

# THE GOSPEL OF PLOTS, POLITICS AND PARANOIA

--A. Ralph Johnson

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Introductory note: This article was written during the height of the hysteria concerning a feared Communist takeover of the world. Churches were being filled with this and sometimes destroyed. Some people in our churches went to jail. Now, with the fall of Communism, those dire warnings have proven wrong and much of the furor has subsided. Unfortunately much damage was done and others are still suffering from becoming involved.

However, the problem is as old as civilization and continues to exist in other forms. We mostly see it today in the "Identity Movement" which holds to much of the same tenets. One of the most prominent of these is Pete Peters, once a member of one of our churches in Nebraska. Some of this has even gone to the point of justifying amassing arms and launching attacks that injure and kill innocent people.

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*"The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" cried Chicken Little."*

Over the years it has been my painful experience to see a number of brethren with great potential for the kingdom diverted from preaching the "Good News" of Christ to a gospel of fear, suspicion and rumor. The malady seems to spawn in frustration with financial struggles, deteriorating world conditions and endless obstacles to progress, often accentuated by an idealistic personality and perhaps a tendency towards instability. This renders them highly suggestible as to things to blame for the situation. The scriptural concept of a struggle against spiritual forces (Eph. 6:12) is much too intangible to satisfy the need for something specific at which to focus blame and upon which to vent frustration.

In this frame of mind someone exposes them to supposedly authoritative but suppressed "evidence" that the major problems we face can be traced to some grand "plot." Unless we act quickly by joining some political action crusade, raising our voices to warn the masses and challenging the laws and court decisions, we shall soon lose our freedom, our homes, our faith and our lives! The seeds of fear and hate take root and soon a strange metamorphosis takes place in which the victim begins to behave as if possessed by some dark force, consuming his thinking, robbing his common sense and driving him relentlessly towards a sea of self-destruction. Sometimes the face becomes flushed with suspicion and anger. Often he seems to be experiencing a relief from the frustrating drudgery of just preaching the Bible and now sees himself as a glamorous white knight, galloping forth to warn the world!

Papers, booklets and rumors are circulated purporting to reveal the "connections" to some sinister conspiracy and blindly accepted as fact with little or no investigation and substantiation. Church members are urged to attend "tax revolt" meetings and even pay to listen with gaping mouths to some self-styled "constitutional lawyer" (who never spent a year in law school and hides under a fictitious name) tell them how to escape payment of taxes by putting 35 exemptions on their W-4 tax forms because the laws are illegal, we are being exploited and our money is phony. (With such reputable "authority" one would just as well call him to take care of an appendectomy!) They have the gall to picture those who decline to finance and parrot the line as ignorant dupes blindly manipulated by propaganda! The irony of it would be a comedy if it were not such a tragedy!

It sometimes takes a bizarre form of tracing the ills of the world back to a fabulous international Zionist-Marxist plot that controls the banking systems, the mass media, the government and the schools. They dredge up any possible connection to something some Jew may have said or done throughout history and present it as representative of Jews as a class. They even peddle fraudulent documents such as the "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion," originally concocted by the Russian secret police from an earlier document from France, purporting to be records of a Zionist plot to dominate the world. Hitler's ruthless purge is discounted as "Only a couple of million"--and it was lucky he did or the Zionists would have taken over the world!

Brethren, I am sick! How is it possible that people can become afflicted with such a fatal infection? This is the same sort of gangrenous paranoia that catapulted a goose-stepping, illegitimate paperhanger to power and spread his insane purge across Europe! It is the same mentality that fired up the gas chambers and cremation ovens and sent countless women and children in freezing cattle cars to experimentation centers, firing squads and mass graves for both the dead and living. It is likewise the same sort of sickness that sent a number of preachers who I have personally known skulking through the night in bed sheets and dunce-caps to honor the “Grand Wizard,” while condemning Jews for being called “Rabbi” and the Pope for being called “Father”!

