



Fire & Light

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✠ **July 29, 2012** ✠

Martyr Callinicus of Gangra in Asia Minor (250)

Virgin-Martyr Seraphima of Antioch (2nd C)

Martyr Theodota & her three sons in Bithynia (304)

St. Theodosius the Younger, Emperor (450)

Martyr Eustathios of Mtskheta, Georgia (589) St. Olaf, King of Norway (1030)

For being twelve, they had five loaves only and two fishes; so secondary to them were the things of the body: so did they cling to the things spiritual only. And not even that little did they hold fast, but gave up even it when asked.

-St. John Chrysostom

✠ **This Week: The Dormition Fast begins August 1... thru August 15**

✠ **Wed. Aug. 1 6:30pm Paraklysis (Supplicatory Canon) to the Theotokos**

{Note: All members of the Community are remembered in prayer at this special service.}

⇒ **Feasts Ahead: Transfiguration – Monday, August 6; St. Herman - Thursday, August 9; Dormition - Wednesday, August 15.**

He Quickened Death Itself

✠ The ultimate reason for Christ's death must be seen in the mortality of man. Christ suffered death, but passed through it and overcame mortality and corruption. He quickened death itself. By His death He abolishes the power of death. "The dominion of death is cancelled by Thy death, O Immortal One." And the grave becomes the life-giving source of our resurrection. And every grave becomes rather a "bed of hope" for believers. In the death of Christ, death itself is given a new meaning and significance. "By death He destroyed death."

Redemption

✠ Redemption is not just the forgiveness of sins; it is not just man's reconciliation with God. Redemption is the abolition of sin altogether, the deliverance from sin and death. And Redemption was accomplished on the Cross, "by the blood of His Cross" (Col. 1:20)...Not by the suffering of the Cross, but precisely by the death on the Cross. And the ultimate victory is wrought, not by sufferings or endurance, but by death and resurrection...The death of our Lord was the victory over death and mortality, not just the remission of sins, nor merely the justification of man, nor again a satisfaction of an abstract justice...

- Fr. Georges Florovsky, remembered today (+July 29, 1979)

REFLECTION – Vice borrows the face of good works...

We see that vice is something shameful and sinful in that it always hides and always takes upon itself the appearance of good works. St. John Chrysostom beautifully says: "Vice does not have its own particular face, but borrows the face of good works." This is why the Savior said: "they come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (St. Matthew 7:15).

Call a liar, a liar; a thief, a thief; a murderer, a murderer; an adulterer, an adulterer; a slanderer, a slanderer and you will infuriate them. However, call a man whatever you want: honest, honorable, unselfish, truthful, just, conscientious and you will make him light up with joy and please him. Again, according to Chrysostom: "good works are something natural in man while vice is something unnatural and false." If a man is even caught in a vice, he quickly justifies his vice by some good works; he clothes it in the garments of good works. Indeed, vice does not possess its own particular face. The same is true of the devil, the father of vices! ~ **St. Nikolai of Serbia**

What did the Protestant Reformers say about the Theotokos?

Martin Luther: "In this work whereby she was made the Mother of God, so many and such good things were given her that no one can grasp them.... Not only was Mary the mother of Him who is born [in Bethlehem], but of Him who, before the world, was eternally born of the Father from a Mother in time and at the same time man and God." ... "It is an article of faith that Mary is Mother of the Lord and still a virgin.... Christ, we believe, came forth from a womb left perfectly intact." (Weimer, *The Works of Luther*, English transl. by Pelikan, Concordia, St. Louis, v. 7. p. 572., v. 11, pp. 319-320; v. 6, p. 510.)

John Calvin: "It cannot be denied that God in choosing and destining Mary to be the Mother of His Son, granted her the highest honor.... Elizabeth calls Mary Mother of the Lord, because the unity of the person in the two natures of Christ was such that she could have said that the mortal man engendered in the womb of Mary was at the same time the eternal God. ...(Calvini Opera, *Corpus Reformatorum*, Braunschweig-Ber un, 1863-1900, v. 45, p. 348, 35.)

... "There have been certain folk who have wished to suggest from this passage [Matt 1:25] that the Virgin Mary had other children than the Son of God, and that Joseph had then dwelt with her later; but what folly this is! For the gospel writer did not wish to record what happened afterwards; he simply wished to make clear Joseph's obedience ... Our Lord Jesus Christ is called the firstborn. This is not because there was a second or a third, but because the gospel writer is paying regard to the precedence. Scripture speaks thus of naming the first-born whether or no there was any question of the second." (Sermon on Matthew 1:22-25, published 1562.)

