

OpenTheo

Division, Whataboutism, & Christian Nationalism

January 20, 2021



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Why is it so hard to acknowledge when our opponents get something right? Or to admit when we are wrong? Why do so few people see that BOTH this issue AND that issue can be right or wrong? Collin, Justin, and Kevin discuss these divisions that we experience on this episode. They also ask, “What is Christian Nationalism?” Listen to the end for the book recommendations and scroll down for the links.

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Timestamps:

The Best Person to Disagree With [0:00 – 1:46]

Collin’s Jolly Holiday [1:46 – 4:17]

A Brief Digression on Morally Problematic Television [4:17 – 7:34]

Justin’s COVID Christmas [7:34 – 10:53]

VidAngel & Cobra Kai [10:53 – 12:15]

Kevin’s December Viewing [12:15 – 17:45]

Both/And: Why is it so hard to see both sides of an issue? [17:45 – 25:54]

Both/And: Should we even want this approach? [25:54 – 35:23]

Whataboutism & Selective Policing [35:23 – 40:57]

Christian Nationalism [40:57 – 56:16]

Book Recommendations Featuring Pro-Life and MLK, Jr. Topics [56:16 – 1:08:25]

Books and More Books:

The Case for Life: Equipping Christians to Engage the Culture, by Scott Klusendorf

Defending Life, by Francis J. Beckwith

Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility, by George Yancey

Letter from a Birmingham Jail, by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Abe: Abraham Lincoln in His Times, by David S. Reynolds

The Attributes of God: An Introduction, by Gerald Bray

Forty Questions About the End Times, by Eckhard Schnabel

The Bible and the Future, by Anthony A. Hoekema

Not Tragically Colored: Freedom, Personhood, and the Renewal of Black America, by Ismael Hernandez

America in the King Years, by Taylor Branch

Abuse of Discretion: The Inside Story of Roe v. Wade, by Clarke D. Forsythe

Concise Guide to Conservatism, by Russell Kirk

Transcript

[Music] Greetings and salutations, this is Kevin DeYoung, and we have the band back together today, Colin Hansen, and who goes the dynamite? Justin Taylor is here, and we'll hear from them in just a moment glad to have you with us here on Life and Books and Everything. is typical. We are glad to be sponsored by Crossway.

I'm grateful for their ministry and their books and wanted to mention to you today short studies in Biblical Theology. This is a series Dane Ortland and Myles Van Pelt have edited there are lots of volumes. This is a really good - it is what it says - short studies in Biblical Theology.

They also have one in Systematic Theology. We may mention that in a future episode

but this one is in Biblical Theology so you have Tom Schreiner on Covenant and God's purpose for the world. Hmm I wonder I'm I'm do I agree with everything in that book Justin about Covenant? If there's anyone I would want to disagree with or would want to disagree with me it would be Tom Schreiner because he's so thoughtful and so ironic.

Okay so you still read that book lots of others. Guy Prentice Waters there's a good the Lord's Supper is a sign and means of the new covenant G. K. Biel, Redemptive Reversals, New Book by Frank Tealman the new creation storyline of Scripture there. There's more than a dozen of them so they're all worth reading so check out short studies in Biblical Theology.

Thank you Crossway. Colin and Justin good to have you here. Just catch up a little bit I'm sure any listeners are eager to hear what you did for your Christmas vacation.

Colin anything noteworthy over the last month or so did you go anywhere did you get sick did you eat anything watch anything what happened? I gained way too much weight and I'm employing my New Year's resolutions and I did I did watch some things some that I'm more proud of than others I've read a lot which was fun which is appropriate for this broadcast and this podcast but I did one thing I did that that was very enjoyable and maybe worth talking about would be watching Ted Lasso on Apple TV now I cannot I cannot recommend this show in good conscience because it's got very bad language and a lot of sexuality in it not like explicit just sexual talk in it but there's a reason it's been very provocative for people because it's so different from what you normally see on TV so that's probably the one thing most interesting that I felt like man I want to talk to people about watching this is it funny that this is the the American coach who's coaching English football Jason Sudeckis so he started out you remember when the Premier League broadcast came to NBC right this is like a little commercial bit there were a couple different commercial bits pretending like an American football coach was coaching English football and he had a whole bit as his guy named Ted Lasso and he had an assistant coach called the Beard and somehow they developed it into an entire series at least for one season and I think they'll be renewing it but I love Jason Sudeckis I think he's I think he's great I think he's funny it helps these from Kansas City and so we love the same sports teams and that comes up a lot Kansas City in the series but just overall I did find it to be incredibly funny but then also strangely endearing and actually poignant and a number of different occasions and a very good contrast and distraction from the news which I needed over Christmas last month we welcome that I'll get to Justin but that that prompts something in me if I can put on my my infamous glowering scowl towards all of those people who were watching Game of Thrones which Babylon B did something about that after I wrote a couple of blog articles I I will go on I will hear of these things now I didn't I've heard of that one Ted Lasso and I didn't look at it in depth but I'll hear of things this is trending on Netflix or this is on prime or what and and they sound interesting especially ones that are historically situated maybe my wife would watch or if they're British in some way and invariably I go and if you go to IMDB

