



# Christian Book Summaries

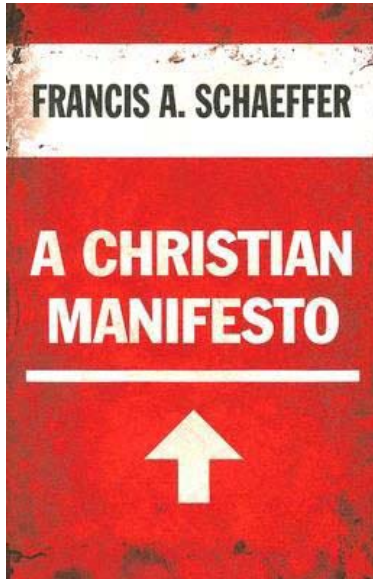
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## A Christian Manifesto

by Francis Schaeffer  
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### A Quick Focus

#### The Book's Purpose

- Identify the primary distinctions between Christianity and contemporary Humanism
- Contrast the history of Christian morality as the basis of American law and government, and the inevitable consequence of replacing it with humanistic relativism

- Explain the Christian's civic responsibility relative to obeying or disobeying government

#### The Book's Message

While Christianity once formed the worldview consensus in America, Humanism now holds sway. With its advent, America stands to lose the delicate balance which allows such great personal freedom without the prevalence of lawlessness. Christians must stand now to resist this move~or face the rise of totalitarianism.

#### Ten Main Points:

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# The Abolition of Truth and Morality

The Christian and Humanist worldviews, both at the center of the struggle for dominance in our culture, fundamentally and irreconcilably oppose one another. For some time culture has steadily moved toward Humanism, and Christians have recognized the symptoms of the shift but not the cause. While they rightly concern themselves with pornography, public schools, the breakdown of the family, and abortion, they have too late recognized that these social issues spring from a deeper and more fundamental shift occurring in our culture.

This shift is one from a biblically informed worldview, no matter how slight or residual, to one of materialistic Humanism. Humanism begins and ends with man, holding that he self-originated and that he is his own standard regarding all things. These two views are diametrically opposed and incompatible at the most fundamental levels, and the struggle between the two is evidenced most strongly in the spheres of government and law.

To continue to enjoy the form-freedom balance Americans have taken for granted, it is important to understand the significance of the biblical moral ethos upon which the principles of our law and government rest. In the Humanist view, man is simply a more complex, competitive animal who exists because of chance. This view reduces law to the preferences of the majority of the people. It is, in essence, brute force. Such a view does not form an adequate base for law because it inevitably devolves into anarchy. It grants total freedom but no form of restraint.

The Christian view holds the law of God as an objective standard. Rather than elevating power to the supreme role, it upholds justice. In order to do so, it holds law as an objective truth apart from the will of man. The Reformation was in part the clarification of the true basis of society and law: the Word of God.

**“The problem always was, and is, What is an adequate base for law? What is adequate so that the human aspiration for freedom can exist without anarchy, and yet provides a form that will not become arbitrary tyranny?”**

Man has for ages asked what is an adequate basis for law. Humanism, with its inherent Marxism and Darwinism, will always lead to moral chaos, anarchy, and finally totalitarianism, because it cannot control the tendency of man toward lawlessness. Freedom must have form, but without biblical law, its concepts of justice, and accountability before God, the only form powerful enough to restrain moral freedom is totalitarianism. When democratic government has been imposed on cultures without the moral foundation of the Bible, it has almost always led to totalitarianism.

## Foundations for Faith and Freedom

In 1644, Samuel Rutherford wrote an epochal book entitled *Lex Rex*. In it, he introduced the radical idea that even kings are under law. At that time, it was commonly held that kings were a law unto themselves. *Lex Rex*, which means “Law is King,” provided a philosophical foundation for the biblical concept that there is a law to which all men are accountable, a law that is not subject to the whims of men.

Rutherford's ideas formed the basis for America's founding fathers as they developed the fledgling country's conception of government and law. When they wrote about “certain inalienable rights,” they were appealing to rights beyond those granted by the government or by man, since such rights as those could be changed. These rights are those rooted in the Judeo-Christian ethic, and they are granted by God.

