

Fixing Blame or Fixing Problems; Five Myths we need...

BEYOND CULTURE WARS BY MICHAEL S. HORTON

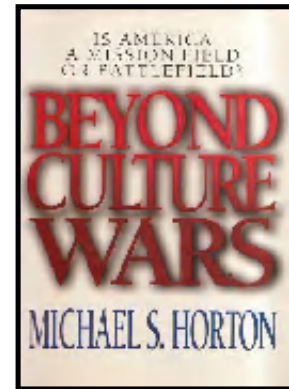
“The church reformed...and always reforming”.

ECCLESIA REFORMATA SIMPER REFORMANDA

Martin Luther warned that “human nature is such that, ever since Eden, we will always return eventually to some form of paganism” – which is why reform is always a need...

Myth 1: the problem is Humanism

Humanism should be correctly defined by the history – where humanism was instrumental in the *Protestant Reformation*. It was only in recent history that the term acquired a *bad name* after John Dewey (father of modern pragmatic education) and Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote *The Humanist Manifesto*...from a secular viewpoint.



Myth 2: the problem is the “Cultural Elite”

This view has much to do with the sense that the media, entertainment, politics and popular literature shape the worldview of the wider culture. The trappings of popular culture often result in the products – rather than sources – being the object of conflict – but for Horton, this approach is misdirected.

Myth 3: American culture is a Judeo-Christian Monolith

To sum this myth up in a few words, the religious convictions so revered from the past (the Founding Fathers) cannot be the source of conviction for the present society. Such an application is in error in – thinking that those early days were purely Puritan...

Myth 4: the greatest challenge today is atheism

Recalling that this book was published in 1994, the following information is somewhat *forward-thinking* in terms of identifying the direction of the culture. First, that secularization is actually religiously guided; that is, that the trend toward a Godless society is ironically driven or distinguished by Christian influence.

Second, our present democracy is “devolving” into the *rule of the mob* – rather than the *rule of law*, liberty is turning into moral anarchy, and justice is rapidly becoming state oppression.

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In these snippets of Horton's historical discussion is insufficient information to fully understand what he is trying to communicate or explain; and to have his apparent understanding would be to fully understand the finer details of terms such as secularism, Judeo-Christian, and atheism.

To add to the confusion is yet another "-eism" called **pantheism** – which is what Horton calls "the problem" in today's culture. This all-encompassing or *anything goes* view basically considers that *everything* is true; **and in the variety of world views, Christianity is only one of many...**

In this anything goes view is the raw "civil religion" that can (and does) use God in some capacity – whether it be implied or expressed as "supreme being", god, universal power, great creator or the like. In such variations and abstracts is realization that this god can be many things to many people – and the risk that this "unknown god" can end-up being nothing to no one.

God and truth are synonymous¹; thus, the *anything goes* pantheism leads to an equally protracted and perverted view of truth. On the one hand, truth is not an issue; but on the other hand, everything is true...

With truth (or God) protracted to any form desired by the viewer (or the created), limits or boundaries do not exist; in other words, man can conceive and concoct any sense of truth, of a god.

In the extremes of truth lies the real basis on which evangelical Christianity must approach to world. **What is truth, or what is true?**

Horton suggests the example of first century Christians that argued the case of truth – rather than a program of moral improvement or national salvation.

Myth 5: Political solutions are ultimate

In the explanation of this myth is yet another problem or term called **idolatry** – or the worship of anything other than God. Idols have long existed (since the *dawn of the age*) and can be very overt or very covert, apparent or unapparent.

Anything that brings hope to the degree that, if lost, would render you hopeless is an idol; still another definition might be anything that consumes your life or thoughts. Idols can include self, another person, place or thing...

In the matter of this myth, politics or the politic can become an idol – a perceived or accepted solution to cultural, societal and other problems.

Politics can be expanded to commerce or business (i.e. money or wealth), to power and authority (i.e. the state or politic...), and to possession and conquest (i.e. land, property and control of people...as property).

¹ Remember that Jesus was the bearer of truth; that Jesus left the "helper" – the spirit of truth – when he ascended into heaven...

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Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was a writer and, of particular importance, a political dissident of the former Soviet Union. At least once, he came to America in the capacity of an intellectual and, through such contact, observed and recorded observations and insights of our culture and country. Most profound was perhaps his dismissal of democracy as to its merits and virtue (as a government). Recognizing that democracy shares some similarity with Marxism, Aleksandr was not well-received in his views and comments; for to draw his comparison was to suggest that democracy is just another man-made institution that “presuppose rationalism, human goodness and autonomy” – only to “**reduce man to a merely economic animal whose whole existence is nothing more than factors of production and consumption.**”

Aleksandr wrote:

The tilt of freedom toward evil has come about gradually, but it evidently stems from a humanistic and benevolent concept according to which man – the master of this world – does not bear any evil within himself and all the defects of his life are caused by misguided social systems, which must therefore be corrected.

In this quote is the expressed observation that **the problems of culture or society can be resolved by “social, moral, and political reform” – and our government is then viewed as the answer.**

Horton adds more (than I include), but he summarizes that capitalism is not Christian – but at best, is a man-made system with some Christian influences. He continues with agreement that politics cannot bring about faith, hope and love; it cannot deliver on the promise to be a god, our God. Politics and government institutions are man-made and, being so, are inclined to the “incurable depravity of human nature.” Whereas the kingdom of God stands forever, societies and their political systems come and go – are born...and then die.

Government cannot make people good...