

Mere Christendom

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Douglas Wilson

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For Knox

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Preface

In the waning days of the British Empire, one wit complained that “everything was at sea, except for the fleet.” We think we can relate to this, except that as Americans, who like to think that because we do everything bigger, faster, and on a grander scale, we think that *our* cultural disintegration has to be more in the grand style—kind of like a Super Bowl halftime gone wrong, as being watched by someone who had just dropped a couple of hits of contaminated acid. If the last few years are anything to go on, it certainly seems that way.

I am offering this book to evangelical Christians, and evangelical Christians are quite accustomed to the basic thesis of this book, which is that “Jesus is the answer.” But because they are also accustomed to express this sentiment

in ways that artfully dodge the real issues, we should perhaps take just a moment to look at things more closely.

Jesus is the answer, but to which questions? The way we usually frame it, we mean that He is the answer to the problems of personal guilt and need, and then personal salvation after that.

The point of this book is that Jesus is the answer to every ultimate question that can be framed by man, and that this is not limited to the first person singular—"Why am I here? Where am I going? Why am I so guilty? Is there a way out? How should I then live along the way? Who am I accountable to?" These are all wonderful questions, and they are the necessary starting point. Individuals as individuals must get right with God, and a man must be born again if he is to see the kingdom of God. Thus far our evangelical pattern.

But at some point, we have to move on to the first person plural. "Why are *we* here? Where are we going? Why are we so guilty?" and all the rest. Cultures and societies and generations need Christ also. The Lord Jesus Christ is not just the answer to our personal dilemma. He is the eternal Logos of God, and as such, He is the spoken Answer to every legitimate question that any given society might pose, or all of mankind for that matter. His Lordship applies to politics, culture, entertainment, media, and His answers to our rebellions and follies are just exactly what we need to hear.

But if we want deliverance, we must call upon Him. We must name Him. Everyone who calls on the name of the

Lord will be saved. The framework for doing this is what I am calling *mere Christendom*, and hence this book.

I argue here for a principled abandonment of the disastrous experiment of secularism, and for a corporate confession of the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, and all done in such a way as to preserve and protect our liberties. This no doubt raises questions, and hence this book.

But before we get into it, I also need to share a few things about the structure and format of the book, which means that I should explain how it came about. Over the years, as I have argued for a proper understanding of the common law, natural revelation, American history, theocracy, Protestant resistance theory, free speech, and whatnot, a number of these elements began to take shape as a coherent “project.”

As I posted a number of articles to my blog on these various issues, I started to attach a tag to them, and that tag was *mere Christendom*. They all had something in common, which is that over time they all contributed to a sprawling and smoking slag heap of words. They may have been sparkling and effervescent words, but it was a slag heap of them nonetheless—somewhere north of 400,000 of them. What I did was to hire my grandson, Knox Merkle, to work through all that material and pull out and arrange sections that could be used in a book like this, a book of ordinary size, and that was somewhat episodic or snapshotty in nature. You may wonder what *that* is supposed to mean, but it should become apparent to you quickly enough—provided you go ahead and read it.

At any rate, this assigned task of assembly was very ably performed by Knox, and then after that I wrote over the top of the whole thing, taking out infelicities and putting new ones in.

This book is therefore dedicated to Knox. It really is wonderful to have your children and grandchildren engaged in the battle together with you. And when that battle is the cultural equivalent of Helm's Deep, it is a particular encouragement.

Douglas Wilson

Moscow, Idaho

PART ONE



Where We
Are Now

CHAPTER 1

The Wickedness of Secularism

What is secularism? Aside from being the villain of this book? Secularism is the idea that it is possible for a society to function as a coherent unit without reference to God. It is the idea that a culture can operate on the basis of a metaphysical and religious agnosticism. It is the idea that we can understand what human rights are without knowing what a human being actually is.



There are often occasions for many to trot out that apocryphal Luther quote about preferring to be governed by a wise

Turk than a foolish Christian. Right, but what if you get a foolish Turk? Now what? But even though Luther didn't say it, I would agree with him if he had—I personally would much rather be governed by a pagan who acted like a Christian than a Christian who acted like a pagan. But what we always seem to get are pagans who act like pagans, and then, when we object to *that*, we are soundly refuted by a misunderstanding of something Luther never said. All I want is a wise Christian. Is that too much to ask? Apparently.



In a Darwinian society, the highest civic value has to be survival, and since we are talking about species, it has to be survival of the *group*. There is therefore no theoretical ground for our secularist rulers to value individual liberty. The true ground of individual liberty is the recognition that individuals will live forever, and in a way that the current regime will not.

In order for genuine liberty to be extended to non-Christians, it is essential that non-Christians not be allowed to define genuine liberty. The blind should not lead the blind, as someone once taught us, and it is astonishing that even some Christians have been maneuvered into thinking that blind leadership can have any hope of keeping us on the road and out of the ditch.

The public square cannot be neutral. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar isn't. If Jesus is Lord, the liberties of those who don't believe in Him are far more secure than the liberties of