**“Glen’s Parallax Perspectives”** is a series of TV programs offering **fresh ways for people to see issues** such as foreign policy, social and economic justice, the environment, governmental functioning, and so forth. We provide **voices and viewpoints that are rarely heard in mainstream media**.

**Mainstream media, politicians, and culture see the world in conventional ways. Therefore, in order to solve problems, we need to see things in fresh ways.** Glen Anderson created this TV series to help people see things differently so we can solve problems at all levels from the local to the global.

This series title refers to “***parallax***,” which is the view you get by looking from a different perspective. For example, put one finger in front of your nose and another finger farther away. Close one eye. Then open that eye and close the other. Your fingers will seem to move. This is called a “parallax” view. **This TV series invites you to look at issues from fresh perspectives.**

Each program airs three times a week (currently every Monday at 1:30 pm, every Wednesday at 5:00 pm, and every Thursday at 9:00 pm) for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for cable TV subscribers in Thurston County, Washington. TCTV is part of Thurston County Media. You can see their schedule at [**www.tcmedia.org**](http://www.tcmedia.org)

**You can also watch the program summarized below through your computer** at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). All episodes of “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” are posted on this blog’s “TV Programs” part and also in one or more of the categories listed in the right side of the blog home page. Also, see information about various issues at the category headings at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

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**🡪 This document provides a clear summary of what we said in the one-hour TV program. I encourage people to watch the great interview – and ALSO to read this document for a great amount of additional information and many links to more sources of information.**

**🡪 I saved this document in Word format with live links.** If this document does not load or print properly for you, please e-mail me at [**glen@parallaxperspectives.org**](mailto:glen@parallaxperspectives.org) and I’ll promptly send you the links you request.

**🡪 Please invite other people to watch this video and/or read this thorough summary through these parts of my blog,** [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)**, including the categories for “TV Programs” and “Religion” and “Conservatism.”**

What’s Wrong with “Christian Nationalism”

Glen’s Parallax Perspectives

May 2024 TV Program

Glen Anderson (360) 491-9093 [**glen@parallaxperspectives.org**](mailto:glen@parallaxperspectives.org)

**Glen welcomed viewers. He introduced this month’s topic and guest.**

The May 2024 interview on “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” TV series examines a problem that cuts across political and religious boundaries – because some people want to blur those boundaries by imposing their own narrow religious beliefs upon everybody else and upon our political system.

The problem has been called “Christian Nationalism” – the false notion that the U.S. was designed to be a “Christian nation” with conservative Christians in charge. Real historians keep disproving this false claim. Most Christians oppose it too, because it would have politically conservative Christians claim to speak for all other Christians.

Glen welcomed his guest, the Rev. Douglas Avilesbernal. He is an Executive Minister in the American Baptist denomination, which we will discuss briefly in just a moment.

Pastor Doug has international experience and an international perspective. Now he is the executive minister of the Evergreen Baptist Association of American Baptist Churches in the Pacific Northwest.

Also, he is active in Americans United for the Separation of Church and State ([**www.au.org**](http://www.au.org)), a nationwide organization that – for more than 75 years since 1947 – has been protecting religion and government from interfering with each other. Glen said he also belongs to Americans United.

The U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment protects freedom of religion. People can have any religion – or none at all – and still have equal rights with everyone else.

Our interview explored several aspects of the Separation of Church and State.

**OVERVIEW: Why we must protect the separation of Church and State:**

Glen said that a moment ago he summarized very briefly the separation of Church and State – and the need to protect each from interfering with the other. He said just a bit more now, and then he invited Pastor Doug to briefly add an opening thought before we get into the substance of this interview.

In some nations of the world, governments are absolutely subservient to the dominant religion. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan under the Taliban are examples of governments based on perversions of Islam. Israel’s government is vigorously – and violently – imposing its form of Judaism upon that nation and is violently imposing its nationalism upon Palestinian people.

Historically, we remember the Holy Roman Empire, which allowed the Catholic Church to dominate much of Europe, and some European nations committed horrible acts of cruelty to people who were not deemed to be sufficiently Catholic.

Nowadays in the United States, some people want the U.S. to become what they call a “Christian nation,” which would enforce their extremist right-wing version of Christianity upon our government and society – and upon people who do not believe that.

Pastor Doug said the spiritual must not dictate to the temporal. He said the religious beliefs of any individuals or groups must not be the source of the rules that govern how we live together. When we intrude upon that separation, we invariably get trouble. He said for many religious beliefs, there is no compromising. In order to live in our diverse society, we must recognize and accept that different people believe differently.

**The American Baptist denomination has done good work on several issues:**

Glen said most Americans are not well informed about the differences between the various religious denominations. For example, Pastor Doug’s denomination – American Baptist – is very much different from the Southern Baptist denomination that is bigger and better known. Glen invited him to briefly summarize how the historical roots of American Baptists differ from the Southern Baptists.

