

Abortion Policy

and Christian Social Ethics
in the Post-Roe United States

Session 2:

Abortion, Poverty, and Private Property

Objectives

- Trace what Jewish and Christian leaders have said about the fetus and abortion
- Identify mistakes Christians have made, and aim to correct them: contraception; economics; etc.
- Discern how abortion is used for other political purposes

Other Ways to Engage

- The Anástasis Center for Christian Education and Ministry
 - Lots of resources on the website
 - On [abortion](#) in particular: anastasiscenter.org/politics-right-bioethics



Website



Classes &
Messages



Discussion
Group



General

- Mako's social media



Author



Personal

Outline

- Recap from Session 1
- Presentation: Early vs. Later Christian Views on Wealth and Poverty (20 min)
- Discussion (10 min)
- Presentation: “Other People’s Children” and the Modern Pro-Life Movement (15 min)
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The Cost of Having Children

- Hospital birth without health insurance (2020): \$15,000
 - Alabama: \$15,162
 - Alaska: \$18,748
 - Arizona: \$19,093
 - California: over \$26,000
- Baby formula: \$2,300 (2016), \$2,900 (May 2022) / year
- Childcare: \$4,000 – 10,000 / year
- Etc.

The Cost of Having an Abortion

- Abortion pills: less than \$400
- Abortion surgery: \$400 - \$2,000

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Abortion and Financial Stress

- The typical abortion patient:
 - already a mother
 - in her late 20s
 - attended some college
 - has a low income
 - is unmarried
 - is in her first 6 weeks of pregnancy
 - is having her first abortion
 - lives in a blue state
 - Margot Sanger-Katz, Claire Cain Miller, and Quoctrung Bui, “Who Gets Abortions in America?” *New York Times*, December 14, 2021

Abortion and Financial Stress

- Married women
 - Get the majority of abortions in Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America
 - Get 14.1% of abortions in the U.S.
- Women who are already mothers
 - Procure 60% of abortions
 - Half of them have 2+ children

Abortion and Financial Stress

- Women in poverty
 - Have 3x the abortion rate of women not in poverty
 - Procured 42.4% of all abortions

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Reasons for Poverty: Opinions

- Atheist, agnostic, no religious affiliation
 - 31% said “lack of effort” causes poverty; 65% “difficult circumstances”
- Black Christians
 - 32% said “lack of effort”; 64%
- All Christians
 - 46% said “lack of effort”; 41%
- Catholics
 - 50% said “lack of effort”; 45%
- White evangelicals
 - 53% said “lack of effort”; 41%
 - Julie Zauzmer, “Christians Are More Than Twice as Likely to Blame a Person’s Poverty on Lack of Effort,” *Washington Post*, August 3, 2017

Significance of Poverty: Early Church

- “If a woman abandons “her newborn child uncared-for on the road, if, although she was really able to save it, she disregarded it, either thinking in this way to conceal her sin or scheming in some entirely brutal and inhuman manner, let her be judged as for murder. [But] If she was unable to protect it and the child perished through destitution and the want of necessities of life, the mother is to be pardoned.”
 - Basil of Caesarea (329 – 379), *Epistle* 217.52

Early Christian Teaching on Wealth

- Prior to colonialism, Christians believed
 - God gave land to humanity in common, as a gift (Gen.1)
 - God gave land to peoples, with boundaries (Gen.10; Deut.32:8; Amos 9:7; Acts 17:26 – 27)
 - “The earth is the Lord’s” (Ps.24:1; 1 Cor.10:26)
 - “The fruit of the earth belong to all” (e.g. Dt.24:19 – 22)

Early Christian Teaching on Wealth

- “When giving to the poor, you are not giving him what is yours; rather, you are paying him back **what is his**. Indeed, **what is common to all**, and has been given to all to make use of, you have usurped for yourselves alone. **The earth belongs to all**, and not only to the rich... **You are paying back, therefore, your debt**; you are not giving gratuitously what you do not owe.”
 - Ambrose of Milan (340 – 397 AD), quoted by Charles Avila, *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching*, p.66

Early Christian Teaching on Wealth

- “That bread which you keep **belongs to the hungry**; that coat which you preserve in your wardrobe, **to the naked**; those shoes which are rotting in your possession, **to the shoeless**; that gold which you have hidden in the ground, **to the needy**. Wherefore, as often as you were able **to help others**, and refused, so often did **you do them wrong**.”
 - Basil of Caesarea (329 – 379 AD), quoted by Charles Avila, *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching*, p.50. See also Saint Basil the Great On Social Justice, p.69 – 70.

Early Christian Teaching on Wealth

- “You condemn a person to slavery whose nature is free and independent, and in doing so you lay down a law in opposition to God, overturning the **natural law** established by Him. For you subject to the yoke of slavery one who was created precisely **to be a master of the earth**, and who was ordained **to rule by the creator**, as if you were deliberately attacking and fighting against the divine command... How [much money] did you pay as a fair price for **the image of God**? For how [much money] have you sold **the nature specially formed by God**? God said, ‘**Let us make man in our image and likeness.**’”
 - Gregory of Nyssa (c.335 – c.395 AD), *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes*

Early Christian Teaching on Wealth

- “Are not the earth and the fullness thereof the Lord’s? If, therefore, **our possessions are the common gift of the Lord, they belong also to our fellows, for all the things of the Lord are common.**”
 - John Chrysostom of Constantinople (340 – 407 AD), quoted by Charles Avila, *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching*, p.94 – 95. See also Van de Weyer, *On Living Simply: The Golden Voice of John Chrysostom*.

