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Secularization of the Christian West: The Contemporary Babylon?

Abstract: The cultural landscape of the Western hemisphere has historically been shaped by Christianity, which has strongly influenced societal values and identity. However, the foundations of this tradition now face significant challenges amid the forces of progress, modernity, and enlightenment. Scholars have long anticipated the rise of secularization, predicting profound shifts in human consciousness. Using Smith's "*Wisdom from Babylon: Leadership for the Church in a Secular Age*" as a framework, this article explores these changes. The ongoing discussion of secularization sheds light on the growing phenomenon of Christian secularization in Western society, especially as postmodern thought triggers a quiet cultural revolution that questions traditional Christian values.

The article presents two main arguments. Many Christian communities have not withdrawn into privatized faith. Instead, they have actively resisted secular ideologies in the public sphere, often aligning with radical right-wing movements. Dataset methods vary between the World Values Survey (WVS), document material and online material (written, audio and video). Secondly, some Christian groups increasingly interpret recent events—especially regarding sexual and gender rights policies—not merely as cultural shifts but as eschatological signs, drawing parallels with biblical Babylon. These views are supported by WVS data and can reflect deeper theological responses to contemporary societal changes.

Keywords: politics, religion, secularization, christianity, Babylon, eschatology

Introduction

Western culture has been strongly influenced by Christianity in all its different forms for several centuries. As such, Western nations developed specific socio-cultural values as critical organizing principles for national identity and unity, underpinned by Christian values and its doctrine [D'Souza 2008; Minkenberg 2022]. Throughout the annals of time, the entrenched pillars of cultural tradition

have faced relentless challenges, besieged by the tumultuous tides of progress and enlightenment. From the luminous epoch of the Age of Enlightenment, with its fervent pursuit of scientific truth, to the emergence of Marxist ideology, heralding an era of atheistic doctrine, and the relentless march of secular education [Clark and Kaiser 2003], technological marvels, postmodern thought [Duncan 2001] and post-materialism [Inglehart 1977], each epoch has left an indelible mark upon the fabric of society.

Yet amidst this kaleidoscope of change, whispers of a Christian secularization have lingered, casting a shadow upon the hallowed halls of tradition. Social scientists, in their fervor, have heralded the advent of secularization, celebrating its purported arrival with fanfare and aplomb. But, empirical reality has often stood in stark defiance of such proclamations, as noted by the astute observations of American sociologist Rodney Stark. For centuries, the scribes and scholars of the Western world have penned treatises on the phenomenon of Christian secularization, grappling with the waning influence of this ancient faith and its moral precepts. It is said that the echoes of this belief first reverberated amidst the Restoration of England in the 17th century, with luminaries like Thomas Woolston prophesying the inevitable decline of Christianity amidst the inexorable march of modernity [Stark 1999].

Luminaries of thought have foretold the relentless march of natural secularization, casting their prophetic gaze upon the shifting sands of human progress. From the visionary insights of the French philosopher Auguste Comte to the fervent declarations of Friedrich Engels, co-author of the Communist Manifesto alongside Marx, who proclaimed the advent of a socialist revolution that would herald the twilight of religion, the echoes of their pronouncements resonate through the corridors of time [Stark 1999]. In the wake of their declarations, a chorus of voices emerged, each adding their own melody to the symphony of secularization. Max Weber, in his contemplation of the «disenchantment of the world», illuminated the path of rationalization, tracing its course toward a worldview devoid of mysticism, where the cosmos unfolds as a self-contained causal nexus [Shiner 1967]. Likewise, Sigmund Freud, in his poignant reflections, cast religion as the “greatest of all neurotic illusions” [Stark 1999], envisioning its eventual dissipation akin to the fading echoes of a distant dream amidst the ceaseless advancement of human consciousness. Concurrently, Nietzsche’s evocative assertion of “God is dead” stands as a profound critique, reminiscent of a thunderclap heralding the unraveling of traditional religious paradigms under the weight of existential inquiry and

the looming specter of nihilism. Thus, within the tapestry of intellectual discourse, the threads of secularization weave a narrative of inevitability, as scholars and thinkers alike bear witness to the transformative currents shaping the human spirit.

Secularization of the Christian West: the First Argument

This chapter aims to shed light on the phenomenon of secularization within the Christian West, while also outlining the theoretical framework applied throughout the article and presenting its two primary arguments.

