

PAWNS, POWERS, AND PRINCIPALITIES

Secret Networks, Global Power, and the Biblical End-Time Conflict

PART V

INSTITUTIONAL POWER, CULTURE, AND COVERT ACTION

CHAPTER 13

INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, COVERT OPERATIONS, AND THE POLITICS OF SECRECY

*Regime Change, Psychological Operations, Domestic Surveillance,
Secret Experimentation, and Democratic Accountability*

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ABSTRACT

Intelligence agencies occupy a constitutional and moral paradox. States require secrecy to discover threats, protect sources, frustrate hostile services, and conduct legitimate national-security operations. Yet the same secrecy that protects necessary intelligence can also conceal coercion, deception, illegal surveillance, clandestine political influence, unethical experimentation, and policies that democratic publics would reject if conducted openly. This chapter examines that paradox through primary government records and high-quality scholarship. It analyzes Operation TPAJAX in Iran, PBSUCCESS in Guatemala, covert action in Chile, Cold War cultural and media influence, COINTELPRO, MKULTRA, assassination planning, the Church Committee reforms, intelligence liaison networks, post-9/11 surveillance, the Section 215 telephone-metadata program, the President's Surveillance Program, and the changing legal status of FISA Section 702 through August 2026. The documentary record establishes that secret state action and institutional deception are historical realities. It does not justify treating every contested event as a covert operation or every gap in the archive as proof of a hidden plot. The chapter therefore argues for calibrated skepticism: secrecy should raise the demand for traceable authority, oversight, and evidence, not abolish evidentiary standards. Theologically, the chapter distinguishes documented human conduct from spiritual interpretation. Scripture teaches that darkness, deception, pride, and abuse of authority are morally serious, while also commanding respect for lawful government and refusing hatred of persons. Christ, not secret knowledge, remains the believer's final security and Blessed Hope.

Keywords: intelligence agencies; covert action; CIA; COINTELPRO; MKULTRA; surveillance; Church Committee

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Research note: This chapter gives priority to declassified records, congressional investigations, statutory texts, inspector-general reports, official archives, and specialist intelligence scholarship. Investigative and exposé literature is treated as a source of claims and research leads rather than as self-authenticating proof. Current surveillance materials were checked through August 16, 2026. The evidentiary labels used throughout the book remain fixed: **ESTABLISHED, STRONGLY SUPPORTED, PLAUSIBLE, CONTESTED, WEAKLY SUPPORTED, and UNSUPPORTED.**

EVIDENTIARY LANGUAGE

ESTABLISHED | STRONGLY SUPPORTED | PLAUSIBLE | CONTESTED | WEAKLY SUPPORTED | UNSUPPORTED

PART V | INSTITUTIONAL POWER, CULTURE, AND COVERT ACTION

CHAPTER 13

INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, COVERT OPERATIONS, AND THE POLITICS OF SECRECY

Regime Change, Psychological Operations, Domestic Surveillance, Secret Experimentation, and Democratic Accountability

"There is nothing covered that won't be uncovered, nothing hidden that won't be made known." Luke 12:2

1. The State's Necessary Secrets and the Citizen's Necessary Questions

Chapter 12 examined institutions that can shape knowledge, culture, and behavior largely through open grants, professional authority, persuasion, and public-private networks. Intelligence agencies move the investigation into a different institutional world. Their effectiveness often depends on concealment. Sources can be killed if exposed. Technical collection can be neutralized if adversaries learn how it works. Diplomatic relationships can collapse if confidential cooperation becomes public. A state that publishes every intelligence target, cryptographic method, agent identity, cyber capability, or operational plan would soon lose much of the capacity for which an intelligence service exists.

That necessity does not resolve the moral problem. It creates it. In an ordinary public program, citizens can inspect statutes, budgets, contracts, administrative records, and hearings while the policy is occurring. In intelligence, the decisive authorization, operational method, source relationship, or legal interpretation may remain classified for years. Oversight is therefore delegated to a smaller circle of officials who themselves operate under secrecy rules. The public must trust institutions whose work often cannot be fully shown to the public at the time it matters most.

Modern democratic intelligence consequently rests on a difficult proposition: some government action must be secret, but no government actor may become morally sovereign because the action is secret. The constitutional question is not whether secrecy should exist. It is who may authorize secret action, what law constrains it, which officials are informed, how Congress and courts exercise review, what records are preserved, what remedies exist for abuse, and when secrecy should yield to historical accountability. The Church Committee later summarized the issue in constitutional terms by insisting that intelligence activity remained subject to law and institutional control rather than inhabiting an exceptional realm outside ordinary government (U.S. Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities [Church Committee], 1976a).

This chapter therefore refuses two opposite errors. The first is officialism, the assumption that a classified program must be legitimate because professionals authorized it for national security. Iran, Guatemala, Chile, COINTELPRO, MKULTRA, mail opening, assassination plotting, and warrantless surveillance show why that assumption cannot survive the documentary record. The second error is total suspicion, the assumption that once some secret programs are proven, any dramatic allegation about an intelligence service becomes presumptively true. Real secrecy makes

evidence harder to obtain, but difficulty is not proof. A missing file can be significant; it is not a blank check for imagination.

The central discipline remains the one established in Chapter 2: the claim must not be stronger than the evidence. That principle is especially demanding here because intelligence archives contain deliberate deception, pseudonyms, compartmentalization, redactions, destroyed records, cover organizations, and retrospective memoirs written by participants with reasons to justify themselves. The proper response is not despair about truth. It is triangulation. Presidential findings, agency cables, budget records, congressional testimony, legal opinions, foreign archives, contemporaneous press, later declassification, and independent scholarship must be compared until the mechanism becomes visible.

2. Intelligence, Espionage, Counterintelligence, Covert Action, and Psychological Operations

A novice reader needs several distinctions before the case studies begin. Intelligence collection seeks information needed by decision-makers. Espionage is clandestine collection, typically through human sources, technical systems, intercepted communications, or other concealed means. Counterintelligence identifies and frustrates espionage, sabotage, penetration, deception, or related activity by hostile services. These functions may be secret, but their primary purpose is to learn or protect rather than to change the political environment directly.

Covert action is different. Current United States law defines it as government activity intended to influence political, economic, or military conditions abroad while keeping the United States role from being apparent or publicly acknowledged. The statutory definition expressly excludes activities whose primary purpose is intelligence collection, traditional counterintelligence, ordinary diplomacy, traditional military activity, and routine law enforcement (50 U.S.C. § 3093). The distinction matters because collecting information about a foreign election is not the same act as secretly financing a party, placing propaganda, mobilizing a pressure group, or assisting a coup attempt.

