

# The People of God as Citizens in an Era of Trump

Edesio Sánchez-Cetina

My words are addressed to a political leader who, in the course of the coming years, will preside over the government of a nation that prides itself on being Christian,<sup>1</sup> a nation whose official documents and circulating currency proudly boast that the country's trust is in God, with a capital "G."<sup>2</sup> However, more than

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1. Just over 70 percent of the population self-identifies as either Protestant or Catholic. See Michael Lipka, "10 Facts about Religion in America," Pew Research Center, August 27, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/08/27/10-facts-about-religion-in-america/>.

2. In countless historical documents of varying types and literary genres—for example, all the newspaper articles and speeches surrounding "Manifest Destiny"—I have read that, especially in its formative years, the citizens and leaders of the United States considered themselves heirs of the unique election and covenant of that capital "G" God, a position originally held by Old Testament Israel.

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directly to the leader, it is more pertinent to address my words to the hundreds of thousands of evangelical Christians who supported him, cheered him on, and voted for him. I would like to ask them, what led you to conclude that Donald Trump was the most suitable person to direct the political, military, and economic course of the great colossus of the North?<sup>3</sup> Yet in an essay that explores life in the kingdom of God as an alternative to life under Trump, I must also address the many Christians who did not vote for the current president of the United States of America. In the midst of his policies and executive orders, those who persevere in humbly living out the gospel can wield both direct and indirect influence on a significant portion of the US population.

Studying the history of the United States of America and how the nation has conducted its political life, international relations, wars, evangelization crusades, and missionary endeavors, it is by no means farfetched to conclude that, as in the nation of Israel for a good part of its history, US citizens believe their country is the nation chosen by God to be the guiding light for the life and his-

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tory of the nations and peoples of the world. In this essay we will explore this concept of being, in other words, the “people of God.” Being the people of God is not ruling over other nations as an empire that, however benevolent it presumes to be, is always, in the final analysis, seeking its own interests. Being the people of God is something else altogether. It is a thing of struggle, dependence, and humility.

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3. This essay is offered in a brotherly spirit of prophetic critique. I am aware that people voted for Donald Trump for countless reasons and that neither major party's candidate reflected all the values of the gospel. However, the conservative religious support for Donald Trump throws into relief some glaring misunderstandings that this essay seeks to address. A similar though modified essay could have been offered had any other candidate won. The issue of citizenship for the people of God under the authority of human governments must be studied anew for each context and slice of history.

## How to Know if We Are the People of God?

The doctrine of Manifest Destiny is largely based on the premise that God gave the Anglo-Saxon colonizers carte blanche to conquer the territory now known as the United States and extend their dominion “to the ends of the earth.” Thus, even today, the “true” citizen of this nation is the one described as the “normate.” Rosemarie Garland Thomson coined this term and defines it as “the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings.”<sup>4</sup> Explaining her definition, Thomson says, “If one attempts to define the normate position by peeling away all the marked traits within the social order at this historical moment, what emerges is a very narrowly defined profile that describes only a minority of actual people.”<sup>5</sup> Kerry H. Winn, following Thomson’s proposals, identifies this social figure: “In traditional American culture the normate is an able-bodied white Protestant male heterosexual.”<sup>6</sup>

Turning to the world of the Old Testament, the normates of the times were the urban inhabitants of Canaanite city-states, also called “little kingdoms” or “powerful towns.”<sup>7</sup> Their myths, legends, poetry, prayers, religion—that is, their entire ideology—was oriented in such a way as to reflect through the entirety of Canaanite society the structure of the pantheon of Canaanite gods. The petty kings in charge of these “little kingdoms” were vassals of the Egyptian pharaoh. Nothing and no one in the city

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4. Rosemary Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997), 8.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Kerry H. Winn, “The Normate Hermeneutic and Interpretations of Disability within the Yahwistic Narratives,” in *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, ed. Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 92.

