

The D. James Kennedy
CENTER *for* CHRISTIAN
STATESMANSHIP

CHRISTIANITY *and* POLITICS

Dr. Robert J. Pacienza



BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS SERIES



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Christianity and Politics

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PREFACE

The primary reason for the chaos in society today is the success of efforts to sever the social order from the sacred order. In answer, Christians must guide our society to the truth, goodness, and beauty of God's design. We must live out our faith in ways that shape our culture for the good and activate our faith in ways that cause our world to flourish. After all, Christ's Lordship is relevant not only to our private lives, but to every sphere and endeavor on earth.

It is clear that America is divided socially and polarized politically. Therefore, it is helpful to step back to consider the proper relationship between Christianity and politics. After all, as Richard John Neuhaus often remarked, a nation's political movements arise from cultural trends at large, and a nation's culture is shaped by its religious (or irreligious) impulses. Put differently, "government and politics" is only one sphere of culture, yet it is a significant sphere to which we must pay special attention in our current moment. Toward that end, we need the realities of God's Kingdom to inform our politics. This will result in political engagement that is driven by an explicitly biblical worldview and not progressive ideologies.

In a dysfunctional and vitriolic political context, Christians are called to be an island of moral sobriety and social sanity. As the world falls apart, we must embody a politics that mirrors the hope, justice, and mercy of

Christ's reign. This commitment involves not retreating from the public square but reimagining it as a platform for demonstrating the transformative power of the gospel.

CHAPTER ONE

A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF POLITICS

The critical error to avoid is the dangerously inaccurate view that Jesus' ministry was apolitical. His message was profoundly and inescapably political. The Oxford dictionary defines political as "relating to the government or the public affairs of a country." Jesus denounced rulers, announced the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and led what seemed to be a political procession. When he declared that he would usher in the Kingdom of God, nobody in their right mind imagined that he was speaking of some apolitical revival or evangelistic stadium crusade. No, he was staking claim to his Lordship over all other lords and Kingship over all other kings. And for these crimes, he died the death of a political insurrectionist.

Indeed, although Jesus never ran for political office, led an army, or published public policy literature, his ministry was political in the deepest sense of the word: it revealed him as the true King of the world, the One

who governs and affects all public affairs under the sun. As Creator and Savior of the world, his political authority relativizes every other political power. This is why Paul told the Philippian Christians that Jesus (not Caesar!) is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11). Likewise, it is why Paul had to remind the Roman church that even though Jesus is the world's highest and truest political authority, they nonetheless must give proper respect to the Roman government (Rom. 13:1-7).

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN THE BIBLICAL STORYLINE

Through the Bible's teaching about creation, we learn that God is the creator and King of the world and that he has chosen to govern the world through human beings who are his chosen representatives (Gen 1:26-28). Indeed, God calls us to lovingly manage his world, including the various spheres of culture such as politics. By observing patterns of biblical teaching and patterns in history, we can see that God's purpose for governments is that they achieve justice for the various individuals and communities under their purview. Similarly, his purpose for politics is for human beings to engage in constructive conversations about how to achieve such justice.

Yet, God's purpose for government and politics has been thwarted by sinful humans. Our sin and rebellion

have corrupted every aspect of human life (Gen 4-11), including politics. Thus, our government never achieves ideal justice, and our political debates and decisions have been carried out in unjust, unloving, and disordered manners. But politics itself is not the problem. Politics is not an inherently dirty sphere. God created the political sphere “good,” even though we sinners twist it in wrong directions. It violates its God-given purpose when it swells to outsized proportions, seeking to control the other spheres. When, for example, it interferes with the religious sphere—penalizing Christians for their views of gender and sexuality, shuttering churches during a pandemic, or restricting religious speech in the public square—it displeases God and violates his creation order.

The good news is that God is in the process of redeeming a people—the church—for himself, so that we can live faithfully for him in every cultural sphere, including politics. Our faithfulness includes the recognition that Jesus is Lord and worldly authorities are not (Mk 12:17); that governments and political leaders have legitimate authority but they have it only because God allows them to (Rom 13:1-7); and that Christ will return one day to set the world to rights, at which time God’s ideal justice will roll down like the waters (Amos 5:24; Rev 21-22).

