

## JOHN 3

Hi. My name is John Immel. This is my third presentation tonight for this conference. I wrote a book called *Blight in the Vineyard*. It addresses the roots and myths of spiritual tyranny and the impact that it is having on Christianity. Paul Dohse was kind enough to ask me to come present here today, and it's been my goal to - first to engage people, challenge them to want to understand, to want to think about the scope of these issues. The second part of my goal is to educate and to give them some sense, some place to put this whole unfolding evolution of Christian thought in modern American Christianity.

While the conference deals with New Calvinism, the reality is this is actually very old Calvinism. These ideas go back millennia. In my last session, I addressed the concept of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and politics. And then I explained how that progression produces specific outcomes. The principle that I highlighted was all metaphysical premise determine epistemological qualification. That defines ethical standards, and ethical standards prescribe political culture. Said another way, foundational assumptions determine how effective man is to understand his world. This defines man's moral value, and his moral values prescribe the government use of force.

I'm going to draw your attention to the PowerPoint here, and I want you to notice something. Polity, government, force. In Christian service, we talk about church government we tend to call polity. I'm not exactly sure why. But my goal is to utterly tie polity to force in your minds. Most people fail to understand government is nothing more than a monopoly of force. So polity is ultimately nothing more than a monopoly of force. Of course, as I referenced in my last session, Americans have never had a religious war as such. But in Europe, that's all they knew. From effectively, and this is all off the top of my head, let's start what is

effectively the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire as we understand it, I'm going to say 600 AD off the top of my head. Europe was awash in bloodshed. And Protestants didn't fare any better. We'll get to that in a minute on my PowerPoint slides.

And the reason force becomes the primary crux of these metaphysical issues is because the central fight for the whole of human existence has been who owns man? The leading consensus, the predominant assumption, the conclusion that the vast percentage of human intellectual capital has been invested in has been that man is ultimately the property of the state. Government owns man. It doesn't really matter what government. It doesn't matter what age that government is in, whether we're talking Sparta, we're talking Rome, we're talking the Holy Roman Empire and Charlemagne, we're talking sixteenth century, ultimately, the conclusion was that the state owned man. And man's specific function was ultimately to lead his life at the behest of the state, whatever that amounted to.

If man is a property of the state, the question is what is the moral justification for someone to use force against another? The underlying question within historic Christianity has universally revolved around why they are specifically authorized to define truth. From 350 to roughly 450 AD, there was a massive evolution in Christian thought. Up until about 300 AD, Christianity was a marginal religion in a much broader intellectual and religious world. But a series of events brought Christianity to the forefront, an emerged Christianity ultimately with the power of civil patronage. This forever changed the face of Christianity. Because the moment you decide that the government is the arbiter of truth and truth is the moral authority to have force, ultimately, the government must be in charge of truth. And if the government is in charge of truth, then the government is in charge of compelling people to believe specific things. They do not have a choice. It goes hand 5.58\* in metaphysical hand. Which is why it is important to understand that

when Christians talk about polity, they are trying to take some of the sting off the implications of when they talk about church government. Because really what they're really saying is church government is really church force. Ultimately, when a man insists that he has biblical polity, what he's ultimately advocating is he has the moral right to compel everything else here to conform to what he says.

In the unfolding drama with the modern American Christianity, one of the leading things, one of the leading doctrines that comes up over and over and over is the issue of submission and authority. Because when truth is ultimately placed in the hands of somebody in authority, what they're really saying is it's their ultimate right to force people to believe what they believe. Polity is another word for government. Government is really a monopoly of force. The mythology is if people would just somehow get all the right ideas, all the conflict would go away. But that never happens. If people would just do it right, it would never happen. But here's the thing, Islam says that too. They say that if the caliphate ruled the world, all the bloodshed would go away. They call themselves a religion of peace because they ultimately believe that as long as they rule the world, they will enforce utter passivity. The Marxists say the exact same thing. Do you know the reason there's bloodshed is because those dang bourgeoisie won't give up all their money and give it to the proletariat. If we compelled this to happen, there would be no more bloodshed. And this is the specific trap that this always produces. The presumption is that the peace will occur if everybody would just get their ideas right. They would get their mind right, the rest of this will disappear. It never happens. It never happens because it cannot happen. Because the moment you decide that one person, even a group of people, are somehow uniquely qualified to use force to defend truth, you ultimately have religious orthodoxy. Religious orthodoxy and political correctness are ultimately the two heads of the same beast. The use of government force to tyrannize.