Psychological operations and propaganda occupy an overlapping but distinct field. They attempt to influence perceptions, emotions, beliefs, or behavior through communication and symbolic action. Chapter 12 treated public-relations theory and open systems of persuasion. Here the focus is different: communications whose sponsorship, financing, or operational relationship to an intelligence service may be concealed. Covert propaganda can include unattributed publications, secretly subsidized media, planted stories, front organizations, forged material, rumor campaigns, or support to apparently independent voices. The mechanism is not merely persuasion. It is persuasion combined with hidden sponsorship.

Secrecy can therefore operate at several levels. A legitimate collection program may conceal a source. A covert action may conceal the sponsor. A liaison relationship may conceal foreign cooperation. A front organization may conceal funding. A compartment may conceal the program from other officials. A classification decision may conceal a legal interpretation. These forms are not morally identical. Protecting an agent from retaliation is different from hiding an illegal experiment on an unwitting citizen. The relevant questions are authority, purpose, method, target, proportionality, accountability, and law.

3. The Cold War and the Institutionalization of Covert Statecraft

The Second World War demonstrated the strategic value of signals intelligence, codebreaking, deception, resistance support, special operations, and clandestine networks. After the war, the United States created the Central Intelligence Agency through the National Security Act of 1947 and developed a more permanent intelligence architecture. The geopolitical setting was severe. Soviet power expanded in Eastern Europe, communist parties competed for influence elsewhere, nuclear weapons transformed security, decolonization destabilized old political arrangements, and Washington feared that ordinary diplomacy might be too slow or too visible for some contests.

Covert action became attractive because it appeared to offer political effects below the threshold of open war. A government could subsidize friendly political actors, influence elections, support resistance, conduct propaganda, organize paramilitary forces, or attempt regime change without publicly accepting full responsibility. This promised flexibility. It also created a recurring accountability problem: policymakers could seek consequential political outcomes while limiting public knowledge of the means used to obtain them.

Scholars of intelligence have long emphasized that covert action is neither an all-powerful instrument nor a meaningless appendage. It can succeed tactically and fail strategically. It can alter a political balance yet create long-term resentment. It can strengthen an ally while corrupting local institutions. It can produce effects that later observers wrongly attribute entirely to the sponsoring power, ignoring domestic actors who possessed their own motives and capabilities. Conversely, official histories can understate external intervention by describing an outcome as a local political event while leaving covert sponsorship buried in still-classified files (Johnson, 1989; Prados, 2006).

The historical method must therefore separate operational participation from total causation. A covert service can materially shape an event without controlling every participant. A local military officer who receives foreign encouragement remains a moral actor. A newspaper secretly subsidized by an intelligence service may still publish material its editors believe. A coup can depend on domestic grievance, elite conflict, economic pressure, foreign assistance, and contingent decisions at the same time. Covert action does not erase local agency. Local agency does not erase covert action.

4. Iran, 1953: TPAJAX and the Mechanics of Regime Intervention

The 1953 removal of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq is one of the clearest examples of why intelligence history cannot be reduced either to official innocence or to monocausal mythology. Mosaddeq had become the central political figure in a confrontation over Iranian oil, British interests, the monarchy, domestic political factions, and Cold War fears. For decades, public debate over the extent of American and British covert involvement was shaped by partial disclosure. The later documentary record made the covert dimension far harder to deny.

The Department of State's retrospective *Foreign Relations of the United States* volume on Iran contains an entire documentary section titled "Planning and Implementation of Operation TPAJAX, March-August 1953." The records include communications showing British approval of the plan and continuing CIA planning in

the weeks before the decisive crisis (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, 2018). The archive documents propaganda, political contacts, planning with Iranian actors, the cultivation of support for the Shah, and efforts intended to remove Mosaddeq and replace his government with one judged more favorable to Western strategic objectives.

The evidentiary conclusion is therefore **ESTABLISHED**: the United States and United Kingdom participated in a covert operation designed to change Iran's government in 1953. That statement no longer rests on exposé literature, anonymous testimony, or ideological inference. It rests on the official documentary record.

A second proposition requires more restraint. The coup was not a mechanical script imposed on a passive Iranian society. The monarchy, military officers, clergy, merchants, political rivals, crowds, communist influence, constitutional conflict, economic pressures, and Mosaddeq's own political choices all formed part of the causal environment. Scholars disagree about the relative weight of foreign action and domestic forces, but serious disagreement about causal proportion does not erase the documented intervention (Abrahamian, 2013; U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, 2018).

This distinction is important for the theology of responsibility as well. Evil can be networked without becoming metaphysically centralized in a human command room. Several actors can pursue overlapping ends for different reasons. One participant may seek oil security, another anti-communist stability, another restoration of royal authority, another personal advancement. Scripture's moral world does not require a single earthly mastermind before deception becomes sinful. Falsehood, manipulation, coercion, and unjust ends remain accountable to God actor by actor.

The Iran case also teaches a methodological lesson about stigmatized knowledge. A claim can move from contested allegation to established history as archives open. The proper conclusion is not that every suppressed allegation will eventually be vindicated. It is that dismissal by reputation is never a substitute for evidence. Historical judgment must remain revisable because the evidence base can change.

5. Guatemala, 1954: PBSUCCESS, Psychological Warfare, and Plausible Deniability

The 1954 overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz offers an even more granular documentary picture of covert action. When the Department of State released its retrospective FRUS volume on Guatemala in 2003, it described the volume as a documentary history of PBSUCCESS, the CIA operation leading to the coup that removed Arbenz. The release explicitly acknowledged that the earlier official publication had been incomplete because it did not document the approved CIA role (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, 2003).

The surviving records reveal the infrastructure of covert intervention. A September 1953 meeting at the office of the Director of Central Intelligence reviewed the status and future of PBSUCCESS. Another memorandum records that the project secured a \$3 million budget. Planning documents treated economic and psychological warfare as operational components. Most strikingly for the present book's concern with narrative control, one CIA cable recommended action through media described in the record as controlled or influenced by the Agency's cryptonymed apparatus (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, 2003, Docs. 54, 64, 171).

Here “controlled media” is not a polemical phrase invented decades later. It appears as part of an operational vocabulary in primary records. The case therefore establishes several mechanisms that are often treated dismissively when discussed abstractly: hidden sponsorship, propaganda, media influence, political organization, economic pressure, paramilitary preparation, and strategic concealment. Those mechanisms were real.

Yet even this unusually rich record does not justify a universal theory. PBSUCCESS was a specific operation with identifiable officials, a budget, communications, plans, stations, front mechanisms, and operational goals. Because these elements can be traced, the case is historical rather than merely conspiratorial. The same standard must be required elsewhere. A claim that a present media ecosystem is intelligence-controlled cannot be established merely by pointing backward to Guatemala. It requires present evidence of financing, direction, tasking, contracts, communications, or other mechanisms.