No, I do not believe that we should obey men’s laws above those of God. Yes, I do recognize that the Constitution has been sometimes distorted from its original intent. Yes, I know that there are those who are plotting to take over the world. But I am also concerned about the dangers of reckless and unfounded accusations. I am most concerned about the much greater threat from that master-plotter of all time, the devil! His power is not confined to flesh and blood conspiracies of this world. His ends are fed by suspicion, lies and hate. He would like nothing better than to get us so alarmed that we are like chickens, fleeing from the cry of a fox into the jaws of a lion.

I am firmly convinced that involvement in such thinking is one of the most dangerous threats to our work for Christ. Thereby, many people are innocently taken in, our work for Christ is diverted, and our credibility is destroyed. The following are some of the evils that force me to raise my voice in protest, regardless of how my brethren may react.

1. I oppose it because it spawns unbelief, fear and hatred rather than faith, hope and love.

In Matthew 10:28 we are told, “*Be not afraid of them which can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.*” Matt. 6:34 “*Be not therefore anxious for the morrow:*”

Matt 16:18 “I will build my church; and THE GATES OF HADES SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.” And, in Romans 8:31 “If God (is) for us, who (is) against us?”

Instead of trusting in God, I hear angry and fearful talk of danger to our possessions, our freedom and our faith. Instead of love and prayer for enemies, there are bitter rumors, denunciations and abuse. Instead of speaking well of our leaders and giving them honor, there is vituperation and railing. There seems to be no concept of “overcoming evil with good,” permitting “perfect love” to “cast out fear,” or “suffering for righteousness’ sake.” (Luke 6:27,28; 2Pe. 2:20-11; Jude 1:8,9; Rom. 12:14-21; 1Jn 4:18; 1Pe. 2:13-17-24; 3:8, 9, 13, 14, 17; 4:1, 12-19; 5:10.)

2. I oppose it because it raises an unnecessary and unscriptural obstacle for outsiders.

The issue they should be squarely facing is the lordship of Christ, not whether the graduated income tax is constitutional or Zionists control the Federal Reserve Board. When we proclaim the resurrection of Jesus, they need to see us as sound, sober, intelligent people, not wild-eyed fanatics who fall prey to any rumor we hear. I must admit that I sometimes wonder myself! We need to be especially careful in these areas to follow the example set by none other than our Lord himself who, rather than making an issue of the temple tax which he did not owe, readily paid it, “lest they be caused to stumble” (Matt. 17:224-27).

3. I oppose it because it directs us away from God’s solution to a false remedy.

(Rom. 13:1,2) *The heart of the king is in the Lord’s hand, he turneth it whithersoever he will*” (Prov. 21:1, cf. Dan. 2:21; 4:25, 32; 5:21; Jer. 27:5, 6). *There is “NO POWER BUT OF GOD.*

The rise and fall of governing authorities depends upon God, and that in turn depends on the faithfulness of those who make up a nation. No amount of political action or intrigue is going to change

that. God's solution is repentance and prayer, not beating the drums of fear, stampeding people to pile up in a corner like turkeys in a hailstorm.

The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the casting down of EVERY HIGH THING that is exalted against the knowledge of God (2Co. 10:4). We had better stick to the armor God has provided rather than fabricating fig leaf aprons of our own devising. Along with our armor, we are to pray for all men, including kings, that we may lead a quiet life in all godliness and gravity (Eph. 6:10-18; 1Tim. 2:1,2).

Infecting people with anxiety, contempt and rebellion diverts them from the trust they should have in God and leads them into sin. This diminishes the reason for God to help and provides a provocation for the enemies of the church to exploit the situation and retaliate.

4. I oppose it because it fosters anarchy, which is not only unchristian but actually erodes the constitutional process upon which we must rely for stable and responsible government.