7. Roland Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 111.

nor the surrounding area checked their authority. The religious, military, and political elite lived in the cities. Their job was to assure that 90 percent of the population—mainly rural peasants—remained under the control of the imperial policies which dictated the entire region's way of life. The messages of prophets like Amos, Micah, and Isaiah reflect the constant struggle against the powerful who spared nothing in their ceaseless attempts to keep society structured along the lines of the city-states and not in accordance with YHVH's dreams of what society could be.

The proposals of the Old Testament prophets become clearer and even more categorical as we study the writings of authors like George E. Mendenhall,<sup>8</sup> Norman Gottwald,<sup>9</sup> and Walter Brueggemann.<sup>10</sup> Through their archeological research and social reading of the Bible, these authors bring us into the context in which the Hebrew people become a nation as a result of the powerful works of YHVH, who is the vital companion in their formation as the covenant people and in the subsequent clash with Canaanite imperial forces.

The birth of Israel as a nation is a matter of identities and identifications. What makes a conglomerate of people be or not be servants and worshippers of the true God, and what makes them citizens of the kingdom or the people of that God? And, from the opposite end of the spectrum, what are the distinctive elements of a nation rejected by the true God, and why can YHVH not be the God of that nation or of its people? To answer these two inquiries, we must go back to the beginning of the story of the formation of the covenant people.

8. See George E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *Biblical Archaeology* 25, no. 3 (1962): 66–87; *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1973).

9. See Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979).

10. See Walter Brueggemann, *A Social Reading of the Old Testament: Prophetic Approaches to Israel's Communal Life*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

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From the start, we must remember that the population that came to occupy the land of Canaan—more specifically, the central mountain range, the West Bank—was not culturally different in a marked way from those already living in the Canaanite towns. They built the same kinds of dwellings, worked with the same kinds of pottery, used similar weapons, and their lifestyle did not differ vastly from that of the inhabitants of the city-states. That is, the similarities indicate that the settlements of those who came to occupy Canaan included a high percentage of Canaanites themselves.<sup>11</sup>

So, then, who were those who came to “conquer” the Promised Land? This group was made up of (1) slaves freed from Egypt by the power of the God YHVH and (2) groups of peasants who took up arms against the powerful elite living in the protection of the city-states. Those Canaanite peasants were living in vulnerable villages and functioned as the labor force to work the land that belonged to the elites. As we might expect, the powerful of the “little kingdoms” had armies of professional warriors with sophisticated weaponry like war chariots, horses, and metal weapons. The peasants, together with the refugees who had escaped from Egypt, had neither army nor sophisticated weapons; they did not work with or have metal at their disposal. Their strength came not from the protection of imperial armies but from the powerful hand of YHVH.

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According to J. P. M. Walsh, this clash of forces can be explained through the Hebrew concepts of *mishpat* and *tsedeq*. In this perspective, *mishpat* means “consensus, established order, system of government.” As Walsh explains, the idea of *mishpat* is “what defines a community: a shared vision or feeling that underlies its common life, validating or legitimating what is done, communally

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11. Corrine L. Carvalho, *Encountering Ancient Voices: A Guide to Reading the Old Testament* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2010), 132.

and individually. It is expressed in laws, songs, stories, folkways, political and economic structures, language.”<sup>12</sup> *Tsedeq*, on the other hand, is understood as what is “right, just, correct” within the parameters of *mishpat*.

The *mishpat* of the Canaanite city-states was justified through the Canaanite religious system with the god Baal at its center. The “little kingdoms” were monopolies of socioeconomic and political power wielded from within oppressive hierarchical structures. Their society was ordered in such a way that the king, the military hierarchs, and the religious leaders were the powerful elite who lived protected within the walls of the cities. The rest of the population was at their service like slaves: the peasants and workers of the land who offered all sorts of services. For their part, the *mishpat* of the Hebrews was grounded in the liberating action of YHVH in the exodus and in the subsequent covenant he established on Mount Sinai. Consequently, Hebrew society was to be egalitarian, made up of slaves freed from Egypt and the Canaanite peasants who opposed every type of concentration of legal or economic power.