The long-term consequences of Guatemala also illustrate why covert action should be judged beyond immediate operational success. The operation achieved its proximate political objective. It also entered a later history of instability, repression, insurgency, counterinsurgency, and deep distrust of United States power in Latin America. No responsible historian should pretend that one 1954 operation mechanically caused every later tragedy. It is equally irresponsible to treat the intervention as morally weightless because it was successful in the short term. Secret statecraft can generate path dependencies that outlive the officials who authorized it.

6. Chile, 1963-1973: Covert Funding, Media Influence, and the Limits of a Simple Coup Narrative

Chile provides a crucial test because it contains both strong evidence of covert interference and a clear boundary on what the official investigation could establish. The Church Committee’s staff report on covert action in Chile described American covert involvement from 1963 to 1973 as extensive and continuous. It documented more than \$3 million spent to influence the 1964 election and roughly \$8 million in the period between the 1970 election and the September 1973 military coup, including support to media organizations, opposition political parties, and limited private-sector activities (Church Committee, 1975a).

The report also documented a more severe episode in 1970. President Richard Nixon directed a secret effort, separated from ordinary State Department and embassy channels, to prevent Salvador Allende from taking office. The CIA established contacts with military plotters and attempted to foment a coup. The operation intersected tragically with plans to kidnap Chilean Army Commander General Rene Schneider, who was shot during an abduction attempt and later died. The documentary record therefore supports an **ESTABLISHED** conclusion that the United States sought a military coup in 1970 and that covert activities were directed toward destabilizing Allende’s political position after he took office.

But the report drew an important distinction regarding September 1973. The Church Committee stated that it found no evidence of direct United States involvement in the coup that overthrew Allende that year, while also documenting ongoing intelligence contacts, political opposition, and the earlier effort to stimulate military action (Church Committee, 1975a). The strongest responsible formulation is therefore layered. **ESTABLISHED:** the United States covertly intervened in Chilean politics, financed opposition and media activity, and attempted to generate a coup in 1970. **NOT ESTABLISHED:** the CIA directly commanded or operationally executed the September 1973 coup itself.

This is exactly the kind of distinction conspiracy discourse often loses. Once intervention is proven, every subsequent event can be absorbed into the intervention. Once the later coup occurs, earlier contacts are retroactively treated as a complete command chain. The official record does not permit that simplification. The more sobering truth is that a powerful state can help create conditions, incentives, networks, resources, and expectations that shape later behavior without issuing the final operational order.

The Chile case also exposes compartmentalization as a political technology. A project kept from the State Department, Defense Department, ambassador, or normal oversight process can preserve deniability, but it also narrows the number of officials able to challenge assumptions. Secrecy does not merely hide a decision from the public. It can hide the decision from other parts of the government. This creates what might be called an internal accountability deficit, where the state itself is not one knowing actor but a collection of compartments with unequal access to consequential information.

7. The Hidden Sponsor: Cold War Cultural and Information Operations

Chapter 12 established that governments, foundations, advertisers, and professional communicators can shape public opinion openly. Intelligence operations add a different question: what happens when apparently independent cultural or informational activity is secretly subsidized or assisted by a state service?

During the Cold War, the CIA and related organizations funded or supported cultural, academic, labor, student, publishing, and media activities intended to counter Soviet and communist influence. Some relationships involved witting collaborators. Others used intermediaries or front organizations that obscured the original source of funds. The point was often not to dictate every sentence but to strengthen anti-communist voices, create institutional platforms, expand circulation, or make certain cultural positions appear independent of government sponsorship (Simpson, 1994; Wilford, 2008).

The Congress for Cultural Freedom became the best-known illustration. It sponsored conferences, journals, artists, and intellectual exchange across national boundaries while receiving covert CIA support through intermediary structures. Exposure of that relationship damaged the credibility of some genuinely anti-totalitarian writers precisely because the hidden funding made authentic intellectual work appear instrumentally compromised. Covert sponsorship therefore creates an epistemic problem even when the sponsored message contains truth. Readers are denied information relevant to judging motive, independence, and conflict of interest.

This history warrants scrutiny of later claims about media-intelligence relationships, but it does not validate the slogan that all major media are or were centrally controlled by one intelligence service. The label "Operation Mockingbird" is frequently used

online as a catch-all name for an all-encompassing CIA command system over journalism. The historical record supports specific relationships, contacts, funding arrangements, and uses of journalists or media organizations in particular periods. The stronger universal-control claim requires evidence beyond the mere existence of those cases. Where names, payments, tasking, editorial intervention, or institutional directives are documented, they should be stated. Where they are not, the allegation remains bounded.

The moral principle is straightforward. Hidden sponsorship can be a form of deception because it manipulates the audience's understanding of who is speaking. This does not make every confidential source relationship immoral. A journalist may legitimately protect a whistleblower. A government may legitimately conceal an intelligence source. The ethical danger arises when authority is manufactured by presenting state-sponsored communication as spontaneous independent judgment while the sponsorship is material to how the audience would evaluate it.

8. COINTELPRO: Infiltration, Disruption, and the Domestic Boundary Crossed

Foreign intelligence and domestic political policing are not the same function. Democracies have legitimate reasons to investigate espionage, terrorism, violence, and clandestine foreign direction. The danger appears when the investigative apparatus shifts from discovering unlawful conduct to suppressing lawful political association, advocacy, or dissent.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's own archival page states that COINTELPRO, short for Counterintelligence Program, began in 1956 to disrupt the Communist Party of the United States and later expanded to other domestic targets, including the Socialist Workers Party, Ku Klux Klan, Black Panther Party, New Left organizations, and other groups. The Bureau terminated COINTELPRO in 1971 and now acknowledges that the program was rightly criticized for abridging First Amendment rights (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.).

The significance of COINTELPRO lies in the word *disrupt*. Intelligence collection asks what a group is doing. Disruption seeks to change what the group can do. Church Committee records documented anonymous communications, manipulation of factional conflict, attempts to damage reputations, covert efforts to affect employment or organizational relationships, infiltration, and other techniques intended to weaken targeted movements. Some targets included genuinely violent organizations or persons. Others were engaged principally in political expression or association. The existence of real security threats therefore cannot be used to erase the constitutional distinction between investigating crime and covertly manipulating politics.

The FBI's surveillance and campaign against Martin Luther King Jr. stands as one of the most morally disturbing examples. Federal investigators possessed legitimate counterintelligence concerns about particular individuals around King, but surveillance widened into an effort to discredit him personally. The episode demonstrates how a security rationale can expand into political and moral judgment once secret collection generates intimate information. The service that begins by asking whether a foreign adversary has penetrated a movement can end by deciding that the movement's leader should be neutralized as a public influence (Church Committee, 1976b; Theoharis, 1978).

A balanced account must also resist selective memory. COINTELPRO did not target only the political left. The FBI's archive includes programs against white hate groups

and the Ku Klux Klan. Recognizing this breadth does not excuse unconstitutional methods. It prevents the program from being turned into a partisan morality tale in which abuse matters only when one's preferred side is targeted. Civil liberties become most meaningful when applied to political opponents as well as allies.