In the realm of contemporary discourse, this treatise endeavors to illuminate the specter of a secularization from the Christian West is looming over contemporary society. This article builds upon the framework proposed by Gordon T. Smith in “Wisdom from Babylon: Leadership for the Church in a Secular Age”. His work examines the parallels between contemporary Western society and the biblical account of the Jewish exile in Babylon. Just as the Jewish people experienced displacement and cultural alienation in Babylon, contemporary Western society has increasingly diverged from Christian values, embracing policies that conflict with biblical teachings (e.g. abortion, same-sex marriage, or gender ideology). He argues that similarly to the Israelites who maintained their faith amidst the pressures of Babylonian culture, Christians are facing a similar challenge to keep their faith but that secularism is not an enemy to be defeated but a context within which Christians are called to serve and bear witness to their faith.

This secularism in political science it has been described, as a “silent cultural revolution” [Inglehart 1977] that has swept through Western societies, uprooting old norms and planting in their place new values that prioritize self-expression, individualism, and autonomy over collective moral codes. Smith calls for Christians to compartmentalize their faith, to live within a secular world but not to confront it head-on [Smith 2019]. This “silent cultural revolution”, is widely analyzed in political science [Inglehart 1977; Minkenberg 2018, 2022].

The first argument disagrees with Smith's advocacy for the confines of privatized faith and that Christian communities should not see this secularism and culture war as an enemy to be actively defeated. In his book, Smith argues that the Church should focus on practicing Christian traditions in private and depart from evangelism towards the broader community and nation. This premise, I argue has been proved incorrect, as these communities have increasingly aligned themselves

with radical right-wing political movements in the on-going “Culture Wars” in countries such as the United States, Brazil, Poland, and Hungary [Moniz, Lino 2024]. Christian groups have strategically mobilized to counteract the influence of secularism, viewing it as a direct challenge to their religious values and ethical frameworks. The resistance includes efforts to assert traditional moral teachings on issues such as family, marriage, sexuality, positioning secularism as a force that undermines the societal role of Christianity. The data speaks volumes—on the graphs below, Hungary, Poland and Russia stand apart, their conservative stances on same-sex dynamics and abortion more unyielding than in lands governed by secular or progressive hands. Drawn from the World Values Survey, this evidence unveils a truth: the march of secularization is accelerating, sweeping deeper into the heart of recent decades, leaving its mark upon the moral fabric of nations.



World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2022

HOMOLIB- Welzel choice-1: Homosexuality acceptance										
	TOTAL	ISO 3166-1 numeric country code								
		Denmark	France	Germany	Hungary	Poland	Portugal	Russia	Spain	Sweden
Low	28.6 (5,078)	5.8	19.5	14.1	56.4	55.3	35.9	77.4	16.8	8.2
Medium	18.8 (3,336)	8.2	24.8	16.4	23.1	19.2	36.9	15.4	20.8	8.5
High	52.5 (9,313)	86.0	55.7	69.5	20.5	25.5	27.1	7.3	62.5	83.4
(N)	(17,726)	(3,351)	(1,734)	(2,105)	(1,462)	(1,288)	(1,150)	(1,751)	(1,166)	(1,168)
Mean	0.59	0.87	0.64	0.74	0.31	0.33	0.42	0.15	0.67	0.85
Std Dev.	0.40	0.26	0.36	0.34	0.36	0.38	0.34	0.26	0.34	0.29
Base mean	(17,726)	(3,351)	(1,734)	(2,105)	(1,462)	(1,288)	(1,150)	(1,751)	(1,166)	(1,168)



World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2022

Justifiable: Homosexuality										
	TOTAL	ISO 3166-1 numeric country code								
		Denmark	France	Germany	Hungary	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Russia	Spain
Never justifiable	22.3 (3,595)	3.5	13.0	10.1	45.0	14.7	44.2	23.7	58.4	10.0
2	2.8(460)	0.8	2.3	0.9	4.6	2.6	3.8	4.7	5.8	2.8
3	3.5(569)	1.5	2.7	1.5	4.7	4.9	4.4	5.9	4.8	3.4
4	3.1(502)	1.1	2.2	1.6	3.7	4.9	3.7	6.1	4.1	2.9
5	11.2 (1,811)	5.2	15.5	9.9	12.7	13.7	11.2	24.4	6.3	10.6
6	4.8(776)	1.9	5.1	3.4	5.9	9.7	3.4	4.9	3.9	6.5
7	4.5(722)	3.0	4.1	3.5	2.2	9.1	2.5	6.1	2.9	7.5
8	6.0(971)	5.9	7.3	6.0	3.1	9.0	4.8	3.7	2.2	11.5
9	5.1(829)	8.7	6.4	5.0	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.4	1.4	11.1
Always justifiable	32.4 (5,238)	67.9	33.5	55.4	11.5	22.7	13.9	13.8	3.3	30.1
Don't know	3.3(532)	0.4	6.9	1.1	2.8	4.2	4.2	2.8	6.1	2.5
No answer	0.9(153)	0.1	0.9	1.6	1.0	1.6	0.9	1.4	0.7	1.1
(N)	(16,157)	(3,369)	(1,880)	(1,528)	(1,519)	(2,282)	(1,358)	(1,201)	(1,810)	(1,210)
Mean	6.11	8.82	6.76	7.86	3.77	6.05	3.98	4.79	2.58	7.00
Std Dev.	3.61	2.30	3.27	3.08	3.25	3.13	3.43	3.06	2.55	3.03
Base mean	(15,472)	(3,351)	(1,734)	(1,486)	(1,462)	(2,148)	(1,288)	(1,150)	(1,688)	(1,166)