Early Christian Teaching on Wealth

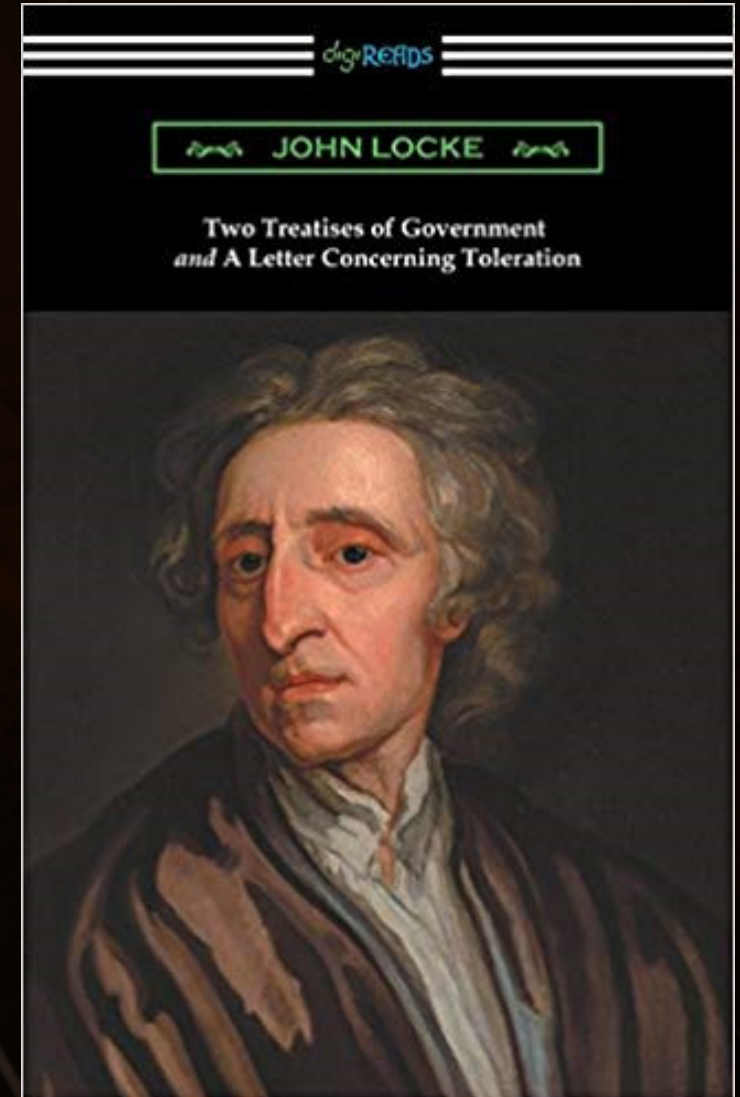
- “In cases of need, all things are common property. There is no sin in taking private property when need has made it common.”
 - Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274 AD), *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 66, Article 7

Early Christian Teaching on Wealth

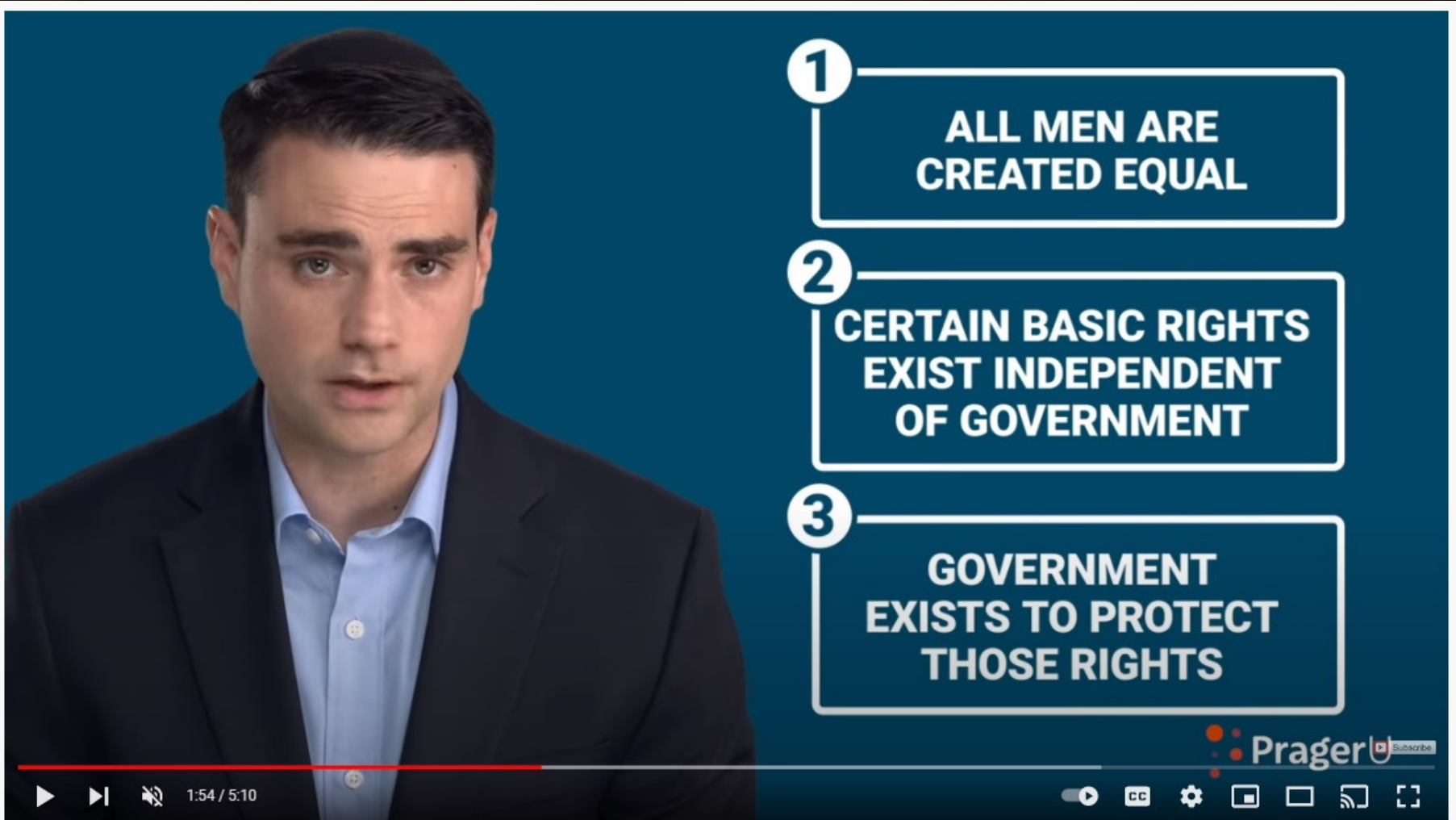
- Christian Influence on English Law
 - London Church Council emancipates all remaining slaves (1102): 10% of the population
 - English Magna Carta (1215)
 - English Charter of the Forest (1217)
- Eroded by the Enclosure Movement
 - Aristocrats manipulated Parliament
 - Drove peasantry into urban poverty
 - Cheap labor for cotton factories
 - Criminalized vagrancy

Why Talk About John Locke?

- 1632 – 1704
- Architect of the colonial constitution of Carolina
- Major influence on Thomas Jefferson, the U.S. Constitution, and American legal thought
- Theorist about private property, an individual right, prior to community and government
- Government exists to protect property rights
- Minimal government, only enforcing contracts



Why Talk About John Locke?



- 1 ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL
- 2 CERTAIN BASIC RIGHTS EXIST INDEPENDENT OF GOVERNMENT
- 3 GOVERNMENT EXISTS TO PROTECT THOSE RIGHTS

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If We Lose John Locke, We Lose America

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Why Talk About John Locke?