Pastor Doug said slavery was what split them apart. In the 1800s the Southern Baptists thought their missionaries should bring their slaves along with them on their missionary travels. The Northern Baptists opposed slavery altogether, and they especially believed that it was especially wrong to go out and share Christ with the world while owning another human being. He said the Northern Baptist Convention morphed into the American Baptist denomination.

Glen said he strongly supports the separation of Church and State, and he appreciates that the American Baptists have a long history of that too. He said that for a number of years he has known and worked with some American Baptists to support peace, separation of church and state, and other good issues. He said he is happy to interview an American Baptist for this TV program.

He said that when we were preparing for this interview, Pastor Doug told him that early in the U.S. – before the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution – Baptists insisted upon the separation of church and state. Elder John Leland from Massachusetts was strong on this. Baptists have a long history saying religion and government must be separate. Government must help ALL people. Religions take care of their own matters. He invited Pastor Doug to add his concerns about this principle of separation.

Pastor Doug said it is important to maintain that separation because – whenever that separation is eroded – the results always are prejudice and hurt for other people. He said that whenever someone with a particular religious outlook feels that everyone else must follow that, problems arise when that religious person has the power to enforce that particular religious outlook. It results in prejudice, exclusion, and destruction.

He said this pattern has persisted throughout history. And he added that this is true even for belief systems that are not religious. Enforcing Communist ideology also abused people. He said we must prevent any belief system from being the basis for governance.

**Separation of Church and State was the authentic message of Jesus:**

Glen said that both of us agree that the authentic message of Jesus was to separate religion and political power. He invited Pastor Doug to share his information and insights about Jesus’ position.

Pastor Doug said God created the world, and Jesus is God in this Triune relationship. He said that if Jesus wanted and believed in political power as a means to carry the faith throughout the world, he would have chosen to be born into the imperial family of the Roman Empire. Actually, Jesus chose to be born outside of official power. He was born poor, and he was briefly a refugee in Egypt.

Glen agreed. He said in a few minutes we will discuss how Jesus’ entire ministry was in profound solidarity with people who were poor, vulnerable, outcasts from society, and politically powerless. Jesus’ Gospel message was to build the new society from the bottom up. He said the “Christian Nationalists” do not understand this at all.

**“Christian Nationalists” demand political power.**

**But Jesus opposed the Establishment and the established powers.**

Glen said that when we were preparing for this interview, Pastor Doug had told him that “Christian Nationalists” want official political power, but Jesus opposed the Establishment and the established powers. Glen invited him to tell us more about Jesus versus the official powers.

Pastor Doug said Jesus never was happy with the official powers – not the Roman Empire that was politically occupying the land – and not the Jewish religious leaders who accommodated themselves to that political occupation.

He said Jesus was born poor and outside of power. Jesus lives outside of those powers. He never went to the places of power. Any time Jesus encountered an official representative of that power, Jesus took them to task. Once some powerful people asked him a lot of questions, and Jesus called them “you brood of vipers.” This was a way of calling them deceitful and self-invested – and that they did not care who gets hurt as long as they got their way.

Pastor Doug said this was at the core of the issue. Official power makes selfishness worse.

Glen said that when we read the Gospels with this kind of consciousness, this is a recurring theme. Jesus was always up against the rich. He kept telling rich people to give their money away because the poor needed it. Jesus was always up against the religious establishment that was oppressing ordinary people instead of upholding their faith’s best ethics of concern for the poor, the widows and the orphans.

**Jesus stood in solidarity with society’s outcasts – the poor and vulnerable:**

Glen said that although many “Christian Nationalists” are on the side of rich people and other powerful interests, Jesus always stood in strong solidarity with people who were poor and vulnerable. Jesus supported society’s outcasts and welcomed them with full human dignity. He invited Pastor Doug to expand upon this theme.

Pastor Doug said one of the strongest warnings by “Christian Nationalists” is that if we help the poor, we will “fall into socialism.” He said Jesus did not oppose structure or power *per se*. What Jesus did keep saying is that any structure that ignores the most vulnerable people is rotted.

He asked, how much would it take to care for the most vulnerable? He said if we were to tax the very richest people in our country just a few percentage points more, we could take care of ALL of our nation’s poor people, while the extremely rich people would still be extremely rich, and their wealth would increase just a tiny bit less than it does now.

Glen said that Jesus told people, “Whatever you do to the least of these, you are doing to me.” That is a PROFOUND statement of SOLIDARITY with the poor, the vulnerable, the outcasts!

Glen said Jesus said nothing at all about abortion – and nothing at all about homosexuality. Rather, Jesus kept saying – over and over again – that we need to restructure our society to be based on love, compassion, and welcoming into society the people who have been elbowed out of the way. That’s what Jesus kept talking about, but the “Christian Nationalists” do not want to hear about the authentic Gospel that Jesus actually kept preaching. Instead, they want to impose their own selfish political ideology upon us and pretend that Jesus preached their right-wing extremism.