**“Think of this great flaming phrase: ‘certain inalienable rights.’ Who gives the rights? The state? Then they are not inalienable because the state can change them and take them away. Where do the rights come from?”**

## Foundations For Faith And Freedom

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The idea that laws that hold sway over both men and kings serves as an essential foundation to the form-freedom balance America enjoyed for most of its history. John Witherspoon, the only pastor to have signed the Declaration of Independence, preached on the first Thanksgiving Day that *“a republic once equally poised must either preserve its virtue or lose its liberty.”* Another founding father, William Penn, once expressed the balance thus: *“If we are not governed by God, then we will be ruled by tyrants.”* These men understood how Christianity as a worldview established the delicate balance of liberty and freedom in our country's government.

Therefore, the First Amendment to the Constitution may not be construed to imply that the founding fathers intended to separate faith and government the way secularists wish to imply. The First Amendment sought to prevent the establishment of a state church, and ironically to prevent the government from interfering in the practice of religion. However, as Humanism has taken root as the predominant worldview of America, the First Amendment has been turned on its head. Under the guise of the First Amendment, Christianity specifically and religion in general is being forced out of civil government.

William Blackstone, the author of the very important *Commentaries on the Law of England*, held that the law was upheld by two foundations, nature and “revelation,” or Holy Scripture. Throughout most of America's history, Christianity was recognized as forming the basis of our law.



# The Destruction of Faith and Freedom

Today, Christianity no longer serves as a foundation for America's law and government. Sociological law, as the natural consequence of the establishment of Humanism, now governs America's concept of law. Sociological law sees man as the arbiter of right and wrong, rather than seeing right and wrong as a fixed principle apart from man. It removes the concept of absolute morality as integral to just law and replaces it with whatever is perceived as best for society at the moment. It is fundamentally different.

Promoters of Humanism do not realize its failure to address life as it is, its failure as a measure of truth. The idea that law is established apart from man gives form to the freedom we once enjoyed. Humanistic thought, on the other hand, faces the daunting challenge of accomplishing what no other civilization in history has accomplished, namely, the maintenance of a moral ethic without the aid of religion.

Humanism has led to the new pluralism, the idea that every option is acceptable. This concept drives not only matters of personal decision, but also those of society and government.

All of these factors have combined to create a culture where law is situational, arbitrarily decided by a select few and imposed on all through the court system, and especially the Supreme Court. While the Humanist worldview has inevitably produced such fundamental change, Christians largely failed to recognize the danger until it was far too late. Christians must see the totality of the situation, realizing that the symptoms spring from the root of culture's worldview.

**“Law in this country has become situational law ... That is, a small group of people decide arbitrarily what, from their viewpoint, is for the good of society at that precise moment and they make it a law, binding the whole society by their personal arbitrary decisions.”**

Christians must present Christianity as the solution not just for society's symptoms, but as the foundation upon which human liberty is established. This must happen soon, before we slide into a complete abandonment of any Christian foundation.



## The Humanist Religion

Humanism rejects the possibility of the existence of God, preferring instead to put its faith in the material world and man's understanding of it. Ironically, it declares itself to be a religion, and has been found to be so by the Supreme Court. So while it militates against religion's intrusion into civil government, Humanism itself acknowledges it is a religion, a faith of its own right.

Within a very short time, Humanism has ascended to prominence in the American culture. This happened not through a conspiracy, but through the church's neglect of the culture. Though the time is late, Christians must make use of their freedom while they still have it.

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**“Most fundamentally, our culture, society, government, and law are in the condition they are in, not because of a conspiracy, but because the church has forsaken its duty to be the salt of the culture.”**

The cultural battle of ideas is in full swing, and many of the most persuasive voices stand with Humanism against Christianity. The media, for example, holds tremendous power in our culture. Public tax money is used to promote the ideas of Humanism as expressed in the issues of Darwinism and abortion. The news media functions as a fourth branch of the federal government, shaping the public perception of events. Such power has dramatic implications for the future of democracy, especially because so much of the media is dedicated to the principles of Humanism.

