

Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

January 30, 2020

I offer this *Laptop* with a measure of “fear & trembling.” I generally try to avoid political “hot-button” things, and this is really not a “hot-button,” because it attempts to function “under the radar” and not attract attention to itself, as you will see.

At the same time, it appears to me that the movement I am going to attempt to describe has a lot to do with current unwillingness of the Republican Party to compromise on much of anything. Understanding this movement helps to explain the enthusiastic support the “Christian Right” offers to President Trump.



This movement has a lot to do with the battles we’ve recently experienced over Supreme Court nominees. This movement will be very active during this election year . . . and for years to come. And yet at the same time, a great many—and maybe most—of the persons offering support to this movement will not recognize the name of the movement to which they belong.

The name of this movement is “**Dominionism.**” You probably don’t know the word, either, and that’s really how its leader prefer things to be. It makes things easier.¹

One might be inclined at first to regard what follows as a “conspiracy theory.” With few exceptions, conspiracy theories have little connection to things as they exist in the real world, and they are robustly denied by those accused of perpetrating them. While we will see denial in what follows, most of this exists quite openly in the realities of the public domain, if one knows where to look.

To put things in a nutshell, **Dominionism is the idea that God has called conservative Christians to exercise dominion over society by taking control of political and cultural institutions.** The technical term for this idea is “theocracy.” And, acknowledged or unacknowledged, this movement appears to be the central unifying ideology for the “Christian Right.”

¹ Resources for this essay include:

- James Garlow & David Brockman, *This Precarious Moment: Six Urgent Steps that will Save You, Your Family, and Our Country* (Salem Books, 2018).
- David Brockman, “The Radical Theology that Could Make Religious Freedom a Thing of the Past: Even Devout Christians Should Fear These Influential Leaders’ Refusal to Separate Church and State,” *Christian Ethics Today*, Fall, 2019, pp. 21-23.
http://www.christianethicstoday.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CET_114_single_pages.pdf
- Frederick Clarkson, “Dominionism Rising: A Theocratic Movement Hiding in Plain Sight,” *Christian Ethics Today*, vo. 24:3, 2016, p. 4 ff.
http://christianethicstoday.com/PDF/CET_Issue_102.pdf
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion_theology
- <http://7culturalmountains.org/>
- <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/infernal/2019/02/dominionism-in-america-part-5-the-seven-mountains-mandate/>

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Dominionism prefers to operate “under the radar,” avoiding public awareness of its activity. In 1987, when Dominionism was criticized in a major report in *Christianity Today*—a conservative journal—Dominionists attacked any journalists who picked up this story, including Bill Moyers, who did a series on the Religious Right in that same year. These attacks sought to discredit the idea that Dominionism was a real thing or, even if real, that it was not of much significance . . . because it would be very difficult for their efforts to be successful if they were widely known and understood.

So what are Dominionists trying to accomplish? It depends to some extent on which Dominionists you’re talking about. “**Soft Dominionists**” believe that Christians need to regain control over the nation’s political and cultural institutions that they (supposedly) lost after the founding period. “**Hard Dominionists**” want to replace the U.S. Constitution with “biblical law,” generally the Law of Moses (including the parts about stoning “sinners”).

Dominionists are convinced, contrary to the evidence, that the United States was explicitly founded as a “Christian Nation.” They completely reject the idea of “separation of church and state,” and in this they have much in common with how Islam usually operates.

One of the central goals of Dominionism is to place Dominion-minded Christians as the heads of “the Seven Cultural Mountains” and to use this influence to “Christianize” the nation and to eventually create a worldwide theocracy that eradicates “secularism” and “pluralism” in all of their forms. This worldwide dominion by Christians is thought to be necessary in order to create the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth and to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Jesus. I’ll come back to that presently.

These “**Seven Cultural Mountains**” are as follows:

1. **GOVERNMENT:** “where evil is either restrained or endorsed”
2. **EDUCATION:** “where truths or lies about God and the Creation are taught”
3. **MEDIA:** “where information is interpreted through the lens of ‘good’ and ‘evil’”
4. **ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT:** “where values and virtue are celebrated or distorted”
5. **RELIGION:**
“where people worship God in spirit and in truth or settle for religious ritual”
6. **FAMILY:** “where either blessings or curses are passed onto successive generations”
7. **BUSINESS:** “where people build for the glory of God or for the glory of man”²

While there is truth in those seven affirmations, and while Christians should certainly be concerned about such things, Gary North, one of the leaders of the Dominionist camp, goes beyond simple rejection of separation of church and state to call for “a Bible-based social, political, and religious order *that finally denies the religious liberty of the enemies of God*”; and Gary DeMar is on record supporting the death penalty for gay or lesbian sex.