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ESSAY FEBRUARY 4, 2021

Portrait of John Locke by Godfrey Kneller (Wikimedia Com... [more](#))

Locke's American Legacy

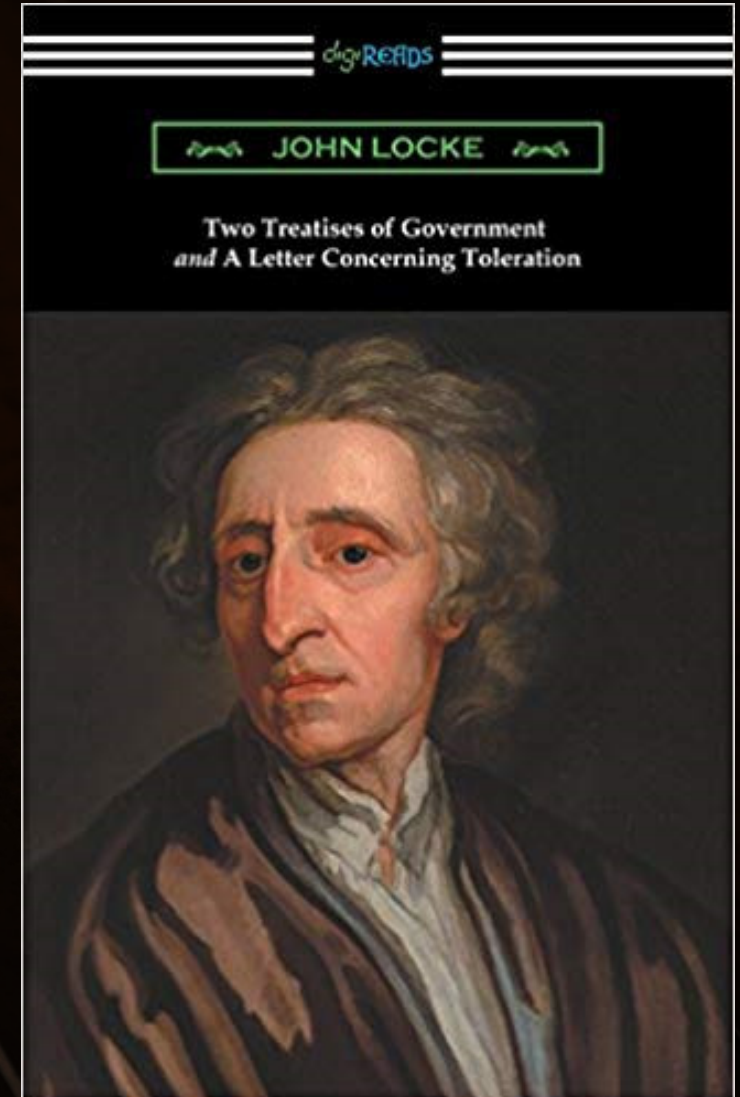
IN RECENT YEARS IT HAS BECOME FASHIONABLE, AND IN some circles even compulsory, to express guilt over the European discovery and settlement of the Americas, as if from the perspective of the 21st century, this was an event to be regretted. Hence, even the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims' landing received no national commemoration. Indeed, the trustees of Plymouth Plantation, the living-history museum that has explained the Pilgrim settlement to schoolchildren and tourists since 1947, chose that very year to announce a change in the institution's name to "Plimoth Patuxet" (the Wampanoag name for the location) as a way of signifying, in effect, that we should think of the spot as still really belonging to the native Americans who previously inhabited it.

— DAVID LEWIS SCHAEFER

The institutions of political and individual freedom that the American founders established on these shores are Locke's most lasting legacy.

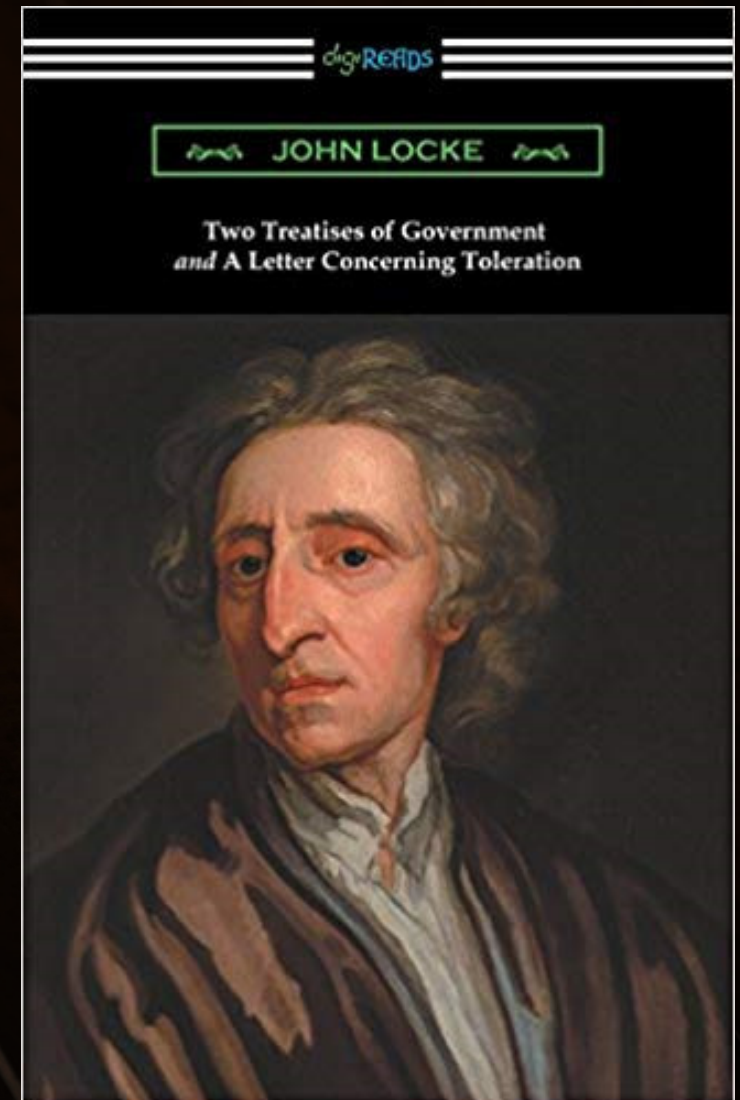
Justifications for Colonization

- Oceans, Trading
 - Hugo Grotius, Dutch: Commons
- Land
 - Pope Nicholas V: “Discovery”
 - Spanish: “Discovery” then conquest
 - John Winthrop, English Puritans: God and covenant
 - Roger Williams, English Baptists: Just purchase only
 - British, John Locke: Labor and enclosure