The religious marketing and packaging always try to portray religious orthodoxy as done on behalf of God. And who can argue with things that are done on behalf of God? And first of all, God isn't standing here to get heard. So it's actually pretty easy. It's pretty easy to represent what you say and what you do as on behalf of God. Yea, verily, I'm doing it in behalf of God. Where's the plumb line? How do you know? Well, people pound their Bible. They'll say, "Well, see, it's all said right here." But the moment anybody stands up and says, "Well, I don't happen to agree with what that says. I don't happen to agree with your conclusion on what that amounts to"? Then what? We don't have a choice. Eventually, somebody's gotta point a gun. I want you to realize that the governing for the glory of God is called theocracy. But in actual fact, theocracy is always oligarchy. Because since God is already standing here and dictating what happens next, ultimately what you have is a select group of men who have somehow magically transformed themselves into the recipient of divine mandate. Which means you ultimately have a very, very small group of men who believe they are uniquely qualified to define truth for everyone.

Man: Catholics.

I heard Catholics. Yes, absolutely. The dirty little secret, those who have the force define God's existence. So it's very easy for them to say they're doing it on behalf of God because they get to define what that really actually means. They get to define God on their terms. God's will is really the subjective whim of those using force. That's the dirty little secret no one really wants to pay attention to. And this is why faith and force are in fact the destroyers of the world. As long as we are discussing reason, we are discussing the whole of human understanding, rationality, and logic. We are actually having the only exchange that cannot reside to be resolved with violence. We're arguing the elements that are in fact measurable and identifiable by anybody who chooses to enter the conversation. So there is a right answer. There is a good conclusion.

There is something out there whereby we can all arrive at the same plumb line. But the moment we say that it is necessarily by faith and by subjectivity, by the definition of a select few, eventually, somebody's got to point a gun. Eventually, we must use force to get the conformity we're after. Now mind you, I didn't come up with this. Ayn Rand is very fond of saying that faith and force are in fact the destroyers of the modern world. Historically, when faith does not work, when the subjective whim of 'I just believe' doesn't carry the day in an argument, somebody eventually says, "You know what? I'm gonna compel you to make this happen."

In this conference, we have heard one speaker, Sharon [SOUNDS LIKE] 00:11:55 Dohse, discuss one of her encounters with a pastor. She was ready to leave the church. He said, "You can't." What's left? She wants to leave. He says she can't. What's left but force? Now in American culture no one's gonna actually accept the fact that a pastor's going to bar the door on the church and refuse to let her out the door. But that's only because it's here. In the sixteenth century she wouldn't have that choice. They would have tossed her in a dungeon. They would have put her on the rack. They might have burned her at the stake for daring to have the temerity. And actually, you know what? I really went back too far. I took it out of America. Guess what? That's exactly what happened in the theocracy of Massachusetts. That's exactly what happened when a woman wanted to have her own bible study and they threw her out. Then we had the Salem witch trials. Faith and force in the modern world.

Faith has become a license to subjectivity, which means ultimately, force is the only means to compel other minds to subordination. This is really the source of all religious wars. This is the background history that confronted our Founding Fathers. Our Founding Fathers were the first men to successfully challenge at the root the substantive cause of tyranny. For the first time in the world, our Founding Fathers finally decided, they finally articulated these key elements. Man owns himself. The state is subordinated to the will of the individuals. Truth can never

be the property of the state. This revolution of thought is directly tied to the Enlightenment.