Ulrich Zwingli: "It was given to her what belongs to no creature, that in the flesh she should bring forth the Son of God. (Zwingli Opera, *Corpus Reformatorum*, Berlin, 1905, in *Evang. Luc., Op. comp.*, v. 6, I, p. 639.) ... "I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the gospel as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact Virgin." (v. I, p. 424)

John Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism: "... born of the blessed Virgin Mary, who, as well after as before she brought Him forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin." - *The works of the Rev. John Wesley, Volume 15 by John Wesley, Joseph Benson, Published by Thomas Cordeux, London, 1812, "A Letter to a Roman Catholic" page 110*

✘ Self-importance, when rooted by habit in the mind, cannot be destroyed by one man...or in a short time... A strong and vigorous treatment is necessary to get at the root of the complaint.
~ St. Basil the Great

✘ Look straight up to God: *He will praise you. But the man whom He approves must not seek honor from mortals....But God brings great advantage to the one whom He approves. Therefore, let us seek after His praise.*
~ St. John Chrysostom

Saint Kosmas Aitolos on the Holy Gospel

First, my brethren, you must pay close attention to all the teachings of the sacred Gospel because it is all diamonds, treasures, joy, gladness, eternal life, and especially to the sacred Sacraments. First, observe what our Christ has done. He didn't allow hatred and hostility to prevent him from giving communion to Judas, his enemy, but just as He gave communion to the eleven disciples, His good friends, so He gave to Judas His enemy.



Are the Traditions of the Orthodox Church Consistent with Scripture?

In this article I would like to concentrate on and address some of the differences between the the restorationist churches and the Orthodox Church and try to discover whether the things believed and practiced by the Orthodox Church are in harmony with the teachings of the Bible.

I do not believe this requires that we be able to show "book, chapter, and verse" for every single item under discussion. Contrary to what some may think, it is not tenable to hold to a view of Scripture that requires a direct and explicit example of everything one believes stated explicitly in the pages of the New Testament. Although this is the position held by many fundamentalist Christians, it is a view that cannot be held consistently. This tenet itself cannot be proved from the New Testament and the New Testament repeatedly records Christ's promise to make His Church the foundation of truth, giving the Church at least equal status with Scripture in matters of interpretation and doctrine.

Neither can fundamentalists find direct and explicit examples of some of their own practices, ranging from the use of multiple Communion cups and Sunday school, to the practice of concluding each worship service with an "invitation song." The absence of specific biblical references to these points does not necessarily make these things unscriptural or antibiblical, but it does demonstrate that no one can limit his belief system or his practice of religion solely to the 27 books of the New

Testament. We all accept certain doctrines and practices that, while not explicitly stated in the Bible, are nevertheless consistent with the teachings of Scripture and are therefore accepted as appropriate and true. I bring this up not to point an accusing finger at those of the fundamentalist persuasion, but merely to show that the demand by some that other churches must show specific biblical examples of each of their practices that may differ from those of the fundamentalist churches is both an inconsistent and unreasonable demand.

However, while an exact example may not be requisite, we should nevertheless agree that any belief or practice that would contradict Scripture must be rejected. The task in this article then will be to discover whether the doctrines and practices of the Orthodox Church are in harmony with or in contradiction to the written Scripture.

The importance of history

To understand much of Orthodox practice it is important to see the significance of history in the development of the Church. Christ did not come to establish an institution that would be entirely static; He came to build a living Body. The church is not, as one restorationist minister once described it, like the game of baseball. Christ did more than simply hand down a set of rules for playing the game, exit Himself for a few thousand years, then say He will come again to see who is still playing by the same set of rules. The church instead is a living organism.

Like any living organism it has certain characteristics that are immutable, but others that grow and mature and adapt to the environment in which it finds itself.

Again, even fundamentalists must admit to this, for otherwise they could not believe it acceptable to meet in special buildings for the purpose of worship and Communion, or do a thousand other things the church of twentieth-century America does that the church of first-century Jerusalem could not. Today's church must address issues that, though at core are the same as those that have troubled mankind since the Fall, nevertheless take on new forms, threats, and temptations with each generation. As we look back through 2,000 years of church history, we are able to see how the church has reached out to meet the needs and challenges of the 67 generations that have come and gone since its establishment.

