree with Puritan laws would not have been able to live in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. John Winthrop, a Puritan attorney and its governor, sought to instill a magisterial government that prohibited anyone from voting unless the magistrate approved the specific Christian men who fit its criteria. Winthrop opposed codifying laws, believing that democracy was "the meanest and worst of all forms of government."

The "City on a Hill" to which Winthrop referred in an oft-quoted sermon, ended up being a place that excluded anyone who disagreed with magisterial rule. His colony effectively illustrated the very nonbiblical values that restrain freedom and liberty—and the opposite of meaning of the teaching he referenced.

Upon arrival to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s, English clergyman and lawyer Roger Williams opposed Winthrop's form of government. But the Colony's rulers didn't allow for free thought or speech. They rejected his notion of "freedom of conscience." First the magistrates placed Williams under house arrest. He was forbidden from discussing his ideas. But when he continued to speak his mind—in his own home—the magistrates banished him from the colony. Next, they changed their mind and sought to kill him.

Winthrop warned Williams, who fled, leaving his family behind. His suffering was so great, he barely survived. Because of this, he wrote one of the most influential treatises in history, *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*. Thomas Jefferson not only read Williams' treatise, but also John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, in which Locke referenced more than

1,500 Bible verses.

Were it not for Roger Williams' influence, it's unlikely Thomas Jefferson would have written what he did in the Declaration of Independence. In it, Jefferson references God four times:

- "The laws of nature and nature's God,"
- All men are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights,"
- "The Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions," and
- "The protection of Divine Providence."

Jefferson intentionally declared that a deity exists and is knowable by human reason. He identified this deity as a *creator* and *judge*. He asked in *Notes on the State of Virginia*:

"And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift of God?"

Foundational to the Declaration of Independence was creationism and morality. As John Adams remarked,

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

The Founders ensured the validity of freedom originating from God, not man. Their assurance rested in "In God We Trust," printed on American money, and in "One Nation Under God," in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Bible is most often used when courts require oaths of office for U.S. Presidents and elected officials. The Judeo-Christian God is mentioned in all 50 state constitutions. The

Supreme Court opens each session verbally declaring, "God save the United States of America."

The Founders did not seek to create a theocracy understanding biblical Christianity to be non-coercive. They understood that only through biblical principles freedom and liberty exist (Gal. 5:1). As Dostoevsky and others from atheist countries assert, "If there is no God, everything is permitted."

The Founders knew that in every human spirit lies an innate desire to be free. That spirit of freedom became the personification of American character.

As Ronald Reagan said in 1952, "America is less of a place than an idea, and if it is an idea, and I believe that to be true, it is an idea that has been deep in the souls of man." As the soul informs the mind, heart and body, it also informs every area of life in which people live—including politics.

3 Keys to Overcoming Anxiety

I was sitting in the center of the long room, at one of the fancy new electric typewriters. It was a timed typing test in my first semester of typing class. She said go, and I could not keep up.

In one of my finest moments, I ripped the paper out of the machine, crumpled it in a ball, and threw it on the floor. "I cannot do this!" I yelled.

The teacher was chagrined and quite speechless.

I practiced and practiced and one day beat that typing teacher in a test of speed and accuracy. Then I grew up and worked 10 years as a medical transcriptionist, typing an average of

80-90 words per minute.

Now I'm in my place as teacher, and I see frustration every day. Students try to do something new, and they don't get it. Reactions vary from apathy and giving up, to tears and arms crossed in anger.

I've decided frustration is good.

Frustration means you've come to something new that you don't understand or can't master immediately. It means **you're about to grow** and cross into something you've never understood or accomplished before. Frustration means a teacher is stretching you.

My favorite reaction to frustration is questions. The best students start asking "Why?" and "How?" They keep asking until you've given them a satisfactory explanation or until they can do what you've asked them to do.

Rule No. 2 in my class:

Be an Aggressive Learner. Ask Your Questions.

Paul says:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

See the frustration Paul is addressing? He gives us no options for going to either extreme of giving up or of freaking out.

"Start asking your questions," Paul says. Pray. Ask.

Keep asking. Keep asking. Keep asking. That's what good students do. They push the teacher until they get the *why* or

the *how* figured out, and a good teacher can't wait to help them push through the frustration to a place of new understanding or new mastery of a skill.