This is the principle restated. Foundational assumptions determine how effective man is to understand his world, which defines moral value, which proscribes government force. Calvin said this: Pervasive depravity has fully corrupted the whole of human existence. This determines that all good is a product of God's specific sovereign action. This defines that man's life is predetermined in action and outcome. This prescribes an elect few who are divinely appointed to shepherd the flock in God's behalf. America is in fact a collision of two diametrically opposed worldviews--the Medieval Reformation and the Enlightenment. Actually, I want to go back to the first point. America is actually a collision of Puritanism and the Enlightenment. Puritanism was a strain of Christianity, the most virulent strain of Christianity, to come out of Europe and to land here. That has always collided with the Enlightenment thought. They came over via some of the men that we will shortly discuss.

Now consider the opposing worldview. The Founding Fathers had a forum regardless of what their Christianity is. And I understand Christians are very quick to want to equate the Founding Fathers and their specific spiritual lives with modern Christianity, and we are very zealous for making a claim on that. But the Founding Fathers believe in man's competence. That was the central theme of everything that they argued for, that man was specifically competent to self-govern. This is colliding with the Calvin Puritan construct: man equals incompetent. Here are some articles of religion from Puritan thinkers. I'm summarizing. This comes from a number of sources that I haven't listed. 16.16\* Sinners in the hands of an angry God is the lingering metaphysical worldview etched in the minds of men declaring God as a vindictive sovereign. Whatever God's benevolence might theoretically represent, ultimately, this worldview may seem wrathful and damning.

Terror is the only appropriate reaction to divine warrants. Point 2 there is actually centered directly in Luther's proper distinction between law and gospel. Point 3, man's depravity requires authoritarian government to stand between yourself and his lascivious impulses. Pride in human ability is man's leading vice and the outworking of wretched deception.

Puritan leaders' impact on colonial religious life, slide 2, salvation is the miracle of being approved access to heaven that this otherworldly utopian is granted or denied according to God's mysterious plan. The unintelligible nature of God's intention in the feeble minds of men makes it capricious and malicious to every failing of human existence. Men are merely pilgrims through this worldly realm, a hostile empire fraught with all manner of evil. Man is a depraved creature, entirely ill-suited in the bewildering environments, specifically prone to sinful self-destruction. The booms of wealth and health are gifts. Therefore, man is merely the steward charged with a divine trust. The elect are then qualified to dispose of their brothers as the collective sees fit. Stewards in God's appointment rule those siblings granted to their control.

This is why I point out the ultimate full philosophical power from metaphysics to politics. And this is actually Calvin's role in this entire family. I'll say something nice about John Calvin. He was a genius, truly a genius. Very few human beings on the face of the planet have ever successfully integrated an entire metaphysical statement through epistemology, through ethics, all the way to politics in something that can be digested for human consumption, very few people on the planet. I still think that this body of ideas is the single-most disastrous on the planet ever perpetrated on man, but he was still a genius. But the power of his ideas is the fact that he digested it such that it was easily understandable from start to finish. Its power is its full statement. And this is what he offered to the world.

Now I want you to notice in the slide here, John Calvin shows up on the scene, his life actually, the important part is in 1536, the *Institutes of Christian Religion's* first edition. This is the first time that a full Protestant's, loosely stated, evaluation and presentation of Christianity has been offered to the world. Everything up to John Calvin was in fact a Catholic thinker of some form. Between 1660 and 1683, John Owen shows up. John Owen is well known for the book, *Sin and Temptation*. Between Calvin's *Institutes* and John Owen's ultimate philosophical statement within *The Sin and Temptation*, this body of thought ultimately ends up centered in England. Notice, 1642-1646, the First English Civil War. Second English Civil War, 1648-49. Third civil war, 1649-1651. I won't expand. It will take a trivial amount of research for you to find the causes of the English Civil War. They were religious wars. They were based on a fight over religious orthodoxy.