He added that Jesus kept denouncing as “hypocrites” the people who bragged about being outwardly religious even while they were violating the core ethics of their faith by refusing to care for the poor. Old Testament prophets cared about the widows and orphans and fairness throughout society. Some of the Old Testament prophets denounced people who would use the courts to screw over the poor people.

Pastor Doug agreed.

**“Christian Nationalists” impose their own politics upon religion.**

**Thereby, they pervert authentic Christianity.**

Glen said one of the reasons he opposes “Christian Nationalism” is that its supporters impose their own politics upon religion – and thereby pervert the authentic Christianity that Jesus and the Early Church promoted. He invited Pastor Doug to share his understanding about this concern.

Pastor Doug said that during the entire time when the Early Church was being formed, it was OUTSIDE of power. It focused on caring for “the least of these.” This followed Jesus’ message that “Whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me.”

He said “Christian Nationalism” is really “White Nationalism.” They use the word “Christian” because that has power for many American people, but “really they are just putting a little Christian varnish over their own nationalism and calling it ‘Christian Nationalism.’” He said they really mean just “White Nationalism.” Glen said we would discuss the “white” aspect in just a few minutes.

Pastor Doug said they keep talking about “family values,” but their agenda is not what real Christians believe. He said Christ told us to love all other people. But “Christian Nationalists” really mean that we must do what they say. Most “Christian Nationalist” leaders have been violating authentic Christian values. Many of them – such as Trump – have done so many bad things that we would never hire them to be pastors of our churches. Their moral failings would disqualify them.

He said the Bible says for those to whom much has been given, much is expected from them. We need much from our leaders. If they don’t live ethical lives, we should not follow them. Christ is clear about this, he said.

Glen said the term “family values” is just a label that they slap over their bias against women, their bias against gay people, and so forth. He said if they REALLY supported “family values,” they would strongly support funding for health care that kids need, food programs that kids need, and lifting families out of poverty, but they don’t do that! “They are on the side of the rich against the poor.” They are against poor families – and against poor children.

Also, he said, if they were REALLY “pro-life,” they would be opposing war because war kills people. They would be opposing nuclear weapons. But for them, “pro-life” means taking away women’s right to make their own health-related decisions.

He said all of this is “a layer of propaganda over what they are really doing.”

**Let’s not return to a false past:**

Glen said that when we were preparing for this interview, Pastor Doug said “Christian Nationalists” seem to want to recover a past that was lost. Glen invited him to tell us what he meant.

Pastor Doug referred to “Make America Great Again.” They want to recover what they perceive was lost. They want white males to again be at the center of society and completely dominating it. They want to return to “blue laws” [requiring many businesses to shut down on Sundays so people could spend all day observing the sabbath]. They want to return to “sundown laws’ [requiring people of color to get out of public spaces when the sun sets]. They want to return to the time when women were not allowed to get credit on their own and were financially subservient to men.

He said actually the past was not as good as many people think they remember it as being. He said the 1950s were idyllic only for a very small part of the population. That time was terrible for people of color – and terrible also for poor whites – but racists told poor whites that they were still better off than people of color.

Glen said the concept is a hierarchy – a pecking order – in which we can find somebody below us that we can pick on. So if you’re a poor white person, you can still pick on people of color because they are below you in the pecking order.

He said such a hierarchy is completely contrary to what Jesus taught. Jesus was radically inclusive and radically egalitarian. Everybody was welcome! Everybody was equal! This was the new society that Jesus and the Early Church were preaching and creating. This was authentic Christianity.

Pastor Doug added that – even though Jesus taught that everyone was equal – Jesus taught that not all ideas are as good as other ideas. He said many times Jesus had to tell his disciples that their ideas were wrong. Peter wanted Jesus to claim more official power, but Jesus had to tell Peter to get back away from that notion. He told Peter to stop tempting him with a desire for official power.

Glen added that even when Jesus was being crucified, Peter took out a sword and wanted to fight back against the authorities, but Jesus ordered Peter to put away his sword because that was NOT how they were going to build the new society. We don’t build the new society based on violence. We build the new society based on love – and even sacrificial love. It was an entirely different consciousness.

**Racism, sexism, etc., violate what Jesus actually taught and practiced:**

Glen said Jesus lived in a time and place that discriminated against various kinds of vulnerable people: women, foreigners, people with disabilities, poor people, and so forth. A moment ago he said Jesus was always in solidarity with those vulnerable people. Now we see many “Christian Nationalists” opposing women’s right to make their own health decision – and we see many promoting white racism.

Glen said many of us have seen photos of the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Many people brought signs calling for a “Christian Nation” and calling for “White “Power.” He said that was the subtext behind what was going on during Trump’s attempt to overthrow the government and keep Trump in power even after losing the election.

He invited Pastor Doug to share some information and insights about sexism and racism.

Pastor Doug said it’s false to think that white is better. That’s an historically old claim.

Actually, he said many of the earliest colonists to come to America were not “the best and the brightest.” Many were criminals who were told they could either go to jail in Europe or move to the American colonies. He debunked the common myth that our colonies attracted “the best and the brightest.”