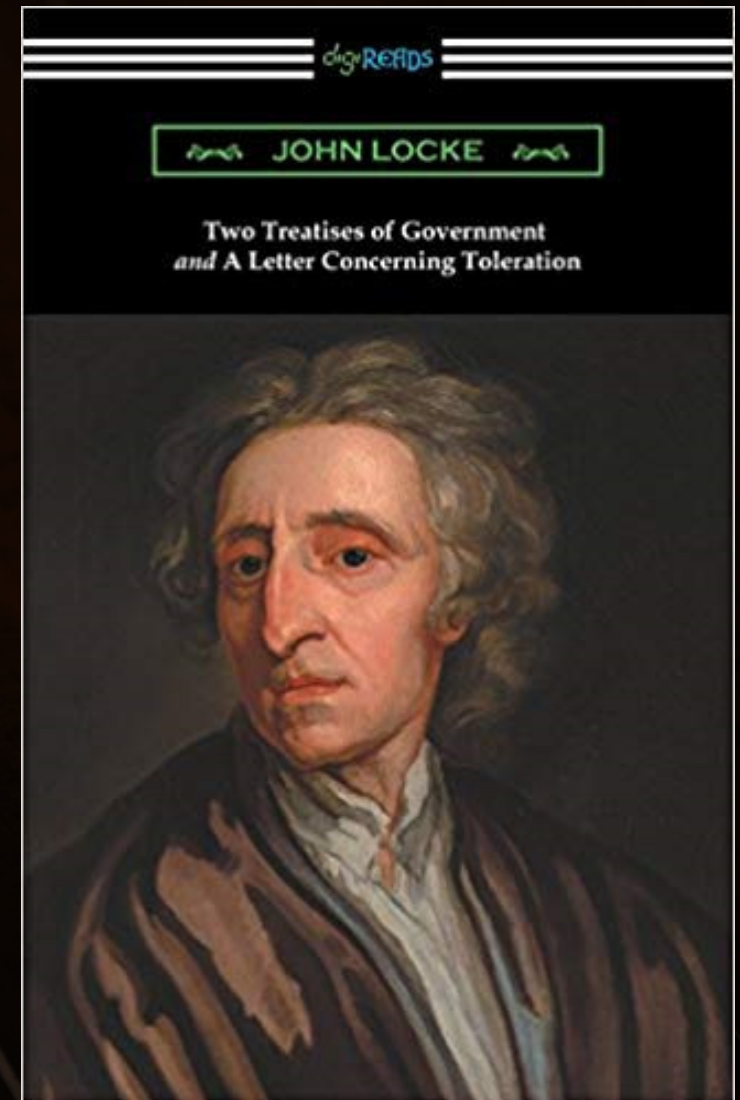
John Locke

- Was a biblical scholar
 - *Two Treatises of Government* was an argument over Scripture against Catholic Robert Filmer
 - *The Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures* (1695)
 - *An Essay For the Understanding Of St. Paul's Epistles By Consulting St. Paul Himself* (published posthumously 1707)



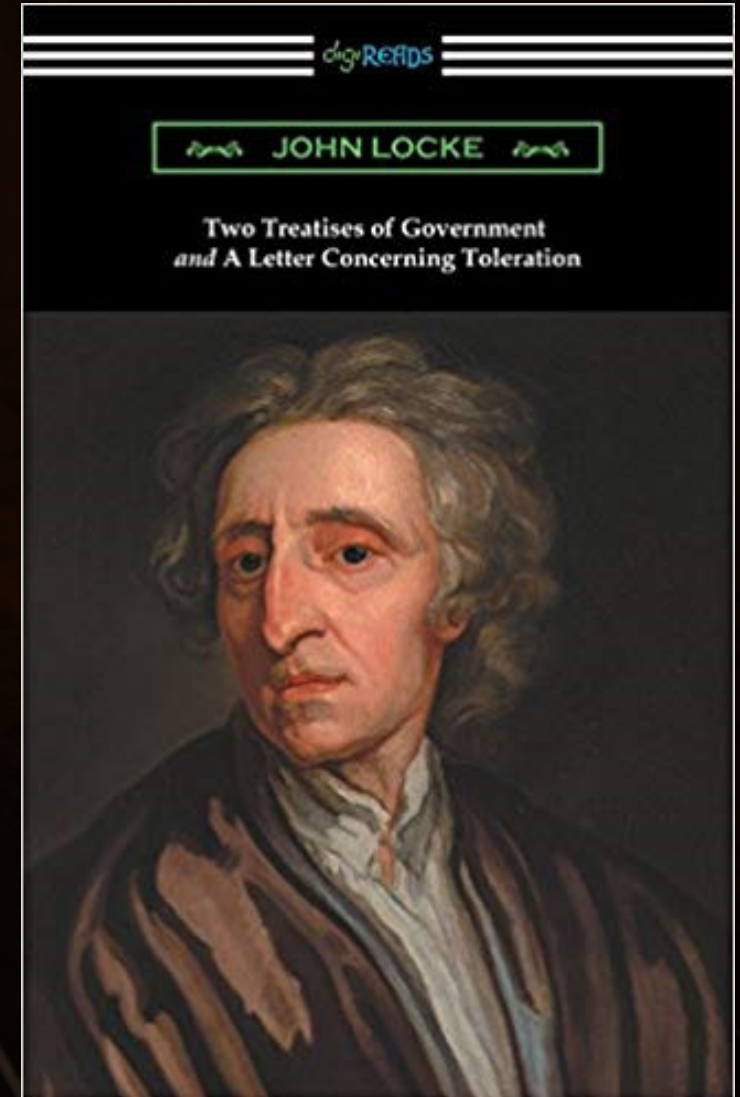
John Locke on Private Property

- “God gave the world to men in common; but... it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational, and labour was to be his title to it...”
 - John Locke, *Second Treatise*, ch.2, sec.34