The Puritans in modern American lore are everybody's favorite Thanksgiving story. We like the Puritans because we think they are us. But in actual fact, there was a reason the Puritans were persecuted. They were militant. They were determined to create a theocracy in England. Oliver Cromwell ruled as Lord Protector, 1653 to 1658. He called himself the Protestant of Moses.<sup>821.35</sup> From my little highlight right there, Puritan migration to New England, 1620 to 1640. For twenty years, the Puritans actually moved out and then landed here in the United States. The active uniformity, the Church of England decided, this is after a series of wars, to dictate a specific form of public prayer--the sacraments, ordination, and church rights. This is what the Church of England did that got [UNINTELLIGIBLE] 00:22:07. This is what they decided. The Puritans thought the Church of England was far too permissive and decided to take their ball and go home, and then the sectarian rebels decided they must, like the like the modern Neo Reformed crowd, tell everyone to follow them. I find this utterly ironic. They are Puritans. They are separatists. They are people who are actually trying to go set up their own thing. But when given the power, when put

in positions of political and civil authority, i.e., put in Massachusetts, what do they create? They create theocracy.

The first colonies, the Salem witch trials occurred between 1692 and 1693. Again, a trivial amount of research will reveal these were specific religious persecutions, the merging of civil force with religious orthodoxy to create death. I could not [UNINTELLIGIBLE] 00:23:08 I know that is not popular, and those of you catching this on the video, I'm sure that will make you nervous. That's fine. I want you nervous. I want you to see this trends towards violence.

Jonathan Edwards. Jonathan Edwards, the Neo Reformed crowd, Jonathan Edwards is their homeboy. How many of you have ever actually read *Sinners in the Hands of a Schizophrenic God*, oops, I mean, *Sinners in the Hands of a Wrathful God*? It's a vicious piece. Vicious. There could not be a greater example of biblical proof-texting in Christianity. Vicious. The fact that that was ever considered a perennial Christian statement is a marvel in my mind.

Now I want to make a series of contrast. The Enlightenment begins around 1650, give or take. The Enlightenment thinkers: John Locke, David Hume, Adam Smith. From these men comes the bulk, well, I don't wanna overstate the case. From these men comes a large amount of the foundation thought of human freedom, human competence, and human liberty. Those men specifically were able to influence our Founding Fathers: Benjamin Franklin, not just giving [UNINTELLIGIBLE] 00:24:40 Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. And I picked these men mostly because they are most well recognized. Thomas Jefferson, of course, is an amazing Enlightenment thinker. And James Madison, we're gonna discuss him specifically shortly. But I want you to notice, the Declaration of Independence, 1776, in an article written by James Madison, *A Memorial in Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*. We're going to address this very shortly. And notice that

from 1776 to 1787 is roughly ten years. Within that ten years, I want you to notice, because he writes this article for a very specific reason. He's going to weigh against the establishment of civil government, civil patronage, and religion.

Now watch. Notice that the three wars that I highlighted there are religion wars. I want you to notice the difference. The American Civil War was not a religious war. It was a war specifically fought in pursuit of liberty and freedom. Now I want you to notice the Founding Fathers' clarity on the arguments against merging the state, no matter how small, with ecclesiastical establishments. I wanna spend some time here. This is actually the beginning of the memorial remonstrance against ecclesiastical establishments. This is how James Madison opens this. I'm not gonna read all of this, and I'm not gonna read it length, but I want you to get the specific source of his objection. James Madison: "We, the subscribers, citizens of the said Commonwealth, have taken into serious consideration a bill establishing provision for teachers of the Christian religion and conceiving of the same if finally armed with sanctions of law, will be a dangerous abuse of power."

There was no illusion here. The nature of Christianity, as our Founding Fathers understood, was that it was a dangerous force to be contended with when it was merged with the power of the state. His first form 27.10\*: "Because we hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth that religion or the duty which we owe our Creator and the manner of discharging it can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force and violence." This was revolutionary. Now this idea had actually circulated amongst any number of different sects and any number of different intellectual ties. But for the first time, there was a formal effort to challenge at the root that the nature of faith and the nature of religion could not ever be done by the force of the state when in actual fact it was the responsibility of intellect and reason. This is absolutely an Enlightenment idea.

Two: "Because the rulers were guilty of such encroachment exceed their commission from which they derive their authority and are tyrants. Because the free men of America did not wait till usurped power has stricken itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle." Hold that thought. Bookmark that in your mind.