international movie database they they have I find the most detailed parental advisory I think is just what people have typed I mean it'll give you how many words they time they said this word and sexuality so I will go for these series that I find all sorts of people raving about and I can't even read through the parental advisory content without feeling some sense of shame now I didn't do I'm not I'm not shaming you for Ted Lasso because I didn't see that one but I knew when I brought this up I knew this is where the conversation was okay and I'm not defending myself on this I just one thing that's interesting with this and I want to you finish that point one thing that's about Ted Lasso is that the his character shines precisely against the backdrop of the other attitudes and language and speech of the other characters and so it's just a it's a strange dynamic because you can't tell is this show the most wholesome thing I've watched in years or is it the opposite you did you it is a confit not the opposite because it's not nearly as vile as a lot of other things out there and like I said it's not graphic so that's a very big difference on it but I I think with your friendship over the years Kevin and becoming a parent I've become more sensitive in good ways and my conscience has been restored a little bit from where it had been seared I think in some of my younger even the Queen's Gambit right now that the the chess won people I mean Bridgerton that thing looked like soap opera trash from the get-go but any of these sort of things I look and it's just mind boggling to me that I mean and I'll do this sometimes for my kids I'll say okay I want you to read this read this to me and tell me if this sounds like something that we're we we my kids were watching some of the Avenger movies earlier so we people could draw the lines a lot better and closer on some things than we do but I asked the question to friends not infrequently do you have anything good because I'd be happy to watch something while I'm you know running on the treadmill or riding my bike or want an hour of downtime and it's just very hard to find something Justin what did you do and can you redeem the time better than Colin yeah I'll tell you what I did and then I'll tell you a solution to make both of you guys happy on the movie the angel that's it so I'll get there but yeah it was not a an easy break for us like Thanksgiving we did not meet as a family which was weird like living now locally with family some other family members made that decision we didn't end up getting together and by time Christmas rolled around I think having foregone family gatherings for Thanksgiving with the the vaccine in sight by way for one point said do you think we should we should be meeting for Christmas and we all decided to meet and long story short over probably two thirds of the people who gathered got covid including myself and my wife and a couple of our kids so thankfully the the symptoms weren't unmanageable and we survived it which is not a throwaway line because no people who haven't and parents who haven't so we're thankful to be on the other side of it but one unfortunate thing that I think of all the stuff that I've read on covid that I didn't truly get is that unless you're completely self-isolated from other family members the people who tested negative their quarantine time starts only after your quarantine time ends and you're no longer contagious so functionally three of our kids didn't get covid but I had to quarantine essentially for a full month which is the long time to quarantine especially after nine or ten months of doing this so that that was you

know mildly frustrating but we got through it this weekend we discovered that our 12 year old dog has lymphoma so that was not something we were expecting but talking about the chemo what do you do there so we're gonna put them on something that it will probably Lord will and give them another month to live but that's a sad thing especially when you have kids and you know I think for people who don't own pets and pets like dogs that you can truly grow attached to for many years it feels a little bit abstract of why would losing a pet be that that difficult but throw kids in the mix and it ends up being a large part of your life so that's a little sadness hanging over the Taylor household right now but yeah so go ahead Kevin no did you watch anything did you do anything noteworthy sorry you were sick glad you're better yeah thanks yeah I think if you're looking for a good movie that's well acted well shot news of the world with Tom pinks yeah it is good it's you know not I think our kids would probably find it boring but my wife and I watched it and it's set in 1890 and just well acted and a good story and interesting keeps your attention yeah I'm surprised that I don't hear of more Christians using vid angel which was started by Mormons and it for a monthly fee it essentially allows you to filter out whatever you want I mean very granular from graphic violence to just regular violence from normal kissing to passionate kissing from blasphemy to profanity I mean it goes it you can pick and choose what you want to see and what you want to hear so we've been watching Cobra Kai with our kids and we just vid angel the whole thing anything you know related to sexuality and profanity and blasphemy is gone and we keep all the violence in there but it's kind of a fun bridging of the gap for my wife and I who are in our mid 40s and our kids who range from the kids watching it range from preteen up to teenager but to go from kind of karate kid world of our youth in the 80s 90s to today it's it's kind of a fun thing to bring everybody together and we did watch my wife now watch the Queen Gam it on vid angel and it was really well shot and well acted I did not love every part of it but I think other people were more excited about the storyline than I was yeah well we we didn't go anywhere we were originally going to go to Michigan and see my family and friends up there but COVID canceled that Christmas so we stayed here we did don't know if I should say this we did go to the Great Wolf Lodge for one night with our family which is indoor water park hotel and I can tell you that the COVID precautions were somewhat more lax inside the Great Wolf Lodge lots of a sea of humanity and tattoos gathered together on but I don't think anyone got at least we didn't get sick from that so that was a fun thing to do for the kids just locally here and I flew to DC I've hardly been on a plane since March it's one of the only two or three times and was there about half of the speakers for the cross conference were there and that was good to just go up I'd never been to McLean David Platts the church where David Platts serves and one of the things reminded me of and maybe we'll talk about this is how how infrequently we're we're seeing people now we know that but I think one of the reasons that largely goes unnoticed and untalked about for divisions in our day and almost everyone recognizes there's lots of divisions in the church right now one under the radar reason is people that might normally be seeing each other and having face-to-face conversations haven't seen each other for a year I'm talking about different