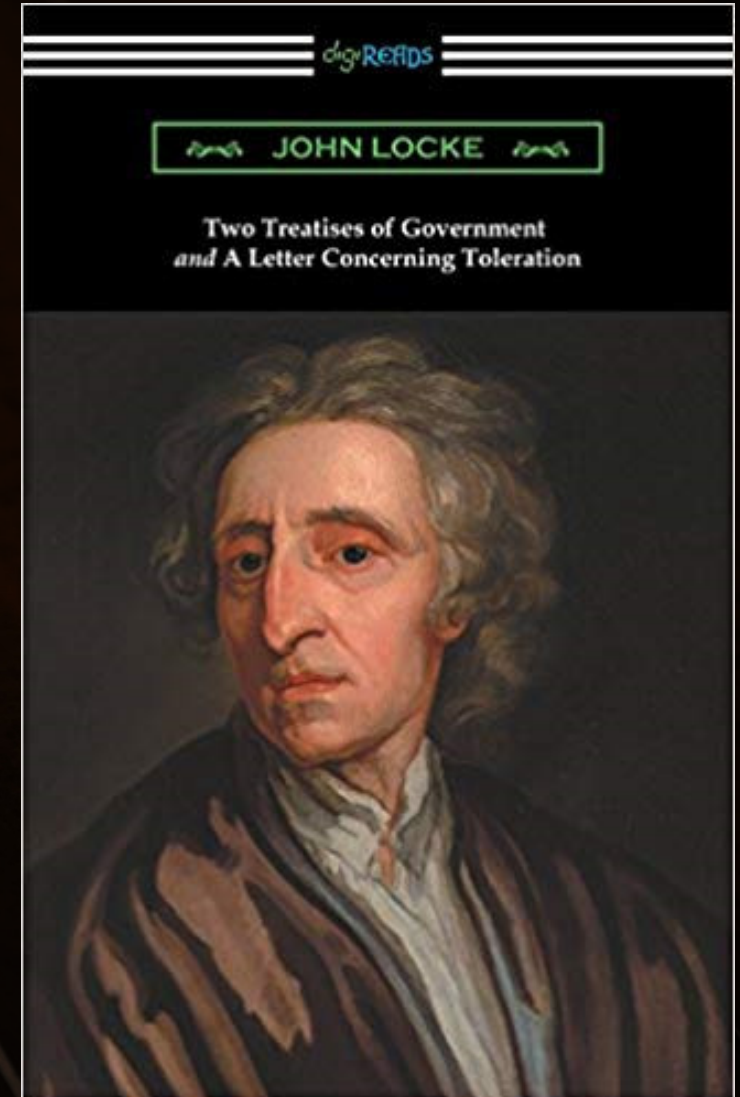
John Locke on Private Property

- “Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his Labour with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his Property.”
 - John Locke, *Second Treatise*, ch.2, sec.27



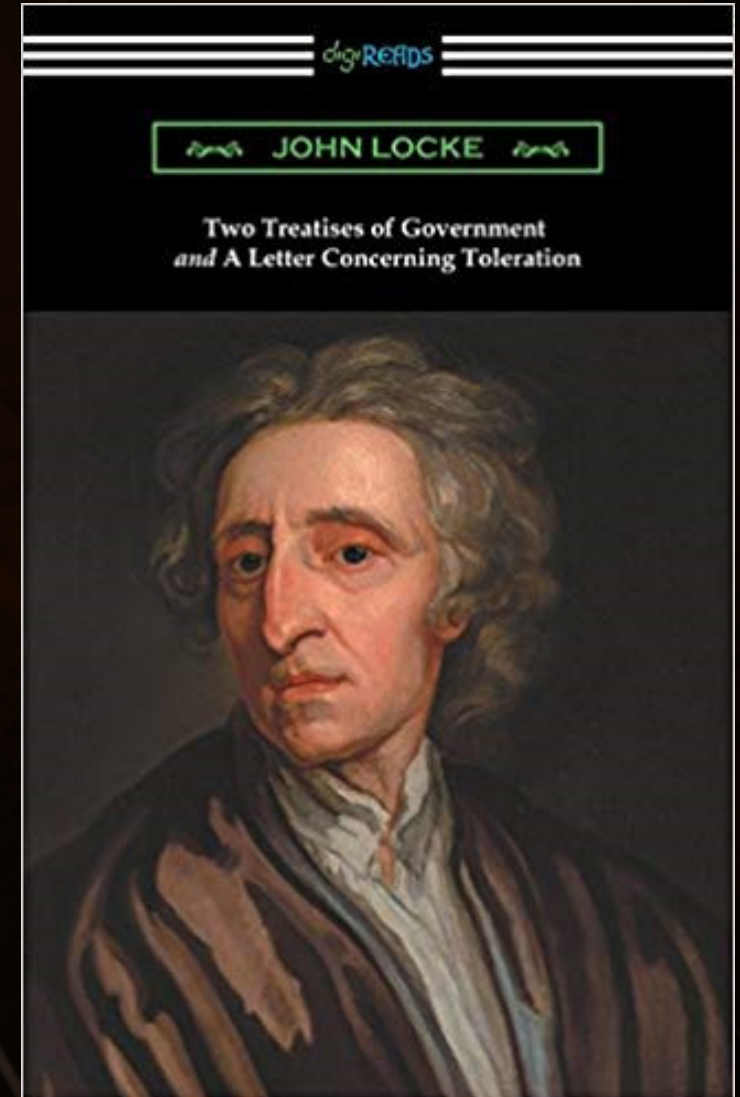
John Locke on Private Property

- “There cannot be a clearer demonstration of any thing, than several nations of the Americans are of this, who are rich in land, and poor in all the comforts of life... yet for want of improving it by labour, have not one hundredth part of the conveniencies we enjoy: and a king of a large and fruitful territory there, feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-labourer in England.”
 - John Locke, *Second Treatise*, ch.5, sec.41



