

Myanmar Cyclone Response: Power-Lust and Lost Lives

As the world looks on to the tragedy in Myanmar and the coldhearted response of its government leaders, Byron Barlowe urges us to keep in mind that a humanitarian response is not a natural reaction.

Corrupted Power

Climate of Fear and Repression

Myanmar, traditionally known as Burma, is a country where ten percent of the population lives “without enough to eat” on a normal basis.^{1} The brutal military government is best known for the repression of a democratically elected opposition candidate, Aung San Suu Kyi, now under long-term house arrest. Burma watchers blogs and sites show grisly photos of alleged brutality (one shows the carnage of soldiers running over political dissidents with ten-wheeled trucks). Last fall, the junta put down protest marches, killing at least 13 and jailing thousands. “Since then, the regime has continued to raid homes and monasteries and arrest persons suspected of participating in the pro-democracy protests.”^{2}

Now, a cyclone has inundated an entire region, the Irrawaddy Delta, killing tens of thousands, displacing at least a million and setting up a petri dish of putrid water and corpses where disease threatens to balloon the death toll. Within this maelstrom, the ruling generals who clutch political power at all costs refuse to allow experienced aid workers from around the world to help manage food distribution and relief efforts. The callousness of their stance has been decried on all fronts, including the often diplomatically soft United Nations (UN).

Feeding and assisting one's own countrymen seems to be such a basic value that it transcends almost all belief systems. However, the Burmese ruling junta is arrogantly defying not only this basic tenet of decency, but world opinion as well.

Failure to Allow Rendered Aid

"The United Nations said Tuesday that only a tiny portion of international aid needed for Myanmar's cyclone victims is making it into the country, amid reports that the military regime is hoarding good-quality foreign aid for itself and doling out rotten food," reports the Associated Press.

It's understandable if the government wants to lead in relieving victims of its own nation. Yet, characteristically, even in this dire situation the government is cracking down on anything not originating from its own authority while repressing its own people. Reports include:

Stockpiling of high-nutrition biscuits in government warehouses and distribution of low-quality biscuits made by the centralized Industry Ministry.

Old, tainted, low-quality rice distributed in lieu of high-quality, nutritious rice offered by aid groups.

Government demands of businesses in the capital to "donate" aid for victims to be distributed through the central government.[\[3\]](#) So much for central "planning." Were there a desire to provide relief, it could have been budgeted before now.

Video feeds of military leaders show them in neat, trim uniforms placing relief boxes away from those in need the very picture of micro-managing control, reminiscent of regimes like North Korea.

Like Cuba in its extreme isolationism, the interests of its people are at the bottom of the ruling party's priorities.

Global Chorus of Criticism

A global chorus of critics has castigated Myanmar for its delays and mixed messages regarding large-scale aid and foreign experts. In what appears to be a show of cooperation, but without the needed effect, more supply flights have been allowed, critical days after the cyclone hit. Yet at this writing, food and relief supplies continue to stack up at the capital's airport and, reportedly, in military storage facilities.

Aid offers from across the globe contrast starkly with the calculated deprivation and malfeasance exhibited by the military rulers. World leaders are simply appealing with the message, Let us help.

Another clear message to the leaders in Yangon: You are responsible for outcomes. "A natural disaster is turning into a humanitarian catastrophe of genuinely epic proportions in significant part because of the malign neglect of the regime," said British Foreign Secretary David Miliband.[\[4\]](#)

The United States has been direct in offering help. "What remains is for the Burmese government to allow the international community to help its people. It should be a simple matter. It is not a matter of politics," U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told reporters in Washington.[\[5\]](#)

Even the UN, often accused of appeasing dictatorial regimes, refused to allow the army-government to head up distribution efforts. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said he is deeply concerned and immensely frustrated at the unacceptably slow response. We are at a critical point. Unless more aid gets into the country very quickly, we face an outbreak of infectious diseases that could dwarf today's crisis," he said.[\[6\]](#)

The UN has learned lessons from past dictatorships' abuse of

privilege. The Oil-for-Food fiasco under Saddam Hussein provides reason enough for UN reticence. Past humanitarian disasters in Africa saw regimes mismanaging aid for political reasons as well. Good intentions of the aid-provider must meet with realistic views of human nature. The foibles and sin of men, especially those in power, tends to validate a biblical view of fallen man much like the physics of a concrete sidewalk demonstrates gravity pretty convincingly.