Thus, as Christians, we must live in the tension between the already-initiated and not-yet-fulfilled kingdom. We are called to engage politically in ways that reflect and promote God’s justice and peace, eschewing idolatry of any temporal power or ideology. This engagement is about

testifying to Christ's ultimate reign, manifesting a public life that aligns with the gospel's transformative power as an ambassador of God's Kingdom.

THE BIBLE'S RELEVANCE TO THE DISCUSSION OF POLITICS

Although the Bible is not a “handbook” for politics, it addresses the political sphere in many places, both directly and indirectly. Consider the following summary of a few of the Bible's political themes and references:

In the Old Testament, God called Israel to arrange her political life around his law so that she would flourish and be a light to the nations. Sadly, Israel failed to align her society and earthly kingdom with the purposes and intents of God's Kingdom. The people of Israel—including her priests and kings—broke God's law repeatedly, to the extent that God sent them into exile (Lam 4:13). So, from the story of Israel, we learn the importance of aligning our politics with the moral law so that society can flourish rather than wither.

In the New Testament Gospels, we learn that God sent Jesus to establish his rightful place as Supreme Lord of the universe—a profoundly political claim. When Jesus was asked about the matter of government taxation, his subversive response was that the Jews should pay taxes in recognition of Caesar's limited role as the leader of an

earthly kingdom. Still, they should never refer to him as “Lord,” a title reserved for God alone: “Give, then, to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matt 22:21). Because of this audacious claim to Lordship, leaders of the political, military, and religious sectors colluded to execute him for treason. So, from Jesus we learn the importance of ascribing supremacy to Christ over any earthly political leader.

After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the early church took his Lordship to heart. The apostle Paul emphasized this allegiance when he wrote to the Philippians that every Philippian citizen would one day bow the knee to Jesus rather than Caesar (Phil 2:10-11). Similarly, he wrote to the Colossians that Jesus, as Lord, would one day return to renew the world and consummate his Kingdom (Col 1:15-20). In fact, early Christians were so focused on Christ’s authority that Paul needed to remind them that they still needed to give earthly authorities their proper respect during this time before Christ’s return (Rom 13:1). In the same vein, Peter reminded Christians that God calls them to be a light to the nations by respecting the political process, living good lives in private and public, and recognizing Christ’s supremacy over earthly leaders (1 Pet 2:13-17). So, from the early church we learn the importance of God’s people aligning our lives with the heavenly Kingdom so as to benefit the earthly kingdoms in which we reside.

SOME UNIQUE POLITICAL CHALLENGES FOR AMERICAN CHRISTIANS

The contemporary era in American politics poses unique challenges for Christians who declare ultimate allegiance to Christ while simultaneously respecting the political sphere and engaging in the political process. For many decades now, the elite cultural influencers and their activist minions have been seeking the subversion and overthrow of the Judeo-Christian worldview. They've been quite successful, with seemingly most Americans managing life without reference to God or his moral law and approaching politics in an entirely secular manner.

As a result, Christians must resist secular ideologies that dominate our political landscape—secular progressivism, socialism, LGBTQIA+, and more. An ideology is, by Christian definition, a system of thought wrapped around an idol or false god. To offer but a few examples: *Secular progressivism* deifies social and moral “progress,” with progress being defined as the society-wide rejection of the Judeo-Christian worldview. *Socialism* absolutizes material equality and is willing to crush procedural justice to achieve the outcomes it deems best. *LGBTQIA+* ideology absolutizes the human desire to do as we please with our gender and sexuality.

In the face of these idolatrous ideologies, Christians

must stand firm, refusing to defile ourselves in an attempt to retain cultural power. Consider Jesus' analogy with salt: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot" (Mt 5:13). In the ancient Near East, salt played the dual role of preservative and seasoning. In a world without freezers or chemical additives, salt was the only *preservative*; the admixture of salt preserved the life-giving qualities of a food item. Moreover, it served as a *seasoning* that made food pleasant to the palate.

Similarly, our adherence to God's law and proclamation of the gospel plays a dual role in the United States. It helps to preserve our society, staving off immoral and idolatrous inclinations that corrupt it. It also helps to season our society, making it more pleasant and conducive to human flourishing. Therefore, let us not be weary of bearing witness to Christ's Lordship and respecting the American political process by engaging in politics as salt and light for our nation.

SPECIFIC POLITICAL REALITIES FOR THE CHURCH

But how can our lives serve as a political preview of God's Kingdom? By conforming to the Bible's teaching on specific political realities. Here are a few examples among

many that could be offered.