If Christians are to faithfully live out the implications of their faith, they must engage the culture on all fronts. If Christ is Lord in the life of a Christian, he must bring Him to bear on the question of Truth, even as it relates to civil government.

**CBS**

## Revival, Revolution, and Reform

Christianity in our day, unfortunately, has often artificially separated religion and culture. Evangelical leaders too often have forsaken their duty as salt and light in the culture to protect their own projects. Many believe that Christianity's primary message is to the individual. But Christian history is marked by the radical impact of the gospel, not just on the lives of individuals, but by the resultant effect upon society.

The Wesley and Whitefield revivals are often remembered for their faithful call to individual salvation, but even secular historians recognize the effect these revivals had in preventing New England from experiencing its own version of the French Revolution.

Other Christians are noted not just for their personal convictions, but for their dramatic impact on the social conditions of their time. Lord Shaftesbury, during the Industrial Revolution, strove to provide justice for the poor. Wilberforce, through his Christian conviction of the equality of mankind and the evil of slavery, fought for the abolition of England's slave trade. Such men did not compartmentalize their faith in isolation from civic responsibility, and we remember them for their faith and their positive contributions to society.

**“These men did not do these things incidentally, but because they saw it as part of the Christian Good News. God used those involved in revivals to bring forth the results not only of individual salvation, but also social action.”**

Christians have a powerful foundation for their belief in the dignity of man because we know that man was endowed by his Creator with rights, privileges, and responsibilities in this world. Because a personal-infinite God exists, and because He has made Himself and His law known, no humanistic institution has the right to disregard it even if the Humanists claim the right to do so. When government under the influence of Humanism takes away the right of children to live, they do so against the principles of law whether they acknowledge it or not.

This means that Christians have a unique contribution to make to public discourse regarding certain issues like abortion. But we must remember that the Christian worldview is true in the total, all-encompassing sense. We should recognize the influence of Humanism on our culture, not just in part but in sum, and strive to bring our worldview to bear on these issues. Let us not forget that the Christian belief system has provided a very rare balance of form and freedom in our country, and if we would keep it, we must never tire of vigilantly advancing it in culture.

**CBS**

## An Open Window

Two opportunities are available to us in 1981. The first is the conservative swing in the 1980 United States elections. A long time has passed since Christians have had the opportunity that now exists, and we should not only strive to put an end to the practice of abortion but challenge the entire philosophical system of Humanism which promotes it. One need only consider the secular media's treatment of Dr. C. Everett Koop when he was nominated for the position of surgeon general to see that the battle will be hard fought. But the window is open for the time being, and we should hope, pray, and work to make the Christian faith heard.

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## An Open Window

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The second opportunity is less palatable but must nonetheless be considered: What if the window does not stay open? The majority of those voting in the 1980 election voted less for conservatism and more for an improved economy. They did so not out of conviction but out of personal desire for more affluence. They do not care how the economy comes around but just that it does. If those voters do not get what they hoped for, what then? Will this window stay open?

Christians must also remember that there are vast differences in the goals of conservatives and liberals. If both are operating on humanistic principles, there will be no difference in the final outcome of their government. Therefore, Christians must stand against Humanism in any form, regardless whether the power is held by conservatives or liberals.

Should the economic numbers disappoint the electorate, we stand in great danger of accepting some form of an elite, especially if we are given the illusion of our desired economic security. Many have proposed their conception of the form of this elite rule, but if it can be brought in under the guise of constitutionality, it is likely the country will not bat an eye.

**“All that would be needed in much of the Western world is even the illusion of ... ‘improved economic numbers’ to accept some form of an elite to give at least the illusion of these numbers.”**

I myself think the courts, and especially the Supreme Court, is a likely candidate for consideration for three reasons. First, they already apply the rule of sociological law in their judgments. Second, they not only rule on law but create law. And third, they have ascended in prominence over the other two branches of the government. However, it is less important that we identify the form such an elite government would take and more important that we recognize just how possible it is.

Just to illustrate the importance of these issues to our personal freedom, and especially our freedom of religion, we should note the high number of religiously oriented legal issues coming before the American courts. Dare we believe that under such a humanistic elite our religious freedoms would remain unchanged?