Some Worldview Implications

The heartlessness of Myanmar's leaders evokes sympathy and indignation among most people. But why? A naturalistic worldview—neo-Darwinism taken to its logical end, for example—would only be concerned with perpetuating those strong enough or “smart enough” to have survived. It might even be the case that the cyclone culled out the least-fit. This naturalistic worldview formed the basis of everything from the eugenics movement to Nazi death camps (not exactly consistent with an insistence on instant relief work).

The final goal of Theravada Buddhism, the strain claimed by 96 percent of the population of Myanmar, is complete detachment from the physical world, which is seen as illusory. Its practice is passive in nature; there is no ultimate reality, much less salvation or reward to attain. This is nothing like the practice of the Dalai Lama, well-known the world over for human rights campaigning. In his Buddhist sect, Lamaism or Tibetan Buddhism, acts of compassion make sense. Theravadic Buddhism as practiced in Burma, on the other hand, views man as an individual with no incentive for helping others. For Burmese monks and adherents alike, there is really no necessary motivation to provide aid in this or any situation.

Generally speaking, “According to Buddhist belief, man is worthless, having only temporary existence. In Christianity, man is of infinite worth, made in the image of God, and will exist eternally. Man’s body is a hindrance to the Buddhist

while to the Christian it is an instrument to glorify God” {7}. While Christian missions like Food for the Hungry, Gospel for Asia, Samaritan’s Purse and others actively seek to assist the Burmese, few such wholesale efforts proceed from either Buddhist nations or in-country monks themselves.

A pantheistic view, rooted in Hinduism’s doctrine of *karma*, would only wonder what deeds were being dealt with in the recycling of life. This worldview provides no real cause for alarm or compassion at all.

Despite such competing underpinnings at a worldview level, something in the human spirit cries out for fellow humans who suffer. Unless tamped down or obliterated, natural sympathies exist. This leads to the inevitable question, “Why? From where does this universal reality spring?”

Persecution by the ruling junta in Myanmar against ethnic minorities has increased since their ascendancy in the 1960s. “The most affected ethnic minority is the mainly Christian Karen people. Large numbers have been forced to abandon their villages in the east of the country and many have fled to Thailand.” {8} Herein may lay a connection, although Christians are not alone in being oppressed there. Godless governments tend to hate or at least discriminate against Christians. Competing worldviews clash deeply.

Biblical Emphasis on Individuals, Human Dignity

“A Christian view of government should...be concerned with human rights...based on a biblical view of human dignity. A bill of rights, therefore, does not grant rights to individuals, but instead acknowledges these rights as always existing.” {9}

Of course the Myanmar government and culture does not recognize the biblical God, so this standard is not to be expected. However, such a presupposition grounds America’s reaction to Myanmar’s languid response to the cyclone. It also helps explain the rest of the world’s stance: the ideals of

democracy, rooted in a largely biblical worldview, have greatly affected world opinion on topics of relief and disaster response. One would be hard-pressed to find historical examples, I'm sure, of a consensus like that described above in centuries or even decades past. But since the Marshall Plan, Berlin airlifts, reconstruction in Japan and a parade of other compassionate rebuilding efforts, the rush to aid has become the global norm. Americas Judeo-Christian model has taken hold.

Christians in the early Church, in utter contrast to the Greco-Roman paganism that surrounded them, extended dignity to the suffering individual regardless of class status and whether or not it benefited them. This new ethic transformed the world and set the stage for the rule of law, compassionate charity and a host of other values taken for granted in Western and now other societies.

Proper View of Man, Need to Limit Power

"While the source of civil government is rooted in human responsibility, the need for government derives from the need to control human sinfulness. God ordained civil government to restrain evil.... [{10}](#) Of course, if the ruling government is corrupt, although some restraining occurs and it can look somewhat just, the evil simply becomes concentrated at the top while it leaks out naturally elsewhere despite external restrictions. We saw this in spades in Communist dictatorships like the USSR, which spawned the gulags, and Albania, where repression and elite privilege reached monumental proportions. And the military leaders of Myanmar continue this traditioninevitably, given the fallen nature of man.