1. **The Hope of the World:** Political ideologies such as Marxism strive for a utopia and view their political programs as saviors of the world. Thus, as Christians, we must never neglect the most important political assembly of all—the Church of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of the Kingdom is the sole hope of the world.
2. **The Sanctity of Human Life:** Sadly, many Americans see no inherent value in human life. Thus, as Christians, we must never cease to remind our fellow citizens that all human beings are created in the image of God, from the moment of conception. We must be pro-life from womb to tomb, rejecting political agendas that promote abortion, euthanasia, and physician-assisted suicide.
3. **The Importance of Law and Order:** An increasing number of Americans undermine the enforcement of law and order. But God ordained government for the very purpose of achieving public justice through lawmaking and law enforcement. Thus, we must resist movements that seek to defund the police, ignore immigration law, or otherwise flout

public justice.

4. **The Necessity of National Defense:** God gives the government the power of the sword and calls it to protect the nation from encroaching enemies. Therefore, we must support our nation's warfighters and defend the homeland.
5. **The Divine Design of Gender:** In a gender-confused society, the church must advocate for policies that honor the truth that God alone defines gender. There are two genders—male and female, created in his image. God's design is not only true, but it is also beautiful and leads to human flourishing.
6. **The Primacy of Marriage and Family:** For the past seventy-five years, our nation has increasingly undermined marriage and family, the most basic institution in creation and history. We have encouraged sexual immorality, threatened parental rights, and redefined marriage. Thus, even in the face of enormous social pressure, we must continue to uphold God's design for marriage and family.
7. **The Priority of Religious Liberty:** Our Founding Fathers had the foresight to view religious

liberty as the “first liberty,” the freedom that enables all other freedoms. Yet, in our day, progressives continually elevate nondiscrimination over religious liberty, seeking to punish Christians for our beliefs about sex and gender. Therefore, we must stand our ground, affirming the right of every American to align their life with their deepest convictions and to do so without fear of reprisal.

By standing our ground on issues such as these, we uphold our calling as Christ’s ambassadors and advance the Kingdom.

CHAPTER TWO

RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTS A NATION

What makes a nation great? Is a nation's greatness defined in its military, economic, or political power? The Bible tells us that the greatness of a nation is defined by her character. In Proverbs 14:34 we read, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." This was a seminal verse used by America's founders to help them develop a political theology that would give birth to generations of flourishing here in America.

GOD'S PROMISE TO EVERY NATION

In Proverbs 14:34 there is a very clear promise to the nations. Righteous nations will be exalted, meaning they will be lifted up and will experience divine blessing; but that promise is paralleled with a curse. Nations defined

by sin will be a reproach, meaning they will be disgraced. There's not a third option. There's no middle ground. Nations will either be lifted up or taken down on the basis of their commitment to public righteousness. A nation will either be blessed or a nation will be disgraced.

Some believe that this promise only applies to Israel. How do we know that's not true? If the author wanted us to understand that this verse only applies to Israel, he would have written, "Righteousness exalts Israel." But I believe there is even a stronger argument. Let's look at the original language. The word for nation is *goy*, and the word for people is *goyim*. These words are used to describe nations and people groups in general, not a particular nation. The author is declaring that this divine promise is not just for Israel, but for all nations regardless of time and geographical location, including America.

God is the supreme ruler and judge of the nations. He alone has the power to exalt nations and he alone has the power to bring nations down in disgrace. He did it to Israel, he did it to Assyria, he did it to Babylon, and he did it to Egypt. And do not think for one second that God is not more than capable of doing it right here in America. That's why Abraham Lincoln said in his second inaugural address:

Yet, if God wills that it [Civil War] continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk and until

every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago so, still it must be said, “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

Lincoln understood that righteousness in the public square results in exaltation and sin in the public square results in reproach. True greatness is not measured in a nation’s military, economic, or political power, but measured in her character—a nation that celebrates righteousness. Those who are students of history know that the American colonists had neither economic, military, nor political power, yet they went up against the greatest superpower the world had ever seen, the British Empire. There’s only one reason for their victory: the providential hand of Almighty God, and men and women who loved righteousness more than they loved sin. It is the promise of God to the nations regardless of time and geographical location. He will either raise this nation up or he will tear it down on the basis of her character.