The evidence verdict is therefore firm. **ESTABLISHED:** the FBI operated secret domestic counterintelligence programs that went beyond passive surveillance into disruption and, in documented cases, infringed constitutional rights. **UNSUPPORTED:** the existence of COINTELPRO proves that every later protest movement, party faction, church network, or dissident organization is secretly controlled by federal agents. Infiltration must be proved case by case.

9. MKULTRA, BLUEBIRD, and ARTICHOKE: Secret Experimentation and the Ethics of Means

Few subjects illustrate the danger of collapsing established abuse into unlimited speculation more clearly than MKULTRA. The established record is already grave enough. In the early Cold War, intelligence officials feared that adversaries were developing techniques for interrogation, conditioning, drug-assisted control, and behavioral manipulation. The CIA pursued research under programs including BLUEBIRD, ARTICHOKE, and later MKULTRA, which began in 1953 and served as an umbrella for numerous subprojects involving drugs, hypnosis, behavioral research, interrogation-related questions, and methods of covert administration.

The 1977 Senate hearing on MKULTRA is unusually important because it documents both abuse and archival destruction. Senators reviewed evidence that covert drug tests had been conducted on unwitting persons, including administration of LSD, and that university or institutional facilities and researchers were sometimes involved without knowing the true sponsor. The hearing also recorded that the bulk of MKULTRA records had been destroyed in 1973 under authority of senior CIA officials. Later-discovered financial files revealed 149 numbered MKULTRA subprojects, including projects involving human volunteers, unwitting subjects, hypnosis, drug acquisition, covert delivery techniques, behavioral studies, and concealed funding mechanisms (U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 1977).

This case establishes a strong proposition that was once easy to dismiss as fantastical: an intelligence agency secretly funded behavioral research and exposed unwitting people to psychoactive substances. It also establishes that respectable institutions can become channels for classified programs without all participants knowing the ultimate sponsor. The institutional legitimacy of a university, hospital, foundation, or researcher therefore cannot by itself prove that every funding relationship is fully understood by every person involved.

But the record does not establish the strongest popular version of the "mind control" narrative. Research into behavioral modification is not proof that scientists developed a reliable technology capable of programming complex human beings like machines. Much of the program was experimental, scientifically weak, ethically indefensible, operationally uncertain, or inconclusive. The 1977 record itself contains acknowledgment of poor scientific design in some unwitting testing. The correct verdict is **ESTABLISHED** for secret behavioral experimentation and covert drug administration; **UNSUPPORTED** for claims that MKULTRA produced a proven, comprehensive technology for remotely programming human thought and behavior.

The destruction of records deserves separate emphasis. It narrows what historians can know. A responsible researcher must therefore acknowledge uncertainty about the full

scope of the program. Yet the missing record cannot be filled by any preferred theory. Chapter 2 established this principle in the abstract; MKULTRA shows why it matters in practice. Deliberate destruction is evidence of concealment. It is not evidence for every proposition that a destroyed file might have contained.

From a Christian ethical standpoint, the central issue is not whether the research produced spectacular results. Human beings may not be reduced to experimental material simply because officials believe the national interest is urgent. The doctrine of the image of God gives every person a dignity that secret necessity cannot erase. A state may possess authority to defend the public, but it does not possess ownership of the human person. The moral boundary is especially clear when subjects are deceived, exposed without consent, harmed, or denied any meaningful way to refuse participation.

10. Assassination Plots and the Problem of Authorization

The Church Committee's 1975 interim report on alleged assassination plots confronted another domain where secrecy and command responsibility became difficult to disentangle. The committee examined cases involving Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, Rafael Trujillo, Ngo Dinh Diem, and General Rene Schneider. It found that United States officials initiated plots to assassinate Castro and Lumumba, while the other cases involved different degrees of support, knowledge, encouragement, or association with local actors (Church Committee, 1975b).

The report is particularly valuable because it did not simply list plots. It examined authorization. Secret bureaucracies can generate ambiguity when senior leaders use euphemism, when subordinates infer intent, when operational planning occurs through indirect channels, or when policymakers create a climate in which elimination is desired without recording an explicit assassination order. The committee concluded that weaknesses in command and control were serious enough that some plots could have proceeded without clear express authorization from the highest level.

This is a more disturbing institutional lesson than a simple rogue-agent story. If every illegal operation were the work of a single disobedient officer, the remedy would be personnel discipline. If every operation were personally ordered in writing by a president, accountability would be straightforward. The historical record shows a harder problem: ambiguous language, deniable expectations, compartmentalized planning, criminal intermediaries, and unclear responsibility can create systems in which consequential action occurs while each level preserves some distance from the final act.

The committee did not prove that every president personally ordered every plot. That distinction must be maintained. In the Lumumba case, for example, testimony about presidential intent conflicted, while the operational record showed CIA planning for his elimination. In the Castro case, the Agency developed multiple assassination schemes, including relationships with organized-crime figures, but the exact level of presidential knowledge varied across episodes and remains a matter requiring case-specific treatment (Church Committee, 1975b; U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, 2014).

The institutional response eventually included an explicit executive prohibition. Executive Order 12333, continuing a prohibition adopted in earlier executive orders, states that no person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States Government shall engage in or conspire to engage in assassination (Executive Order 12333, 1981, § 2.11). The prohibition is significant because it converts what might otherwise be treated as an unwritten norm into an express rule governing intelligence activity.

11. The Church Committee: Exposure, Reform, and the Constitutionalization of Oversight

The Church Committee did not arise because Americans suddenly became suspicious of intelligence in the abstract. It emerged from documented revelations after Watergate, reporting on domestic spying, disclosures about CIA activities, and growing evidence that agencies had operated with inadequate external scrutiny. Chaired by Senator Frank Church, the committee investigated the CIA, FBI, National Security Agency, Internal Revenue Service, covert action, assassination plots, mail opening, domestic surveillance, and related activities.

Its historical importance lies in two achievements. First, it created a public evidentiary record showing that abuse was not a fantasy of fringe critics. Intelligence institutions had engaged in activities that violated rights, exceeded appropriate mandates, or evaded meaningful oversight. Second, it refused the conclusion that intelligence itself was illegitimate. The committee repeatedly recognized that intelligence is necessary to national security. The reform question was how to place secret power inside a constitutional structure capable of supervising it (Church Committee, 1976a, 1976b).

The post-Church architecture included permanent congressional intelligence committees, clearer reporting responsibilities, executive rules, and eventually the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA), which created a statutory and judicial framework for specified forms of foreign-intelligence surveillance. Oversight did not make intelligence transparent in the ordinary sense. It created designated institutions that could review secret activities without publicly disclosing all operational details.