We as Christians must recognize the moment before us and must recognize the necessity of what may lie ahead if Humanism continues to run unchecked and unabated. Christianity and Humanism must yield diametrically opposed results, but we have a poor record so far in acting before it is too late. If we fail to act now, we stand to lose those freedoms that differentiate us from most other countries in the world and in history.

# The Limits of Civil Obedience

We have strayed far from the intentions of America’s founding fathers. We now must ask ourselves, as people who understand our existence in light of God’s creation, What is our relationship and responsibility to the government? Humanists are not bound by such questions, for they have no responsibility to obey the state, only fear of the state’s power over

them if they do not. But Christians are commanded by God to obey the civil governments. What should that relationship look like?

The Christian understands that the civil government is under the law of God just as are individual men and women. It is God who establishes governments, and when government fails to uphold the law of God, it has abrogated its authority, and Christians, as a matter of conscience, are not to obey it. Government enjoys a delegated authority under God. When it abandons God’s law, it becomes a law unto itself—a tyrannical force. There comes a certain time when it is the Christians duty to disobey the state.

**“God has ordained the state as a *delegated* authority; it is not autonomous. The state is to be an agent of justice, to restrain evil by punishing the wrongdoer, and to protect the good in society. When it does the reverse, it has no proper authority.”**

Stories of civil disobedience occur throughout Christian history both before and after the Reformation. Early Christians died refusing to obey the Roman government in its demand for worship of Caesar. While to the Christians it was a religious issue, to the Romans it was a civil matter. They died being torn apart by wild beasts rather than obey a government that had abandoned the basis of just law.

Others who disobeyed unjust government rather than disobey God include William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English. He was tried and executed. John Bunyan preached without a license from the king and was imprisoned

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## The Limits of Civil Disobedience

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for 12 years. John Knox, who preached against the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church, was persecuted and driven from his country. During this time, he developed a theology of resistance to tyranny and began promoting it in his native England. He strove for peaceful resolution where the differences were not essential, but on essential issues he went further than others, in effect saying that Christians had a responsibility to disobey government when it went against God's law; to do otherwise would be disobedience to God.

Finally, there is the author of *Lex Rex*, Samuel Rutherford. The thesis of *Lex Rex* is that the law is king, and if kings or governments set aside the law, they are to be disobeyed. His teaching was outlawed in both England and Scotland, and Rutherford himself would have been executed for his views had he not died first. He defined any act of the state that opposed the law of God as an act that is unlawful and tyrannical. He also clarified that there should be a pattern of significant undermining of the trust given to the government by God under His law in order to justify such rebellion by the people. When such evidence exists, it honors God to oppose such tyranny.



# The Use of Civil Disobedience

Advocating civil disobedience is a sober step, one that should be taken with a great deal of caution and care. As Christians, we respect the rule of law and, like Rutherford, are the opposite of anarchists. However, it is when the rule of law abandons its own foundation that the Christian must weigh his response.

Rutherford explains three different levels of resistance appropriate for a private person. The first level involves protesting the breach of God's law and may involve litigation. The second level is to flee if possible. When these methods fail, he advocates the use of force in self-defense, if necessary.

For a corporate body, he advocates protest and, if necessary, the use of force. It should never be lawless rebellion, but proper force to compel or restrain.

Such resistance should always begin at the appropriate level rather than the highest level and should always be viewed with an eye first to reconstruct and correct rather than to disrupt and destroy. Because we live in a fallen world, force of some form will always be necessary. However, on this point, Christians will often stop short with regard to government, unaware that the use of force is not just the right of a state. So in advocating this position, we must always remember that the exercise of force must always be legitimate in reason and exercise, and must never cross the line into unmitigated violence.

In the face of unjust government, it bears repeating that force is a last option. Are we willing first to suffer unjustly, and even endure prison or civil penalties, to protest wrong government? We face such challenges as our government becomes more secular and more humanistic, because the humanistic worldview is exclusive. It does not tolerate any viewpoints different from its own, and it elevates the state to godlike status.