World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2022

ABORTLIB- Welzel choice-2: Abortion acceptable										
TOTAL	ISO 3166-1 numeric country code									
	Denmark	France	Germany	Hungary	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Russia	Spain	
Low 27.7 (4,349)	6.7	17.6	27.8	34.4	32.5	53.6	38.2	41.3	26.9	
Medium 26.6 (4,178)	11.3	25.4	35.6	35.6	32.6	26.7	37.1	30.4	22.2	
High 45.7 (7,173)	81.9	57.1	36.6	30.0	34.9	19.8	24.7	28.3	51.0	
(N)	(15,701)	(3,363)	(1,815)	(1,480)	(1,487)	(2,199)	(1,302)	(1,178)	(1,712)	(1,164)
Mean	0.54	0.82	0.64	0.50	0.44	0.46	0.31	0.39	0.40	0.56
Std Dev.	0.37	0.27	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.33	0.31	0.31	0.34	0.36
Base mean	(15,701)	(3,363)	(1,815)	(1,480)	(1,487)	(2,199)	(1,302)	(1,178)	(1,712)	(1,164)



World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2022

Justifiable: Abortion										
TOTAL	ISO 3166-1 numeric country code									
	Denmark	France	Germany	Hungary	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Russia	Spain	
Never justifiable 18.5 (2,997)	4.0	11.1	18.7	23.7	22.2	38.5	25.6	25.7	17.0	
2 4.1 (657)	1.4	3.2	4.3	4.7	3.7	5.8	5.8	6.7	5.0	
3 4.3 (695)	1.4	2.7	3.9	5.2	5.4	7.1	6.1	6.7	3.8	
4 3.9 (635)	1.6	2.0	4.3	4.2	5.8	3.5	4.9	6.9	4.2	
5 15.0 (2,422)	7.2	16.0	24.3	21.2	14.2	15.7	24.8	13.3	9.0	
6 6.9 (1,120)	2.5	6.5	5.8	9.5	11.4	6.4	6.7	8.6	8.1	
7 7.4 (1,191)	6.8	6.4	6.5	6.7	10.9	4.2	7.8	7.5	8.7	
8 8.8 (1,427)	11.5	10.7	7.4	7.0	8.6	6.5	6.5	7.0	10.8	
9 5.5 (889)	8.7	7.8	4.5	4.2	2.8	2.7	2.7	3.6	9.9	
Always justifiable 22.7 (3,667)	54.8	30.2	17.1	11.6	11.4	5.5	7.2	8.7	19.7	
Don't know 2.2 (348)	0.2	2.9	1.5	1.4	2.6	3.2	1.4	5.0	2.8	
No answer 0.7 (108)	0.0	0.6	1.6	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.5	0.4	1.0	
(N)	(16,157)	(3,369)	(1,880)	(1,528)	(1,519)	(2,282)	(1,358)	(1,201)	(1,810)	(1,210)
Mean	5.87	8.36	6.78	5.46	4.94	5.11	3.79	4.51	4.57	6.05
Std Dev.	3.29	2.45	3.09	3.11	3.04	3.02	2.93	2.83	3.02	3.26
Base mean	(15,701)	(3,363)	(1,815)	(1,480)	(1,487)	(2,199)	(1,302)	(1,178)	(1,712)	(1,164)

In recent times, where the secular tide ebbs and flows, a symbiotic bond emerges between Christian movements and the radical right. They stand united, perceiving this alliance as a bulwark against the encroaching shadows of modernity that threaten the sanctity of faith. Radical leaders echo these concerns, articulating a shared urgency to reclaim a lost moral compass amidst the cacophony of contemporary values. In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s government embodies this ethos, openly decrying the progressive values that have surfaced from the Culture War, particularly those concerning gender and sexual rights. In a fervent declaration in 2019, Orbán warned that Christian Europe stands on the precipice of peril, advocating a return to its foundational roots as the only salvation for a continent adrift [About Hungary 2019].