Sadly, church history is largely ignored by most fundamentalist and restorationist churches. The primary function church history seems to have in these groups is to demonstrate how various errors crept into the church through the ages. What seems to be desired by many restorationists is not an understanding of the development of the church through time, but a comprehension of the static "pattern" of the church as presented in the New Testament — particularly in the book of Acts.

It is felt by many that all that is really needed is a full discernment of the church as revealed in the New Testament documents. But in order to arrive at this, one must first look at the New Testament as a blueprint or as a book of law. This was never its intended purpose. Such a view denies the allowance for church growth and maturity in the subapostolic age — denies, in fact, the working of the Spirit of God within the church after the lifetime of the Apostles. It also demands that the writings of Luke the historian be regarded as authoritarian commandments

specifying church order and doctrine.

Is such an approach to Acts faithful to the purpose of the book? Hardly. Acts is primarily an early history of the church and tells about its growth in certain areas and about the works of certain of the Apostles. It might be compared to the books of Joshua, Judges, and Kings in the Old Testament in that these too are mainly books of history. We should no more use Acts as a manual of church government or of theology than the Israelites should have used Kings or Judges for the same purpose. Though examples of certain aspects of church polity and of Christian doctrine and theology are certainly found in Acts, the book's primary focus is on history, not theology or polity. It would seem that in the restorationist churches the Book of Acts is asked to fulfill a purpose for which it was never intended.

But even given the idea that we must pattern today's church strictly after the church found in Acts, we still would not end up with a static church. To the contrary, we see in Acts evidence of a growing, maturing Body, a Body that adapted itself to the demands of its environment — not in the sense that it ever altered its theological foundation (that never changes), but in its adapting the externals within a divinely guided framework to deal more effectively with the problems and challenges it faced in its day-to-day life. For example, when the Greek widows were being neglected in the Jerusalem Church, the Spirit led the Apostles to ordain the diaconate to see to these matters (Acts 7). When the question of whether Gentile converts should be subject to the Law of Moses, the church held a general council in Jerusalem to decide this question (Acts 15). These are but two evidences of a growing Body, a Body that is maturing and changing to be able to deal with the challenges that faced it. What evidence is there (biblical or otherwise) to allow us to conclude that at the death of the Apostle John no further change or development could ever take place?

HIEROMARTYR SAVVAS TRLAICH, BISHOP OF GORNJI KARLOVAC

By Fr. Ignatius Shestakov, translated Fr. Andrew Phillips.



The Gornokarlovatsky Diocese of the Church of Serbia is situated on the territory of contemporary Croatia and includes the western most areas settled by Orthodox Serbs in the 15th century. The growth of the Orthodox population there was accelerated at the beginning of the 16th century, when Serbs from neighboring Dalmatia and Bosnia settled there, fleeing from Turkish oppression. Over time, the so-called military region of

Kraina was formed, serving as a protective flank for the Austro-Hungarian Empire from Turkish expansion. The Serbs who lived in Kraina served in the Austrian Army and received special privileges from the Emperors and at that time Kraina was one of the largest and most prosperous dioceses of the Church.

However, Roman Catholic proselytism and the spread of Uniatism down the centuries was a constant danger for the Serbs. On more than one occasion they had to stand up for their privileges and the purity of their faith. The 20th century, during which the Church suffered terrible trials, was no exception to this. During the Second World War, the Gornokarlovatsky Diocese found itself on the territory of the puppet "Independent Croatian State" and suffered in ways that had never been seen before. It seems as if most of the devilish evil of the Croat fascists fell to its lot. Obviously, the tragedy was that the Diocese was located in the very heart of the newly-formed pseudo-State, very close to the Croat capital of Zagreb.

During the genocide which took place between 1941 and 1945, 65 Orthodox priests were murdered by the Roman Catholic Ustashi forces, 116 churches were completely destroyed, 39 others seriously damaged and over 160 parish and monastic libraries were completely or partially destroyed.

The sufferings of the clergy and the people were fully shared in by the bishop of Gornji Karlovac, bishop Savvas Trlaich. In 2000, he was glorified by the Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church as a hieromartyr. A true son of his people, he showed himself to be a true pastor, laying down his life for his flock, and his ministry was crowned by martyrdom.