He said “White Nationalism” wants to coopt Christianity into a hierarchy based on skin color, even though authentic Christianity is egalitarian rather than hierarchical.

**This resource appeared after we produced our TV interview:** The April 2024 issue of AU’s magazine includes this book review: Untangling the roots: In his new book, scholar Robert P. Jones exposes the disturbing links between Christian Nationalism and white supremacy: [**https://www.au.org/the-latest/church-and-state/articles/untangling-the-roots-in-his-new-book-scholar-robert-p-jones-exposes-the-disturbing-links-between-christian-nationalism-and-white-supremacy/?sourceid=&emci=c5424cdc-ebed-ee11-aaf0-002248223794&emdi=3908199f-8bf2-ee11-aaf0-002248089b1e&ceid=11184951#**](https://www.au.org/the-latest/church-and-state/articles/untangling-the-roots-in-his-new-book-scholar-robert-p-jones-exposes-the-disturbing-links-between-christian-nationalism-and-white-supremacy/?sourceid=&emci=c5424cdc-ebed-ee11-aaf0-002248223794&emdi=3908199f-8bf2-ee11-aaf0-002248089b1e&ceid=11184951)

**They exploit grievances and losses. They scapegoat vulnerable people.**

Glen said that Pastor Doug had told him that “Christian Nationalists” scapegoat vulnerable people as a way of exploiting feelings of grievances and losses. For example, extremely rich people are taking money away from the working class, so they distract the public from their greed by scapegoating people of color who are competing with whites for jobs. Also, men can no longer get away with dominating women – and women are competing for “men’s jobs” – so women are scapegoated and oppressed in other ways. Also, immigrants are scapegoated because they want jobs that native-born Americans want. Instead of expressing facts and feelings honestly, some things are hidden under rhetoric.

Glen invited Pastor Doug to tell us about how some “Christian Nationalists” are herding people into certain directions toward exploiting people’s feelings of grievances and losses.

Pastor Doug said “Christian Nationalists” have discovered the power of propaganda. One powerful aspect of propaganda is to find a grievance and then figure out and publicize a reason for that grievance. Targeting vulnerable people is clever because they can’t fight back. Also, regarding immigration, the relevant and valid facts are disregarded because some immigrants do not have documentation.

Framing them as “criminals” destroys their credibility – and the valid reasons that led them to immigrate – and the injustices in our immigration system. He said, therefore, it’s easy to say, “All of your problems are because of **those** people.” He said it is a “bait-and-switch” scam that tells people to look one way while we continue to abuse the vulnerable people. Grievances do hurt, but distracting people with the wrong reasons is wrong.

**Immigrants:**

Glen said nowadays a big political issue is immigration because some people loudly campaign, “Vote for me and I’ll keep **those** people out!” He said this happens to some extent in both political parties. He invited Pastor Doug to help us understand immigration more accurately than the cruel distortions that so many people are saying nowadays.

Pastor Doug said President Reagan explicitly said undocumented immigration was a net benefit – especially for businesses in the U.S. Because of this, Pastor Doug said it is convenient for the U.S. to keep the immigration system broken because it creates a large pool of people who are willing to work for next to nothing. He said if the federal immigration authorities raid your factory or meatpacking plant, they take everybody away, but the next day you can fill all of those jobs with other undocumented immigrants who are willing to work for next to nothing. He said even if the business owners pay a fine, that is small compared to the amount they save by paying very low wages, so they can easily accommodate this small cost of doing business.

He added that there is no legal way for so-called “unskilled” immigrants to come to the U.S. He said people who are desperate for jobs find it necessary to walk through the desert because there is no legal way for them to apply for a work visa through any legal channel. Jobs in their home countries pay extremely low wages for “unskilled” work, so they come to the U.S. to earn more, but the U.S. prohibits any legal way for them to do that.

Glen added that there are a number of reasons why many people can no longer live in their home countries. U.S. businesses have hurt labor there. Environmental and climate disruptions prevent them from farming. The U.S. exports cheap U.S.-produced corn that is priced lower than what Latin American farmers must charge for what they grow. Some countries are ruled by oppressive governments that make it dangerous for people to live there. He said people have a legal right to immigrate to the U.S. and seek asylum here, but the U.S. routinely violates that right. He said these important and valid reasons for immigration are rarely discussed in U.S. media or politics or society.

Pastor Doug agreed. He said when NAFTA passed in the 1990s, the U.S. promised Latin American farmers that they would be able to sell their corn in the U.S. at U.S. prices, so those farmers supported it. He said the opposite happened after NAFTA passed. The U.S. subsidized corn grown here and flooded the markets there and undercut the prices that those farmers needed to charge in order to cover their costs. This devastated those farmers who had been growing corn for generations. Their choice was to either starve or to come to the U.S. and work on U.S. farms.

