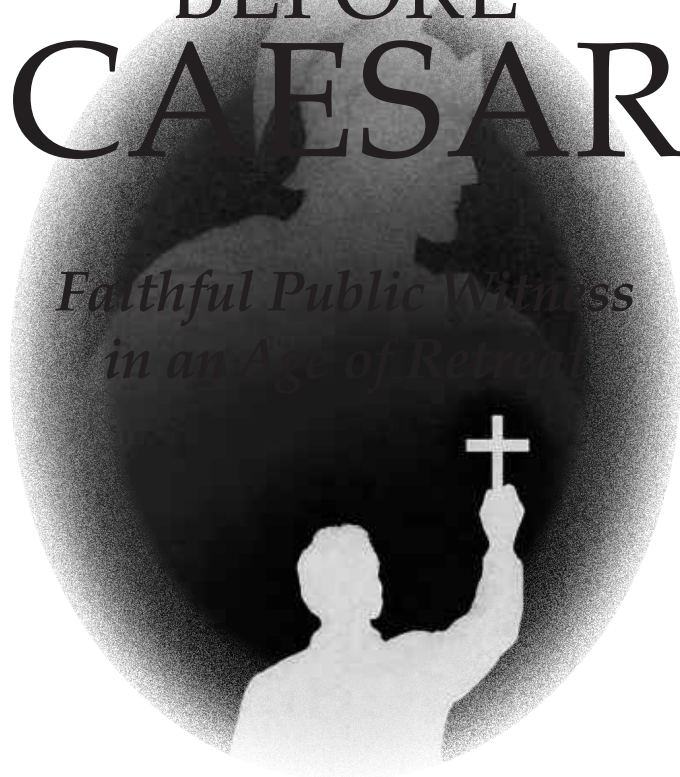


CHRIST BEFORE CAESAR

*Faithful Public Witness
in an Age of Reason*



CHRISTOPHER I. THOMA

FIDELIS PUBLISHING ®

ISBN: 9798999024619

ISBN (eBook): 9798999024626

Christ Before Caesar

Faithful Public Witness in an Age of Retreat

© 2026 Christopher I. Thoma

Cover Design by Diana Lawrence

Interior Design by Lisa Parnell

Edited by Amanda Varian

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever. For information, address info@fidelispublishing.com.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who wishes to quote brief passages in connection with a review written for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper, website, or broadcast. The web addresses referenced in this book were live and correct at the time of the book's publication but may be subject to change.

Unless otherwise indicated, all quoted Scripture comes from (ESV) English Standard Version - The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Order at www.faithfultext.com for a significant discount. Email info@fidelispublishing.com to inquire about bulk purchase discounts.

Fidelis Publishing, LLC • Winchester, VA / Nashville, TN
fidelispublishing.com

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Introduction

WHAT MY DAUGHTER BROUGHT HOME FROM SCHOOL

The times are changing quickly. In nearly every corner of American life, the Christian's public voice is being quieted. It doesn't always happen by force but often by misconception or fear, resulting in a willful withdrawal. That's the essential intersection of this book's examination.

That said, what follows is also meant to encourage. It is not just a call to clarity but to courage—to reclaim a faithful presence, and to reenter the public square not with hostility but with conviction. It begins, as many important things do, with a simple question brought home by a child.

Not long ago, my daughter received a two-sided page in her high school history class. Her teacher read the page aloud, presenting it as a historical analysis of early twentieth-century fascist regimes and a comprehensive definition of fascism. Wisely, my daughter asked for a copy of the document, which she brought home to share with me.

She questioned the information's legitimacy.

The page was excerpted from an article by Dr. Laurence Britt. A quick investigation led me to the article's original version on SecularHumanism.org. However, the page shared in my daughter's class was downloaded directly from Ratical.org, a site

with an openly “progressive” editorial stance—thus, the site’s name, a play on the word “radical.”