Government based on a proper understanding of man is the hallmark of American representative democracy. Unlike Myanmar's concentration of power into the hands of a few powerful elite, the American system makes room for the human dignity and rationality of the people while controlling human

sin and depravity. Neither utopian schemes, which are based on man's supposed innate goodness, nor controlling systems, which are built on sheer power, do right by human nature. Myanmar's example of an unworkable government is all too clear in its tragic reaction to a devastating natural disaster.

As Probe's *Mind Games* curriculum puts it, "In essence, a republic [like that of the United States] limits government, while a totalitarian government [like Myanmar's] limits citizens." And often, as with the estimated 170 million killed by regimes like those of Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot and others who fly in the face of a right understanding of man, the limits to citizens includes their very lives.[\[11\]](#)

Sanctity of Human Life

What officials do during a crisis exposes their worldview. Do authorities do all within their means to save lives? What about prevention? Do investments in infrastructure belie a preoccupation with commerce, power or prestige as in the case of China's razing of entire neighborhoods to clear the way for the PR coup of the Olympics while political and religious dissidents are jailed? Are well-equipped fire and rescue, police, disaster recovery and even military personnel standing by to help at all costs to save even a few human lives? It seems obvious when certain governments act out of political peer pressure rather than a philosophy rooted in the value of every human being. And that value originates in the God in whose image humans are made. Without this doctrine as a basis for policy, people become mere workers, expendable state property and pawns for despots.

Nothing in Myanmar's delayed, heartless response to the storm's effects shows value of human life. In fact, the meager efforts of the regime in Rangoon (the capital, also called Yangon) have so far not only been ineffective in the immediate and for the future, but are insulting to human dignity.

Again, we can invoke first century parallels to help make the case that today's outcry stems from a Christian heritage. Whereas callous Roman elite threw babies into the Tiber River, Christians rescued and raised them as their own. So committed were they to the notion that all people have value as God's image-bearers, that ancient Christ-followers risked deadly disease to treat strangers. Ancient pagans, not entirely unlike the Myanmar government, left even their own kin to die during plagues.

Biblical Imitation of a Giving God

Hurricane Katrina evoked not only an immediate and massive response however incompetent it may have been from the local, state and federal governments in the U.S. Expectations for relief were sky-high. And the groundswell of private and religious response left a worthy legacy.

So why, we may ask, were expectations so great? Some may say expectations grew from a sense of entitlement. Some folks just think a handout is due them, so in dire circumstances, it goes without saying. After all, the ambulance always comes when called.

A strong case can be made that people have grown to expect help due to a residue of Christian care and compassion that lingers on in what many call post-Christian times. The Church's centuries-long heritage of innovating institutions like hospitals, orphanages and eldercare has overhauled the way people are treated.

That is, the biblical worldview has so saturated the culture of the West and has since so affected the rest of the world, that it would be unthinkable for most civilized societies not to respond to catastrophes with aid. Yet, this was not the case in ancient cultures unaffected by the radical ethic of Jesus Christ, who took Old Testament compassion for the stranger, widow and orphan to new extremes. (See my radio

transcript on the topic of *Compassion and Charity: Two More Reasons to Believe that Christianity is Good for Society* and listen online at *Probe.org* soon.)

As the world looks on to the tragedy in Myanmar and the coldhearted response of its government leaders, keep in mind that a humanitarian response is not a natural reaction. It is something introduced and modeled by the caring Creator of all men, Jesus Christ. A truly biblical worldview not only works, it works compassionately.

Notes

1. Reuters Foundation Alertnet, May 12, 2008, www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/MY_DIS.htm.
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4. Houston Chronicle, May 11, 2008, www.chron.com/dispatch/story.mpl/headline/world/5770860.html
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8. Ibid, May 12, 2008, www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/MY_DIS.htm
9. Christian View of Politics, Government and Social Action, *Mind Games College Survival Course*, 1996, Probe Ministries.
10. Ibid, based on [Romans 13: 1-7](#), NIV.
11. R. J. Rummel, *Death by Government*, Transaction Publishers, 1994, quoted in The Truth Project DVD-based curriculum, Focus on the Family, 2006. For partial online reading: tinyurl.com/3efqjr

UN Conferences

Habitat II and Sustainable Development

Although United Nations conferences have been taking place frequently over the last two decades, most Americans have ignored the proceedings and their ominous implications. Recent conferences in Cairo, Beijing, and Istanbul have been a vivid reminder of the radical ideology of the UN and the threat it poses to our faith, family, and freedom.