Vladyka Savvas was born on July 6th, 1884 in Mol to the family of Stephen and Elizabeth Trlaich and was baptized Svetozar. After studying at grammar school and then at the

seminary in Sremski Karlovtsy, he graduated from the faculty of law at the University of Belgrade. He was ordained deacon and then priest in 1909. From 1909 to 1927, Fr. Svetozar served as a parish priest. In early 1927 he was appointed to an administrative post at the Holy Synod and then became its secretary.

Widowed, in 1929 he took his monastic vows with the name of Savvas and became rector and archimandrite of the Monastery of Krushedol. He served there until 1934, when he was appointed Vicar-Bishop of Sremski. He was consecrated bishop in Sremski Karlovtsy on September 30th, 1930, by Patriarch Barnabas of Serbia. As Patriarchal Vicar, Vladyka Savvas chaired the diocesan council of the Archdiocese of Belgrade-Karlovtsy until November 1936 and from then until early 1937 he chaired the ecclesiastical court. Then, on September 4th, 1938, he was appointed bishop of Gornji Karlovac, with his residence in Plashkom.

The German invasion of Yugoslavia and the ensuing proclamation of an Independent Croatian State saw Plashkom occupied by the Italians, but at the end 1941, it was handed over to the Croat Ustashi. On this, bishop Savvas and nine priests were taken hostage. On May 23rd, 1941 the Ustashi occupied the bishop's residence and expelled the bishop. On June 8th, the notorious executioner Josip Tomlenovich appeared at the residence and ordered any diocesan money and papers of importance to be handed over to the Ustashi. Bishop Savvas was ordered to leave the town and head for Serbia. However, he refused to do this and stated that he could not abandon his diocese and his people.

On June 17th, 1941 Vladyka was arrested together with other well-known Serbs and priests who did not wish to leave the place of their ministry. The Ustashi locked their prisoners into a cowshed and set an armed guard. For one month all those arrested, and especially bishop Savvas, were subjected to humiliation and torture on a daily basis. They were then sent to the notorious concentration camp at Gospich. The prisoners were taken from the railway station at Gospich to the local prison and again subjected to further humiliation and torture.

In the first half of August 1941, about 2,000 Serbs were taken from Gospich to Velebita; bishop Savvas among them. It is supposed that he was murdered there, at the same time as about 8,000 other Serbs, in August 1941. The Holy Synod of the Serbian Church constantly, but unsuccessfully, called for the forces of occupation to explain what had happened to bishop Savvas and other Serbian bishops on the territory of the Independent Croatian State and tried to obtain their release.

Unfortunately, we have no exact information about the circumstances of the martyrdom of bishop Savvas. However, the Serbian historian, Velibor Dzhomich in his book, "Ustashi crimes against Serbian priests," quotes a testimony

which may throw some light on the question. According to this, a Fr Iovan Silashki wrote the following in an issue of "The Banat Herald" newspaper:

In 1941, the Gornokarlovatsky Diocese was under the control of the dreadful Ustashi regime. The bishop and the priests were told that they were undesirables and that they must abandon their flocks. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Zagreb, Aloysius Stepinac, openly told Vladyka that he must leave "Croatian" Karlovac, otherwise he would be "liquidated." Vladyka answered him: "Even if it costs me my head, I will not abandon my people!"

Soon it became clear that the Catholic Archbishop was not joking. Vladyka Savvas was arrested and horribly tortured. During the tortures and beatings in Plashkom, the Ustashi used a gramophone to play the hymn, *As many as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ.*

When they took Vladyka to his place of execution, his mother stood in front of the church and waited for him. She wanted to see her son for one last time and make her farewells. However, the executioners did not allow her to do this. Vladyka nevertheless blessed his mother, his legs tied, and went to his death.

A few years after this, a stranger walked into the church in Bashaida, where Vladyka had served. He spoke to the postmaster Savvas Saravolets.

"Did you know Vladyka Savvas Trlaich," asked the stranger, "I heard that he was priest here."

"Of course, Vladyka was my teacher. I'm grateful to him for everything I have managed to do in life. How do you know Vladyka?"

"I was an eyewitness of his sufferings," answered the stranger.