He added that the U.S. – at least since the 1950s – deliberately kept Latin American governments unstable. This has made it easier for the U.S. government [and business] to get their way. This has forced many Latin Americans to immigrate to the U.S.

**American nationalism perverts authentic Christian theology:**

Glen said we have already mentioned that “Christian Nationalism” perverts real Christianity. Pastor Doug also has told Glen that the **nationalism** aspect is a particularly American perversion that makes wrong assumptions and distorts history. He asked Pastor Doug to tell us about this.

Pastor Doug debunked the notion that God made the U.S. to be “the New Canaan” and a “City on a Hill.” These concepts come from the Hebrew scriptures, which Christians tap into. Many Americans believe God gave us this land, and it is ours to have and settle, regardless of the fact that Native Americans were already living here. He said the historical and scriptural place was Canaan, but the U.S. is NOT Canaan. Americans do not have a God-given right to dominate this land regardless of the people who were already living here. He said that is a perversion of theology, and a perversion of God’s message.

Glen added that for many, many years the U.S. government tried to kill as many Native Americans as possible. Even with federal recognition of reservations, the government fails to adequately fund health care, education, housing, and other services there. He said the problems of nationalism, racial bias, etc., all tie together.

**They say it’s a bad world, so they say we must use violence:**

Another point we agreed on is debunking the position of some “Christian Nationalists” who say we live in a bad world, so we need to use violence. But both of us know that Jesus persistently urged nonviolence.

Pastor Doug disagreed with the assumption that the way to live in this world is to use violence more effectively than other people are using it. He said it makes no sense. How could violence be the best answer for violence?

He said “turn the other cheek” does not mean being a doormat so other people can simply hit us again. He said we need to understand what “turn the other cheek” meant in that culture, so what Jesus actually said is that “I’m going to stand here firmly as your equal, so if you want to keep going, you need to treat me as your equal.” [Glen explained this more thoroughly just a few minutes later.]

He also said Abraham Lincoln was skilled at translating the language of scripture into meaningful explanations of life. Lincoln said the best way to defeat your enemy is to turn him into your friend. Trying to defeat your enemy with violence will only cause them or their family members to retaliate against you with more violence. But if you make your enemy your friend, that solves the problem.

**Jesus taught and practiced nonviolence:**

Glen said he would take the next five minutes to explain that actually, **Jesus persistently taught and practiced nonviolence – and urged nonviolent resistance to oppression.** Even when he was going to be crucified, he told a disciple not to use a sword to save his life.

Jesus spoke to ordinary people – especially people who were poor, outcast, vulnerable, and oppressed. He urged them to trust God and use nonviolence – including nonviolent ways to liberate themselves from oppression.

**Walter Wink was a great biblical scholar who researched the realities of Jesus’s time and place – and wrote smart insightful books about Jesus’ radical message for his people. Unfortunately, modern Americans do not understand that context, so Glen took a few minutes to share now how Jesus encouraged people to practice nonviolent resistance.**

The society in which Jesus lived 2,000 years ago discriminated against many kinds of people (women, foreigners, poor people, people with disabilities, and so forth).

Jesus reached out to those outsiders, outcasts and other vulnerable people with a message that affirmed and validated their essential human dignity. His appeal went far, far beyond the typical Christian theology that modern churches preach (about saving people’s souls).

**Jesus persistently taught people that God really wants a truly egalitarian society** where every person is equal in God’s sight and all people need to be brought together in equality for a truly egalitarian society that affirms all kinds of people.

Nowadays some people make it seem like Christianity is all about opposing abortion and homosexuality. Actually, Jesus said ABSOLUTELY NOTHING about those! The “Christians” who claim that these are Jesus’ main points are merely substituting their own biases instead of what Jesus actually taught.

Actually, **the only things that Jesus did condemn over and over again** were his **condemnation of rich people who failed to share with the poor** -- and **hypocrites who claimed to be religious but actually violated their faith’s ethical teachings**.

Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5, 6, 7) includes **a sequence of three teachings – one right after another** – in which Jesus urges people to use **nonviolent resistance against oppression**. The person who wrote Matthew’s gospel combined these three teachings into this sequence in order to emphasize that **Jesus was promoting nonviolent resistance against oppression**.

**These teachings (Matthew 5:38-41) made great sense to the audience at his time and place, but modern people don’t know the context that existed then.**

**Now Glen explained each one of Jesus’ three teachings about nonviolent resistance in Matthew 5:38-41.** You will be able to see why the authorities saw Jesus as the nonviolent revolutionary that he was, and why they killed him.

**1. Turn the other cheek:**

When Jesus told people to “turn the other cheek,” he was **NOT** telling people to let themselves get beaten up! Rather, he was showing how oppressed people can **nonviolently resist** their oppressors.

In the society where Jesus lived, the left hand was considered ritually impure and used only for toilet functions, so everyone used their right hands to perform ordinary tasks.