Before reading any further, remember: While a teacher might usually provide hard copies of crucial course information that eventually ends up in the hands of parents helping their students to study, my daughter’s teacher did not do so with this document. My daughter had to request it. That’s suspicious. And yet, measured against Britt’s concluding rhetorical sarcasm warning that fascism is being reborn in contemporary America, the teacher’s goal comes more into focus.

The excerpted page presented a list of signs—fourteen in all—each lifted from Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and others. As a concerned parent—and as a pastor trained to read texts with a critical eye—it was not difficult to see Britt’s article is intellectually careless. He’s historically imprecise, dangerously reductive at every turn, and leaves his bias against conservatism and Christianity hidden in plain sight. Right from the beginning, he refers his readers to the “Affirmations of Humanism” and then insists the affirmations are logically sound and crucial interpreters.

And yet, what follows is a political morality tale, with secular humanism as the hero and a thinly veiled caricature of conservatism and orthodox Christianity as the villains. Of course, he never directly names the targets of his critique. Instead, Britt’s descriptors—catchy slogans, pride in the military, anti-abortion stances, religious devotion, patriotism, national security, homophobia, rigid traditional gender roles, and others—leave little room for doubting who he’s describing.

Unsurprisingly, Britt does not expand the actual arguments or critique these positions objectively, but rather he simply inserts them into the fascist framework. The implication is therefore clear: Conservatism, nationalism, and Christianity are proto-fascist threats.

As a writer, I know rhetorical manipulation when I read it. Britt’s words are not analytical. When presented to students as

a definitive culmination of the subject, they become unfiltered indoctrination. It is a guilt-by-association argument designed to stigmatize conservative values by comparing them to the likes of Hitler and Mussolini without a sliver of actual evidence or balance. Even a little bit of either could have alleviated this sense. Instead, for example, Britt simply establishes national pride, concern for crime, support for police, and respect for the military as signs of creeping totalitarianism, even though they are natural to nearly every society, no matter its government or political structure.

But then his treatment of religion.

Britt explains how fascist regimes tend to align with a nation's predominant religious group to establish political dominance. He implies that in America, Christianity is the predominant religion, and therefore, Christianity's engagement in the public square is inherently fascistic. This is a gross oversimplification. While some twentieth-century fascist leaders paid lip service to religion, most were actively hostile to Christianity.¹ Hitler despised orthodox Christianity and sought to replace it with a racialized pagan nationalism.² Mussolini was a committed atheist.³ To pretend fascism is inherently religious—or Christian engagement in the public square is a form of fascism—is, quite simply, historically ignorant.⁴ Christians were among fascism's earliest and most consistent opponents.⁵ Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who stood against Hitler and ultimately died for it, remains one of the most recognizable examples.⁶

Britt (and therefore my daughter's teacher) wants his readers to know a conservative America is a fascist America. He provides no evidence, only cultural cues: people waving flags patriotically, being pro-life, supporting law enforcement, or believing their nation has moral significance. Doing this, he implies traditional values and national pride form, by default, a dangerous concoction.

But this is precisely backward.

Classical conservatism—with its emphasis on limited government, constitutionalism, the rule of law, religious liberty, and decentralization—has always been the antidote to fascism. It stands in direct opposition to the unchecked collectivist dogma and suppression of dissent that defined true fascist regimes. But this remains hidden to the students because Britt, and therefore the teacher, never actually defines fascism. Real fascism is not even close to cultural or political conservatism. It is, as historian Stanley Payne described, “a political system marked by authoritarian centralism, suppression of pluralism, militant nationalism directed by the state, and the eradication of dissent.”⁷ Fascism’s ultimate goal is to silence dissent and to achieve ideological conformity.

Admittedly, an honest view of contemporary America does show these tactics being employed—but not by conservatives. It was the Biden administration that had to issue formal apologies and fund settlements for weaponizing the IRS. Indeed, the IRS admitted to targeting conservative groups for additional scrutiny based on their political beliefs. The case of *Linchpins of Liberty v. United States* is just one example.⁸ After Elon Musk purchased Twitter, countless documents were released (the “Twitter Files”) showing the company coordinated and complied with federal requests to suppress conservative accounts.⁹ Those accounts were subjected to “visibility filtering” to limit their reach on the platform.