leaders and pastors and church folks who would be intermingling at various conferences or symposium events and we just don't see each other now so I was really glad to see Mac Stiles was there and Matt Schmucker and St. Pratt and David Platt and several other people couldn't come but it was just good to see guys that I would have normally probably seen two or three times in the past year but hadn't for some time so we watched none of you mentioned Mandalorian maybe because that ended before Christmas I didn't see the first season but my kids did and then we did watch the second season and that was a fun thing to do on Friday night 40-minute episodes and pretty much everyone in the family had something to enjoy in it although there's some I think some cringy characters and things in there but it got better and I thought it the last episode was good I watch football so I'm sad there's how many there's only three more football games and then we take a long break so grateful for that and well my wife's excited about the Joanna Gaines resurfacing again with a cooking show and Magnolia Network my wife also found a show on HGTV called Escape to the Chateau and have you seen it so it's a British couple that bought a Chateau in France so it's a Reno show but they're renovating a Chateau and the amazing thing is they bought a 45 room Chateau with seven other buildings and a moat in the countryside of France and they bought it for \$350,000 and so I've been just sort of watching it in the background but my wife has enjoyed that and I will say that this is you know maybe our style here we were we still have cable we're so antiquated and we saw in the Turner Classic movies the other night charade if you have never seen that movie never I don't even I've never even heard of this it is very good it's a am I right it's a Hitchcock movie and it has Carrie Grant and Audrey Hepburn 63 or 64 very clever very lots of twists and turns it's kind of a mystery who done it but it has lots of actors and actresses who went on to be famous Walter Mathau James Coburn so I tried to have my kids watch it and they were so bored I said just stick with it it's really interesting so that that's sort of our style and then even my mother-in-law could come and watch that with us so I'll have to give it angel and try Ted Lasso after that if I try to have our kids watch anything made like in 2010 they're like yeah this is so old well I know and then after that came on the man who knew too much which is another Hitchcock movie with Doris Day and Jimmy Stewart and that was made I think in 58 so I was born in 77 and I was thinking this movie seems so old but it was only made 20 years before I was born 20 years before some of my kids were born is finding Nemo I mean that's how old we are so all right we'll we'll transition and talk about there's lots to talk about in our world I wanted to start and you guys have seen this I won't read the whole thing but maybe it'll be a good entree into a conversation about all that's going on especially here in the United States and this is a Facebook post from Abigail Dodd so I think all of us know and one way or another and a good writer and thinker and at Bethlehem Baptist Church or one of the church sites in Minneapolis and she had a post on both and and she says just reading some of it it's possible to believe that widespread stealing burning violent rioting all summer was damnable and that the violent storming of the capital was likewise damnable it's possible to believe there were innocent protesters caught in both it's possible to believe that COVID is real and

especially dangerous for some and also that the panic the media incited is unhelpful at best and harmful to millions at worst it's possible that ethnic partiality is sinned to be repented of while also believing that the cultural narrative a pervasiveness treatment of anyone who isn't white is a lie used for political social capital it's possible to believe that the merging of Christian symbols with the storming of the capital and cult-like conspiracies is wicked while also believing that critical theory is a danger to the authority of scripture in the purity of the church she gives a few other examples so my question for us and thank you Abigail for writing that and I think all of us you know more or less said yeah we agree with that both and so why is that so hard to do and not so much asking the particulars of each line or phrase that Abigail wrote but why is that approach to these issues so difficult and is that an approach we should be advocating more frequently Justin yeah I think one of the reasons that it's difficult for us to do is that we like to posture we like to play to the crowd and I don't just mean other people like to do that well I think I face that temptation myself and so it should not be hard to do it should be easy to say I want to declare truth where I find it and I don't need to play to the crowd or to play sides off of each other but I think that we are so politically oriented and I don't just mean by that kind of executive politics but we're political animals who want to appease one side or the other and we also have different instincts and so oftentimes we can emphasize things differently have different suspicions of one another different senses of what what needs to really be emphasized for our particular crowd but yeah I think all three of us when we read Abigail's piece said I agree with both of those sides and why why is that so difficult to say what do you think Colin you guys are probably familiar with a lot of the studies on the effect of the market on churches and one of the key sociological takeaways of the effect of a an open marketplace of religion is that churches tend to end up focusing on their distinctives as opposed to their commonalities so a new church will come along and they're they show how they're not like your grandmother's church or they're different because they have congregational polity or because they don't have congregational polity or because they have high church worship or because they have low church worship or because they have dynamic preaching or because they have biblical preaching you see what I'm saying the marketplace encourages us to be able to emphasize what makes us different from others and I think that has some carryover to how that plays out within broader debates within the church is that we'll tend to emphasize that which divides us that which distinguishes us that which sets us apart and I was in fact just thinking about this this morning guys about how journalism is including the work that I do for the gospel coalition has a kind of force that continually pulls you away from the both and or continuing to pulls you away from the traditional or the or the just that was that which has been said before because there's a constant pull to want to distinguish and to differentiate and to criticize and to and social media is just that kind of journalism on steroids but you guys have much more experience within the academic guild than I do and the academic guild has a little bit of that temptation as well because you have to be able to distinguish yourself from that which came before so there isn't a lot of incentive to simply reiterate what's been said