We use the word “Hebrews” (related to the word '*Apiru*) to identify those who came to be citizens of the nation of YHVH. The Amarna letters mention groups of people who were living and functioning at the fringes of the status quo.<sup>13</sup> When the exodus group arrived to Palestinian lands—somewhere between 100–150 years after the era of the Amarna letters—, they found a Canaanite society in chaos. Egypt was being an irresponsible, absentee ruler

12. J. P. M. Walsh, *The Mighty from Their Thrones: Power in the Biblical Tradition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1987), 5.

13. Amarna was an Egyptian location discovered and excavated in what is called the Tell el Amarna. Among the correspondence found there are requests for aid from the little kings of Canaan in response to the invasion or presence of groups or gangs of people known as the '*Apiru* at the beginning of the fourteenth century BC. There is no defining ethnic characteristic for this group, only social. Among the substantial correspondence, letters EA67 and EA68 are examples that reference this kind of person or group. See William M. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1992): 137–38.

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in the area, and the mass of peasants, shepherds, and merchants were discontented with the social situation. It was not difficult for this mass of marginalized members of Canaanite society (the *'Apiru*)—living on the fringes of society and enduring mistreatment from the imperial social order centered in the city-states—to join the exodus group, which was coming from a successful liberation from slavery in Egypt and was guided by YHVH, the God who had freed them from oppression and had made a covenant with them on Mount Sinai. The two sectors joined. They held in common the fact that they did not belong to the status quo, the imperial Canaanite system.

The movement that these groups carried out together is what today we call the “occupation of the Promised Land.” The occupation occurred through movements of resistance or rebellion which are reflected to a degree in the books of Joshua and Judges and were sustained by the theology and message of the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>14</sup>

The defining characteristic of this group of Hebrews or *'Apiru* was their social reality. None of them—neither those in the exodus group nor the Canaanite peasants and salaried workers—had access to the privileges of the wealthy ruling class within the reigning system of the “little kingdoms.” Most of this group of outcasts (nearly 90 percent) settled, as previously mentioned, in the central mountain range, where living conditions were dangerous and difficult. It was a “borderland” society with a subsistence economy and a family- or clan-based social structure and culture. Human settlements were small, vulnerable villages of no more than

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*Survival  
required a  
combination  
of divine aid,  
personal and  
collective  
obedience to  
YHVH, hard  
work, and  
interdependence  
and solidarity.*

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14. There are at least four theories to explain how the occupation or establishment of the nation of Israel in Palestinian lands came about. The approach discussed here is widely supported by archeological, ethnological, and sociological studies, as can be found in the literature referenced in the footnotes.

150 people, all of whom were related through what is called *bet-‘av* (“household” o “extended family”), under the authority of the patriarch or matriarch.<sup>15</sup> It was precisely this situation of vulnerability and dependence that defined them as a people and established the foundation of their nation and their faith. Their God was not Baal or any figure from the Canaanite pantheon. Their God was YHVH, the God who had chosen to be their God and guide in a lifestyle diametrically opposed to the Canaanite system.

Through the exodus and wandering in the desert, and through the narrative that sustained them, YHVH taught the escaped slaves (and teaches us) that vulnerability, interdependence, and solidarity shape the lifestyle of his people. These three characteristics generate the content and the *raison d’être* of their national document, the covenant document, which is the Decalogue (Dt 5:6–21). This would help explain, then, why the people had to spend so much time in the desert and why the so-called Promised Land was not flowing either literally or metaphorically with “milk and honey.” The source and foundation of their life and sustenance is their redeemer and guide, YHVH, and him alone. Texts like Deuteronomy 32:7–12, 37–39 and Hosea 12:9, 13:4 affirm that only by rejecting other gods can human beings or a community be sure to have YHVH as their savior, sustainer, and guide. The primitive Israel that occupied the Promised Land did not settle in the established Canaanite cities or towns but occupied the inhospitable mountainous region where, facing shortages, plagues, sicknesses, and war, they eked out a living with great effort. They were thus dependent on the rains, on the local vegetation, on terraces they built and cisterns they dug. That is, they needed a combination of divine aid

15. See the studies of Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel: 1250–587 BCE* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005); Carol Meyers, “The Roots of Restriction: Women in Early Israel,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 41, no. 3 (Sept. 1978): 91–103; Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988); Roland Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015).