The direction of the last few conferences illustrates this point. The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro established an environmental foundation for all the UN's radical social and economic agendas. The 1994 Cairo Conference focused on population control and attempted to push abortion and contraception as solutions to the perceived "problem" of overpopulation. The 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing, China, proved to be the most radical of all. It continued to push abortion as a human right and attempted to make sexual orientation a human right by promoting the idea that genders are not clearly defined but are socially constructed. The White House has already created an Inter-Agency Council to implement the Beijing platform in the private sector and every executive agency.

The recently completed conference in Istanbul, Turkey, built upon the foundation of the other conferences and was the culmination of the conferences. Wally N'Dow, Secretary General of Habitat II, predicted that the conference would be a "new beginning that will reflect and implement the actions called

for at the unprecedented continuum of global conferences that have marked this closing decade of the century." He said that "a new global social contract for building sustainable human settlements must be forged" for the "new global urban world order." Mindful of the controversy surrounding the other conferences, he declared, "There will be no roll-back of any of the conferences, including Beijing."

Habitat II focused on the problems of urban centers. Its goal was to create "economically, socially and environmentally thriving urban communities" in order to better the lives of people living in third-world countries. Although the goals were commendable, the agenda of the conference participants went far beyond urban blight.

A key concept in the Habitat II agenda was sustainable development. In the school curriculum developed by the UN, sustainable development was defined as "meeting the needs of the present generation without damaging the Earth's resources in such a way that would prevent future generations from meeting [their needs]." It includes "changing wasteful consumption patterns" and "emphasizing equitable development" in order to "bridge the gap between rich and poor countries." In practice, sustainable development is a radical concept that will limit the amount of food, energy, or general resources that citizens of a nation can consume. Rather than consuming what they can afford, "rich" nations (like the U.S.) might only be allowed to consume what they need to stay alive.

One UN publication declares that we "must learn to live differently" and calls for this international agency to "ensure that the benefits of development are distributed equally." To achieve this so-called "equal distribution," there must be a redistribution of wealth throughout the planet. The UN has already drafted specific plans for implementing sustainable development in the U.S. In spite of the frightening implications of these conferences, U.S. taxpayers have been footing the bill for them and their

radical agendas.

Habitat II: Global Taxes and National Sovereignty

The most recent conference in Istanbul, Turkey, known as Habitat II is illustrative of another major concern: namely, the threat these conferences pose to our national sovereignty.

Habitat II called for national governments to manage economic systems. These include public and private investment practices, consumption patterns, and public policy. UN Secretary Boutros Boutros Ghali told the first plenary session that he wanted the conference to be a "Conference of Partners."

Another section was devoted to the international community and its involvement with national governments. The Global Plan of Action calls for the international community to force changes in the world's economic structures.

The UN also intends to reach sustainable development by changing the structure of national governments. In fact, the Habitat agenda depends upon UN oversight of national, regional, state, and local governments. The document asks city administrators to re-design their regulations, political systems, and judicial and legislative procedures. It was no accident that the conference was filled with mayors from many U.S. cities as well as from cities around the world.

The Habitat document proposed that "government at all levels should encourage . . . walking, cycling, and public transport . . . through appropriate pricing . . . and regulatory measures." Governments are charged with the responsibility of encouraging citizens to walk, ride bicycles, or take public transportation. This would be accomplished by the heavy taxation and burdensome regulations often found in socialist economies.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali has also called for global taxes on international currency transactions, energy, and travel to fund the United Nations. During the conference, the U.S. was harshly criticized for being delinquent in its payment to the UN. It currently owes \$1.5 billion. Currently the U.S. pays about 25 percent of the UN budget and nearly 40 percent of the "peacekeeping" costs. The UN hopes that in the next few years they are able to implement this global tax so they can be free of U.S. influence and enact their radical global agenda.