This architecture should not be romanticized. Oversight bodies can fail, become dependent on agencies for information, divide along partisan lines, or approve programs later judged excessive. Classified legal interpretations can remain difficult for the public to assess. Yet imperfect oversight is not equivalent to no oversight. The establishment of standing committees, inspectors general, reporting requirements, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, minimization procedures, and statutory definitions materially changed the institutional environment in which intelligence agencies operate.

The Church Committee therefore offers a model for mature skepticism. Exposure need not end in abolition. A nation can acknowledge abuse, preserve necessary intelligence functions, prosecute or discipline wrongdoing where warranted, reform law, improve reporting, and continue collection against real adversaries. The alternative to unaccountable secrecy is accountable intelligence, not strategic blindness.

12. Declassification, Redaction, and What Archival Silence Does Not Prove

Intelligence history is written against an uneven archive. Some files are released in full. Others appear decades later with redactions. Some are withheld because disclosure could still reveal sources, cryptographic methods, foreign liaison relationships, or personal information. Some were destroyed. Some were never written because officers deliberately minimized records. Some may remain misfiled or unknown.

This creates a temptation unique to hidden-power research. The researcher encounters a gap and treats the gap as confirmation: the absence of a document proves the operation was too secret to leave a document. Such reasoning is unfalsifiable. If a

record exists, it proves the theory. If it does not exist, its absence also proves the theory. That is not historical method.

The opposite error is equally serious. Officials may imply that because the available archive contains no record, the alleged conduct did not occur. MKULTRA demonstrates why that inference can be too strong. Records were intentionally destroyed, and later financial files revealed material that earlier inquiries could not recover. The proper verdict in a genuinely incomplete archive may be **UNRESOLVED**, **PLAUSIBLE**, or **CONTESTED**, depending on what other evidence exists.

Declassification can also correct official history. The 2003 Guatemala retrospective volume explicitly acknowledged that the 1983 FRUS volume had been incomplete because it failed to document the government-approved CIA role. The later release did not make every prior critic correct about every detail. It demonstrated that official historical publication can itself be limited by classification and that later disclosure may materially alter a responsible account (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, 2003).

A Christian commitment to truth should make this uncertainty bearable. We do not need to force every question into certainty. [Deuteronomy 29:29](#) distinguishes what belongs to God from what has been revealed to His people. The verse is not a rule of archival method, but its posture is salutary: human knowledge is finite. Faithfulness does not require omniscience. Where the evidence stops, the historian should stop.

13. Contractors, Liaison Networks, and Intelligence Globalization

Modern intelligence is not performed by isolated national agencies acting alone. States share signals intelligence, exchange reporting, conduct joint operations, use contractors, buy technical services, depend on commercial communications infrastructure, and operate through liaison relationships that can extend across decades.

The Anglo-American signals-intelligence relationship provides a documented example. The BRUSA agreement of 1946, later associated with the UKUSA framework, formalized cooperation between the United States and United Kingdom. NSA's declassified historical materials explain that the relationship later included Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, forming the partnership commonly known as the Five Eyes (National Security Agency, 2010). The important point is not a sensational claim about a hidden supranational government. It is the ordinary but consequential fact that intelligence sovereignty can be networked. Information gathered in one jurisdiction may be useful to another, and shared technical systems can create capacities no state possesses alone.

Liaison produces both benefits and accountability challenges. Cooperation can detect terrorism, cyber operations, proliferation, hostile espionage, and military threats more effectively. It can also complicate legal oversight when one state obtains information from a partner under rules different from those governing direct domestic collection. Responsible analysis must therefore ask which government collected the information, under what authority, how it was shared, what restrictions accompanied it, and whether recipient agencies may query or retain it.

Private contractors add another layer. Intelligence agencies depend on software engineers, cloud infrastructure, cybersecurity firms, satellite systems, translators, analysts, logistics providers, and specialized technology. Contracting can bring expertise and scale. It can also distribute sensitive functions across organizations whose incentives

and oversight structures differ from those of career public servants. Edward Snowden's 2013 disclosures themselves illustrated the paradox: a contractor could possess access to extraordinarily sensitive surveillance information because the modern intelligence system depends on private technical capacity.

The existence of contractors does not prove that private corporations secretly command the intelligence state. Nor does government contracting make a firm morally neutral. The proper level of analysis is the contract, authority, data access, tasking relationship, security obligation, and decision chain. Public-private intelligence is a structural reality; hidden private sovereignty is a stronger claim that must be demonstrated separately.

14. After September 11: Emergency, the President's Surveillance Program, and Expanding Collection

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 created intense pressure to prevent another catastrophic failure. Congress enacted the USA PATRIOT Act, intelligence sharing expanded, watchlisting and counterterrorism systems grew, and executive officials sought faster access to communications and metadata. Emergency can reveal genuine institutional weaknesses. It can also lower the political resistance to powers that would have faced greater scrutiny in ordinary conditions.

One of the most consequential developments was the President's Surveillance Program (PSP), portions of which were publicly described as the Terrorist Surveillance Program and later associated with the name STELLARWIND in declassified material. A joint inspector-general review by the Department of Justice, Department of Defense, CIA, NSA, and Office of the Director of National Intelligence documented presidentially authorized intelligence activities initiated after September 11 and examined legal review, operational use, and disputes inside the executive branch (Offices of Inspectors General, 2009).

The internal conflict surrounding the program is historically instructive. Senior Justice Department officials raised legal objections to aspects of the program, culminating in the March 2004 confrontation over reauthorization while Attorney General John Ashcroft was hospitalized. The program was subsequently modified. This episode demonstrates that the state cannot be treated as a single mind. Intelligence agencies, White House lawyers, Justice Department officials, inspectors general, courts, and congressional committees may disagree sharply over authority even while operating under the same national-security objective.

The post-9/11 period therefore reinforces a central thesis of this book: concentrated capability does not require universal command. Networks of authority can be powerful precisely because they are layered. The President can authorize; NSA can collect; Justice can interpret law; telecom providers can supply records; the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court can approve procedures; Congress can legislate; inspectors general can investigate; private contractors can implement. The resulting system may be difficult for citizens to see, but difficulty is not evidence that one hidden committee controls every layer.

15. Section 215 and the Bulk Telephone-Metadata Program

The 2013 surveillance disclosures focused public attention on a program under Section 215 of the USA PATRIOT Act in which the NSA collected large volumes of telephone call-detail records. These records generally did not contain the content of calls, but they

included metadata such as phone numbers, time, date, and duration. Because network relationships can be inferred from metadata, the distinction between content and metadata is legally important without making metadata trivial.

The Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board (PCLOB) conducted an independent statutory and policy review in 2014. The Board concluded that the telephone-records program lacked an adequate legal basis under Section 215 and that the statutory concept of records "relevant" to an FBI investigation could not reasonably support indiscriminate bulk acquisition of nearly all call records from covered providers. The Board also questioned the program's value relative to its privacy costs (Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, 2014).