The Dominionist movement tends to be white, with little affection for people of color, “immigrants,” or Muslims. Dominionists tend to be strong proponents of “The Wall,” and they tend to believe that Israel can “do no wrong.” This support of Israel has very little to do with the welfare of Jews, Israelis, Palestinians, or justice in international affairs. This support has to do with a particular theological interpretation of “Israel’s” place in the Divine Plan.³

² One might wonder why other “centers of influence” such as science, recreation, sports, health, and medicine are omitted from this list.

³ And I would suggest that this theology confuses “Israel” as a political entity with “Israel” as the elect people of God.

Gary North laments the U.S. Constitution's proscription of religious tests for public office, envisioning a day when Dominionists gain sufficient power to amend the Constitution and **limit the right to vote and the holding of civil office** "to communicant members of Trinitarian churches." In a 2005 article in *Mother Jones*, North went so far as to **deny citizenship to any persons refusing to submit** to such "Dominion."

At a conference in 2008, C. Peter Wagner noted that the goal of Dominion "has to do with **control**. Dominion has to do with **rulership**." George Grant added, "It is Dominion we are after. World **conquest**. Not just a voice . . . not just influence . . . not just equal time. It is **Dominion** we are after."

R. J. Rushdoony, one of the architects of Dominionism, wrote that "The goal of Christian Reconstruction, as the name implies, is **to reconstruct the United States, and eventually the world, into a theocracy** based on the Old Testament laws from the Pentateuch and added laws in the New Testament. In order to accomplish this they need to **infiltrate and take over** the government or to **eliminate** the institutions of secular government altogether."

Beginning about 1980, the Religious Right began to frame their struggle for moral and political dominance as a "culture war." Recognizing that many of their goals would be fought out in the courts, they began a persistent and well-funded effort to elect judges at every level—obviously including the Supreme Court—who would tend to adjudicate in their favor.

In 1982, Gary North wrote that "We must **use the doctrine of religious liberty** to gain independence for Christian schools **until** we train up a generation of people who know that there is **no** religious neutrality, **no** neutral law, **no** neutral education, and **no** neutral civil government. Then they will get busy constructing a Bible-based social, political and **religious order which finally denies the religious liberty of the enemies of God.**"

One of the keys to the success of this effort is to *have more children than the opposition*. Joseph Mattera, who pastors a church in Brooklyn, New York, points out that the historic evangelical goal of universal conversion is unnecessary to achieve Dominion. One of the "keys to Dominion," he says, is prolific reproduction and indoctrination of Christian children.

Christians, he believes, should **seek to multiply faster** than those who are limiting the size of their families, so their children would "have more influence . . . [and] . . . **more votes than anybody else and we would have the most power** on the earth."⁴

Given such an agenda, Dominionist theorists and contemporary leaders know that they need to move carefully, lest they provoke powerful opposition. Some leading Dominionists deny that they seek a theocracy when that is quite clearly their goal. Os Hillman wrote that "**Kingdom solutions sometimes need stealth solutions** so that the secular world can accept them."

Many Dominionists anticipate—and even celebrate—deepening political tensions, violence and even religious or secessionist war. Gary North thought this was likely. He predicted in 1989 that as the Dominionist movement rose, the idea of constitutionally

⁴ While the Homeschool Movement is not monolithically Dominionist, Dominionists were instrumental in establishing this movement, in providing resources for it, and are still quite active in this area. Dominionist homeschooling resources are quite focused on rewriting American history to suit their own ends.

protected religious pluralism “*will be shot to pieces in an ideological (and perhaps even literal) crossfire*” as Christians and humanists continue to square off in “an escalating religious war” [emphasis in the original].⁵

Dominionists do not require moral or doctrinal conformity in order to accept someone as a co-belligerent, or even as a leader, so long as such leaders can help them get part of the way down the road to Dominion.