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(Dt 11:10–17; 28:12), personal and collective obedience to YHVH, hard work, and interdependence and solidarity among families and people connected to their villages, such as exiles, servants, and hired help.

Why is all of this necessary for survival? YHVH wanted to show his chosen, newly-fashioned people, as well as the peoples and generations to come, that there was a way of life that allowed everyone to live in a dignified, truly human way, with no one being either “above” or “below” anyone else. In other words, God’s dream has always been an egalitarian, inclusive community or society. Was it possible? Yes, and in the Bible it is defined as the kingdom of God, the covenant people, the community of faith. This is *shalom*, life abundant, the gospel.

Achieving this dream requires four interwoven elements that must always be held together: absolute faithfulness and loyalty to the one true God; rightness and justice in social relationships; exodus; and covenant. Through the exodus, YHVH freed a group of slaves from oppression and invited them to a life of liberty and *shalom*. Toward this end, immediately after the exodus, YHVH summoned them to Mount Sinai where he made a covenant with them and gave them the covenant document, the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments), which includes all the elements for life as the people of God and which is expanded in the covenantal code in Deuteronomy 12–26.

What we have here is a conjugation of exodus with covenant: that is, the union of (1) an event that led to both freedom and new options in life (the exodus) and (2) the commitment to turn this event into a model for the life of the nation (covenant) that is born thanks to the liberating action of YHVH, an achievement through which YHVH established himself as the God of Israel and made Israel his covenant people. Consequently, I see no other way to understand the covenant than as *exodus in perpetuity*. With the covenant, YHVH invites Israel to make the achievements of the

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*With the covenant, YHVH invites Israel to make the achievements of the exodus their way of life.*

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exodus their way of life. Hence, the *mishpat* (constitution) of YHVH and its subsequent *tsedeq* (appropriate or right behavior): an egalitarian society or community opposed to all manner of the concentration of power and lands, resistant to taking advantage of others, focused on justice and compassion toward the needy, generating an atmosphere of trust, and refusing to find security in horses and chariots; i.e., the trappings of worldly security and success.

To keep exodus and covenant united, absolute faithfulness and loyalty to the one true God must be intertwined with rightness and justice in social relationships. In other words, we cannot practice social justice when YHVH is not our one and only God; and if we practice evil, we cannot claim the true God as our only Lord.

Let us explore this further in light of a few biblical texts, beginning with Psalm 82. I understand this poem to be a sarcastic scoffing at the Canaanite myths which extol power struggles between the gods: they are wrapped up in defending their positions of power but disregard their responsibility to maintain a just society among humans. As a result of this neglect and disobedience, God (chairman of the assembly of the gods) judges the gods and reminds them of their divine responsibility. Since they do not fulfill their duties, they are, in the final analysis, condemned to die. The poem ends by declaring of God that, as the only guarantor of justice on earth, “all the nations are your inheritance” (Ps 82:8).

While this poem has a sarcastic slant, the mocking tone does not nullify the seriousness and purpose of its message. If this literary sample dares to make a statement about the destiny of the gods, due to their incapacity to maintain justice on the earth, God—sovereign over the world and history—has assigned that duty to others: human beings. This helps explain the reason behind the exodus, the reason behind the revelation of the name

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of God as YHVH (Ex 3:1–15),<sup>16</sup> and the reason behind the formation of the people of God. In the Old Testament, the people of God were the Israelites, and in the New Testament, the church. Both were formed for the same purpose: to carry out the project of the kingdom of God, the creation of a community of *shalom*.