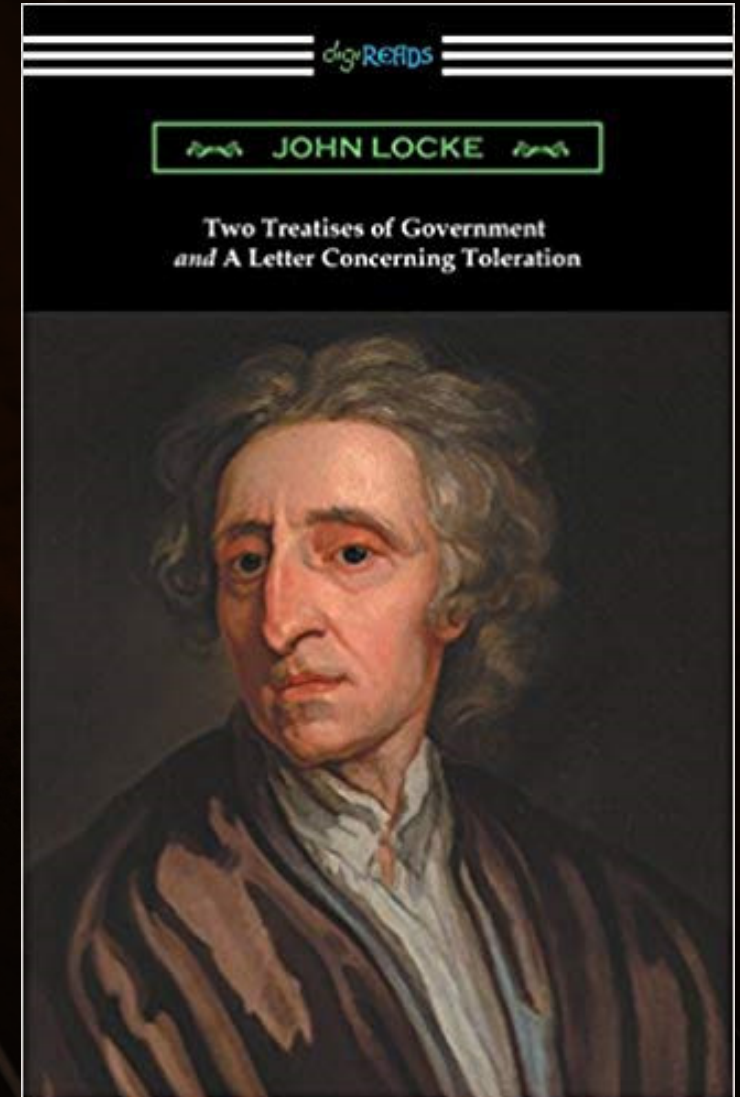
John Locke on Private Property

- Asserted Genesis 1 meant you could take others' land if you were more productive than them. Locke intentionally misrepresented Native Americans... becoming one of the earliest white people to accuse non-white people of “laziness.”
- See Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and the Defense of English Colonialism* (1996)



John Locke on Private Property

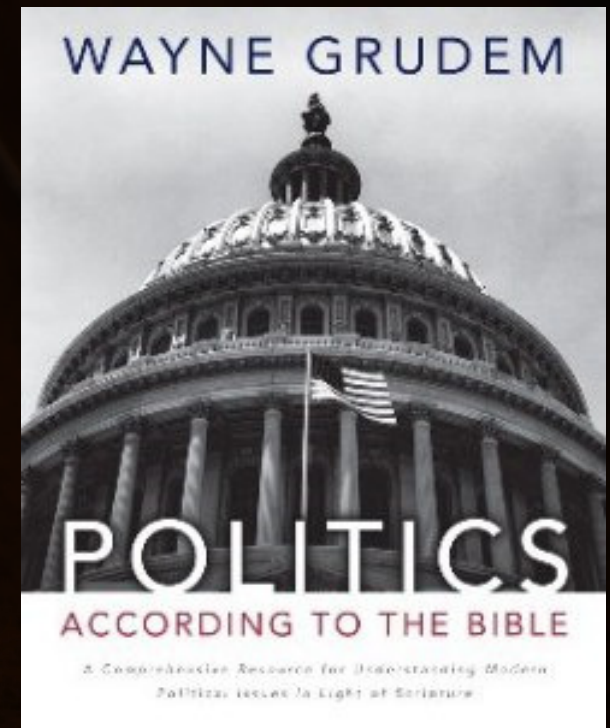
- Locke contributes to why Americans tend to:
 - Fear smarter immigrants/POC
 - Have a culture of workaholism
 - Believe productivity justifies the destruction of land
 - Believe that America is a pure meritocracy when it isn't



Majority White American Evangelicalism on Property as Individual, Unlimited

THE ALBERTUS CENTER
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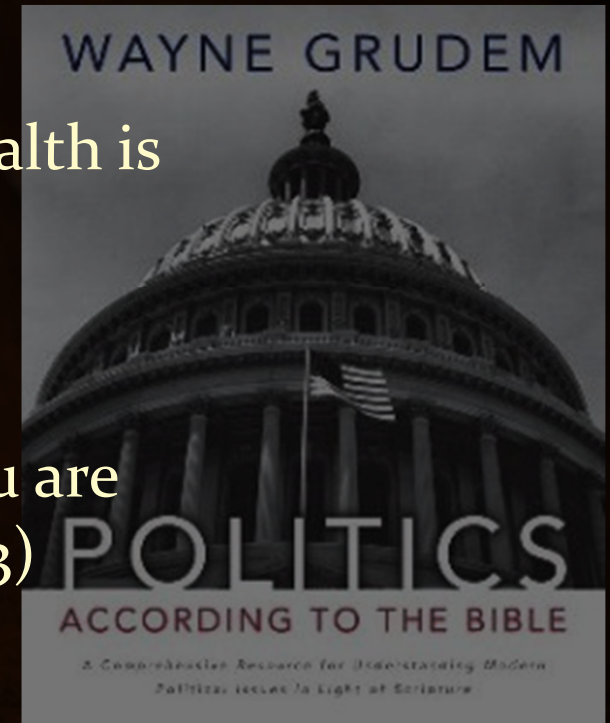
- “The Bible clearly takes the side of individual ownership of property. My conclusion is that the estate tax should be permanently repealed.”
 - Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), p.309



Majority White American Evangelicalism on Property as Individual, Unlimited

THE ANASTASIS CENTER
FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & MINISTRY

- Compare:
 - Genesis 1 in early Christian teaching: wealth is for all
 - Israel's land vision, Jesus' table vision
 - Jubilee reset: "The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are aliens and sojourners with Me" (Lev.25:23)
 - Paul on generosity: "That there may be equality" (2 Cor.8:14)
 - See Mako Nagasawa, "Atonement, God's Character, and Economic Justice (A Critique of Wayne Grudem)"
 - www.anastasiscenterblog.org/atonement-in-ministry-intro/post-7-atonement-gods-character-and-economic-justice-wayne-grudem



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Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think white evangelicals are more likely to blame the poor for their own “lack of effort” than other religious groups?
2. Evaluate the following: The U.S. was established not simply to protect people’s religious liberty, but to protect people’s ability to practice heretical ideas about slavery, race, and property.
 1. Calvin on usury and markets; “curse of Ham” on race and slavery; Locke on creation, property, and government
3. John Locke’s theory of private property is a *theology* of private property. In your own words, how does Locke’s departure from earlier Christian ethics contribute to poverty and the abortion rate?

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“Other People’s Children”

- Senator Ron Johnson (R-WY): “I’ve never really felt it was society’s responsibility to take care of other people’s children.” (Jan 2022)
 - Against child tax credit of \$3,600 per child
 - Opposed Biden’s effort to help families find childcare options
 - Wanted to slash unemployment benefits to make people get back to work

“Other People’s Children”

- Christian Ethics
 - Limiting intergenerational advantage and disadvantage
 - Leviticus 25
 - Children not suffering for their parents’ mistakes and misfortunes
 - Leviticus 25; Ezekiel 16
 - Caring for other people’s children
 - Jesus’ vision of God’s family
- Philosophically
 - What have children done to deserve all the advantages and disadvantages they can possibly inherit?