By 2023, this call to arms had evolved into an urgent clarion, urging the promotion of Christian culture through active evangelization. Herein lies a poignant illustration: Christian groups and radical right leaders are not retreating into the shadows of the public sphere. Instead, they engage fervently in the political arena, challenging an increasingly secular Western society, as Orbán himself has articulated: “And I will make one last cautious comment on Christianity and Christian culture. I believe that Christian culture needs to be promoted, and it would be fine if it were accompanied by evangelisation – but that is way beyond my political remit, and is a different world. But if we do not regain our faith that following the path proposed by Christ is the way to a freer, more human and more liveable world, and that is where we will find the ultimate question and the answers in human life, if we do not regain that faith, it will be very difficult to make Europe independent and successful again” [About Hungary 2023].

In Poland, a resonant chord of conservatism vibrates through the fabric of society, echoing the findings of the World Values Survey (WVS), which reveals a prevailing commitment to traditional values. The Polish Catholic Church stands as a steadfast ally to the Law and Justice (PiS) government, a partnership well-documented and laden with implications for the nation’s moral landscape. This entwined relationship bequeaths considerable advantages to the Church, propelling its mission to uphold and amplify conservative values within the public realm. This convergence of faith and governance illuminates the Church’s profound influence on political deliberations, particularly as they pertain to morality, LGBTQ+ rights, and social policy in Poland [Resende, Hennig 2021]. In a significant move that underscored this alliance, the PiS government, buoyed by the Constitutional Tribunal’s 2020 ruling, imposed a stringent ban on abortion in instances of fetal defects. This decree was framed not merely as policy, but as a sacred defense of life and constitutional values, invoking the deep-rooted Catholic ethos that permeates Polish identity. Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of PiS, fervently echoed this sentiment, advocating for a vision wherein every pregnancy culminates in birth. His words resonate with the weight of religious tradition, intertwining the sanctity of life with the rituals of baptism and burial [Kaczyński 2020, cited in *The Guardian* 2020]. Poland grapples with the eternal struggle between progressive aspirations and the tenacious hold of tradition, revealing a society at a crossroads. President Andrzej Duda highlighted the importance of defending Poland’s Christian roots, stating, “Poland is and will remain strong with its Christian roots” [Duda 2020, cited in *Notes from Poland*, 2020]. President Duda described LGBTQ+ ideology as “neo-Bolshevism”, aimed at destroying Polish values [Duda 2020, cited in *Reuters* 2020]. Similarly, Kaczyński stated that PiS would

defend traditional family structures and protect Polish civilization from what he perceives as threats from LGBTQ+ rights and Western liberalism [Kaczyński 2019, cited in *The Guardian* 2019]. This fervent critique of Western liberalism echoes across borders, resonating in the hearts of radical right leaders from the steppes of Hungary under Viktor Orbán to the expansive realm of Russia, where the very fabric of society is deemed under siege.

Patriarch Kirill, entwined with the Russian state, raises his voice against the tide of individualism and secularism, lamenting a world that has chosen to reject the divine truth of God. His proclamations reverberate like thunder, claiming that human rights have become a weapon to justify “sin”, a sharp dagger aimed at the heart of Christian morality, particularly concerning LGBTQ+ rights and the secularization of society [Church Times 2022]. Kirill frames these cultural shifts as a threat to Christian and moral traditions, positioning Russia as a defender of traditional Christian values against the liberal West. Similarly, in a 2021 speech, Putin denounced “woke” culture and progressive movements in the West, including the increasing focus on gender identity. He argued that such ideologies undermine traditional family structures, referring to the promotion of ideas like gender fluidity as “nonsense” and accusing the West of trying to erase basic biological distinctions between men and women [EPPC 2021]. These positions emphasize the close alignment between Putin’s political rhetoric and the conservative stances promoted by the Russian Orthodox Church. Russia’s 2013 law banning the “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” to minors, which was promoted as a defense of “traditional family values. Putin has echoed many of Kirill’s criticisms, often framing Russia as a bastion of traditional values in contrast to the West’s embrace of liberalism and “woke” ideologies. Giorgia Meloni’s recent electoral victory in Italy has underscored the central role of Christianity in both her party’s ideology and her personal convictions. Meloni has consistently articulated her identity as intrinsically linked to her Christian faith, stating, “I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am Italian, I am Christian” [Meloni 2019]. This declaration reflects her adherence to a strong Christian value system, which informs her political views and rhetoric. As a leader of the radical right, Meloni has publicly criticized LGBTQ+ rights, framing them within the context of her conservative beliefs [Meloni 2021]. Furthermore, her stance on abortion reveals a commitment to traditional family values, where she advocates against the practice, viewing it as contrary to her religious principles [Meloni 2022].