"We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it. Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians in exclusion of all other sects?" This is why the historic fight between our minions and Calvinists gained some attraction. Because we were ultimately failing to identify the principle that he is arguing here. The issue is not that necessarily the Arminian perspective versus the Calvinist perspective. The issue here is at central root, man's fundamental competence to master his own life, whatever that means. The reason all other fights, all other doctrinal fights are useless in this instance is because at the root until you defend man's right for moral existence, you're lost.

He makes this observation. Point 7: "Because experience witnesses that ecclesiastical establishments during all those fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, and in both, superstition, bigotry and persecutions." It is important to understand that our Founding Fathers had no illusions about the nature of what Christianity was and was not. They understood its broad history. They understood what Puritanism is. They understood what the Massachusetts colony theocracy did. For many of them it was close enough to their lifetime that it would not have been war as such as we're learning out of the book. They certainly would

have been within striking distance of the religious wars in England and the tides of warfare that swept across the face of the earth.

James Madison has a lot to say in Point 8. "Because what influence in fact have ecclesiastical establishments had on civil society? In some instances they have been seen to erect a spiritual tyranny on the ruins of civil authority; in many instances they have been seen upholding the thrones of political tyranny; and in no instance have they been seen as the guardians of the liberties of the people." This is one of the most scathing denunciations ever, at no point. And this is why this argument must take place under principle. Until we are in fact seen as guardians of the liberties of the people, all we are doing is rehashing the same arguments, the tyrannies in the spiritual times.

Ten years from the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the U.S. Constitution, I want you to notice that this memorial and remonstrance takes place, deaths [SOUNDS LIKE] 00:32:04 were between these two events. Between the specific overthrow of tyranny, within ten years' time we already have a religious movement, a group of people trying to use civil authority to create patronage. In other words, to create a means by which others from the outside pay a tax to support a given group of individuals merely because they were religious brothers, and the ratification of the Constitution, within ten years.

Madison is specifically arguing the supremacy of human reason, and he's specifically denouncing the use of civil authority, the merging of religious faith and the power of the state. He is specifically saying it is a menace. This is where this goes. This is where this heads. The current Calvinist defenders can pooh-pooh my point all they like. History is really [SOUNDS LIKE] 00:33:07 large over this. I win this argument only because all I have to do is educate on the public record. This is not complicated. This is exactly what's at stake. The Founding Fathers had no illusion about the destructive force of Christian religion, and it is the

most virulent forms of Christian thought that the Founding Fathers put absolute barriers in place to curtail this acquisition of civil power.

And here was the breath of fresh air for the first time in almost all of human existence. There had been fits and starts in the Magna Carta, rethought [SOUNDS LIKE] 00:33:48 opportunity for human liberty, and a couple other opportunities. But for the first time in human history, men sat down and they finally said no. Man is entitled to the sum and substance of his own life. And they penned these words. We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new governments laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers.

Let's do a contrast. Puritan theology. Man is incompetent. Man is morally guilty. Man needs the force of government to compel him to good action. Government is an unquestionable manifestation of God's appointment. God is wrathful and offers man no rights of existence. God appoints man to a predetermined existence of suffering and bondage. God's sovereignty appoints man to slavery. This is the Puritan construct. This is Reformation theology. This is Calvinism. This is the most virulent form of reformation thought.

This is what comes out of the Declaration of Independence. Man is competent to understand truth because truth is self-evident. What is the metaphysical presumption behind the Declaration of Independence? That man can understand the world in which he lives, that his epistemology is fully intact, and that by virtue of that ability, truth is self-evident. The equality of human creation endows all with the same right. There is no

election to specific privilege. In the modern Calvinism construct, all of the men standing in the pulpits today are claiming a special privilege to stand there. Man has a right to life, liberty, and happiness. The Calvinist construct says there is no such thing, that any effort towards right or life or liberty or the claim to any happiness is in fact a self-deception and a manifestation of your depraved nature. Just government is a product of human consent. Figure this, for almost 1800 years, the Church had said that it was in fact the divine right of kings to dictate government, that government was in fact divinely appointed. Man had no right to question, for the most part. And that whatever happened was in fact the product of his will. This is the first time in human existence that they've articulated that no, government is actually the product of human consent. I am only governed in as much as I choose to let you govern me. Truth is not the property of the state. The state is in fact the servant of man's defense. This was utterly revolutionary.