There are other legitimate and effective ways to resolve the problems without further eroding the constitution by taking the law into our own hands. We have no right to usurp the role of the courts and incite rebellion against tax and inspection laws. No government can function where every man arbitrarily decides for himself what laws he will or will not obey. That is exactly what enemies of our government seek to accomplish. If I were a Communist, I would do everything possible to encourage the very things these people are doing!

Titus 3:1,2. tells us to put people in mind to "*be in subjection to RULERS, to AUTHORITIES, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work, to speak evil of no man, not contentious...*"

1Peter 2:13-17 says, "*Be subject to EVERY ordinance OF MAN for the Lord's sake: whether to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evildoers and for praise to them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants to God. Honor all men, Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*"

Romans 13:1-7 says:

*1 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the (powers) that be are ordained of God. 2 Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: 4 for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore (ye) must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. 6 For this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute (is due); custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (ASV)*

Encouraging contempt for speed laws, defiance of building regulations, refusal to cooperate with Christian school restrictions, falsification of tax forms, deliberate refusal to file income tax forms, omitting income or concealing it under the guise of a "trust" are violations of the spirit of these scriptures. The profession of "sincerity" is not a valid justification for ignoring or wresting these scriptures.

5. Indeed, another very serious objection I have is the gross distortion of the word of God.

"*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's*" (Matt. 22:21), is discounted by contending that the Constitution assigns each citizen the role of "Caesar" and therefore we should pay he money to ourselves! This not only perverts the scriptures but also the constitution which provides for a

representative government to legislate, execute and judge the laws. The citizen's power is in choosing representatives. No individual has any right to usurp this authority to himself.

The example of Jesus paying even the temple tax, which he did not owe, in order to avoid causing stumbling (Matt. 17:24-27), and similar passages concerning taxes (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:6-7), are countered with the contention that those were proportional while the income tax is graduated. What absolute nonsense! No such criteria were ever established in scripture to determine the legitimacy of a tax. Caesar made the coins to be used for exchange. What Caesar made belonged to him.

They cite 1Pet. 2:13-17 to show that the constitution itself (or rather, their interpretation of it) is to be obeyed rather than man. But the passage says, "every ordinance of man." People make ordinances. People are obeyed. "Every ordinance" cannot be confined to the US Constitution. The Constitution itself provides for the functions of government to be performed by men and how problems should be corrected. It is our responsibility to comply with all laws, subject only to the exception that God's laws must take precedence when there is a conflict. God never told anyone not to pay taxes.

Against this it is replied, "But what if someone forbade you to exercise your constitutional right of appeal or voting privilege?" The trouble with such objections is first, that Christians under Rome did not have a vote and they still had to obey. Secondly, they do not relate to the issues before us. "What if?" is a common evasion of the issue. The issue here is not whether you can vote but whether you are to pay your taxes, get building permits, or obey the speed laws. Regardless of what we think, these issues have been settled in the courts for many years by those authorized by the constitution to make such decisions. Furthermore, even if some political group did rise up and prohibit us from voting, we would still have to handle the matter through legal channels. Christians may not take the law into their own hands just because they believe someone else is abusing it.

Again, Paul's appeal to Caesar and the declaration of the Apostles that they must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29) are used to justify defiance of the law. However, Paul worked within the law in exercising his right to appeal. God has not commanded us not to pay our taxes, not get building permits or to drive over 60 miles per hour.

It is argued that if we cooperate now that eventually they will be prohibiting us to practice our religion. That sounds like we are being urged to do wrong so that good may come. It is bad enough to contend that one wrong justifies another but here doing wrong is justified on the basis that if we do not, someday a wrong may be committed!

But it is argued that our tax money is being used for many evil purposes. So is a lot of other money we spend. The Mormons use money we spend in their financial empire to finance their temples to propagate their falsehood. Catholics use money we spend in their stores to sustain the Catholic Church and the Pope of Rome. The Arabs use our gasoline money to suppress Christianity. Am I to blame if my landlord buys booze from my rent money? What did Rome do with the money she collected from the Christians? A couple of hours in a history book would soon silence such nonsense.