In the United States, recent scholarship illuminates the steadfast support Donald Trump receives from Evangelical and Christian movements [Baker, Perry,

Whitehead 2020; Maccaroni 2023; Moniz, Lino 2024], despite his divergence from the mold of a “traditional Republican candidate” [Margolis 2019]. In fact, 81% of evangelicals in the polls voted for Trump [Capecci 2024]. As a radical right-wing figure, Trump’s appeal within Christian spheres has surged notably in the 2024 electoral campaign, a response perhaps to the intensified Culture War and the escalating discourse around “wokeism” in American society. Ryan Burge, a Baptist minister and political scientist, contends that the Christian right, or “religious right”, has long opposed progressive reforms but now views Trump as God’s uniquely “anointed leader”, a prophet-like figure appointed to vanquish the forces they believe propagate sin and secularism [MSNBC 2023]. Some draw parallels between Trump and Cyrus the Great, the Persian king who liberated the Israelites from Babylonian captivity, positioning him as a deliverer in modern terms. Trump’s rallies frequently feature Christian prayers, underscoring his support among Christians, contrasting with Kamala Harris, who recently responded to a rally attendee’s declaration of “Jesus is King” with “You are at the wrong rally” [Fox News 2023]. This exchange vividly illustrates the ongoing “Culture War”, with one side allied to Christian values and belief systems and the other to secular or postmodern atheistic worldviews.

Legislative Measures

In recent years, legislative measures have been enacted across the political spectrum, reflecting divergent visions of society’s moral and cultural fabric. Progressive parties in many Western governments have embraced policies that are secular and forward-looking, often challenging traditional Christian values. In contrast, conservative and far-right governments have adopted measures aimed at reinforcing Christian and traditionalist principles, particularly in matters of sexuality and gender.

In Russia, the deep-rooted influence of the Russian Orthodox Church is well-documented, shaping public discourse and state policies. A notable example is the 2013 enactment of “Federal Law No. 135-FZ”, which restricts the dissemination of information on «non-traditional sexual relationships» to minors. Defending the law, President Putin affirmed: «We are not curbing anyone’s rights, but we must protect children from information that undermines traditional family values» [Putin 2013 as cited in BBC 2013]. The law, formally entitled *On Amendments to Article 5 of the Federal Law «On the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to Their Health and Development» and Other Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Regarding the Protection of Children from Information Promoting the*

Denial of Traditional Family Values, reflects a deliberate effort to resist the tide of secularization and progressive ideologies perceived to threaten a Christian Europe.

In Hungary, the government led by Viktor Orbán enacted Act XXXI of 2020, which prohibits the legal recognition of gender changes on official documents, thereby undermining the principles of gender identity ideology. This legislation defines «sex» as the biological sex assigned at birth, based on primary sex characteristics and chromosomal analysis. Consequently, the biological sex recorded at birth is immutable and cannot be modified in official documents. This effectively bars transgender individuals from amending their gender markers on identification documents such as ID cards and passports. Organizations such as Amnesty International have strongly criticized this law, characterizing it as a «step back into the dark ages» [Amnesty International 2020]. Human Rights Watch also condemned the legislation, highlighting the increased risk of humiliation and mistreatment faced by transgender individuals as a result of these restrictions [Human Rights Watch 2020]. In addition to Act XXXI of 2020, the Hungarian government also passed Act LXXIX of 2021, commonly referred to as the «Anti-LGBT Law» or «Child Protection Law». This law, which was adopted in June 2021, prohibits the depiction of homosexuality or gender transition in educational materials, advertisements, and media accessible to minors. These legislative actions reflect the strong influence of Christian ideology within Orbán's administration, emphasizing the preservation of traditional religious values in Hungarian society.