This global tax proposed by Boutros Boutros Ghali would be received from international currency transactions, energy shipments, and international travel. If implemented, it would remove the UN's dependence on sovereign nations. No longer would the United States or other countries have a check and balance against an international organization. The UN could pay for its activities, fund UN peacekeeping forces, and conduct many of its affairs independently of the United States.

Canadian developer Maurice Strong is often considered a likely candidate to become the future Secretary General of the United Nations. He has called for a shift in our current thinking. He has stated that this change in thinking "will require a vast strengthening of the multilateral system, including the United Nations. . . . We must now forge a newEarth Ethic' which will inspire all people and nations to join in a new global partnership of North, South, East and West."

This global vision should especially concern Christians mindful of end-times prophecy. At the time when the world seems to be moving swiftly towards global government, the prospects of a stronger United Nations autonomous of sovereign nations is a scary scenario. This bolder and stronger United Nations would further erode U.S. sovereignty and strengthen the hand of world leaders who are promoting globalist visions of a one-world government.

UN Conferences: Four Areas of Concern

Now I want to discuss the possible effects of the UN conferences on our families and communities. I see several issues on great concern to Christians.

The first issue is education. Many of the concepts from Habitat II, like "sustainable development," have already infiltrated America's schools. Textbooks promote global citizenship and minimize national sovereignty. Other textbooks blame rich northern countries (like the U.S.) for retarding the growth and development in lesser developed countries. "Tolerance" and "global peace" are emphasized as the ultimate aims of society. The Goals 2000 federal program for education in this country provides the perfect mechanism to transmit these global UN philosophies into school curricula. A second issue is the impact on families. The Habitat II conference continued the UN attempt to redefine the family. Many UN leaders see the traditional family as an obstacle to UN dominance.

The Habitat II platform stated that "in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist." Many participants asked that "sexual orientation" be included as a civil rights category. In many ways, this merely extended the concept promoted during the Beijing Women's Conference that gender be defined not as male and female, but as one of five genders that are socially constructed. Habitat II also promoted "gendered cities" which are to be organized in terms of "gender roles." The third issue has to do with population. The UN Population Fund says that population growth is a key inhibitor of sustainable growth. UN recommendations of population control are based upon the faulty premise that the world is in the midst of a population explosion that cannot be controlled. Participants raised the fear of losing resources even though there is empirical evidence to the contrary.

Because of the UN's anti-population bias, the Habitat II document emphasizes "sustainable development" as the mechanism for population control. Thus, "family planning" is a key concept, and the document therefore emphasizes surgical abortions and chemical abortions (RU-486). The Habitat platform specifically mentions "reproductive health services" for women in human settlements and calls for government management of economic and population growth.

A final issue concerns the area of ecology and pollution. At the 1992 UN Earth Summit, Canadian developer Maurice Strong stated, "It is clear that current lifestyles and consumption of large amounts of frozen convenience foods, use of fossil fuels, appliances, home and workplace air conditioners and suburban housing are not sustainable." Many believe Maurice Strong will probably succeed Boutros Boutros Ghali as UN Secretary General and are rightly concerned about his New Age views on ecology. The Habitat II document encourages nations to use heavy taxation and various regulations to ensure that citizens walk, ride bicycles, and take public transportation.

The threats posed by these UN Conferences (including the recent conference in Istanbul) are real. American citizens must fight these radical ideas and ensure that our politicians do not give away our sovereignty on the pretext of easing ecological problems. We should be good stewards of the environment, but we should not place that responsibility in the hands of those in the United Nations who want to use it as a tool for global dominance.

Globalism and the Traditional Family

Now I would like to turn our attention to the goals of the globalists. Though they are a diverse and eclectic group of international bankers, politicians, futurists, religious leaders, and economic planners, they are unified in their desire to unite the planet under a one-world government, a single economic system, and a one-world religion. Through

various governmental programs, international conferences, and religious meetings, they desire to unite the various governments of this globe into one single network.

Although this can be achieved in a variety of ways, the primary focus of globalists is on the next generation of young people. By pushing global education in the schools, they believe they can indoctrinate them to accept the basic foundations of globalism. According to one globalist, global education seeks to "prepare students for citizenship in the global age." Globalists believe that this new form of education will enable future generations to deal effectively with population growth, environmental problems, international tensions, and terrorism.