Matthew 25:31–46, the narrative of “the sheep and the goats,” discusses the final destiny of those who did or did not fulfill the responsibility to practice justice. It does so in the spirit of Psalm 82 and of the *raison d’être* of the exodus, the covenant, and the formation of a nation based on these principles and committed to the one true God and to his primary work: a life in accordance with the gospel (cf. Mt 11:2–6). There is no alternative for those of us who call ourselves members of the people of God, heirs of the covenant, and followers of the gospel.

Yet this project of living in community with *shalom* does not factor into the agenda of any human government. The Manifest Destiny of the United States of America—and all other expressions of national imperialism—was not the destiny sought by God; nor is the vision of the future outlined by Donald Trump the vision set forth by God. Christians who seek to live faithfully under Trump’s authority will have to uproot their national identity to become first and foremost citizens of this other kingdom, the kingdom of God, to which it is much harder, and less popular, to belong.

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16. A good number of studies on the Tetragrammaton conclude that the meaning of the name of God is “To be with.” This meaning is more readily comprehensible when considering the phrase in which God reveals his name to Moses: *’ehyeh-’asher-’ehyeh* (Ex 3:14). Traditionally, this phrase is translated, “I am who I am.” But a translation more in line with the linguistic idiosyncrasies of the original Hebrew would be, “I am the one who is here” or “I am the one who will be there with you.” The name YHVH is intimately tied to the exodus, since through this historical experience God shows himself to be in solidarity with the oppressed and vulnerable.

## What Story Will We Write?

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The Bible as a whole plays a paradigmatic role; that is, through a rich array of genres and literary forms, it presents a series of human experiences to get us to consider, ponder, and carefully weigh courses of action, paths forward, life models, and the legacy of a better world for future generations.

In the long run, neither God nor history will judge the sons and daughters of God for the buildings they built, the style of liturgy they employed, the size of their gatherings, or the institutions they established (as a fair number of churches and denominations seem to prioritize these days). Rather, judgment will be based on obedience and readiness to follow the guidelines of the kingdom of God, which are the basics of the gospel, present both in the Old Testament and in the New. We have already discussed some arising from Psalm 82 and Matthew 25. The following passages, representative of both testaments, further outline the gospel vision:

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. For

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the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky. (Dt 10:12–22)

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. (Acts 2:41–46)

What I would like to say to Mr. Trump, then, is that in leading a nation widely considered to be historically aligned with the biblical Judeo-Christian tradition, he ought to pay attention not to those who talk about this faith but to those who live it out. In the United

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States and in Latin America, there are many Christian groups that take pride in being heirs of the enduring Protestant tradition, that is, the Protestant Reformation, but are only verbalizers of the gospel. They talk about it and fight over it but only to the degree that they themselves call “sound doctrine.” Recognizing that we all have planks in our eyes, I tremble to observe that what comes across from this loud sector of Christianity is a great deal of “blah, blah, blah” with no practical implications, no life, no fruit—or a narrow measure of practical action strictly within the bounds of what they see as acceptable to address in society. I fear that these believers have such a cramped view of the reach of the gospel that they are similar to those of whom Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 7:21).

If “proclaiming” and “living out” the gospel are on our agenda, we must study the content of the proclamation and the basis of our action: that is, the gospel itself. I would like to invite Mr. Trump and the Republican Christians and others who voted for him—if they seek to base their lives and accomplishments on the real gospel—to listen to the voices and models that *are* worth emulating. There are wonderful examples there in the United States. One such beacon of hope, considered by many as a faithful spokesperson of the Word of God and the gospel, is Walter Brueggemann. Worthy of being read and studied as a complement to our reading and study of Scripture, his numerous books teach us to live in a way that is radically different than the status quo, than the reigning system. I will highlight just two of his titles.