In the United States, during the tenure of Donald Trump, a series of notable measures were implemented that profoundly impacted the landscape of gender identity and civil rights. Among these actions was the controversial Transgender Military Ban, which prohibited transgender individuals from serving openly in the armed forces. This policy was framed as a cost-saving measure, yet it resonated with deeper ideological currents reflecting the administration's stance on gender identity. Furthermore, the Trump administration rolled back vital protections for transgender students, allowing educational institutions to disregard Title IX mandates that required the recognition of students' gender identities. In this climate, Trump vocally criticized what he termed «woke culture» and identity politics, framing them as manifestations of a leftist totalitarian ideology rooted in Marxist thought. This critique extended beyond the LGBTQ+ movement, encompassing programs such as diversity training in federal agencies, which he argued promoted «reverse discrimination» rather than fostering true meritocracy.

In Trump's rhetoric, he articulated a sense of urgency regarding a perceived cultural revolution sweeping across the United States and the West—an assertion that echoes the thesis presented by Inglehart in 1977, commonly referred to as the «silent cultural revolution» in post-materialist societies. In various speeches, Trump expressed his concern: “We must defend our history, our heritage, and our great American way of life. We are fighting a cultural revolution” [NBC News 2020]. His words underscored a broader struggle against progressive movements, framing them as threats to a traditional American ethos.

In a chorus of nations, similar tides of change arise, as radical right parties have recently ascended to power in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, their conservative ethos deeply entwined with the threads of Christianity [Krajčovič 2021]. In Slovakia, a significant legislative proposal emerged in 2021 called: “Constitutional Amendment Proposal “. This proposal was introduced to amend the Slovak Constitution to define marriage strictly as a union between a man and a woman. This move was spearheaded by the ruling party, OĽaNO (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities). This move, echoing the sentiments of conservative and religious factions, sought to safeguard traditional values against the encroachment of progressive ideologies. This ignited widespread public protests that reverberated through the streets, a testament to the fervent beliefs held by many. Thus, the struggle unfolds, a poignant reflection of the eternal conflict between tradition and change, faith and liberation, as nations grapple with their identities in an ever-evolving world [Kováč 2021].

In Portugal, a land steeped in Christian heritage, the echoes of faith resonate through the ages. Emerging as a sovereign nation in 1143, it was among the first to embrace Christianity, forging a bond with its doctrines that has endured for centuries. This connection was further cemented during Salazar's fascist regime, wherein the Portuguese Catholic Church and Christian values were fervently propagated within the educational system. The 1917 Miracle of Fatima also illuminated the nation's spiritual path, positioning Portugal as a bastion of Christian tradition within the wider world. As decades passed and the shadow of fascism receded, Portugal transitioned to a democratic society, where leftist and progressive ideologies, particularly through the Socialist Party, began to flourish. These progressive governments opened pathways to challenge the long-held conservative values steeped in Christian doctrine, leading to the normalization of abortion, same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, and gender identity discourse. Recently, the subject of “Cidadania e Desenvolvimento” in public schools has come under

scrutiny. The radical right party Chega has vehemently criticized it, alleging that the curriculum indoctrinates children with the notion that gender is not a binary construct but a spectrum shaped by social influences. This has sparked considerable backlash, particularly regarding other policies perceived as incompatible with Portugal's deep-rooted Christian traditions. The announcement of mixed public restrooms has ignited fervent opposition from conservative factions. Chega has positioned itself against such measures, voicing concerns over safety and the preservation of traditional family values [Observador 2021]. The party's rhetoric often underscores the necessity of safeguarding these values from what they term the excesses of liberalism and "woke" ideologies, which they argue undermine the societal fabric [Público 2021]. This narrative effectively mobilizes conservative support, resonating with voters who perceive their cultural identity as increasingly imperiled, reaching recently 18% in the 2024 elections.

Babylon as more than a metaphor

The second argument posits that "Babylon serves as more than a mere metaphor with eschatological implications" within certain Christian circles. This perspective extends the framework established by Smith, asserting that the contemporary world not only reflects the cultural dislocation of faith akin to Babylon but also actively embraces practices that contradict the moral imperatives outlined in scripture in eschatological terms. Such views are echoed in various theological discourses, suggesting that the modern societal landscape mirrors the spiritual and ethical challenges faced by the ancient city. This alignment prompts a critical examination of contemporary moral standards and their compatibility with traditional Christian teachings [Cohn 2021; Johnson 2022]. In the biblical narrative, Babylon was not merely a place of exile; it was a city whose practices—particularly those concerning sexual ethics—invoked the wrath of God. In much the same way, contemporary society, with its embrace of sexual and gender rights, its redefinition of marriage, and its support for abortion, is seen by many Christian groups as a «modern Babylon», where sacred teachings are defied in favor of secular autonomy.