Congress subsequently enacted the USA FREEDOM Act of 2015, replacing government bulk storage under that program with a more targeted mechanism in which records generally remained with telecommunications providers and could be queried under statutory procedures. The precise architecture later evolved, and the NSA eventually discontinued the call-detail-record program under the USA FREEDOM framework. The important historical point is that a surveillance system can move through a cycle of secret implementation, public exposure, legal challenge, oversight review, legislative modification, and operational discontinuation.

This sequence should recalibrate public reasoning. Before 2013, a claim that the government had acquired vast domestic telephone metadata under a secret court order could easily have been dismissed by an uninformed observer as conspiracy thinking. After disclosure and official confirmation, the program became an established fact. The lesson is not to believe every surveillance allegation. It is to refuse the lazy argument that scale or secrecy makes an allegation inherently implausible.

16. Section 702 Through August 2026: Capability, Safeguards, and a Legal Transition

FISA Section 702 has generated a different debate. The authority, enacted in 2008, allowed programmatic surveillance targeting non-U.S. persons reasonably believed to be outside the United States for foreign-intelligence purposes. The government did not need an individualized Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court order for each foreign target. Instead, the court reviewed certifications and the targeting, minimization, and querying procedures governing the program. Because targeted foreign persons communicate with Americans, U.S.-person communications can be incidentally acquired, and agencies can under specified rules query already-collected information using U.S.-person identifiers (Congressional Research Service, 2025; National Security Agency, n.d.).

The public debate therefore involves two propositions that must be kept together. Intelligence officials and the PCLOB have described Section 702 as highly valuable for counterterrorism, cyber defense, counterproliferation, and other foreign threats. Privacy advocates, members of Congress, and oversight bodies have simultaneously raised concerns about U.S.-person queries, incidental collection, access controls, and the absence of a warrant requirement for many searches involving Americans' identifiers.

Reforms adopted in 2024 tightened aspects of querying, auditing, and oversight. In an April 2, 2026 staff report issued under the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board's sub-quorum procedures, PCLOB staff concluded that Section 702 remained highly valuable and that reforms implemented since 2023 were producing positive privacy and civil-liberties effects. The report also emphasized that there had not yet been enough time or data to evaluate every reform fully. Because the report was issued

while the Board lacked a quorum, it was a staff report rather than a report approved by a quorate Board. That institutional detail matters when weighing the document's authority. The report nevertheless recorded major reductions in FBI U.S.-person queries compared with earlier periods, reflecting policy and technical controls (Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, 2026). ODNI's April 2026 annual transparency report likewise supplied public statistics on the Intelligence Community's use of national-security surveillance authorities during calendar year 2025 (Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2026).

The law's status changed again in 2026. Public Law 119-87 moved the statutory repeal date for FISA Title VII to June 12, 2026. Section 702 and the other Title VII provisions were then repealed on that date. Repeal did not, however, instantaneously terminate every activity undertaken under earlier authority. The statutory transition procedures provide that an order, authorization, or directive issued before repeal may continue until its own expiration, with the relevant Title VII rules continuing to govern that instrument during the transition. Congressional Research Service analysis therefore explained that a certification approved before repeal could continue to support collection for its authorized period after June 12 (Congressional Research Service, 2026; Pub. L. No. 119-87, 2026).

As of the August 16, 2026 publication cutoff for this chapter, the most accurate description is therefore neither "nothing changed" nor "all Section 702 collection ended on June 12." The statutory authority had been repealed, while pre-repeal orders, authorizations, and directives could continue temporarily under the transition provisions. This distinction is not semantic. Intelligence law often operates through layered statutes, certifications, court approvals, expiration dates, and transition clauses, and compressing them into a slogan can misstate both the government's authority and the civil-liberties stakes.

The prophetic implications should not be forced. Section 702 is a foreign-intelligence surveillance framework, not the mark of the beast, not proof of a one-world government, and not a biblical identity code. Its relevance to later chapters is technological and institutional: modern states possess capacities for large-scale collection, querying, linking, and analysis of digital communications that were impossible in earlier eras. Capability creates moral responsibility. Capability does not by itself establish eschatological fulfillment.

17. What Real Covert Programs Do to the Meaning of "Conspiracy Theory"

The phrase "conspiracy theory" often performs more than one function. It can accurately describe an explanatory theory that attributes events to secret coordination without adequate evidence. It can also operate rhetorically, signaling that a question is socially disreputable before the underlying records are examined. Intelligence history shows why the label must never substitute for analysis.

Iran, Guatemala, Chile, COINTELPRO, MKULTRA, assassination plotting, mail opening, domestic intelligence excesses, secret cultural funding, bulk metadata collection, and the President's Surveillance Program are not theoretical possibilities. Their core facts are documented in official archives and investigations. In several cases, the public learned critical details only years after the conduct occurred. A culture that automatically equates secrecy claims with irrationality will fail to detect genuine abuse.

Yet the opposite cultural reaction is equally dangerous. Once readers discover that officials lied or concealed real programs, they may begin to treat disbelief as naivety and

suspicion as intelligence. The archive does not support that epistemology. The same Church Committee that exposed real abuses also rejected or qualified allegations where the evidence did not carry them. Its Chile report documented massive covert intervention while refusing to claim direct U.S. operational involvement in the 1973 coup. Its assassination report distinguished cases and levels of authorization. Mature investigation gains credibility by saying both "this happened" and "this stronger claim is not established."

This is where exposé writers such as William Guy Carr, Antony Sutton, and John Coleman must be handled with methodological discipline. They were right to insist, in different ways, that official structures do not exhaust political reality and that covert relationships can affect historical events. But documented intelligence operations do not retroactively establish every larger network or hierarchy they proposed. A real CIA operation cannot serve as substitute evidence for a separate claim about an Illuminati continuity, a Committee of 300, or a universal secret directorate. Each chain must be proven on its own record (Carr, 1955; Coleman, 1992; Sutton, 1974).

The intellectual correction is therefore not a compromise between belief and disbelief. It is evidence-specific confidence. Historical truth does not become more truthful because it is official, and an allegation does not become more truthful because it was mocked. The investigator's task is to follow documents across institutional boundaries until the strongest claim the record can bear becomes clear.

18. Evidence Verdict: What the Documentary Record Establishes

The cases examined in this chapter permit unusually strong verdicts because many of the relevant operations are now documented by the institutions that conducted them or by official inquiries with access to classified records. The table below distinguishes proven mechanisms from stronger claims that the evidence does not establish.

