

Third-Wave Conservatism: America's Rising Hope

John Fonte is a notable American scholar and commentator specializing in issues related to American politics, nationalism, sovereignty and multiculturalism. He is a senior fellow and director of the Center for American Common Culture at the Hudson Institute. He received his B.A. and M.A. in history from the University of Arizona and his Ph.D. in world history from the University of Chicago.

Fonte is perhaps best known for his 2011 book, "Sovereignty or Submission: Will Americans Rule Themselves or Be Ruled by Others?" He has been a vocal critic of multiculturalism and transnational progressivism, arguing that these ideologies weaken traditional national identities and the coherence of nation-states. He asserts that such views are antithetical to the values that underpin Western democracies.

His speech, "National Conservatism, Freedom Conservatism and Americanism," was given at Hillsdale's College National Leadership Seminar in Bellevue, Washington.

He said modern American conservatism can be divided into three waves: The first wave, embodied by William F. Buckley Jr. and Ronald Reagan, lasted from the mid-1950s to the end of the Cold War; the second wave, expressed by Paul Ryan and the two Bush presidencies, ran from the 1990s to roughly the second decade of this century; and the third wave, exemplified by Jeff Sessions and Donald Trump, is ongoing.

Ronald Reagan represented the first wave; his three-legged stool metaphor described the president's coalition of conservatives as economic conservatives, social conservatives and defense hawks. As to social conservatism, Reagan became convinced that the only way to defeat Soviet communism's anti-

god ideology was found in Scripture, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10a, NIV).

Solomon's Proverbs 17:24 –[Spiritual] wisdom is before the face of the perceptive man—is elucidated by Jewish Hebrew scholar Michael V. Fox:

Wisdom's truths are not hidden, but not everybody is willing to perceive them, to take them to themselves and realize their language.

For wisdom cannot be bought—not because it is so expensive, but because no valuables can be compared to it. Wisdom belongs to a different category of value and hence cannot be acquired [through secular education theories].

Scripture is no lazy man's book, or as A.W. Pink noted, "Much of its treasure, like the valuable minerals stored in the earth's bowels, only yields up to the diligent seeker."

Regarding "wisdom and the perceptive man," the U.S. kept the Soviets for decades at bay militarily but without addressing Lenin's godless ideology. Reagan perceived that bringing God into the equation would provide the decisive overriding factor. Dr. Paul Kengor tells the story in his groundbreaking book, "God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life."

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Ronald Reagan's contribution to America was spiritual, for the simple reason that Scripture is concerned with the spiritual conflict that underlies history.

President George H.W. Bush (41st U.S. president) initially represented the second wave of modern American conservatism (1989-1993), famously stating during his 1988 presidential campaign, "Read my lips: no new taxes."

However, facing rising deficits, he agreed to a budget compromise with Congress in 1990, which included tax increases. Reagan conservatives saw this as a betrayal that intensely damaged his credibility. Bush 41 also supported legislation that significantly increased immigration.

George W. Bush (43rd U.S. president) promoted North American economic integration and declared in 2005 that U.S. foreign policy would henceforth be “to seek and support the growth of [democracy] in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”

Bush 43 daydreamed of a Christless marketplace, where “democratic capitalism” was the magic potion that would bring freedom and world order, especially to the Middle East.

In his excellent “1 & 2 Kings Commentary,” Peter J. Leithart summarizes Bush’s worldly approach and Oval Office homilies:

Put a McDonald’s and a Gap in every major Middle Eastern city, and terrorism will drown in a wave of Happy Meals.

Strangely, it is not just abstract theorists who hope for a world without enemies, but politicians, even in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, the Madrid and London bombings, and continuing terror throughout the Middle East.

Mistaking that enmity cannot be cajoled, co-opted, convinced, or smilingly coerced to become an ally.

President George W. Bush’s idea of spirituality requires some clarification. When asked on Nov. 20, 2003, at a press conference in London with British Prime Minister Tony Blair:

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Mr. President, when you talk about peace in the Middle East,

you've often said that freedom is granted by the Almighty. Some people who share your beliefs don't believe that Muslims worship the same Almighty. I wonder about your views on that.

Bush 43: I do say that freedom is the Almighty's gift to every person. I also condition it by saying freedom is not America's gift to the world. It's much greater than that, of course. And I believe we [Christianity and Islam] worship the same God.

Speaker Paul Ryan, you may remember, dealt Trump a withering blow right before the Nov. 8, 2016, election with Hillary Clinton. On Monday, Oct. 10, 2016, the speaker told his fellow Republicans that he no longer would defend the Republican nominee, Donald Trump, but would instead “use the next 29 days to focus on preserving the House and Senate.”

Fonte concludes that the third wave of conservatism and nationalist-populist revolt against the policies and attitudes of the second wave (Bush 41, Bush 43 and Paul Ryan) was turbocharged by Trump, who remains the leading political figure of third-wave conservatism, although in Dr. Fonte's view, “third-wave conservatism did not begin, nor will it end, with Trump.”

That said, we come to the redoubtable Russell Moore, editor-in-chief of Christianity Today, who announced last week that “Black Christian Leaders Find Hope with Kamala Harris.”

Finding hope with Harris, as framed by Moore, is rather puzzling. He seemingly prefers to overlook that taking the life of an unborn baby in utero is front and center of the presidential campaign, as well as that Harris' pro-abortion extremism only intensified with her tenure in the U.S. Senate (2017 to 2021).

For example, Harris voted against the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, a bill designed to keep babies born

alive following a failed abortion attempt. The nonpartisan GovTrack named her as the most liberal U.S. senator in America.

Moore should be ashamed to call himself a Christian.

One hundred years from now, historians will record that secularism's early 21st-century priests and priestesses brought America to her knees by immersing America's youth in Critical Race Theory, homosexual and gender dysphoria, race division and teaching children to hate America and each other. All this was due to the diabolical diatribe of cultural Marxism's collaborators manning the nation's spiritual, intellectual, educational, economic and vocational cultural levers of power.

Yet, on the verge of plunging into spiritual darkness, the nation has been pulled back from the brink of destruction.

We see signs of hope that appeared in North Carolina from 2021 to 2022. Fifty North Carolina pastors and spiritual leaders ran for city council, county commissioner, school board, state representative and so forth; 25 won the primary, and 10 won the general election.

Gideons and Rahabs have begun to stand and are entering America's public squares. Over the next century, the spiritual awakening will start as the men and women of Issachar move from state to state, all for "the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith" (The Mayflower Compact, 1620).

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David Lane is the founder of the American Renewal Project.