before you have to always pitch it as something that is that is different so I think sometimes the biggest effects on our lives are those which we don't even recognize and for all this living in an open marketplace of ideas I think the both and is comes across is not saying anything it's not adding anything to the discussion of not creating a level of urgency that leads to action or at least that demands or compels action because we're all so primed for that kind of setup so but I think one reason why I'm hearing so much from so many pastors now is because I think they're trying to have the both and mentality in an either or world and it's really pulling them and their churches at the seams and so I appreciate Abigail just being able to show that it is possible to be able to hold competing what are appearing to be competing ideas in our heads at the same time and even to be able to discover a kind of nuance without at the same time falling prey I know Kevin to one of your pet peeves the constant synthesis or even being above the fray those are two other approaches one approach of above the fray of why does anybody even care about any of this stuff you guys don't have a clue or the you know synthesis that always says well over here you guys are wrong over here you guys are wrong but somewhere where I'm standing here in the middle is the right way to do it then I'm not saying there's always wrong just saying that this this both hand is a little bit distinguished from that I think it's a little bit more characteristic to a pastor's typical position do you think that's accurate Kevin or what how they often feel pulled of I see what you're saying over here but I see what you're saying over here but why can't you guys see that both of you have some valid perspectives that can be held at the same time you certainly do have to do that a lot as a pastor not that other people don't but I am often finding myself I'll listen to that nope that's that those are true points and sometimes you don't get to a new breaking ground or wonderful statement of agreement but simply by acknowledging you know what you you made six points there and three of them I think are right I'm still over here disagreeing because I have six other points that I think are right but sometimes just to be willing to state yep that that's a good point I can see that can at least help relationally rhetorically but of course the question is do we want to find that because it depends on what sort of issue I'm I'm reading through and listening to the wonderful biography by Andrew Roberts on Winston Churchill and you know when Churchill is wanting Britain to rearm to fight the Nazis you're not trying to find common ground you're not trying to find a way to say well you know you may really make some good points and we make some good points so if every conflict that we have is that a fevered pitch of those you know reductio ad hit Laram everyone else is Hitler then of course then that is a misstep and sometimes the stakes are that high but that's not always the best way forward I think too what we see is that the mega cultural teams are so increasingly well defined at least intuitively and her medically sealed from each other that it is like as I'm looking at Colin you know he's wearing the Kansas City Chiefs outfit and they beat the the Browns the other day so it is like two teams and so when the capital insurrection happens the oh I think almost all Americans can say that was oh that's a sad day that shouldn't have happened that's that's horrible but there's also this instinctive tribal thing that if you're on the left you feel like their team just threw six

interceptions on that day I mean look at what they did this you do feel some sense of this is let's keep talking about this this is good for our side and if you're more conservative you feel like I can't believe this own goal that we just did these were these were our people even though when you think about it you don't really want to own not all of those people not the ones killing people and breaking in and and chanting horrible things but when the larger cultural issues are so divided in those two things anytime something it's just so predictable whether it's a mass shooting or it's riot or protest or something all the sides get divided and there there is very little at least in the short run it feels like to be gained by trying to acknowledge any other legitimate points on the other side and last thought here and see what else you guys want to add but there is a there is a question of should we mainly be policing our own so to speak or ought we mainly to be warning against outside isms infiltrating into our camp or our church because both of those things are reality but your instincts there so if your instinct is hey you know what mainly conservative evangelical churches are not reading critical race theory but they may be unhelpfully disciplined in Christian nationalism we're gonna come to that what is that is that a thing can we define it but let's just say that's something bad so there's one instinct that says you know what I really need to be talking about is that danger that's what's in my churches where someone else could also make the point say hey you don't realize just the very world that we're living in this is the air that we're breathing everybody is picking up this whether it's critical theory or whatever it is so and that may cause people to be silent in one or the other direction just sensing well that's not really my fight to pick or the people I know are not really into that but the people I see on Facebook are falling prey to that other thing and so I'm gonna talk about that and because it's a big world and a big country and we can follow anybody on social media any one of us can you know somewhat legitimately make the case that our way of seeing what the major problems are are really the major problems because you can point to evidence in any of those directions I think all of that makes it very hard and there just isn't the you don't often get a lot of traffic wins whatever by trying to say you know what they had a good point they had a good point on some of these cultural flash points and doing this sort of both and that Abigail did but on those issues in particular I think we need to be leading the way as Christians is say hey we can we can condemn two things at the same time we can praise two things at the same time even if there seem to be coming from opposite ends of the spectrum anything else you guys want to add yeah I just had the both and can be done in the way Abigail did there at the same time it can also be done at different times so for example you in the middle of the riots this summer you might have a certain message at that point and then you might have another message when we see the Capitol Hill attack six or whatever plus months later that can be part of the both and as well there can be a different emphasis depending on the different moment and that's why I keep bringing it back Kevin to the pastor because the pastor has to be able to sense his congregations mood and what word of the Lord that they need for that particular time and sometimes there are words of consolation sometimes there are words of challenge then sometimes of admonition sometimes of