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The first, *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism: Living in a Three-Storied Universe*,<sup>17</sup> deals with what we have discussed in the last three paragraphs, which can be considered the nature of true evangelization. Brueggemann's proposal coincides with what I have explored in the first part of this essay and which I will summarize as following: living in accordance with the achievements of the exodus, as stipulated in the covenant, interwoven with the two inescapable tenets of biblical faith, which are fidelity to the one true God and the practice of right and just relations in society. While the entire book is worthy of study, here I will invite Trump and his evangelical supporters to read and reread the first chapter which describes and explains the three fundamental elements of true evangelization and life in the kingdom of God. Brueggemann addresses evangelization on the sweeping, universal scale, not just the interpersonal exchanges through which a follower of Jesus attempts to convert a nonbeliever. He deals with the biblical witness of how a theological event of good news is announced and produces change, and he identifies three stages in this drama:

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*True evangelism is living in accordance with the achievements of the exodus, as stipulated in the covenant, interwoven with fidelity to the one true God and the practice of right and just relations in society.*

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1. The event itself, the decisive combat: The event that will be announced, which is always a *theological conflict*, is hidden from our eyes, something to which we have no direct access. In the case of the church today, we proclaim Christ's death on the cross of Calvary, and we know that this sacrifice is wrapped up in political, ideological, and religious controversy while at the same time being a redemptive death that is part of God's plans.

2. The announcement which mediates the victorious outcome, making it effective in new times and places: The announcement

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17. Walter Brueggemann, *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism: Living in a Three-Storied Universe* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993). The paragraphs that follow borrow material from chapter one, "Evangelism in Three Unfinished Scenes."

of this event of conflict is, as we would hope, an announcement of victory. In the face of the voices and actions of death, the God of life rises up victorious. Jesus Christ was crucified in accordance with the will of God for giving us life, and the resurrection three days later is the seal of victory over death and sin.

3. The lived appropriation of the new reality now announced: the task of appropriating and living out the good news is unending and endlessly varied. The proclamation of the gospel is always a combination of exposition of the Word together with the testimony of lives committed to this gospel.

None of the scenes of the drama of salvation can be overlooked in the practice of a holistic/integral mission or of a holistic evangelization. These three elements show up again and again throughout the Bible, giving us a picture of what life looks like in communities belonging to the kingdom of God. Earlier we examined how in the Old Testament the decisive combat of the exodus was announced over and over and was intended to be lived out in the new reality of the covenant people. The New Testament follows suit, for example in the decisive combat of Jesus' death and resurrection, the announcement thereof, and the lived appropriation that all who wish to follow him must likewise take up the cross; or in Acts where the theological conflict is the Holy Spirit breaking in, then the news is spread, and the Spirit's power is subsequently lived out in a community of equals. Each time, the community that responds to God's victorious action becomes a people for which slavery, oppression, and injustice form no part of their identity.

We see, then, that Brueggemann's three elements will always drive the people of God into confrontation and conflict with the reigning systems of life today—of which the United States of America is the primary champion. The confrontation and conflict exist because, in attempting to faithfully live out the "appropriation of the new reality" of Jesus Christ as Lord and coming King, the people of God will ever be at odds with the world's governments,

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which run on greed, fear, and exploitation. The people of God are not allowed to live out their citizenship in blind faithfulness to the status quo of the ruling order.

And at this point, for their own well-being as well as that of the rest of the world, I suggest that Mr. Trump and his supporters read and put into practice a second book in which Walter Brueggemann, together with Peter Block and John McKnight, invites us to search for and choose a more just, more human lifestyle which is in harmony with God's intentions toward humanity. The book, *An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture*,<sup>18</sup> is short but substantive. In it, the authors contrast the world of the market and its ideology with the principles of a "neighborly covenant" lifestyle; that is, the search for an alternative social order apart from individualism, a community of equals in which we practice what the apostle Paul taught: "No one should seek their own good, but the good of others" (1 Cor 10:24). This practical book offers to the government of Mr. Trump and those who support him—and perhaps even more so to those who do not!—an option for life beyond the current consumer society. As Jesus taught, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Mt 6:24). This "other kingdom" offers life beyond money and consumption. A realm of well-being for all, it turns the status quo upside down in the *shalom* held out by YHVH for his people.

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18. Peter Block, Walter Brueggemann, and John McKnight, *An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