No doubt you have some new hard thing in front of you right now. How are you responding to it?

What the Bible Says About Big Government, Pt. 1

This is part one of a two-part essay.

Evidence is mounting that many government programs fail to accomplish all that their advocates had promised. What do the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures have to say on the subject of government power and functions? News reports about clergymen's public statements and actions often reveal the men of the cloth on the side of big government – favoring more handouts, more intervention, more regulation. Does the Bible support that position?

First, however, just what is government?

The Essence of Big Government: What Authorities Say

- “The civil law ... is the force of the commonwealth, engaged to protect the lives, liberties, and possessions of those who live according to its laws, and has power to take away life, liberty, or goods from him who disobeys.” (John Locke)
- “Government is not reason, it is not eloquence – it is force. Like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master ...” (George Washington)

- “Law is the common force organized to act as an obstacle to injustice.” (Frederic Bastiat)
- “The essential characteristic of all government, whatever its form, is authority. ... Government, in its last analysis, is organized force.” (Woodrow Wilson)
- “The state belongs to the sphere of coercion. It would be madness to renounce coercion, particularly in the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat.” (Nikolai Lenin)
- “A government may be freely chosen, but it is still not all of us. It is some men vested with authority over other men.” And democracy “... is a name for a particular set of conditions under which the right to coerce others is acquired and held.” (Charles Frankel)
- “The State is the party that always accompanies its proposals by coercion, and backs them by force. ” (Charles A. Reich)

It should come as no surprise to students of the Bible that the Scriptures analyzed the ultimate nature of government much earlier than any of the writers cited.

Christians sometimes wonder what Jesus had to say about the role of government and theologians normally reply that he said very little on the subject. The principal relevant statement recorded in the gospels is His response to a question as to whether it was proper to pay the head tax imposed by Rome. The tax amounted to about 25 cents a person and was regarded as a mark of servitude to Rome.

In ancient times the authority of a ruler was symbolized by the circulation of his coinage and coins bearing the ruler's image were considered his property, in the final analysis. When Jesus requested that His questioners show Him one of the coins used to pay the tax, a coin was brought and He asked, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They replied that it was Caesar's. Jesus then said, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God

the things that are God's." The account is told in Matthew 22 and in parallels in the gospels according to Mark and according to Luke.

While Jesus said little about the power of government and what government should or should not do, two other New Testament writers came down solidly on the side of respect for the civil authorities and obedience to law. One of these was the apostle Paul. A respected New Testament scholar wrote about Paul a few years ago, "It is evident from many allusions in his writings, that the thought of Rome had strongly affected his imagination. He associated the great city with all that was most august in earthly power. He believed that it had been divinely appointed to maintain order and peace among the contending races."

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul offered the following admonition: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are appointed by God" (Rom. 13:1).

Pay your taxes and give respect and honor to whom they are due, said Paul. Conduct yourself properly and you will have no reason to fear an official. "But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain" (Rom. 13:4).

And St. Peter wrote:

"Submit yourselves to every human authority for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme, or to governors, as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and to praise those who do right. For it is the will of God that by doing right you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free people, do not use your liberty as a covering for evil, but live as servants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:13-17).

The statements are brief because the writers were not

primarily concerned for man's relation with the authorities but for his relation with God and his fellow man. But the statements are definite. And they provided the scriptural foundation for what some students have considered Martin Luther's exaggerated reverence for the State.

While there is support for paying taxes, obedience to law, and respect for civil authority in the New Testament, no detailed analysis of the nature of government or the proper functions of government is to be found there. There is, however, ample guidance for the individual conduct of government officials. They are human beings, so they will be fair, as all humans should be. They will deal justly with the people. Tax collectors will not steal because nobody should steal.

Another Biblical View

In the Old Testament, the writer of the books of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel draws a definite contrast between limited government and the all-powerful State. The writer of the two books drew on earlier sources, some of which probably went back as far as 1000 B.C. or earlier and all of which had been completed by about 600 B.C. For generations the Jewish people had been led by officials called judges, of whom at least one, Deborah, was a woman. Best known of the judges to modern readers is Gideon, because his name is carried by the organization recognized for its practice of distributing Bibles in hotels and motels. The judges combined civil, military, and religious functions in their office. They led the Jewish people in battle against their enemies, settled questions of law, administered justice in disputes between individuals, and functioned as priests and prophets. To the enemies of Israel they often showed no quarter and in some of their judicial decisions they may have been arbitrary but their leadership of their own people was apparently rather mild. The writer of the book of Judges reports, in chapter 17 and again in his concluding verse, Judges 21:25, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyon did what was right in his own eyes."