encouragement that's part of the both and as well so it's not just that we always go around and say that that that then becomes a little bit of the what about ism if you just say well okay yeah I see what happened on Capitol Hill but what about all the stuff that the left is doing over here that's not the kind of both and that I would necessarily commend there can be a time and a season for different messages but all within the same conceptual framework of conviction that is not content to be confined to whatever kind of either or binaries you're being given at that particular moment by whether it be politicians or media or circumstances or whatever Justin what do you think yeah the whole what about ism question is really interesting to think through because if nobody it's an ism so nobody likes being on the receiving end of it almost by definition that's something bad I was part of an ETS panel discussion with Jamartis being John Fee over John Fee's book John Fee's a American historian writing about Donald Trump and he coined the term the court evangelicals and wrote a book about how terrible it is that the evangelicals support Donald Trump and I was part of the response to that and one of his key points in the book is that evangelicals who support Trump are driven by fear and then he quotes a few Bible verses that show that evangelicals should not fear people if God should not fear anything except God alone I agree with those in theory but I pointed out my response that sure seems like people who were voting for Hillary Clinton this was before the election so mainly focused on 2016 election you could produce lots of evidence that they were driven by fear they were fearing the Christian nationalism the theonomic right they were fearing Trump presidency so is fear something that's common to all and you're just picking on one or are you being inconsistent in applying that and he in his response suggested that I was engaged in what about his own but at its best that can try to just pressure test whether somebody actually holds to a principle or not or whether they're trying to score a cheap political points remember another speaker Scott Clusendorf talking about the pro-life defense and the accusation that pro-lifers are inconsistent because they believe in defending the life of the unborn but they don't do enough to actually care for those who are born and one of his responses was you may be right I may be terribly inconsistent I don't think I am I may be hypocritical and how I treat issues X and Y but that does not necessarily mean that I'm wrong about issue X you still have to eventually at some point get around to discussing my argument about issue X so the whole what about is something is interesting and frustrating at the same time I do think that hypocrisy is a serious charge that somebody is acting out of accordance with what they believe but that's not the same thing is have you condemned by tweeting every single thing that is bad on the planet that that's not the same as hypocrisy I just the failure to say all those things yeah I think that's a really important distinction what about ism and if people haven't heard of that phrase it just means well what about that when you don't want to talk about what's going on at the moment there's a distinction between the charge of personal what about ism and a more principal big picture and so if you know some Cruella de Vil is murdering puppies and you try to speak out against it and someone says well what about the Armenian genocide from a hundred years ago so okay I'm I wasn't there but that's bad well you never talk about it you didn't celebrate

the end I'm giving it a certain example obviously but there's a that that's one sort of hey you're just avoiding talking about what's happening right now or trying to make this seem less severe than it is but then your point is an is important Justin it is fair to ask people well where was this moral indignation here now sometimes that's just a sidestep to not really talk about it but on a personal level it can be fair and this is where all of us I'm talking about the three of us and other people who may write and comment that's not we're not mainly cultural commentators but all of us do some of that we do some of that on this podcast and when you go down that path you set yourself up so the more that sort of your thing is that's what you do and more and more because of social media it can become anybody's thing you do set yourself up to say now where was this righteous indignation six months ago or six years ago and even when we think that we're being fair we can look at our tone and I know people hate that the tone police but this is what I mean we may have spoken against one thing and we did it in a very scholarly dispassionate way and then we speak about something else and it's full-on prophetic kind of shame on you or we speak against one thing but it's very seeking to persuade and hey I really hear where you're coming from and I agree with all of these things but just hear me out versus seeming to be talking down to someone so all of that is I think part of what comes out in the what about is in charge that can be legitimate on a personal institutional level even if it's sometimes used as a distraction from really talking about and really condemning what needs to be condemned did you have something Colin yeah I had a couple people ask me this week why the gospel coalition doesn't do more exposés don't do more investigative journalism things like that and I think it was probably in light of some of what World Magazine and Christian today have done for example with Robbie Zacharias and I'm grateful for what World Magazine and Christian today have done of being able to understand those things because I think people deserve to know especially as their donors to these ministries about how their funds are used and how these organizations are governed and things like that so I think those are legitimate forms of of inquiry but I responded and said I don't think organizationally I ever could have done that without being selective mm-hmm in other words say something came up with somebody the gospel coalition didn't like okay an exposé what if it came up with one of our own people I'm not saying that some like somebody would have been oh no no my point is it's too tempting we would have walked straight into a situation where it was wait a minute I'm not sure we want to do that that person might be upset or those people could be on and on and on and I just knew at that point we couldn't get into that situation because it would be clearly inconsistent and that's why I'm so I'm grateful for what World and Christian today have also done sometimes in writing about some of my friends some of our friends some of the people that we've worked with before some of the people that that we've you know had had you know difficult breaking a a fellowship with but I just had to learn that was not going to be my particular calling because of where I am and I have to be mindful of those temptations so that's I think to your point Kevin if you're gonna be the cultural commentator you're gonna speak the biblical truth about every single thing that's happening it is extremely