Claim	Verdict	Evidentiary basis
Modern states create intelligence services that necessarily use secrecy to protect sources, methods, and operations.	ESTABLISHED	Statutes, executive orders, agency charters, official histories, and oversight frameworks.
The United States and United Kingdom participated in a covert operation to remove Mohammad Mosaddeq in Iran in 1953.	ESTABLISHED	FRUS Iran retrospective documentation of TPAJAX and British-U.S. planning.
CIA Operation PBSUCCESS materially contributed to the 1954 overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala and used psychological and media operations.	ESTABLISHED	FRUS Guatemala retrospective volume, CIA cables, project records, budget documentation.
The United States covertly financed political and media activity in Chile and attempted to foment a military coup in 1970.	ESTABLISHED	Church Committee staff report on covert action in Chile.
The CIA directly commanded or operationally executed the September 1973 Chilean coup.	NOT ESTABLISHED / CONTESTED	Church Committee found no evidence of direct U.S. involvement in the 1973 coup while documenting extensive prior and continuing covert opposition.

Claim	Verdict	Evidentiary basis
The FBI operated COINTELPRO programs involving infiltration, disruption, and activities that infringed First Amendment rights.	ESTABLISHED	FBI Vault records and Church Committee investigations.
MKULTRA included covert drug testing on unwitting subjects and concealed funding through institutions and intermediaries.	ESTABLISHED	1977 Senate hearing and recovered CIA financial records documenting covert testing and funding mechanisms.
MKULTRA produced a proven technology capable of reliably programming complex human behavior.	UNSUPPORTED	Research activity is documented; the claimed comprehensive capability is not.
U.S. intelligence officials developed assassination plots against foreign leaders during the Cold War.	ESTABLISHED	Church Committee interim assassination report and related declassified records.
Every assassination plot examined was personally and explicitly ordered by a U.S. president.	UNSUPPORTED AS A GENERAL CLAIM	Authorization evidence varied by case; the committee found serious command ambiguity.
Post-9/11 surveillance included secret presidentially authorized programs and large-scale telephone metadata collection.	ESTABLISHED	Joint inspector-general PSP report, PCLOB Section 215 report, statutory and declassified records.
Section 702 and FISA Title VII were repealed on June 12, 2026, while pre-repeal orders, authorizations, and directives could continue temporarily under transition rules.	ESTABLISHED	Public Law 119-87 and CRS Legal Sidebar LSB1444.
The existence of real covert programs proves that any sufficiently secretive allegation is probably true.	UNSUPPORTED	This conclusion is logically invalid and contradicted by case-specific findings and counter-evidence.
Intelligence liaison and contracting create transnational and public-private operational networks.	ESTABLISHED	UKUSA records, contracting structures, statutory and agency records.
These networks constitute one documented, sovereign hidden government directing all major world events.	UNSUPPORTED	No command-capable institutional chain has been established by the evidence reviewed.

The central evidentiary lesson is not that governments always lie. It is that governments are human institutions capable of secrecy, courage, error, service, deception, sacrifice, abuse, reform, and self-protection. The moral category must be attached to the act and evidence, not to an abstract institutional label.

19. The Spiritual Meaning of Secret Power

Historical proof and theological interpretation must remain distinct. No declassified CIA cable can prove a demon's presence in a meeting. No biblical text names TPAJAX, PBSUCCESS, COINTELPRO, MKULTRA, FISA, NSA, or the Church Committee. Scripture must not be turned into a codebook that retroactively authenticates geopolitical claims.

Yet Scripture does provide categories for judging what the documentary record shows. Government itself is not satanic. [Romans 13:1-7](#) presents governing authority as a real instrument of order under God's sovereignty, while [1 Timothy 2:1-4](#) commands prayer for rulers and all those in authority. These texts do not make the state self-authenticating or morally autonomous. They place political authority under God as a delegated trust. A Christian should therefore reject the idea that an intelligence officer, soldier, police investigator, cryptanalyst, or security official is morally suspect merely because the work involves secrecy. Many serve sacrificially to protect innocent people from genuine threats. The biblical alternative to political idolatry is not political contempt but ordered allegiance: honor lawful authority, pray for rulers, and remember that every ruler remains answerable to the King of kings.

Scripture simultaneously denies the state divine status. When human authority commands what God forbids or forbids what God commands, the apostolic answer is clear: "We must obey God rather than people" ([Acts 5:29](#)). Political authority is delegated, limited, and accountable. Classification cannot convert sin into righteousness. A secret room is not outside God's jurisdiction.

The biblical symbolism of light and darkness is therefore morally relevant without becoming a simplistic mapping of classified work onto evil. Jesus teaches that hidden things will be disclosed ([Luke 12:2-3](#)). Paul commands believers to reject "shameful secret things" and to commend themselves through open presentation of truth ([2 Corinthians 4:1-2](#)). He also tells Christians not to participate in fruitless works of darkness but to expose them ([Ephesians 5:8-14](#)). These texts do not condemn military secrecy or confidential pastoral counsel. They condemn moral darkness: deceit, shame, exploitation, and rebellion that seek concealment because exposure would reveal guilt.

This distinction illuminates the spiritual pattern visible in several cases. MKULTRA's moral problem was not simply that files were classified. It was that people were used without informed consent and that records were destroyed. COINTELPRO's problem was not simply that sources were confidential. It was that secret power moved into disruption of constitutional political activity. A legitimate intelligence relationship can remain confidential without becoming morally corrupt. Secrecy becomes spiritually dangerous when it shelters acts that could not withstand truthful accountability.

The deeper spiritual warfare described in [Ephesians 6:10-18](#) also guards the Church from hatred. The struggle is not against flesh and blood. Intelligence officials are not demons. Foreign adversaries are not demons. Whistleblowers are not saviors. Journalists are not saviors. Alternative researchers are not prophets merely because they oppose official power. The adversary's methods include deception, accusation, fear, pride, and division, and those methods can corrupt critics as readily as institutions.

The Church must therefore expose darkness without learning darkness's methods. It must not answer propaganda with fabricated evidence, state deception with reckless rumor, surveillance abuse with doxxing, or institutional secrecy with collective slander. [Ephesians 4:25](#) requires believers to put away lying and speak truth. The Christian investigation of hidden power is itself under judgment if it manipulates readers with claims the evidence cannot bear.

20. Discernment for a Church Living in an Intelligence Age

What should a Christian do with this history? The first response is intellectual repentance. Some believers have treated government secrecy as proof of guilt. Others have treated official denial as sufficient reason to ridicule anyone who asks questions.

Both postures are forms of intellectual laziness. The historical record demands a harder discipline.

The believer should ask who authorized an action, through which institution, under what legal authority, with what budget, against which target, by what means, and with what oversight. When a claim concerns the past, seek declassified records, congressional investigations, court findings, and independent scholarship. When it concerns a current program, distinguish statute from proposed legislation, capability from deployment, authorization from actual use, and surveillance of foreigners from querying information about citizens. Never let a dramatic diagram substitute for a causal chain.