THE STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

What is the standard of righteousness that exalts a nation? We’ve heard a lot of talk recently that the standard of

righteousness to be followed is defined by humanity or by the government. No, the standard of righteousness to which we must bow is found in the Bible. God is righteous and his righteous standards are revealed in his Word. Righteousness according to God isn't relative. Whether it's Israel or America, the standard of righteousness can't be redefined. It is unbending. It was the standard of righteousness 2,000 years ago and it is the standard of righteousness today in the 21st century. The American founders understood this. Our founding fathers understood that if rights and laws are not grounded in God's unchanging standard of righteousness, then they are doomed to fail. Therefore, many of them stood firmly on their theological convictions, allowing them to shape public policy.

It is not opinion, but it is fact that Christianity served as the predominant worldview to establish the United States of America. This is so because our founders understood that the righteous standards of Almighty God are absolute and timeless. Their beliefs translated into a public and political theology that shaped the public square in 1776. This gave birth to a nation that stood for God's righteousness and resulted in unprecedented blessing—a nation that was truly exalted. Listen to these prominent voices from America's founding generation:

- President John Adams said, "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

- George Mason of Virginia said, “The scourge of slavery will bring the judgment of heaven on a country.”
- Rev. Thomas Baldwin said, “A virtuous people will always be free and happy.”
- Rev. Daniel Clark Sanders said, “That public prosperity pervades every part of an empire when its members are knowing, virtuous, and pious.”

The list goes on and on. Our nation’s founding fathers and founding ministers understood that if this nation were to be blessed, righteousness must be demonstrated in a public square that shapes public policy for the glory of God. A nation that flourishes is a nation that is rooted and grounded in righteousness.

But do you know what our problem is today? It’s this: we’re no longer a nation defined by the righteous standards of God’s Word. Instead, we are a nation that murders millions of babies in the name of choice and reproductive rights. We’re a nation that rejects the central American idea that our rights are inalienable and God-given. We’re a nation that mocks states that are attempting to put the Ten Commandments back into the classroom. We’re a nation that has taught our children for decades that they are a cosmic, evolutionary accident. We’re a nation that says gender is just a social construct. We are a nation that has more days to celebrate homosexuality

and transgenderism than days to celebrate the very birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the real state of our union.

Does all this of depress you a bit? It should. Recall what the proverb says: “sin is a reproach to any people.” This means that we feel the shame and the disgrace as a nation. When public theology rooted in scripture forms our public policy, the nation flourishes. But when sin shapes our public policy, we are a reproach. We will then experience shame and disgrace in the absence of the blessing of God. There is only one standard of righteousness that leads to the exaltation of a nation.

AGENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

So who are the agents of God in advancing righteousness in the public square? God has exalted Jesus and seated him on the heavenly throne where he is currently reigning and ruling all things—but he is reigning and ruling through God’s people. This means that Christ’s followers, in the midst of an ungodly nation facing disgrace, are the ones who have been called to be agents of righteousness. In Matthew 5:13-14, Jesus gives his church a clear calling:

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for any-

thing except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden."

We are to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a city on a hill. These are all phrases that do not describe the toxic escapism that we find in the church today. This escapism tells us that our ultimate goal is to get saved and hope that God takes us up to heaven as quickly as possible. No! Once we're saved, we're now the very agents of God's righteousness. We are salt, agents of life and preservation in a culture of death. We are light, agents bearing the light of the Gospel of the Kingdom into the midst of darkness. We are a city on a hill, agents who build the city of God in the midst of the city of man.

As Jesus starts to attract followers, he never says, "Now, pay no attention to this world." He teaches that his Kingdom is not of this world; therefore, go shape this world to look more like the Kingdom of God. He doesn't call them to forget about the Roman Empire. He calls them to go into the Roman Empire and transform every square inch as agents of righteousness. When we get to the Great Commission in Matthew 28, does Jesus say, I'm ascending to heaven, come with me? No. He says, Go into that world—that dark, dangerous, idolatrous, and ungodly world. Go into the pagan Greco-Roman world and *disciple the nations*. Not simply disciple individuals, but disciple the nations so that the nations might understand

the righteousness of God and experience shalom. This has been the hope of the world for 2,000 years. In the midst of an unrighteous world, we serve as agents of righteousness—salt, light, and a city on a hill.

CHAPTER THREE

A CALL TO ACTION

So how do we respond as Christian Americans in the 21st century?