tempting to only do that against certain lists of people who are not those people who pay your bills you're going to be extremely tempted to only say bad things about them and only good things about your the people who support you the more you talk the more you you sort of put up with you put they put up that placard of what that of what you're doing professionally you walk yourself into that situation and now to Justin's point earlier because of social media we're kind of all in that situation and it induces quite a bit of stress and conflict and anxiety and I don't think it's particularly healthy right let's use that to segue to this ism and I'm gonna set the clock at about ten minutes here so we can finish by talking about some books but Christian nationalism yeah we know we have someone a friend of ours or at least acquaintance of ours who's who's writing a big book on Christian nationalism as of yet I couldn't point to somebody today some a manifesto on it or here's the book that argues for it so on the one hand it seems to me still pretty ambiguous and nebulous but that doesn't mean ideas aren't sometimes in that stage what I want us to talk about because it's after the the capital riots we're hearing a lot about it let's go around this triangle a couple of times and let's start okay if Christian nationalism means this and let's start with if it means this it's not a bad thing I think people are using it as a bad thing I think the three of us would say yeah it sounds like a bad thing but just those words together in many people's minds wouldn't have to be so Justin give us an example of if someone out there thinks of Christian nationalism as X then that's not what we're concerned about and maybe this is too simplistic but if somebody gets tears in their eyes when they hear the national anthem they love America which is where we're recording this in the United States they have a love of country and they appreciate the sacrifice it has made they think that their country is flawed but still a force for good on the whole worldwide so they they love their nation and they want to see it prosper they don't want to see it divide or turn it on itself and they also want to see people come to the Lord want to see their fellow citizens become Christians and bow the need to the Lord Jesus Christ so kind of combine that love of country and desire to see the citizens of the country love Jesus if that's what Christian nationalism is pretty hard to find objections to that that's good Colin what give us an example of something that wouldn't be problematic would not be problematic to be able to identify the elements of Christianity specifically within the Reformation specifically within continuing on through the Enlightenment period of how the very essence of what became the United States of America was owing a great deal to Christianity we don't have to say that that was the primary or even the or certainly the exclusive force or even that all of the founders were explicitly Christian or doing this because of they were Christians but simply to be able to observe the particular elements of Christianity that made the United States of America possible for example Kevin shout out to you some of that Presbyterian influence on you know national you know Presbyterian polities influence on some of the checks and balances and things like that or even just broader changes that the Reformation had wrought that made things like liberty of conscience more realizable within that context and specifically through the you know through the the pilgrimage of some people who were motivated by religious reasons now wouldn't

want to attribute that to religious freedom because they didn't necessarily allow religious freedom but my point is simply if we recognize some of the particular elements of Christianity and how they shaped the United States that Christian nationalism I think is fine yeah and putting those two together then we could say if Christian nationalism means trying to bring to bear Christian values and principles and be salt and light in our world recognizing that there's a creator recognizing whether from the Bible or from natural law there is a higher authority and law to which human flourishing is made possible when we follow that law to even have some sense of remembrance of ways in which the country was more discernibly Christian now minority brothers and sisters would say the good old days weren't that good so we we know there were no golden days but to have a sense that there used to be more of a acceptable public face for Christianity in this country and we lament that loss I think all of that can be appropriate defensible good so Christian nationalism just by putting those two words together doesn't have to be nefarious but let's turn the corner now what are some things that we want to say well if that's what Christian nationalism is then that's a big problem and we're gonna need to disciple people out of it or warn against it do you have something at the top of your mind Justin yeah I think that identity issue is a large one that it it's okay to identify as an American and to feel some measure of pride in that but when it it becomes functionally such a deep part of your identity that it obscures our identity in Christ I think that that becomes problematic Tommy Kidd on our Evangelical History blog wrote a post and he made the point in critiquing Christian nationalism about the level of affinity that one feels with fellow believers who might not be Americans versus somebody who's an American who is not a believer Brad Littlejohn wrote a response and critiqued him to some degree but I think there's something to what Tommy's saying that there's a natural in this if you're in a foreign country and you're the only American and you spot another American you share some cultural commonalities and you're both speak English and you you have some shared history and so there's some affinity even if you don't know each other but the way in which an unbeliever you feel that with an unbeliever is different than two believers meeting up for the first time there's a there's a deeper more embedded more more fundamental to our identity aspect to that relationship that I think should trump any commitment to nationhood so identity would be one area I think that that we want to be really careful about if that if we feel more American than we do Christian if being in America counts more than being in Christ then I think there's warning signs on the dashboard at the very least that something has gone seriously wrong yeah no I agree with that call would you say I'm gonna stick with the founding and say that there is a way that that element of Christian influence on the founding can go very badly and that would be where we identify the covenant of God with his people in the Old Testament with a covenant that God makes with the the people of colonial or now the United States of America I I think Eric Metaxis is a plenty visible public figure that as I relate a conversation with him I think it's appropriate and in keeping and I've shared the story with you guys before but it will probably be new to a number of listeners at a conversation in 2015 with Eric and my understanding with him