"The Ustashi butchers took Vladyka to a clearing and continued to torture him there. They tore his skin off him and then covered him with salt. Then they buried him alive, with just his head protruding, brought an iron harrow and pulled it across his head until he gave up his soul to God. What happened after that, I don't know. Maybe the Ustashi threw him into one of the many precipices there, which they used as graves for the Serbs. So even in death he wasn't separated from his people."

Unfortunately, this is all that we know about bishop Savvas' martyrdom.

As the result of the devastating losses suffered by the Serbians of this regions (which could never be made up for), after the war the Gornokarlovatsky Diocese could not be restored to its former prosperity. The destruction of its holy places and shrines also continued under the Communist regime, so that churches which had been damaged often fell into total ruin.

Dire tribulations hit the diocese again during the 1991-1995 war. Half a century after the first, a second act of spiritual genocide unfolded for the Serbs. On Orthodox Christmas in 1992, the St. Nicholas Cathedral, built in the 18th century, was blown up by the new Ustashi. Subjected to an artillery bombardment, the bishops' residence in Karlovtsy, with its library, records and museum, was looted. The bishops' residence of the Gornokarlovatsky Diocese was destroyed during Catholic Christmas, in 1993. After the Croat attack on the Serbian Kraina Republic, during the "Operation Storm" in August 1995, Serbian people were expelled from their ancient diocese and many of its holy places were desecrated and destroyed. During the war of 1991-1995, 11 churches were destroyed and 45 damaged. After the expulsion of the Serbs, many churches and other church premises were abandoned and neglected.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, the diocese survived and now the situation is returning to normal. Church life is being reborn, ancient churches are being restored and new ones are being built. In 2005, after a long gap, a new bishop was appointed to the Gornokarlovatsky Diocese. He is Gerasim Popovich, a graduate of the Moscow Theological Academy. The memory of Hieromartyr Savvas is kept with special care in the diocese and he is often mentioned in the diocesan journal.

The restoration of Church life in the diocese is faced with many problems, above all the lack of a flock. Twice subjected to ethnic cleansing and expulsion in the 20th century, it is difficult for Serbs to return to where they had lived for centuries. We hope and trust that, despite all the difficulties, through the prayers of Hieromartyr Savvas, the life of this ancient diocese, which has suffered so much, will grow in strength and never be extinguished until the end of time.



When, on a clear autumn night, I gaze at the clear sky—sown with numberless stars, so diverse in size yet shedding a single light—then I say to myself: *Such are the writings of the Fathers!* When, on a summer day, I gaze at the vast sea—covered with a multitude of diverse vessels with their unfurled sails like white swan's wings, vessels racing under a single wind to a single goal, to a single harbor—I say to myself: *Such are the writings of the Fathers!* When I hear an harmonious, many-voiced choir, in which diverse voices—in elegant harmony—sing a single Divine song, then I say to myself: *Such are the writings of the Fathers!*

St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (+1867)

The Pressure to Repudiate Christian Teaching

Rod Dreher, May 15, 2012, *What If Rachel Held Evans Is Wrong?*

According to Evangelical blogger Rachel Held Evans, many young Evangelicals are so upset with the church on how it has handled homosexuality that they're walking out the door.

She writes about the North Carolina amendment, and how large numbers of Evangelicals under 40 either disagree with traditional Christian teaching on homosexuality, or, if they accept traditional teaching, don't think it's as big a deal as older Christians think. "So my question for those evangelicals leading the charge in the culture wars is this: Is it worth it? ... And is a political "victory" worth drowning out that quiet but persistent internal voice that asks -- what if we get this wrong?"

Interesting. I wonder if Held Evans and her generation wonder if 2,000 years of Christian tradition and the clear instruction of the Bible indicates that maybe they, and contemporary American culture, have this wrong?

In any case, I don't think there's much doubt that the numbers she cites in her post indicating the falling-away of young adults from organized religion are valid. In their book *American Grace*, the social scientists Robert Putnam and David Campbell sifted through the exhaustive research on American religious attitudes today, and found that the abandonment of organized religion by the young is the biggest story in American religion today.

The key point, though, is that they are not becoming atheists; they are rather becoming "spiritual but not religious" types.

Crucially, the data cited in *American Grace* show that the young began to fall away from the church in the early 1990s; around the time that homosexuality, including same-sex marriage, began to be a topic of mainstream discussion. Understand, it's not that Evangelicals are becoming more liberal, necessarily (though some are); it's that young people who were raised Evangelical are becoming more liberal, and ceasing to identify with Evangelicalism. In the book, the scholars postulate that sympathy for the gay rights movement among late X-ers and Millennials has a lot to do with it.