But several obstacles stand in the way of the globalists' goals. Consequently, they have targeted three major institutions for elimination because their continued existence impedes their designs to unite the world under a single economic, political, and social global network.

The three institutions under attack by globalists today are: the traditional family, the Christian church, and the national government. Each institution espouses doctrines antithetical to the globalist vision. Therefore, globalists argue, these institutions must be substantially modified or replaced.

The traditional family poses a threat to globalism for two reasons. First, it is still the primary socializing unit in our society. Parents pass on social, cultural, and spiritual values to their children. Many of these values such as faith, hard work, and independence collide with the designs of globalists who envision a world in which tolerance for religion, dependence on a one-world global community, and international cooperation are the norm. These values are not taught in traditional American families, therefore globalists seek to change the family.

Second, parental authority in a traditional family clearly supersedes international authority. Children are taught to obey their parents in such families. Parents have authority over their children, not a national or international governmental entity. Globalists, therefore, see the traditional, American family as an enemy, not as a friend.

Well-known humanist and globalist Ashley Montagu speaking to a group of educators declared that, "The American family structure produces mentally ill children." From his perspective, the traditional family which teaches such things as loyalty to God and loyalty to country is not producing children mentally fit for the global world of the twenty-first century.

One of the reasons globalist educators advocate childhood education begin at earlier and earlier ages is so that young children can be indoctrinated into globalism. The earlier they can communicate their themes to children, the more likely will be the globalists' success in breaking the influence of the family.

But the traditional family is just one of the institutions globalists seek to change. We must now turn our attention to globalistic attacks on these other institutions.

Globalism Opposes Christianity and Nationalism

We have seen that globalists oppose the traditional family, but we must also be aware that they believe that the Christian church and a sense of national identity are contrary to their vision.

Globalists feel that the Christian church threatens their global program because of its belief in the authority of the Bible. Most other religious systems (as well as liberal Christianity) pose little threat. But Christians who believe

in God, in sin, in salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, stand in the way of the globalist vision for a one-world government and a one-world religion.

The coming world religion will merge all religions and faiths into one big spiritual amalgam. Hinduism and Buddhism are syncretistic religions and can easily be merged into this one-world religion. But orthodox Christianity cannot.

Jesus taught that "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). Globalists, therefore, see Christianity as narrow, exclusive, and intolerant. Paul Brandwein even went so far as to say that, "Any child who believes in God is mentally ill." Belief in a personal God to which we owe allegiance and obedience cannot remain if globalists are to achieve their ultimate vision.

National governments also threaten globalism. If the goal is to unite all peoples under one international banner, any nationalism or patriotism blocks the progress of that vision.

Globalist and architect Buckminster Fuller once said that, "Nationalism is the blood clot in the world's circulatory system."

Among nations, the United States stands as one of the greatest obstacles to globalism. The European community has already acquiesced to regional and international plans, and other emerging nations are willingly joining the international community. By contrast, the United States remains independent in its national fervor and general unwillingness to cooperate with international standards. Until recently, Americans rejected nearly everything international, be it an international system of measurements (metric system) or an international agency (such as the United Nations or the World Court).

The globalist solution is to promote global ideas in the

schools. Dr. Pierce of Harvard University speaking to educators in Denver, Colorado, said, "Every child in America who enters schools at the age of five is mentally ill, because he comes to school with allegiance toward our elected officials, toward our founding fathers, toward our institutions, toward the preservation of this form of government." Their solution, therefore, is to purge these nationalistic beliefs from school children so they will come to embrace the goals of globalism.

All over the country programs on Global Education, Global History, and Global Citizenship are springing up. Children are being indoctrinated into a global way of thinking. Frequently these programs masquerade as drug awareness programs, civics programs, or environmental programs. But their goal is just the same to break down a child's allegiance to family, church, and country, and to replace this allegiance with the globalists' vision for a one-world government, a one-world economic system, and a one-world religion. These then are three institutions the globalists believe must be modified or destroyed if they are to achieve their globalist vision. Christians must, therefore, be diligent to defend their family, their church, and their country.

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