was very different from what it would be in 2021 and at one point in the conversation he said that at a restaurant that he picked out New York City he said America is the last hope of Christianity and I just assumed he had misspoken I thought he meant to say that Christian was last hope of America and he said no I met what I said and in fact he would go on to write a book about nationalism and Christianity that I think would exemplify the problematic elements that we're talking about here and that we've seen a flourish in the last number of years and sort of reach a kind of heightened point and disturbing point with the you know with the late Trump presidency into the transition or lack thereof into the attacks on the Capitol building so if you begin to see the United States in covenantal terms in divine terms then as Eric Metaxas said within the at the Jericho March at that point reality doesn't matter because revelation trumps so let me add add to that and I think you guys would agree with these and that's helpful Colin I'm just jotting down a few words so more theological if Christian nationalism is a less sophisticated form of theonomy I would find that problematic theonomy arguing that the Old Testament laws are giving us a blueprint for what the modern nation state should do that it's God's law and therefore that should be enshrined I think when I hear voices on the left and they've been saying this for 30 years or more fearing a great theonic theonomic takeover I do want to say there aren't that many of them are around you could have every reformed Presbyterian takeover and it's not very many of them comparatively so I think the threats of that are overblown but if that's the the vision I have problems with that theologically more sociologically and this is getting to what he said about identity I do fear that Christian nationalism if that embraces a grievance culture victimization that's that this is about our identity as the aggrieved party and in many of those people would be critical about minorities for doing that in vice versa so there's a race sometimes I mean like a foot race to find the highest aggrieved status and to the degree that Christian nationalism is a form of expressing were the ones who are put upon were the ones who are persecuted I don't think that's helpful even if it were demonstrably true and it's not demonstrably true we've talked about before one of the things that you get living in in a country that's almost 50 50 politically or maybe 40 40 20 as some people say or 45 45 10 is that you have vast was the people who are convinced that they are one step away from mortal extinction and that those opposite them pose an existential threat so everyone can feel like they're losing at the same time and I think movements on the right or the left that are motivated by those sort of identity politics and grievance now I'm not talking about legitimate yes we protest against injustice or suffering but to make that your identity I think it's going to be problematic and then I'll just bang the drum on this one more time and that's inappropriate here's what I think we need we need an appropriate appraisal and use of the spirituality of the church now that is for Bowton in some circles because it was used in the 19th century by some to defend slavery to say hey the church is spiritual institution we don't need to take a stance on slavery but Charles Hodge and others said no the Bible does speak directly to some issues but it doesn't speak directly to others and so when when I see that the political sphere and the ecclesiastical sphere seem to be having almost completely overlapping

circles and one is using the symbolism of the other and vice versa then that's very problematic I mean there's almost nothing in the gospels more frequently misunderstood than the nature of Christ's kingdom that it is and not an earthly political kingdom it may have earthly and political ramifications to say Jesus is Lord but it is a heavenly kingdom it's one that's coming and one that has already come and constantly they're wanting to make Jesus king by force the violent try to take the kingdom by force and Jesus says no that that's not the sort of kingdom that we're about here so I do think at root there are often theological issues and I would encourage any pastors or other Christian leaders out there to try to get at some of these issues theologically rather than just politically sociologically so when I hear much consternation about Christian nationalism and this will wrap up this conversation on this point I just want to both encourage and caution people I guess the caution is let's make sure we know what we're talking about and provide some definition and then the encouragement is yet there are real dangers out there for those of us who for lack of a better term are conservative folks to sense and we need to be honest that it's not always just the bad guys out there but sometimes we have real things in our camp and we need to try to be thoughtful about them so I hope that there there there is more that is written on this that has a good historical philosophical theological lens either to agree or disagree with because that's one of the real benefits of having things in writing is it's much easier to do analysis and say what you agree and disagree with where at present it feels like Christian nationalism is either a very genuine threat that we ought to be concerned about or it's a slur to just put over anybody who voted a different way or doesn't think exactly as we do all right let's end on a cheery note and talk about some books what books have you been reading in the past week week month two months over since last time we met give some books and if you have a book whether you've been reading it or not but if you have a book either on race especially MLK so we're recording this on the MLK holiday and or abortion because of course those two things usually fall in the same week sanctity of life and the Roe v. Wade anniversary so some books you've been reading in the last month or so and in addition to that you have any great recommendations on those two perennial topics Justin yeah so on maybe to start with the second one first on abortion if any listeners are out there Scott Cluison dwarf as name starts with a K Cluison dwarf I won't try to spell the whole thing but his book that Crossway publishes on making a case for life I think is the best introduction like if you don't know where to begin you've never really studied it want some tactics to use what to clarify what you think in your own mind I think that's the best entry-level book and then Francis Beckwith defending life is a sophisticated sort of a college to graduate level study on abortion that I think is just it's a sort of writing that just will make you a better thinker making more logical making more clear making more informed on race George Yancey's book I think is is even handed and thoughtful he's an African-American evangelical sociologist yeah beyond racial gridlock looking forward to Isaac Adams book that will be coming out in 2021 which I haven't read I've seen a preview of Shaolin's as well yeah I didn't know about Shaolin wrote a book for Moody Press but that looks like it's coming out within the next month or so but I would

