Ross Douthat in his book *Bad Religion: How We Became A Nation of Heretics* offers a hard-hitting account of how American Christianity has gone “off the rails” - and why it threatens to take American society with it.

He defines “bad religion” as the slow-motion collapse of traditional faith and the rise of a variety of false Christianities in America which are in reality heresies.

Douthat says these distortions of traditional and historical Christianity offer “debased versions of the Christian faith that breed hubris, greed, and self-absorption.”

Douthat moves from the 1950s to the age of Obama and charts institutional Christianity’s decline from a vigorous, mainstream, and bipartisan faith on through the civil rights movement and culture wars of the 1960s and 1970s.

He is not hesitant to name names and discuss the influence of people like Glenn Beck, Joel Osteen, and Oprah Winfrey on traditional Christianity.

Douthat explores how the prosperity gospel’s mantra of “pray and grow rich” has led to a cult of self-esteem and the reduction of God to a “life coach.”


His urgent call for a revival of traditional Christianity is sure to generate controversy, and it is vital reading for those of us concerned about the future of America.

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*Dr. Barth Smith is Professor of Practical Theology Emeritus and has pastored the same church for over 30 years!*