An Earlier Pro-Life Movement

- U.S. Catholics: New Deal Democrats
 - Great Depression: abortion rate rose
 - Strong federal government managing the economy
 - Infrastructure
 - Welfare state
 - Unemployment
 - Disability
 - Social Security
 - Housing via home loans (for some)
 - Pro-Labor Regulations on Corporations and Trade
 - Protect consumers against indebtedness
 - Protect economy against banking risks
 - Protect workers against slave labor competition
 - Democracy of small businesses: anti-trust, anti-monopoly

The Modern Pro-Life Movement

- “The abortion issue is the door through which many people come into conservative politics, but they don’t stop there. Their convictions against **abortion** are like the first in a series of falling dominoes. Then we lead them to a concern about sexual ethics and standards among young people. This leads to **opposition to secular humanism**, then particularly in the **schools** with a purportedly decent morality we point out that secular humanism is identified as both the godfather and the royal road to **socialism and communism**—which points the way to minimally regulated free enterprise at home and to aggressive foreign and military policy to counter the Communist threat of Russia and its many surrogates.”
 - Richard Viguerie, co-founder of the Moral Majority, 1979 – 80
 - Joshua Zeitz, “Why Conservatives Should Beware a *Roe v. Wade* Repeal,” *Politico*, September 4, 2018

Evaluating Viguerie's Fundraising

- Abortion
 - Because of Scripture, not “secular humanism”
 - Reluctant to acknowledge “quickenings” as Christian
 - Legal and acceptable at the time of the U.S. Constitution
 - Rooted in the Greek Septuagint text of Exodus 21:22 – 25 + Aristotle
 - Much “stricter” than the Hebrew Masoretic text of Exodus 21:22 – 25
- Neoliberal Capitalism
 - Viguerie identifies less regulated capitalism with true Christianity
 - Christian faith has historically been more pro-labor, pro-ecology, pro-investing in the population re: economic support, literacy, schooling, health care, etc.

Evaluating Viguerie's Fundraising

- Abortion and Political Psychology
 - Rights of oppressed minorities
 - The unborn over against minorities, women
 - Individual, Meritocratic-Retributive Justice: “what you deserve”
 - If you get married and have kids: good life
 - If you have kids before marriage: economic hardship
 - If you perform an abortion: criminal punishments
 - Abortion policy became an extension of capitalism and criminality
 - Shares the belief of most white evangelicals that God's justice is retributive, not restorative
 - See Session 3

The Modern Pro-Life Movement

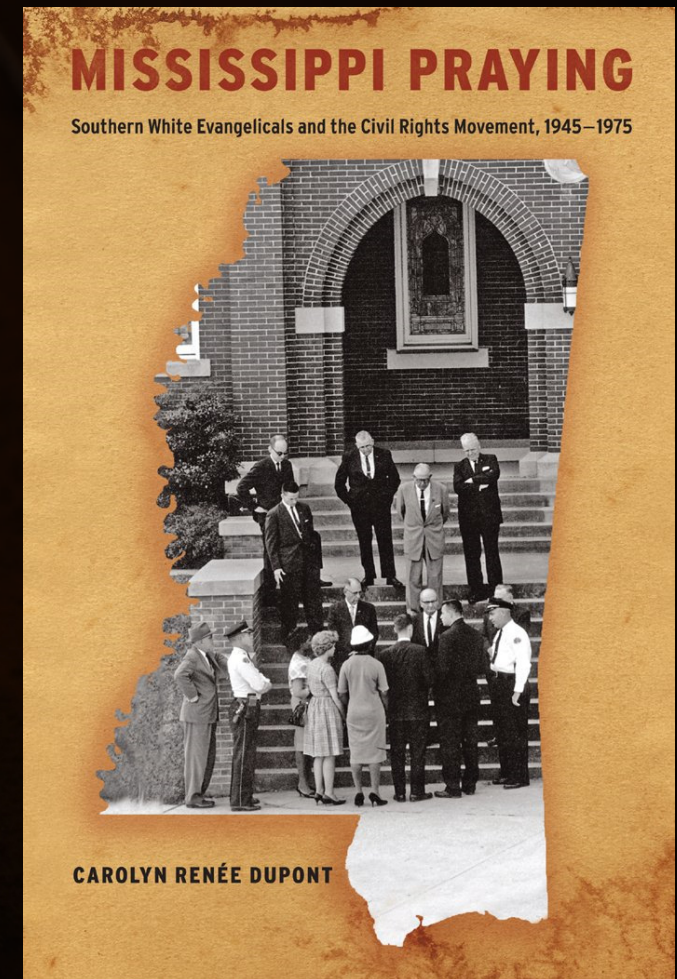
- Ronald Reagan's Political Coalition
 - Anti-communist foreign policy
 - Neoconservatives against the U.S.S.R.
 - Imperialists eager for resources in Latin America, etc.
 - Pentagon, military-industrial complex
 - "Anti-communist" domestic policy
 - Libertarians
 - "States rights" white segregationists
 - Anti-labor, pro-corporate
 - Anti-communist moral, "pro-family" policy
 - 1930s: Christian libertarians, anti-New Deal
 - 1950 – 60s: White evangelicals called Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other black civil rights leaders "communist"
 - 1980s: Abortion as driven by atheism and "communism"

White Evangelicals and Reagan

- “What galvanized the Christian community was not abortion, school prayer, or the ERA. I am living witness to that because I was trying to get those people interested in those issues and I utterly failed. What changed their mind was Jimmy Carter’s intervention against the Christian schools, trying to deny them tax-exempt status on the basis of so-called de facto segregation.”
 - Paul Weyrich, co-founder of the Moral Majority, 1979 – 80
 - William Martin, *With God On Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, p.173
- Contrary to the “culture war” narrative of evangelicals drawn back into national politics to defend the unborn