encourage people to read again King's letter from Birmingham Jail written in 1963 draws heavily upon the Christian tradition and natural law and I think it's just such a beautiful and important document not only historically but it continues to speak to us today in terms of what I'm reading my parents for Christmas gave me a thousand page biography of Abraham Lincoln called Abe by David Reynolds and subtitled Abraham Lincoln in his times and he points out that there have been 16,000 biographies studies of Wow that have been written some more books can exist than any other figure in history other than Jesus and his is the first of the 16,000 that's a cultural biography so he's into cultural biography is written ones of Walt Whitman and others John Brown I believe but he's seeking to put Lincoln in his time so 300 pages into that and plowing through that slowly and learning a lot and enjoying it in terms of Christian books Gerald braised attributes of God just try to try to make my way through books like that just very slowly just read an attribute a day and Eckhart Shnovel's book 40 Questions About the End Times has been on my shelf for many years and ask itology I think I've read one book all the way through the Bible in the future by Anthony Hocham on ask itology and it's just one that I end up avoiding you know what is what is the thunder and the earthquake and the seals and the bowls and all those things represent and it's that's a topic that's just easy for me to put off so I really like the 40 questions series that Kregal puts puts out because you can read just one section at a time few pages and learn something and just make my way through it slowly so there's big books where I'm trying to plow through a larger book and then there's books where I'm just taking a pager to at a time when I've got a break or you know sitting in traffic that little sort of things all right I'll mention some books I'll start with a book that I doubt very many people have heard of but I read it several years ago and found it helpful by Ismail Hernandez it's called not tragically colored freedom personhood in the renewal of black America and it was published I think by Acton out of Grand Rapids so that you it has more of a conservative bent but I found it to be a helpful different look at some of the questions that continue to be devil us here on race and I also mentioned the I just assumed one of you would the Taylor branch volumes on MLK and and you can get the the one slim single volume couple hundred pages on the King years and that would be just good history to read on abortion one I've written on my this on my blog years ago but I think it's helpful to just think about I was gonna mention Cluison door but if you want to just know more about the road decision Clark Forsyth book abusive discretion explores many of the myths surrounding the road decision so that's a helpful book and what I'm reading I have four books that I've finished in 2021 so far and very different kind of books Russell Kirk's concise guide to conservatism I may write about this on my blog so if you want just a hundred pages on a thinker from the 20th century on conservatism that's good the myth of the lost cause by Edward lone Kemper the third so if you want to know some it is the name why the sought the South fought the Civil War and why the North won so this is definitely against the lost cause I've read some books from the lost cause side of things but if you want just a clear it's very laid out in you know several chapters what slavery about to die out was slavery the primary cause of secession was Robert E Lee one of the greatest generals in history I'm

not saying that you will agree with everything in here and I would have to read more history to see if I agreed with everything but very clearly laid out an interesting book I also read the biography of Gerhard is Voss by Danny Olinger sorry Danny if I mispronounced your last name I always love to read biographies of some of our reformed he's a big listener of LBE is he no I'd probably not I don't know he's an OPC pastor he might be I haven't met him yes give us a shout out okay Gerhard is boss so that was enjoyable and then these are sort of my my fun reading at well all them are fun but I am I've read through so many kind of productivity books and I got this one Colin from one of the TGC end of year lists I forgot who mentioned it but make time how to focus on what matters every day Jake Knapp and John Zoratsky it's a very quick easy read it has little pictures simple book and you're not going to put into into your daily rhythm all the you know 60 70 suggestions here but if you read a book like that and you get three or four that stick with you yeah I think it's it's worth reading so that's what I've been doing and I'm on to some other bigger history books now Colin well my reading has changed in 2021 and it'll be changed for the foreseeable future I have some you're you're going through turreting that would be a change yeah would be a static change see if I can drop hints throughout the year I've embarked on the most ambitious sort of writing project of my career to this point and so a lot of my reading is is concentrated on that and I mean I do have a bunch of other books going but there you know that I'm there I'm there's gonna be slow so I'll save those for a future episode so I have something to talk about so my first two weeks so far heralds of the king Christ-centered sermons in the tradition of Edmund P. Clowney edited by Dennis Johnson also been working my way through for Christ in the University the story of University Christian Fellowship the USA 1949 1990 Keith and Gladys Hunt let that not to be the only book on the university that I'm reading see Sassy Woods and the Evangelical Rediscovery of the University by A. Donald McCloud and then also I'm gonna work in my way through actually wrap this up moral believing animals human personhood and culture by Christian Smith so if you can use those puzzle pieces you can begin to guess as to what I'm I'm working on I do though also with because of my gospel bound podcast I do have an opportunity to be talking with a bunch of different authors and so a couple that I'm that I'm interested in and that I wrapped up 2020 reading Thaddeus Williams book confronting injustice without compromising truth 12 questions Christians should ask about social justice I'm talking to him soon and then this is a little bit off the beaten path but minds wide shut how the new fundamentalisms divide us by Gary Saul Morrison and Morty Shapiro a little college professor and University president my alma mater I'm pretty sure they would consider us all to be the fundamentalists that they write against in the book which is part of why I want to interview them and yet nevertheless I I was pretty astounded by how much they attacked the left and I thought that's not easy these days for University president to really attack the left for its increasing fundamentalism and to use that terminology to refer to socialists and communists and all kind of leftist activists and and a robust defense of the free market and I just didn't think didn't think president Shapiro had it in him to do that so I'm hoping I'll get to talk to them for gospel

bound we'll see it's great I also read the new biography of RC Sproul by our friend Steve Nichols which crossways publishing coming out in the next couple of months and Steve's gonna be a guest on the podcast I'm really looking forward to that that was that was really fun to read Justin Colin good to see your glistening faces here good to be with you all and grateful for our listeners and if you have questions topics things you are interested in us talking about certainly feel free to send an email or communicate through one of the channels we do take a look at that and try to we we we want to give what the people want within reason but good to be with you and thanks for listening so until next time glorify God enjoy him forever and read a good book you you

(buzzing)

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