Notice that in Matthew 5:39 Jesus specifies that you were struck on the **right** cheek. Notice how your hands and arms work. If someone is facing you and slaps you on your right cheek, your attacker – using his right hand – must have used the **back of his hand**. A man would use the **front** of his hand to slap a man of equal status, so he would be slapping the man’s left cheek. Since Jesus specified that you were slapped on your right cheek, this means that you were slapped by the back of the other person’s hand. This back-handed slap is a dismissive, oppressive gesture that an oppressor would use for slapping someone of low status (such as a woman, a child, or a slave). Jesus very often spoke to audiences of people of low status who were oppressed. They had personal experience of receiving slaps on their right cheeks by the backs of their oppressors’ hands.

When Jesus tells these oppressed people to “turn the other cheek,” they would be exposing their left cheeks for the second slap. But – because of how our arms and hands are constructed – this would require the oppressor to use the front of his hand (not the back). This kind of slap would elevate the victim to equal status. Therefore, “turning the other check” is a clever nonviolent way to expose the oppressor’s class-based oppression and elevate the victim’s status to that of his equal in this conflict.

**2. When the court takes your cloak:**

Right after urging this clever nonviolent strategy to resist social oppression, Jesus offers in Matthew 5:40 an example of nonviolently resisting economic oppression. He says, “If anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak also.” The poor people he was talking to knew exactly what this meant, but people in our time and place do not know the context from Jesus’ time and place.

Poor people were in debt and had to give their outer garments (their coats) as collateral for their loans. But their law allowed them to reclaim their coats for warmth overnight and return their coats to the lenders the next day. Some people were so hopelessly in debt that they could never pay back their loans, so the lenders would take them to court and permanently seize their collateral – their outer coats – leaving them cold overnight.

Jesus spoke to people who were so poor that they would never be able to repay their loans, so the lenders would take them to court and permanently seize ownership of their collateral.

So Jesus told these poor people that if the court took someone’s coat, he should also take off his cloak (the long flowing cloth that was his only other piece of clothing) and give that to the lender too. Then he’d stride out of court completely naked.

In that culture, being naked was tremendously shameful, but the same was not so much on the person who was himself naked but much more so on whoever had caused his nakedness. So when he leaves the court naked the shame would be on the lender. “First National Bank took all of my clothes.” This was a clever nonviolent way to expose systematic economic injustice and shame the lenders who were oppressing very large numbers of poor people.

**3. Go the second mile:**

Immediately after that, Jesus offered a third strategy for nonviolent resistance to oppression – in this case the oppression of being occupied by the Roman Empire’s army.

Nowadays people do not know the nonviolent revolutionary meaning of “going the second mile.” People mistakenly think it’s simply doing more than expected – like a business that “goes the second mile” to provide customers with excellent service.

In Jesus’ time Jesus urged “going the second mile” as a clever form of nonviolent resistance against the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was occupying a very large region for many years. The Roman Empire was oppressing the people but Rome was savvy enough to limit its oppression just short of the excesses that would cause the occupied people to rise up in revolution against the Roman Empire.

For example, a Roman soldier could force a local subject to carry his heavy pack for one mile, but no longer, because carrying the Roman soldier’s pack for more than one mile would be too oppressive, so the Roman Empire would punish a soldier who made a local person carry his pack more than one mile.

So in Matthew 5:41, Jesus told the people that if a soldier forced you to carry his pack for one mile, carry it for a second mile too. This clever nonviolent action would expose the Roman military’s inherent oppression and get the soldier in trouble. Carrying his pack for a second mile was a clever nonviolent way to resist the Roman Empire’s oppression.

**Clearly, when the Gospel of Matthew sequences these three strategies for nonviolent resistance one right after another, it is clear that Jesus was instructing the people how to nonviolently resist oppression in their daily lives. No wonder the authorities wanted to kill him!**

**Two more items after this interview:**

Pastor Doug provided this quotation from Shane Claiborne, whose book is ***Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals****: “*Peacemaking doesn’t mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evildoer, the act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight but the careful, arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice.”

Glen did not have time to say that decades ago some Catholics reached out to other Catholics who opposed abortion on the grounds of being “pro-life.” These people said that if you are really “pro-life,” you must extend that to other issues and oppose war, nuclear weapons, and the death penalty too. They called this consistent multi-issue “pro-life” agenda as a “seamless garment.”

**Some decent people have been fooled into joining this cult:**

Glen said he is glad he had the opportunity to share fresh insights into what Jesus actually taught – and what Jesus encouraged people to do. Now he pivoted to hearing more from Pastor Doug. A few days ago he told Glen some interesting things that he told us about next. Glen invited Pastor Doug to tell us about these three concerns:

#1. Many “Christian Nationalists” claim they are the ONLY source of truth. Pastor Doug said they want to make sure people do not read Scripture for themselves – because they do not want people to be educated in what Scripture really means. They oppose education, because when people become educated they will learn about the kinds of things Glen said just now about what Jesus was really teaching and doing. He said it is mind-blowing! Jesus’ messages were so revolutionary that his followers would be able to bring about a revolution peacefully. This is why the authorities killed him. Pastor Doug said the Roman Empire knew how to deal with violence, but they did not know how to deal with peace – nonviolence – so that is why they killed him. Now the “Christian Nationalists” say “don’t listen to anybody else but us,” because they also know that they cannot handle nonviolence and peace.