6. I am opposed to this thing because of the extent to which it obviously feeds on covetousness.

The constant focus on taxation, the Federal Reserve, International Bankers, danger of having our possessions taken away, etc., reeks of covetousness. Few things have the power to stir people more than personal greed.

We are not to be anxious about material things (Matt. 6:25-34). God ordained the payment of taxes. A lot of it goes for evil but a lot goes for services that we use and enjoy. If we expect to use the roads, fire protection and other things, honesty requires that we pay. If there were no government we would soon have something much worse on our hands.

7. Perhaps one of the most appalling evils of this thing has been the rationalization of blatant dishonesty, and even worse yet, the encouragement of young people to become part of it.

Anyone who does such a thing or even condones it is going to face the wrath of an angry God unless he repents, whether he is a preacher or any other person! (Rev. 21:8; Rom. 1:28-32).

It seems incredible but I have heard church leaders try to defend listing 35 exemptions on their W-4 tax forms! How in the world can one justify 35 exemptions? It was argued that both the graduated income tax and the making of paper money is unconstitutional, and therefore, they made no legal money and owed no taxes! They claim that the only thing they earned was "FERNS" (Federal Reserve Notes), which is not taxable money. It is kind of funny that they can expect their employers to pay them "money," their landlord to accept it for their rent and the grocer to take their "dollars" to purchase food, but when they get a tax form asking just how much of that stuff they made, they suddenly discover that there "ain't no such critter"! If the stuff is so illegal, why do they take it in payment and why do they represent it as money when giving it to others? If it isn't money then they sure do get excited about nothing when Uncle Sam asks for his cut!

The choice of a number like 35 in listing exemptions is an obvious fraud from the simple fact that it is a deception for the purpose of evading payment of taxes. The tax laws clearly define what qualifies as an "exemption," and warn that using any other basis is perjury. Attempting to justify such falsification comes not one whit behind the rationalization of a woman having an affair with another woman's husband who told me, "Well, the Bible says, 'Love thy neighbor!'"

The courts have repeatedly reaffirmed that such conduct is illegal and a lot of foolish people are sitting in jail for being sucked into it. It makes little difference whether you choose to call them "bucks," "dollars," "FERNS," or "lettuce;" they are "the things that are Caesar's." Whether legal or otherwise, we know full well what is being requested.

8. I am especially concerned about the irresponsible handling of facts and the vilification of innocent people.

It is a gross slander to heap such blame for the world's problems upon the Jews. How is it possible by any rational standard to portray Communism as a Jewish plot? Stalin had the Jew, Trotsky, assassinated. Stalin purged the Jews. Hitler and Stalin conspired against them. They have been hounded and suppressed ceaselessly in Russia. The Communists have been one of the staunchest supporters of the Arabs against Israel.

I am concerned because this is the attitude which has always characterized those who have harassed the Jew and which is warned against throughout the scriptures. Certainly, when they rebelled, God delivered them into the hands of their enemies, but the alarming thing is that IN EVERY CASE, THOSE WHO IMBIBED OF THIS CUP OF HATE ULTIMATELY THEMSELVES FACED A SIMILAR FATE! (Is. 51:21-23; Gen. 12:3; 27:29). Let Nazi Germany be marked, "EXHIBIT A!" We had better be very cautious about violating the scriptural warnings against glorying over the fall of the Jew (Rom. 11:18-20).

Some have gone to the extent of even denying their heritage as Jews, claiming that they are only Khazar Russian impostors. The blind ignorance of such a contention is beyond comprehension! No people of the world have any better-documented continuous existence than the Jews. History is abundant with evidence of Jews in Babylon, Spain, England and Eastern and Western Europe. Even the conversion of Khazaria to Judaism was due to Jews followed by large migrations of Jews into the country and to mixing their blood with the population. The Old Testament makes provision for such conversion. One would just as well deny that Jesus was a Jew because he descended from Rahab of the Canaanites and Ruth who was a Moabite!