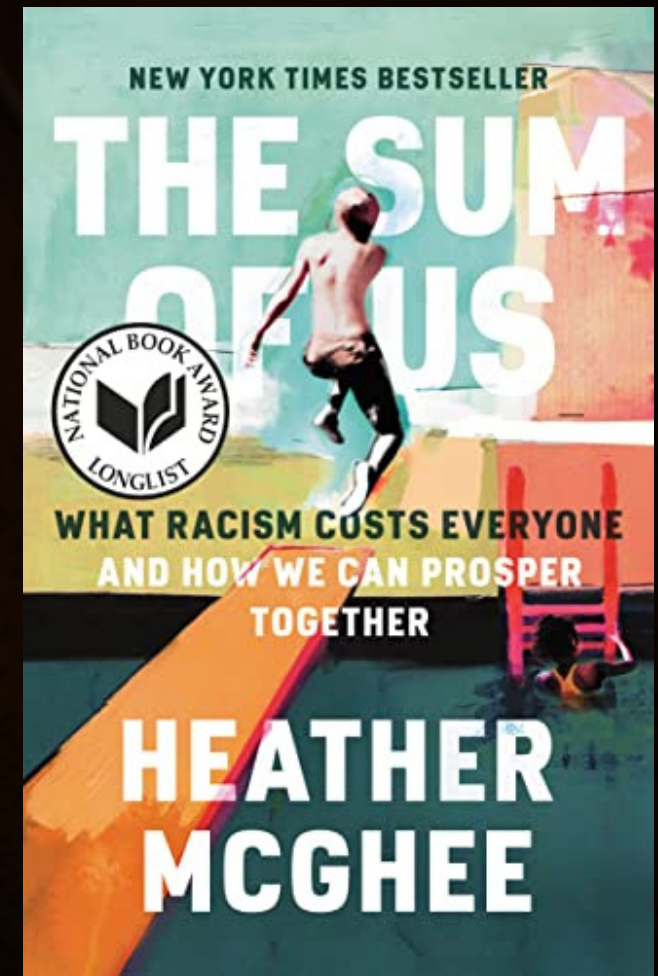
White Evangelicals and Race

- Opposed *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the integration of public schools
 - South: Formed “segregation academies” and wanted them to stay tax-exempt
 - Legal architecture:
 - States’ rights against federal
 - Localism vs. unelected judges
 - “Freedom of religion” to mask racial segregation



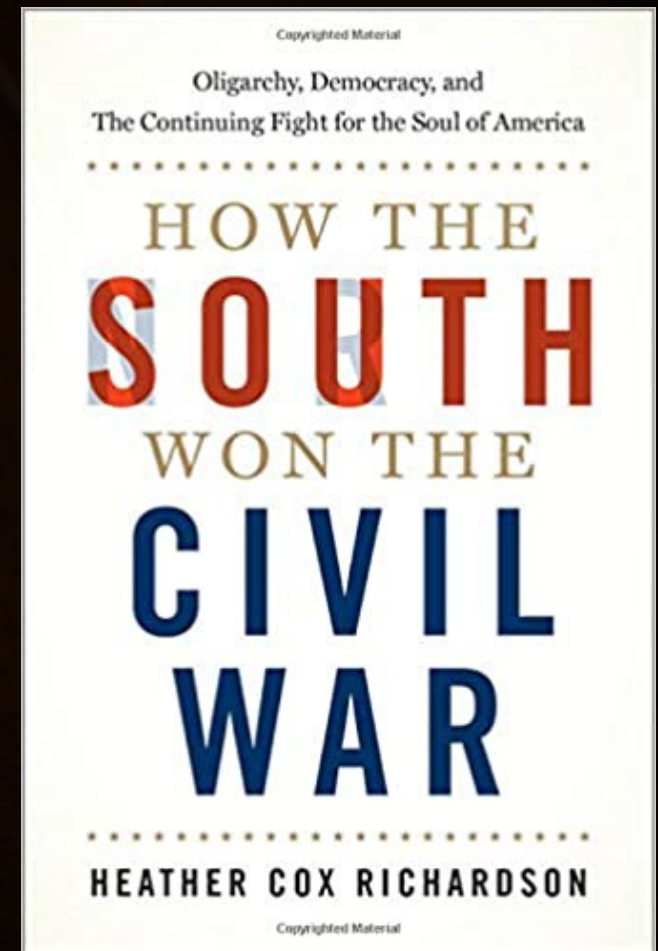
White Evangelicals and Race

- A Parable: disinvestment in public swimming pools when integrated
- In the 22 states that restricted abortion post-Dobbs:
 - “You’re on your own economics”
 - Higher maternal death rates
 - Higher infant mortality rates
 - Many refused the ACA Medicaid expansion
 - Literacy, COVID safety, etc.



White Evangelicals and Race

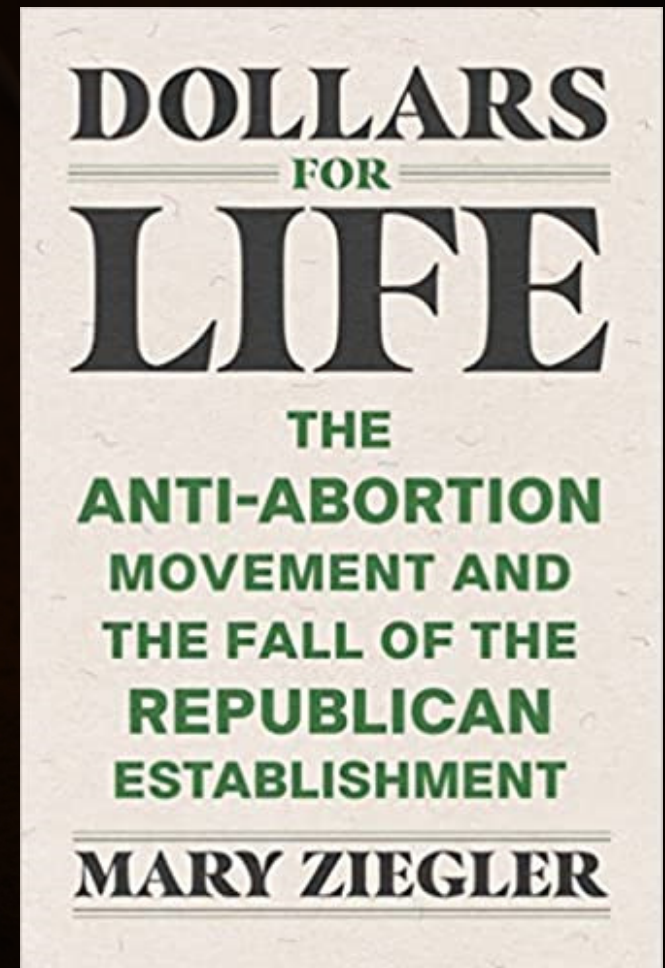
- Southern Strategy post 1964:
 - Move white segregationists from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party
 - Southern Baptist pastors and Western politicians: Goldwater (R-AZ); Nixon (R-CA); Reagan (Republican Gov of CA)
 - Chris Ladd, “Pastors, Not Politicians, Turned Dixie Republican,” *Forbes*, March 27, 2017



Loose Campaign Finance and Restrictions on Voting



- “I don't want everybody to vote. Elections are not won by a majority of people, they never have been from the beginning of our country and they are not now. As a matter of fact, our leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down.”
 - Paul Weyrich, co-founder of the Moral Majority, 1979 – 80
 - Speech to conservatives in 1980, now on YouTube



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Discussion Questions

1. Do you think “you’re on your own in parenting” should be society’s retribution for people having sex?
2. Do you think minimal economic governance and allowing people to fall into poverty is compatible with seeking to bring down the abortion rate? Why or why not?
3. If you could reduce the abortion rate to zero by financially assisting women to give birth, and then providing a stipend to adoptive families for free housing, childcare, health care, and college tuition, by raising taxes on the rich, would you? Why or why not?

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