I stand here today. I am talking at a phone that has a camera that is not too much bigger than the size of my little finger in an air conditioned room surrounded by technology that can only come from human freedom. The advances of man, the things that have eradicated human suffering across the world [UNINTELLIGIBLE] 00:37:48 are directly tied to human liberty because in as much as man is free, man is free to think. And in as much as he's free to think, he's free to exchange that value with whoever he chooses to associate with and no one can compel him. He can better his life as he sees fit, and he can solve problems of the beggarly elements of this earth. That was revolutionary.

I stand here in 2012 able to do what a paltry number of human beings had ever been able to do. And it is directly related to this legacy, the legacy of human competence, human freedom, and human liberty. You don't get this with the ideology of the Dark Ages. It does not work. And every place this ideology has manifested itself, it has driven man back to the Dark Ages. Every place it persists in this earth, it produces the Dark

Ages. This exact same metaphysical assumptions that are in Calvin are in Augustine. The exact same metaphysical assumptions that are in Augustine are ultimately in Islam. You go to an Islamic country that has not had any exposure to Enlightenment ideas, Afghanistan, and you see the exact same paltry existence in human condition. Liberty, freedom, thought, they are absolutely tied together. Human competence, human liberty are essential for the benefit of man.

The Gospel According to John Immel, I've now come full circle in my presentation here. Now you can begin to understand why I've been hammering on this point. The cohesive structure of ideas from the metaphysical premise to the epistemological ability to the ethical understand to the political action, all of them running the line. And that is the answer to my original observation. The Gospel According to John Immel 3:1-3. All people act logically from their assumptions. It does not matter how inconsistent the ideas or insane the rationale. They will act until that logic is fulfilled. Therefore, when you see masses of people taking the same destructive actions, find the assumptions and you will find the cause.

Christians love to thump their ESV, laying claim to the Declaration of the Independence and the Founding Fathers. They hold freedom of religion as a certainty. They love the prosperity that rational thought, logic, and industry produce. But they do not even have a blush of hypocrisy when they pound that same ESV to claim solidarity with Reformation orthodoxy. They will then rate John Calvin as the great reformer of Geneva. They will speak sagely, calling Jonathan Edwards their homeboy, not once realizing the philosophical schizophrenia. These are mutually exclusive worldviews.

In the world of election and limited atonement, there is no such thing as self-appointment and self-determination. There is no such thing as self-governance because you don't own you. In a world of irresistible grace,

there is no such thing as private property, private possessions, or even personal boundaries because whatever good you have is a manifestation of God's grace. All grace is administered by his stewards of grace. And in a world of predestination, there is no right to inquire. And in a world of predestination, there is no human sensibilities to be conservative. Your pain, your suffering is irrelevant. Who are you, o man, to challenge God, to inquire the things of God, the mysteries of God? Your pain is what you should have. In the metaphysical world of T.U.L.I.P., there is no real justice. Everything is a great big fat sin before God because the nature of man is utterly offensive to God. If you happen to be a part of the group that gets picked, it's all good. And if you don't, it sucks to be you.

The threat of damnation hangs over your head like the Sword of Damocles. Your sin violates God. So who are you to demand recompense for a violation of sins against you? How dare you speak justice? You don't own you. Or do you?

This is the first choice. This is the fight within the ages. Who owns man? Father, in the name of Jesus, we must live in understanding. Never before has man been defended. We defended you and we swatted our own. But never have we defended man's right to live, right to exist, right to live, right to prosperity, never have we done this successfully. To throw off the tyranny of the ages, Father, we need your wisdom and understanding. We need to have the eyes of our understanding opened, that our insides will be filled with light. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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