The second response is constitutional and civic seriousness. National security is a real public good. So are privacy, due process, freedom of conscience, lawful political association, and accountable government. The Christian need not choose between being "pro-security" and "pro-liberty" as though one were inherently godly and the other inherently naive. Wise government seeks both, recognizing that fear can be exploited by terrorists and by states.

The third response is compassion for those inside institutions. Intelligence work places people under unusual moral pressure. Officers may know threats the public cannot see. They may be ordered to keep secrets from family and friends. They may confront ambiguous directives, loyalty conflicts, and the fear that refusal will damage a mission. Christians should pray for officials to possess courage to reject unlawful orders, humility to admit uncertainty, and wisdom to distinguish legitimate secrecy from complicity in wrongdoing. Oversight should protect conscientious public servants as well as citizens.

The fourth response is a mature theology of whistleblowing and disclosure. Not every classified disclosure is righteous. Reckless publication can expose human sources, compromise legitimate operations, or endanger lives. Nor is every internal secrecy rule morally binding in the face of criminality. The proper Christian posture values lawful reporting channels, inspectors general, congressional oversight, courts, and carefully justified disclosure when grave wrongdoing cannot otherwise be corrected. The moral issue is not celebrity but truth, proportionality, necessity, and responsibility.

The fifth response is freedom from the seduction of secret knowledge. A reader can become so fascinated with hidden operations that every event begins to look like an operation. This produces a counterfeit omniscience. The person believes that ordinary explanations are always cover stories and that ambiguity itself proves hidden coordination. Christianity offers a different epistemic humility. [1 Corinthians 13:12](#) reminds believers that present knowledge is partial. We can investigate diligently without pretending to see every unseen cause.

21. The Blessed Hope in an Age of Surveillance and Secrecy

The growth of surveillance capacity naturally raises eschatological questions. Later chapters will address digital identity, global governance, information control, [Revelation 13](#), the Antichrist system, and the timing of the Church's gathering to Christ. Chapter 13 must preserve its boundary. Intelligence capability is relevant to the question of what modern systems can technically do. It is not by itself proof that a particular surveillance program is the prophetic beast system.

The biblical contribution of this chapter is more immediate. Secret power does not outrun divine knowledge. [Hebrews 4:13](#) teaches that no creature is hidden from God. Human agencies may classify records, redact names, conceal sources, or destroy files.

Nothing is classified before the throne of God. Every ruler, analyst, operative, contractor, journalist, dissident, pastor, and reader will answer to the same Judge.

That truth should terrify the unrepentant and comfort the faithful. The Christian hope is not that every covert program will be exposed before Christ returns. History contains crimes whose full earthly record may never be recovered. The believer's confidence is that God does not need an archive to know the truth and does not need a congressional hearing to render justice.

This book adopts a pre-tribulation understanding of the Blessed Hope while acknowledging faithful evangelical disagreement about the timing of the rapture. The detailed exegetical case belongs to Chapter 19. Here the pastoral force of the doctrine is enough. [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#) presents the gathering of believers to the Lord as comfort. [1 Thessalonians 5:4-11](#) immediately calls the children of light to wakefulness, sobriety, faith, love, and hope. [Titus 2:11-14](#) joins the Blessed Hope to present holiness.

Readiness therefore does not mean stockpiling rumors about classified facilities. It means being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, walking in truth, refusing moral compromise, loving the brethren, proclaiming the gospel, and remaining faithful when institutions demand misplaced allegiance. The imminence emphasized by the pre-tribulation understanding of the Blessed Hope is not permission for panic or prophetic overconfidence. It removes the illusion that the Church must first decode every state secret before it can be ready for Christ. The Church's security is not operational superiority. It is union with Christ.

For the unbelieving reader, the exposure of secret sin should lead to a more personal question. Governments conceal wrongdoing because human beings conceal wrongdoing. The same impulse exists in the individual heart. We curate appearances, rationalize motives, hide guilt, and hope judgment can be postponed. The gospel announces that Christ already knows the truth and yet offers forgiveness to those who repent and believe. [Romans 3:23-26](#) places every sinner under the same verdict and presents justification through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. No security clearance, patriotic service, political cause, or hidden knowledge can reconcile a person to God. Christ alone saves.

22. Conclusion: When the Archive Opens, Christ Is Still King

The archive examined in this chapter leaves no room for a comforting mythology in which respectable institutions never deceive. The United States Government's own records establish covert regime intervention, hidden political financing, psychological warfare, domestic disruption programs, secret human experimentation, assassination planning, warrantless surveillance disputes, bulk metadata collection, and enduring systems of classified cooperation. Some activities were defended as necessary. Some were later prohibited or reformed. Some remain the subject of legitimate disagreement about proportionality, legality, and efficacy. The existence of the programs themselves is not a matter of speculation.

The same archive also leaves no room for the opposite mythology in which every world event is the visible surface of one secret command. Iran had Iranian actors. Guatemala had Guatemalan actors. Chile had Chilean actors. Intelligence agencies themselves contained factions and legal disputes. Congress, courts, inspectors general, presidents, agency leaders, contractors, foreign partners, and citizens sometimes cooperated and sometimes resisted one another. Power was secretive in particular cases without being omnipotent.

The most durable lesson is methodological and spiritual at once. Real conspiracies exist. Real cover stories exist. Real classification can hide wrongdoing. Real propaganda can manipulate publics. Real surveillance can exceed the boundaries later judged lawful. Therefore the Church must not be naive. But because truth matters, the Church must also refuse counterfeit exposure. A false accusation does not become sanctified because a government once lied.

The Christian is called to a more demanding freedom: fear God enough not to fear secret power, love truth enough not to exaggerate it, respect legitimate authority without worshipping it, and expose wrongdoing without dehumanizing those inside institutions. Christ has already been exalted "far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion" ([Ephesians 1:20-23](#)). At the cross He disarmed the rulers and authorities in the ultimate spiritual sense ([Colossians 2:13-15](#)). No intelligence service occupies the highest throne. No hidden archive contains the final secret of history. The Lamb does. The trumpet of God in [1 Thessalonians 4:16-18](#) is not a reward for those who mastered hidden archives. It is the comfort of those who belong to Christ. The proper response to secret power is therefore neither paralysis nor obsession, but faithfulness: repent, believe the gospel, walk in holiness, test claims carefully, pray for those in authority, speak truth without fear, and be ready for the Lord.

The next chapter turns from covert operations to a different form of long-range power: the attempt to model, manage, and plan populations, resources, environments, and global systems. That history includes legitimate concerns about human welfare and ecological stewardship, but it also raises searching questions about technocracy, eugenic legacies, demographic intervention, and the temptation to govern persons as variables. The evidentiary discipline established here will remain essential: trace the institution, read the document, identify the mechanism, test the allegation, and then bring what is proven under the authority of Scripture.

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