By now you may be asking, “Where do Dominionists get such ideas? Is this in the Bible anywhere? Those are very good questions. There are four biblical verses that appear quite predictably in Dominionist literature:

Genesis 1:28

*²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and **multiply** and fill the earth and **subdue** it, and **have dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and **over every living thing** that moves on the earth.”*

Deuteronomy 28:13-14

*¹³ And **the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down**, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, ¹⁴ and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. (“the head and not the tail” is a Dominionist buzz-word)*

Isaiah 2:2-3

*² It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as **the highest of the mountains**, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and **all the nations shall flow to it**, ³ and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” **For out of Zion shall go the law**, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

Revelation 1:5b-6

*⁵ To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory **and dominion forever** and ever. Amen.*

One might well argue that these verses offer precious little support to Dominionist theology, and in this, one would be correct, in my view.

It appears to me that Dominionist theology involves a revival of what is generally called “post-millennialism.” The idea of a “millennium” appears in the Bible only in Revelation 20:1-6, and there has never been a consensus among thoughtful and theologically-trained Christians about what “the millennium” really means.

Since this is not the place to discuss everything that could or should be said about millennial theology, let me simply say that the best-known approaches are “pre-millennialism” and “post-millennialism.” To greatly over-simplify, “**pre-millennialism**” teaches that the world

⁵ It is worth noting that New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) events often begin with processions of young men marching to the military beat of drums and blowing shofars—ram horns used for battle signals in ancient Israel. The NAR is a major branch of Dominionism.

is going to become worse and worse until Jesus returns to put things right, while “**post-millennialism**” teaches that the world is going to become better and better, more and more righteous, and *then* Jesus will return.

The great World Wars of the early twentieth-century pretty much destroyed the idea of post-millennialism until Mr. Rushdoony and others revived it mid-century. Pre-millennialists have been much more visibly active than post-millennialists in recent decades, tending to focus on the “Rapture” as a way to be “beamed up” out of the deteriorating world situation, and they have therefore been fairly uninterested in political action, since “the world is going to hell, anyway.”

Post-millennialists, and especially Dominionists, have been much more focused on nation building and control, which they attempt to accomplish without being noticed. **Dominionists have little use for “the Rapture.”⁶ They believe that it is necessary to build “the Kingdom of God” on Earth in order for Jesus to return.**

Well, just a few more thoughts and I’m done. Here are a few buzz-words that usually designate—or at least suggest—Dominionist ideas and goals:

“Christian Reconstructionism”
“Gates”
“Latter Rain”
“Kingdom Now Theology”
“New Apostolic Reformation” (NAR)
“Seven Mountains Mandate”
“Seven Mountains” or “7M”
“Sphere Sovereignty”
“Spheres”
“States’ Rights”
“the Tea Party”
“Theonomy”

Some of the more prominent public figures associated with Dominionism include:

Michelle Bachmann
Sam Brownback
Ted Cruz
Gary DeMar
Newt Gingrich
Mike Huckabee
Steve King
James Lankford
Roy Moore
Gary North
Sarah Palin
Dan Patrick
Rick Perry

In the end, what shall we say about all this?

⁶ And in this, at least, I can make common cause with them.

Let me clearly affirm that **persons of faith have just as much right as anyone else to advocate for policies and laws that are consistent with their/our beliefs and values.** *Indeed, I would suggest that such involvement is our sacred responsibility.*

At the same time, civil government and its officials have the duty to uphold the Constitution and to serve all the people of the Republic, not just those with whom they agree. James Madison, author of the Bill of Rights, warned that “When government prefers one religion over others, all religion suffers. A government that can make Christianity the official religion can just as easily prefer one form of Christianity over others” . . . *which is precisely what Dominionists are trying to achieve.*

Jesus had many opportunities to establish His Kingdom by force, and He declined every one of them. Peter told us to “*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience*” (1 Peter 3:15-16a).

Let us quietly agree that we will be both active and passionate in our efforts to influence public policy; but let us reject any effort to coerce conformity with what we ourselves believe.

Dave

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In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ISAIAH 2:2

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INFLUENCE IS A RESULT OF OUR LOVE, HUMILITY AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD, NOT A GOAL TO BE ACHIEVED. IT IS THE FRUIT OF OUR OBEDIENCE. -OS HILLMAN

Previous quotes have shown that he doesn't really believe this.

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