Scholar Scott Wenig, an expert in Applied Theology and a Christian pastor, contends that the cultural landscape since the 1960s has transformed into a battleground, pitting traditional Christian values against what he calls an "ever-evolving neo-paganism". Wenig suggests that God's moral order has been overshadowed, supplanted by the rise of radical feminism and the "unrestrained sexual expressions of all kinds" that have become symbols of a post-materialistic worldview.

This shift echoes what Ronald Inglehart described in his “silent cultural revolution” [Inglehart 1977], a subtle yet profound transition from materialistic values to those emphasizing self-expression and individualism. In harmony with Wenig’s critique, radical right movements voice condemnation of moral relativism and the progressive ideologies, tracing their lineage to the influence of critical theory and postmodern thought. Within this discourse, right-wing leaders often employ terms like “neo-Bolshevism” or “cultural Marxism” [Busbridge et al. 2023], characterizing these movements as forces working to erode the pillars of Western tradition [Hicks 2004; Stein 2015; Jamin 2018; Nagle 2017]. Today, such critiques are often reframed under the banner of “wokeism” [Cammaerts 2022; Smith et al. 2023], a term that, for many, evokes a sense of ideological upheaval against established societal norms and values.

For some Christian leaders, such as Cliffe Knechtle, Frank Turek, and Jack Hibbs, the practice of abortion today is likened to the ancient rites of child sacrifice condemned in the Bible in Leviticus 18:21, Leviticus 20:2-5, Deuteronomy 12:31, Deuteronomy 18:10 or in Jeremiah 7:31. They draw parallels between modern-day abortion and the biblical passages that speak of offerings to pagan gods, arguing that the spirit of these ancient sins lives on in contemporary practices. This eschatological reading of current events places contemporary society on the precipice of divine judgment, a modern contemporary Babylon awaiting its reckoning. For many within these communities, the cultural and political shifts of the present are not merely challenges to be navigated but signs of the impending end times. Pastor Jack Hibbs, for example, has publicly argued that contemporary societal developments signal the approach of an eschatological age [VanDyke 2021]. In partnership with figures such as Charlie Kirk, leader of the conservative Turning Point movement (that supports Donald Trump), Hibbs has co-hosted events that merge Christian prophecy with radical political action, framing the defense of Christian values as a battle against the forces of darkness in an apocalyptic struggle for the soul of society. In this context, Christian support for radical political solutions becomes not merely a matter of policy but a moral imperative in their perspectives [Lindsay 2020; Frank 2021]. As society drifts further from its Christian roots, these Christian and Evangelical groups view themselves as the last bastion of divine truth, fighting against the rise of a new Babylon where faith is marginalized and secular values reign supreme with “wokeism” and progressivism [Wald 2021]. This dynamic finds elucidation within the field of political science, where certain scholars contend that Christian groups and radical right movements constitute a form of “counter-revolution” [Ignazi 1992; Minkenberg 1992]. These

groups function as a “collective actor” [Minkenbergh 2018] in opposition to the postmodern and secular cultural transformations.

In the sacred narrative of Christian eschatology, Babylon serves as a profound symbol of humanity’s tragic fall into moral decay and spiritual darkness. As foretold in the prophetic texts of Isaiah (13:19–22) and Jeremiah (51:37, 52–58), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah stands as a solemn reminder of divine judgment upon those who embrace sexual immorality and idolatry. The fate of Babylon is portrayed not merely as a historical event, but as an inevitable consequence of humanity’s rebellion against God’s commandments. In the New Testament, the symbolism of Babylon is deepened, particularly in the Book of Revelation, where it is depicted as a formidable and corrupt force that dominates the world during the end times. Here, Babylon is characterized as a center of idolatry, luxury, greed, and sexual immorality, a manifestation of human pride and rebellion against divine law. The haunting words of Revelation 14:8 proclaim, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great” warning that all nations have been seduced by her adulteries and moral degradation. This biblical imagery resonates powerfully with contemporary Christian thought, as many theologians draw parallels between these ancient warnings and the modern challenges posed by the sexual revolution and the moral relativism that pervades postmodern society. The abandonment of traditional values, marriage, and the sanctity of gender reflects a departure from the objective truths established in sacred scripture. These shifts invite a profound contemplation on the nature of divine truth and the imperative to uphold God’s eternal commandments amidst a culture that increasingly embraces subjective moralities. In this light, the call to return to the foundational teachings of scripture becomes a clarion cry for believers. As stated in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, the apostle Paul warns that “the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God”, urging Christians to stand firm in their faith and resist the seductive allure of a society that seeks to redefine righteousness. The recent legalization of same-sex marriage in Greece stands as a significant milestone, marking the nation as the 16th member of the European Union and the 35th globally to embrace such legislation. For many Christian churches and conservative groups, this development is perceived as a disconcerting shift, particularly given Greece’s profound historical ties to Christianity. Notably, it is the first nation with a Christian Orthodox majority to legally recognize same-sex marriage [Gregory 2024], but also countries like Italy or Portugal where progressive policies contradict their Christian heritage. This evolution in societal values underscores the increasing embrace of post-materialistic and progressive social justice movements within contemporary Western culture.