**“The humanistic, material-energy, chance worldview intolerantly uses every form of force at its disposal to make its worldview the exclusive one taught in the schools.”**

Another challenge taking full shape in our time is the reversal of roles regarding the federal government. Originally intended to be limited in scope and power, our founding fathers granted the bulk of governmental authority to the states. In our time, these roles are now totally reversed. Ultimately, one side will win out. Either we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord and willingly submit as a nation to God's law, or we must bow the knee to Caesar. Humanism unwaveringly upholds the sovereignty of the state, and Christians have not done well to promote the cause of Christ up until now.



## The Use of Force

When all avenues to flee unjust government are exhausted, we must consider the use of defensive force. The American Revolution is a good example of this, and because of the circumstances could be considered a counter-revolution. Likewise, Christians in Nazi Germany had a responsibility to protect their Jewish neighbors from the unjust government of the Nazis.

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## The Use of Force

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**“There does come a time when force, even physical force, is appropriate. The Christian is not to take the law into his own hands and become a law unto himself. But when all avenues of flight and protest have closed, force in the defensive posture is appropriate.”**

While Christians work toward the promotion of the Christian worldview in our culture, we also must work toward change on key issues. On matters of clear principle, we must even consider civil disobedience.

This is difficult for a number of reasons. First, the Christian should not seek to impose any kind of theocracy. Being a Christian should not be equated with patriotism. Secondly, there are some who live in countries where these issues are already a daily consideration. Even now they experience persecution, jail, and even execution for their disobedience. They have no right or power of protest, no avenue of flight, and they are too weak numerically to resist. Such individuals need encouragement to remember that true, biblical spirituality touches all of life. Before God, each one should strive to do what they can to resist injustice.

Third, the concept of force within some Christian circles can be used to justify the opposite behavior advocated by the concept as explained here. Certain circles that combine Marxism with Christianity, such as liberation theology, could use the concept to justify anarchy. Or, Humanists could use it as a justification of their use of force in bringing about authoritarianism.

Fourth, unstable people who hear discussion of force and resistance can pervert the concept to bring about anarchy. However, all these problems should not dissuade us from considering what our final conviction is regarding when civil disobedience is an option.

The Declaration of Independence is instructive for learning the role civil disobedience played in the founding of our own country. After outlining man's God-given rights, it goes on to outline the responsibility of the people when government undermines these rights: ***“It is the right of the people to alter and abolish [the government], and institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.”***

The role of Reformation thinking, and of American clergy, is prominent in the establishment of our original American government through the American Revolution. If the Christian refuses to acknowledge the role of civil disobedience, he fails to recognize the limits of government and instead gives it the autonomous authority that belongs to God alone. The Christian's stand in civil disobedience is one of principle, and through history it has been at this point where Christians have resisted even at the loss of their lives.



## By Teaching, by Life, by Action

The Christianity of our generation foolishly focused on the symptoms rather than the disease regarding American culture. By fighting only symptoms, they left the worldview of Humanism at its root unopposed. Proponents of Humanism seek to impose it upon everyone else by force. Christians must recognize that if and when the government, which is established by God, commands that which God has forbidden, it abrogates its authority.

**“It is time we consciously realize that when any office commands what is contrary to God's Law it abrogates its authority. And our loyalty to the God who gave this law then requires that we make the appropriate response in that situation to such a tyrannical usurping of power.”**

Such humanistic government can only produce relativistic, amoral, and inhuman results because it fails to account for ultimate Truth and does not submit to God's law. Christians are obligated both to protest and resist when necessary, and to promote an alternative solution to culture. While we may be

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## By Teaching, By Life, By Action

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tempted to simply present the Christian alternative, we must realistically acknowledge that the world is fallen and that we should use all means at our disposal, including legal and political, to promote the Christian message.

We must remember that the unique American freedom we enjoy is predicated on the form-freedom balance brought through our country's historical Christian consensus. This consensus was weakened as the demographic of the country changed, but was lost entirely with the predominance of Humanism as the new American worldview. *This view will undermine the form-freedom balance, and lay the groundwork for the introduction of totalitarianism.*

As this worldview ascends, the worldview which brought about the United States is systematically being marginalized in our culture. Christians should not fear to stand against Humanism, to bring to bear the Christian alternatives, and to restrain our country's march toward totalitarianism.



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