When pressed concerning this, they commonly resort to two arguments. The first is that no one can prove he is a Jew because the Romans destroyed all of the family records to 70 AD. It is true that they

cannot trace their lineage to a particular tribe but that in no way counters the evidence of their existence. One would just as well dispute that the Arabs descended from Abraham or the Ethiopians from Ham. If nothing can be proved without a formal pedigree, then history is a farce. But may I ask in reply, where are the family records that trace all modern Jews back to a pure Gentile Khazar ancestry?

Another contention is that God completely dissolved the concept of there being any such thing as a Jew when it says that “there is neither Jew nor Greek,” (Gal. 3:28) and that “They are not all Israel that are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6). It is true that they are not the spiritual Israel of promise but it is not true that they are no longer descendants of Abraham. When they were disobedient in the Old Testament they were deprived of the benefit of the promises but God still kept His word and accomplished His purposes through their descendants. God has not forsaken his desire for Israel’s deliverance. As touching the Gospel, they are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are beloved for their father’s sake” (Rom. 11:28).

But no matter what we believe about the destiny of the Jew, it is wrong to spread hatred against them. We need to take great care what is said about any person or people. False reports have historically brought disastrous consequences. It is even unfair to take information from a few Jewish sources and attribute it to them as a people. There are bitter and hateful Jews just like there are in every other people but that does not make them all to blame.

Quotations are sometimes lifted out of context from the Talmud or other ancient writings and made to appear to represent modern Jewish attitudes towards the countries in which they live. It is no more valid to use such things to prove a Jewish plot than to quote from the Old Testament for that purpose. It is no more valid to use such methods against them than to accuse all Christians of seeking to take over the world because of the abuses of the Papacy.

9. Finally, I am concerned about the congregations and church leaders who become enmeshed in this thing.

It is my observation that preachers who have participated in it has been effectively diverted or seriously reduced in his effectiveness for the kingdom. Their preaching becomes alarmist. They make impulsive and unsound decisions. They become defensive and dictatorial. They come into conflict with others and begin to withdraw, blaming their situation on the opposition instead of recognizing the difficulties as originating with them. Unrest grows in the congregation and families leave. At first they are glad that the “troublemakers” are gone, but the problem continues to persist. Growth declines and they become withdrawn rather than evangelistic.

Much time is spent with non-Christian groups, just because they are anti-Communist. Non-Christian speakers are brought in and soon people of any theological stripe are accepted as “Brethren,” just so they keep pumping up the alarmist cause. I have even known of some of some of their kids being sent to “Americanism” schools where they were completely lost to any concept of the New Testament church.

The very fact that church time is spent hashing over world and national politics and studying such literature rather than the word of God tends to feed unrest and stunt spiritual growth. Church is not the place to hear what some sorehead thinks about tax laws or a “Jewish conspiracy.” It is the place to learn God’s will. Even if it were true, the Bible has a better solution than anything devised by us. Nothing will be solved by people building additions to their homes without permits, kids defying the speed laws and conflicting with parents because the church leadership said the laws were unconstitutional. Falsification of tax statements and ending up in legal and financial troubles, husbands and wives divided, friends separated and people left with deep emotional disturbances, is not going to help either the kingdom of God or our country.

Some have boasted of quitting their jobs so they won’t have to pay taxes. Then they lived off of others or went on unemployment compensation, social security or welfare rolls, which they held in such contempt as being “illegal.” “Oh consistency, Thou art a Jewel, and rarely to be had!”

In conclusion, I urge that any who have been lured into this to stop and make a careful investigation of the facts and scriptural warnings. We have more important things to do than expose "pinkos" or become martyrs to income tax. Let all our people everywhere make it clear that we want the word of God, not tax revolt, taught from our pulpits. We cannot afford to have our work diverted, our preaching diluted, our congregations decimated, our funds depleted, our relationships destroyed and our souls doomed.

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