#2. “Christian Nationalists” spread their message vigorously, so many people hear only their side of the issues, so even many decent people have been fooled. Pastor Doug said the “Christian Nationalists” say they are the only ones who care about Christians because they are like them. They say that anyone with a different message does not care about Christians. He said this approach is powerful, because everyone wants to belong – everyone wants to be part of something – everyone wants to be loved. He said the “Christian Nationalists” use this strategy to capture Christians into silos where they can control them. People value love, so they will do anything for love.

#3. Some “Christian Nationalists” take advantage of their dominance and are “milking it for all they can.” Pastor Doug said the organization Americans United for the Separation of Church and State refers to the “shadow network” that is very well organized, and funded by very large donations. They expect big returns from this money and organizing. They are writing bills for legislators. They are funding campaigns for school board members because they want to capture them. They leverage their power toward controlling the higher-ups. Their approach includes reaching out to people in little towns across America and saying they love the people and bring the people under their control. He said these efforts have led to chaos in the U.S. House of Representatives because so many radicals have been elected there. Just say the right words in the right way, and you can exert control.

**How to help people leave that cult:**

Glen said that people join a cult and get deeper into it. Then they stop listening to information different from what their cult leaders tell them.

In some ways, the “Christian Nationalist” movement seems like a cult. People whose family members or friends have joined cults try to figure out how to reach out and help the people captured by cults. Some methods are called “de-programming.” He invited Pastor Doug to share any information, insights or suggestions about this.

Pastor Doug said a cult claims that it is the only one who loves the person – and that anyone who says anything different from what the cult says is trying to take the person away from the only group that loves them.

He suggested that real Christians are close to the cult members, so we can talk with them about the love of Jesus. He urged doing this in a way that does not sound superior or elitist – not to imply that we are coming to rescue them. Listen to each other. Build a relationship. Slowly that relationship can grow.

Also, he urged real Christians to get training in “cult de-programming” and combine those insights and strategies with Christian compassion and Christ’s guidance. These are powerful, so “Christian Nationalists” do not want us to take these positive steps. They want us to simply get angry, because they can handle that. But they can’t deal with a truly loving Christian intervention.

**Powerful funding, etc. behind “Christian Nationalism”:**

Glen said the “Christian Nationalist” movement promotes itself as a grassroots movement, but actually some powerful forces are organizing, funding and promoting it. Pastor Doug has already mentioned this, so Glen asked him to tell us more now.

Pastor Doug said some very wealthy people are pouring millions of dollars into this propaganda. A moment ago we mentioned the “shadow network.” They don’t want to be seen because they want to pretend that this is a grassroots issue.

But, he said, the “Christian Nationalists” are using that argument against the reasonable side. They keep blaming George Soros [a rich European] for funding the opposition to them. Glen added that Soros is Jewish, so when the right wing blames George Soros for being on the other side, they are really saying that “the Jews” are behind everything that they don’t like.

Pastor Doug said they are attaching to prejudices that people already hold.

**We did not have time to make these points:**

A famous hymn says, “And they’ll know we are Christians by our love.” What is Trump’s love like? If you were searching for a pastor for your church, and you got Trump’s resume, would you hire him?

The Religious Right tried various ways to get religious people to get involved in politics. In the 1970s they found abortion and LGBTQ issues as gimmicks to gain political power, and the merger continues now.

In March 2024, Donald Trump – while running for President – began selling his special version of a “God Bless America Bible.” It’s the King James Version (from 1611), which some conservatives think is the ONLY acceptable English translation, even though more modern translations are more accurate and more understandable.

Besides being yet one more way for Trump to make money from his followers, this was also a political scam because he was telling “Christian Nationalists” that – if he becomes President again – he will impose right-wing Christianity as the U.S.’s religion. By the way, Trump has no religious beliefs at all. He worships only his own ego, wealth and power. Trump is using conservative Christians as a political gimmick to add to his own wealth and power.

**Sources of information:**

The very best source of information is the website of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State provides a lot of information. It is [**www.au.org**](http://www.au.org)

**Glen produced and hosted two previous TV interview programs on this topic. Here is the basic information about them – and links so you can watch the videos and/or read the thorough summaries he typed up about what we said.**

* **Glen’s October 2021 episode of this TV series is titled, “Religious Freedom: What it Is – and What it Is Not.”**

The October 2021 program provides fresh information and insights into some controversies that have confused and misled many Americans about many matters, including our human rights and how our government functions. Glen interviewed Rob Boston, who has worked many years for the nationwide organization, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, which has protected our rights and diversity since 1947.