But -- and here's the thing -- they also found that liberal churches are not benefiting from the culture shift. Bob Putnam has said in interviews (and maybe too in the book, I can't recall) that if the Christian church wants to hold on to its young, it will have to liberalize on homosexuality. But his own research shows that liberalization on homosexuality has not benefited the churches that have done so. They continue to decline as well. Something else is going on with young Americans and institutional religion.

It's important to separate the question of whether or not churches should involve themselves in political campaigns like the North Carolina amendment -- do liberal Evangelicals like Held Evans believe that liberal churches should have abstained as well, or is political activism only problematic when conservative Christians do it? -- and the moral theology question of the rightness or wrongness of homosexuality.

The first is a question of prudential judgment, but the second is fundamental. The pressure from outside and within churches to ignore or repudiate Christian teaching is strong and going to get much stronger in the years to come, especially when it starts costing churches tax exemptions, and starts costing individual Christians social and professional status. I heard over the weekend from a Christian professor at a secular university who is extremely leery of letting anyone know his beliefs on homosexuality. He explained ways in which the culture and the policies of his university are so pro-gay that any deviation, however mild and for whatever reason, would identify him in the eyes of his professional community as a horrible bigot and, absurdly, a threat to the safety of gay students and faculty.

The church (by which I mean all Christian churches) has already lost American culture on this issue. The real fight, and the most important fight, is within, for the truth of Scripture and Tradition on this issue.

The Putnam-Campbell data suggest the real battle will not be over whether or not churches are going to embrace gay marriage. As I said, the churches that do aren't benefiting from it, overall. The question is going to be whether or not young people remain Christian in any sense connected to the Great Tradition. Homosexuality is a clear, bright line. The Rachel Held Evanses need to ask themselves if they would be willing to follow Jesus Christ if in doing so, they would have to take a countercultural position on the issue. To embrace same-sex marriage from a Christian viewpoint is a radical shift, one that repudiates two millennia of Christian thought and teaching.

Are we really so sure that we 21st century Americans have this right, and everyone that came before us, including St. Paul, was wrong?

All of which is to say that I expect a severe winnowing in the ranks of Christians over the course of my lifetime. It is surely never the case that truth is determined by numbers. Trads like me point to the extinction of liberal nun orders as an example of how abandoning tradition leads to a kind of death, but we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that any church or religion has to be prepared to die for the sake of the truth. That is, better to die in truth than to live for a lie. I think about how hard it would have been for a Christian in the Jim Crow South to repudiate, if only in his own heart and mind, the anti-Christian racism widely held in the culture around him, mostly because it was so normative in that day and age.

Similarly, for traditional Christians, preparing our children to hold on to certain truths of the faith in the post-Christian culture that now exists, and that is fast coming into being, is going to be an incredibly difficult challenge.

Rod Dreher is a Senior Editor for the American Conservative. There he operates a daily blog, from which this piece has been adapted.

⇒ According to the 2010 US Census, less than one percent (0.77 percent, to be precise) of all American households are constituted of a same-sex couple — and a statistical analysis paper on the Census website cautions that that number probably overestimates the number by 28 percent. Someone who pointed this out to me does the math, and says:

So how exactly do around 650,000 gay couples get to redefine marriage, stifle religious freedom, demand special rights, shut down adoption agencies, mandate the teaching of uncritical approval of homosexuality in schools, tear down the biological family, and tag anyone who disagrees with the label “hateful bigot?” Is there really some overwhelming new social consensus on gay “marriage,” or are we being marketed, manipulated, and maligned by our Ruling Classes into either agreeing with this brave new world or keeping our mouths shut? - Rod Dreher

⇒ Popular American Christianity cannot easily separate itself from American culture because it is a product of that culture. As David Frum once wrote, “It gets its adherents from the culture and takes its ideas from the culture... God will make you rich. God will make you thin. God will improve your sex life.” Services with motorcycles and electric guitars followed up sermons for the God of War and Israel and then a trip to the adjacent coffee bar afterward. It's only a matter of time before said Protestant megachurches will be doing homosexual marriage ceremonies because that's what the broader culture wants, or watch their children stop being religious altogether... Sean Scallon