Gideon did not even want to be king. After he had led the men of Israel successfully against their enemies, they asked him to rule over them but he replied, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you."

After the death of Gideon one of his sons, Abimelech, seized power briefly and killed all of his brothers except one, the youngest, Jotham, who hid himself and escaped. When Jotham was told what his brother had done, he related a parable, recorded in Judges 9, about the trees going forth to anoint a king over themselves. The olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine all declined to abandon their productive pursuits to become king, so the trees then turned to the bramble and the bramble accepted.

The Worst on Top

In *The Road to Serfdom*, Prof. Friedrich A. Hayek, for somewhat different reasons from those cited in Jotham's parable, reached a conclusion that resembles the parable of the trees and the bramble. Prof. Hayek describes how kakistocracy arises in a chapter entitled, "Why the Worst Get on Top."

Samuel was the last of the series of prophet-judges. He administered justice in his own city of Ramah, a few miles north of Jerusalem, and traveled a judicial circuit that took him annually to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. When senility approached, Samuel made his two sons judges but the Scripture records that they lacked their father's honorable character and "they followed after unlawful gain, and they took bribes, and they perverted justice" (1 Sam. 8:3).

The Jewish people were still engaged in the prolonged effort to conquer the land they had occupied. Recurring wars threatened their security. Such enemies as the Philistines were better organized and better equipped than the people of Israel who retained their loose tribal structure and had not

yet fully abandoned the nomadic life. So the elders of Israel came to Samuel with a request: "You are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now, install for us a king to govern us like all the nations" (1 Sam 8:5).

The request displeased Samuel and he prayed to the Lord who admonished Samuel to heed their request, "For it is not you they have rejected, but Me they have rejected from reigning over them" (1 Sam 8:7). But Samuel was directed to tell them what it would be like to have a king. He did so in words recorded in 1 Samuel 8:

"This will be the judgment concerning the king who will reign over you: Your sons he will take in order to place them for himself in his chariots and as his horsemen, and they will run before his chariot, and in order to assign for himself captains of thousands and captains of fifties, and to plow his ground, and to gather in his harvest, and to make his weapons of war and the equipment of his chariots. And your daughters he will take for perfumers, and cooks, and bakers. And your choicest fields, and vineyards, and olive groves he will take and give them to his servants. And of your seed fields and your vineyards he will take a tenth of their harvest and will give it to his high officials and to his servants. And your menservants and your maidservants, and the best of your young men and asses he will take and make do his work. Your flocks he will take a tenth of, but you will be his for slaves. And you will cry out in that day because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves ..." (1 Sam 8:11-18).

The people refused to listen to Samuel, however, and insisted that they wanted a king to govern them and fight their battles. Their wishes prevailed. They got big government.

The king who was selected was Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin. Many years before, when Moses explained to the people of

Israel the law that he had delivered to them, he told them what kind of person to choose as king when the time came. His counsel is recorded in Deuteronomy 17:

“When you have come into the land which the Lord your God gives you and possess it and dwell there and then say, ‘I will set a king over me just like all the nations that are around me,’ you must set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. You must select a king over you who is from among your brothers. You may not select a foreigner over you who is not your countryman. What is more, he shall not accumulate horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order that he accumulate horses, for as the Lord has said to you, ‘You must not go back that way ever again.’ He shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he acquire for himself excess silver and gold” (Deut. 17:14-17).

In a book based on his research at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace of Stanford University, Alvin Rabushka wrote, “Governments take resources from the public but use them to maximize their own welfare.” Both Moses and Samuel recognized this propensity and warned about it. To modern taxpayers the tenth part of their grain and vineyards and flocks, that Samuel said the king would require, must appear mild indeed but in time the burden became onerous to the people. Samuel’s prophecy that one day they would cry out because of their king was not realized immediately. Then, as now, persons with the vision to foretell the consequences of certain popular choices and actions could only tell *what* would occur as a result, not *when* it would occur. {eoa}

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This is part one of a two-part essay. It has been slightly edited. Join us tomorrow for part two. For the full, original article—published on March 1, 1976—go to .