Our guest clarified what religious freedom IS and what it is NOT.  We cleared up confusion about the centuries-old American principle of “the separation of Church and State.”  We set the record straight on how to protect all people’s religious freedom and human rights – and American democracy. In a free society, people need to get along with each other – including people whose beliefs differ from each other – and we must protect **fairness** for **all** people.  This includes the relationships between religious beliefs and governments.

You can visit Glen’s blog – [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org) – and click the “TV Programs” link to WATCH THE VIDEO and/or READ THE THOROUGH SUMMARY I typed up of what we said. This link will take you to the blog post, so you can click the links to WATCH and/or READ: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/religious-freedom-what-it-is-and-what-it-is-not**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/religious-freedom-what-it-is-and-what-it-is-not)

* **Glen’s October 2019 episode of this TV series is titled, “Being Christian in America in a Time of Crisis.”**

Glen interviewed several retired ministers who help us take a fresh look at some of our nation’s social and political issues – especially in light of religious faith.  Many of the public policy issues that our nation is grappling with have been pushed hard from conservative Christian viewpoints, but those are NOT the only voices of Christianity. Moderate, liberal and progressive Christians have insights that differ greatly from the highly publicized views that have gained political power.

You can visit Glen’s blog – [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org) – and click the “TV Programs” link to WATCH THE VIDEO and/or READ THE THOROUGH SUMMARY I typed up of what we said. This link will take you to the blog post, so you can click the links to WATCH and/or READ: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-being-christian-in-america-in-a-time-of-crisis**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-being-christian-in-america-in-a-time-of-crisis)

**More problems of escalating “Christian Nationalism”:**

Trump and his allies are preparing to infuse “Christian Nationalism” in case he becomes president again. Here is some information: Spearheading the effort is Russell Vought, president of The Center for Renewing America, part of a conservative consortium preparing for Trump’s return to power. [**https://www.politico.com/news/2024/02/20/donald-trump-allies-christian-nationalism-00142086**](https://www.politico.com/news/2024/02/20/donald-trump-allies-christian-nationalism-00142086)

A shocking online manifesto reveals the dangerous plan called “Project 2025” and its link to a coordinated “Christian Nationalism project.” See this: “The Statement on Christian Nationalism” seeks to implement a Scripture-based system of government whereby Christ-ordained “civil magistrates” exercise authority over the American public. [**https://buckscountybeacon.com/2024/03/shocking-online-manifesto-reveals-project-2025s-link-to-a-coordinated-christian-nationalism-project/**](https://buckscountybeacon.com/2024/03/shocking-online-manifesto-reveals-project-2025s-link-to-a-coordinated-christian-nationalism-project/)

**Americans United for the Separation of Church and State is a great organization that does good work:**

Both of us are active members of the nationwide organization Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. Americans United has been working hard since 1947 to protect the separation of Church and State. For many years Glen has been reading materials from – and providing financial support to – this great organization.

Their website – [**www.au.org**](http://www.au.org) – provides much information. Please visit it and learn about problems and solutions:

* We need to protect our society from other people imposing their beliefs upon us and taking away our rights and freedoms.
* Also, we need to protect religion from being abused by governments, although this is rare in the U.S. compared to other nations.

Their February 2024 magazine focuses several articles about “Christian Nationalism.” Read it through their website, [**www.au.org**](http://www.au.org). Here is the direct link: [**AU’s *Church & State* magazine**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/79128150/455531773/-1223560185?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwMS8xLzU4MjYxIiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogIjg3ZGZmZjExLWRjY2MtZWUxMS04NWY5LTAwMjI0ODIyMzc5NCIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbkBwYXJhbGxheHBlcnNwZWN0aXZlcy5vcmciDQp9&hmac=Se4tPQ4Qu0HTBqCu566Pfldh7IZ7oSY6caSHMvlrLHM=&emci=0d0661be-6ab1-ee11-bea1-0022482237da&emdi=87dfff11-dccc-ee11-85f9-002248223794&ceid=11184951)!

**Glen’s closing encouragement:**

Glen thanked thank the Rev. Douglas Avilesbernal for sharing his information and insights with us.

And he thanked the people who have been watching this TV program.

He urges people to protect American society and government from the dangers. He said he is deeply concerned that “Christian Nationalism” is hurting us in two big ways:

1. Right-wing extremists who say they are Christian are actually perverting authentic Christianity – what Jesus actually taught and practiced – and deceiving the public and hurting people’s faiths. They are slandering real Christianity and deceiving the public.
2. Those right-wing extremists are trying to impose their beliefs – and their politics – upon our entire nation. They are taking away everybody else’s religious freedom – and our political rights. That is bad for our society and for the vast majority of Americans.

You can get information about a wide variety of issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence through my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)or by phoning me at   
(360) 491-9093 or e-mailing me at [**glen@parallaxperspectives.org**](mailto:glen@parallaxperspectives.org)

Glen ends each TV program with this invitation to help make progress:

**We're all one human family, and we all share one planet.**

**We can create a better world, but we all have to work at it.**

**The world needs whatever you can do to help!**