Within this shifting context, passages like 2 Timothy 3:12—»everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted«—resonate profoundly with Christian conservatives. Pastors such as Hibbs [Hibbs, n.d.], Jeremiah [2021], Jeffress [2020], and Graham [2019] have recently highlighted this verse, viewing it as a reminder of the challenges faced by those committed to living out traditional Christian values in an increasingly secularized and morally pluralistic society.

This scripture encapsulates the apprehension felt by those witnessing the transformation of cultural norms, as they grapple with the implications of a society increasingly characterized by moral relativism and a departure from traditional values. The landscape of modernity thus serves as a battleground for ideologies, where the call for justice and equality often collides with a fervent desire to uphold spiritual convictions. Passing from the Old Testament to the New, some Christian fundamentalists discern the signs of a “Contemporary Babylon” in our midst. In Christian eschatology and millennialism, the prophecy unfolds [McConkie 1992], as the return of Israel to the land in 1948, coupled with recent secularization, heralds the dawn of a new era as elucidated by several famous Christian pastors that support radical right options in politics.

In summary, the argument follows that Christian circles consider these advancements and contemporary cultural revolution in sexuality and morals as sign of apocalyptic times and decide to depart from mainstream political party support to radical right parties and leaders. The cultural revolution in sexuality has also featured in some recent studies, as digital platforms, akin to alchemical crucibles, transmute the traditional romantic tableau, once inhabited by the faithful disciples of monogamy. As delineated by Rosenfeld et al. [2019] and Lundquist and Curington [2019], this metamorphosis manifests itself in the emergence of a cultural paradigm shift, a rupture from the traditional moorings of relationships, monogamy, and sexual behavior. In recent studies, the prevalence of casual sexual experiences, facilitated by dating apps and social media, astounds the senses, with around 52% partaking in these encounters, as revealed by Strugo and Muise [2019].

Conclusion

In the complex landscape of human thought and prophecy, the phenomenon of Christian secularization emerges as a recurring theme, envisioned by esteemed thinkers such as Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Although these intellectuals articulated expectations regarding the trajectory of secularization, they did not witness the full realization of their predictions during their

lifetimes. In contrast, the current sociocultural landscape of the Western world offers a compelling illustration of the ongoing secularization of Christian ethos, reflecting a profound transformation in religious belief and practice. This evolution invites further exploration of its implications for both contemporary society and the future of religious identity.

This era is characterized by the rising prominence of movements advocating for human and sexual rights, which frequently stand in opposition to traditional Christian doctrine. Notable examples of this tension include the support for same-sex marriage, adoption by same-sex couples, abortion rights, and issues surrounding gender identity and transitioning. These developments are evident not only in governmental policies but also in educational initiatives aimed at promoting inclusivity and diversity. Empirical data, such as that derived from the World Values Survey, highlights the significant secularizing trends occurring within Western societies. Concurrently, findings from document analysis and online material analysis indicate that Christian organizations, along with radical right political parties, are actively mobilizing to counteract and resist these progressive secular ideologies. This opposition is manifested in both material struggles and efforts within the spiritual domain, reflecting a comprehensive effort to defend traditional values.

Moreover, the striking parallels between contemporary societal norms rooted in the advocacy of social justice and the biblical depiction of Babylon are evident for many Christian fundamentalists. These norms and practices, vehemently condemned in scriptural narratives, evoke a reflection upon our modern epoch as a contemporary Babylon. In this context, many Christian pastors and groups speculate about the advent of a millenarian era within Christian eschatology. Thus, the current era stands as a poignant chapter in the ongoing saga of human civilization, where the currents of secularization and biblical imagery intertwine, inviting contemplation on the trajectory of our collective destiny.

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