The same federal agencies pressed other platforms like YouTube and PayPal to de-platform and demonetize conservative accounts under vaguely written policy violations.¹⁰ Closer to home, Biden’s Department of Justice labeled protesting parents at school board meetings as “domestic terrorists.”¹¹ Some were arrested, simply for speaking out against allowing boys into girls’ locker rooms.¹²

These are not fascist traits emerging from among conservatives. They are tactics being wielded against them.

WHAT MY DAUGHTER BROUGHT HOME FROM SCHOOL

In short, Britt's article is little more than ideological doctrines masquerading as concerned analysis. It is a sermon designed to influence. By sharing its fourteen signs as definitive, the teacher betrays an intention to use her influence to recraft youthful minds accordingly.

This is not teaching. It is propaganda.

In the end, I met with the school administration. They were polite. They listened. A week-long review ensued. Ultimately, the administration defended the teacher's use of the article. I was offered the chance to move my daughter to another class. I declined, knowing the social consequences would land squarely on her shoulders. Ultimately, the teacher chose to leave the class and was replaced by a permanent substitute.

Trust I am not finished with this situation. Nor is this book.

I begin with this story because it encapsulates the purpose of the following works. What happened to my daughter is a snapshot of a much broader struggle.

The classroom. The courthouse. The newsroom. The workplace. The grocery store. The movie theater. The Church.

These and so many more are fields of battle in the same spiritual and cultural conflict. If we do not know or are not willing to recognize how the Gospel intersects with these arenas—if such ignorance imputes to us a refusal to engage—we will find our children, our freedoms, and our faith reshaped by those who are only too eager to define “truth” on our behalf.

The answer to this is by no means rage. But it isn't a retreat, either. It is clarity concerning Christian identity, the substance that establishes the distinctiveness, and the courage to carry it into the field.

This book is a call to faithful Christian existence in the public square—not based on passing political strategy or wobbly platitudes but grounded in the enduring truth of the Gospel. What follows will seek to confront the myths, expose the threats,

and build up the people of God for engagement—daringly faithful, confessional, and entirely Christ-centered.

It's likely you'll notice along the way my preferred style of communication is storytelling. Jesus told stories. Those stories—the parables—played no small role in the ruling authorities wanting Him dead. For example, they knew what He meant when He described a landowner sending servants and eventually his son to collect fruit from tenant farmers, how they abused and killed the ones sent (Luke 20:9–19). They knew what Jesus meant because they knew the facts of Israel's history and recognized the doctrinal premises inherent to the Lord's message.

Stories have a way of steering straight through our defenses undetected and then, suddenly, we're captured by truth. I intend to proceed in this way.

Accordingly, the first two sections of chapters will wrestle with the headier material. As I said before, there is substance establishing Christian distinctiveness, and it desperately needs parsing. There are historical and theological premises that must be iterated before the stories can rightly capture. Nevertheless, each of those chapters will conclude with a pastoral reflection. These reflections are not tangents but intentional ponderings—moments drawn from ministry and life embodying the truths explored in the material preceding it. They serve as a means of incarnation, bringing the theological and historical to bear in the tangible world of classrooms, courtrooms, sanctuaries, and supper tables.

You'll notice the final four chapters depart from this pattern. They contain no separate pastoral reflections. That's not because the storytelling has ended but because those chapters are the reflections. By the time you arrive there, the groundwork will have been laid. The arguments will have been made. What remains is the deeper call: to live the truth, to walk it in courage, to suffer for it, and, should God require it, to die in the hope it brings.

WHAT MY DAUGHTER BROUGHT HOME FROM SCHOOL

God willing, all three sections will form a coherent whole—one that understands the world my daughter is growing up in will not pause for cowardice. And besides, the Gospel does not allow it, anyway.

