

Like Martin Luther, Today's Believers Must Destroy Golden Calves

The German Augustinian monk and religious reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) was the catalyst and seminal figure of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation. In the fall of 1517, he drafted a set of propositions for the purpose of conducting an academic debate on a particular well-known Catholic method of exploitation in the Middle Ages, the practice of selling indulgences.

This practice involved a monetary payment of penalty that supposedly absolved one of past sins and/or released one from post-death purgatory.

Claiming the sale of indulgences was unbiblical, Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. Luther's objections were particularly directed toward what he deemed as 1) the heresy of the purchase and sale of salvation, 2) aggressive marketing practices of German Dominican friar Johann Tetzel [(1465-1519) and 3) the scandalous conduct of 'pardoners.'

Friar Tetzel, the inquisitor for Poland and Saxony, was purported to have coined the jingle, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs."

Unbeknownst to himself, the small-town monk Luther had just lit the fuse of a religious reform movement that swept Europe in the 1500s. Known as the Protestant Reformation, the movement resulted in the creation of a branch of Christianity called Protestantism, a name used collectively to refer to the many religious groups that separated from the Roman Catholic Church due to differences in doctrine.

The term “Protestant” originates from the Latin word “protestari,” meaning “to declare publicly, testify, protest.”

Deeming the Catholic Church’s practice of “pilgrimages, the sale of indulgences to obtain forgiveness, and prayers addressed to saints” an absurdity, Luther instead embraced the doctrine from Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV): “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

In the summer of 1521, Luther sequestered himself at Wartburg Castle—hiding from secular and papal authorities who sought to arrest him on heresy charges—as he set to work translating the Bible into the German vernacular. He translated the New Testament from Greek to German in 1522, and the Old Testament from Hebrew to German in 1534.

As God’s Word came alive, an outburst of religious awakening swept across Germany and Europe, to arrive at America’s eastern shores in the early 17th century. It ultimately resulted in the transformation of traditional Western moral and legal philosophy by making the Bible, not reason, and more particularly the Ten Commandments, the basic source and summary of natural law.

French mathematician, physicist, religious philosopher and theologian Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) already had proposed a century earlier that a key principle of just government requires biblical benchmarks or guidelines in order to judge.

The Catholic Church’s practice and veneration of relics—such as the alleged three fragments of the cross; the finger of Thomas that went into the side of Jesus; two thorns from the crown of thorns; the stump on which, purportedly, the apostle Paul was beheaded; and the tooth of baby Jesus—offered sentimentality but not resurrection power, “for the living have no tomb.”

What is most puzzling in our own nation’s setting revolves

around American Christendom's surrender to secularism of America's once Judeo-Christian heritage and biblically based culture established by the Founding Fathers. As a consequence of the Christian abandonment of the public square, spiritual worship now centers within and around the State.

The State's secular priests and priestesses banned prayer to Jehovah in public schools in 1962 [Engel v. Vitale], outlawed the Bible from public education in 1963 [Abington School District v. Schempp], miraculously discovered a constitutional 'right' to kill unborn babies in 1973 [Roe v. Wade], tore down the Ten Commandments from public schools, courthouses, and government buildings in 1980 [Stone v. Graham], exalted, normalized, and codified into law homosexual intercourse and same-sex marriage in 2015 [Obergefell v. Hodges], and pronounced 'special rights' for homosexuals and transgenders in 2020 [Bostock v. Clayton County].

God's enemies—Big Business, Big Tech, Bud Light, Fortune 500, and Big Biden—venerate the golden calves of multiculturalism, political correctness and secularism as they incite instability in the culture, whip up division between races, and promote political upheaval. Deifying wokeism, Critical Race Theory, DEI [diversity, equity, inclusion], and radical environmentalism, the State's sacrosanct sacraments include abortion, "anti-racism" struggle sessions, vaccines, and obsessive recycling.

As individual freedoms wane, government mandates and edicts are now viewed as the ultimate source of authority. American Christendom meanwhile cowers behind the four walls of the church building, giving center stage to butts, buildings, and budgets instead of getting involved in the culture. Yet it would seem that a focus to ascertain God's model for cultural transformation would be deemed essential for a healthy church.

What appears certain is that very little remains of the robust theological underpinnings and inherent power [Gr. *dunamis*]

that took off in Germany in 1517, soared in England in 1534, and began its triumphal march on the Eastern Shores of America in 1620.

What was once publicly declared and testified to, remains today, often even privately, unstated and unexpressed.

Famed sociologist and best-selling author Robert N. Bellah (1927-2013) spells out what it was that, after arriving at America's shores in 1620, launched America's meteoric rise in world history: "The Bible was one book that literate Americans in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries could be expected to know well. Biblical imagery provided the basic framework for imaginative thought in America up until quite recent times."

Cunningly expunged from American culture by God's antagonists and foes, the Bible in contemporary secularized America has been largely removed from church houses, schoolhouses, statehouses and courthouses, so that biblical illiteracy now monopolizes the culture.

Still and all, Gideons and Rahabs are entering the public square, and a cloud the size of a man's hand is appearing on the horizon (1 Kings 18:44-46). {eo}

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