First, we need to recover a biblically informed understanding of Christian patriotism. You can be both Christian and patriotic, in that order. When Jesus and his Kingdom inform our politics it should result in a Christ-exalting vision of what it means to love God and love country. Yes, my ultimate allegiance is to Jesus and his Kingdom, but I love my nation enough to want God's righteousness to be manifest in the nation of which I'm a citizen. I love my American neighbor enough to make sure they understand the truths of God's law are the only means by which this nation might flourish yet again.

My patriotism does not undermine my first allegiance to Jesus. Here's an illustration. I love my wife and my children. I am deeply loyal to them. But my close friends would never question my loyalty or my allegiance to Jesus. My ultimate love for Jesus compels me to love

my family with joy. In the same way, our love for Jesus should compel us to love and celebrate this nation, even in the midst of her imperfections. We can love this nation, honor the men and women who have fought for freedom, and celebrate our unique traditions. It is a false dichotomy that we have to either love God or love country. We can be a grateful people who joyfully entrust the true story of our nation to the next generation. The American story is far from perfect, but it is beautiful and worthy of our efforts to pass it down to our children and grandchildren. We need to pursue a love of country that confronts evil and injustice in the public square, and embraces the reality that Christianity, more than any other worldview, shaped the founding of this nation.

There are two pillars in church history that modeled Christian patriotism. They were great theologians and leaders of the Protestant Reformation—John Knox and John Calvin. No one would ever question their ultimate allegiance to Christ and his Kingdom. Nobody would ever question John Knox and his longing for the gospel to go out from his native Scotland and reach the far corners of this world. But he did challenge the Queen of Scotland to submit to the truth of God’s Word. Under a death warrant from the Queen he cried out, “Give me Scotland or I die.” He wanted his nation to be transformed and exalted through righteousness. His love of God compelled him to appropriately love his nation.

John Calvin was a native of France. Like Knox, no one questions his commitment to the good news of the

Reformation spreading to the nations, but this did not prevent his deep love and affection for his native land. Calvin sent missionaries all over the world, but he sent 1,300 missionaries to France to share the Gospel of the Kingdom with those who were living in darkness. He would often secretly visit with the hope that the truths of God's Word would transform France. The patriotism of Knox and Calvin was never in conflict with their mission to the world. Likewise, we can appropriately love both God and America.

Second, we need to understand that we are in a spiritual battle for the soul of our nation. Will it remain one nation under God? In order to recapture the soul of the nation, we need to be praying for revival. Do you know what great event happened in this nation prior to 1776? The Great Awakening. Through the gospel preaching of ministers like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, the Great Awakening brought true revival to America. These ministers called people to repent and stand for righteousness in both private and public. This laid the foundation for the birth of a new nation. We need to understand that the very thing that gave birth to this nation began with the people of God repenting and celebrating righteousness in the public square. We need to be praying for another Great Awakening to sweep across America again. If we want to see cultural and political transformation, we first need to see spiritual transformation and revival.

Third, we need to vote for policies and leaders that will best fight for righteousness in our nation. I can't

emphasize the following strongly enough. A political election is not ultimately a decision between right versus left. It is a decision between right versus wrong. Unfortunately, I have heard many pastors claim that voting is simply your civic duty and not your biblical duty; they then conclude that it's permissible not to vote. This is both nonsense and unbiblical. It is our biblical duty to vote in every political election. It is one way we love our neighbor well and exercise our dual citizenship in both the Kingdom of God and America. We go to the ballot box electing imperfect candidates who will best fight for righteousness in America. Currently there are roughly 25 million eligible evangelicals that are not registered to vote in this nation. Voting is our biblical duty, not just our civic duty.

Fourth, we must reject the modern claim of the separation of church and state. Some of you may bristle at the assertion that the proper place of God is in the public square. You might ask, "Doesn't the U.S. Constitution call for the separation of church and state?" Yes, but not in the way we've been taught. Our Founders envisioned the wall of separation to keep the state out of the church, not the church out of the state.

The much-abused basis of the now wrongly defined separation of church and state lies in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. It reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," before similarly prohibiting Congress from "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably

to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” The reason the First Amendment, like the other nine amendments in the Bill of Rights, exists is this: several states refused to ratify the U.S. Constitution (i.e., be part of any country governed by it) without it. States insisted on a written guarantee that the federal government would not usurp the authority of states to make laws affecting religion.

Thomas Jefferson himself (who used the now hijacked “wall of separation of church and state” metaphor in an 1802 letter) stated plainly that the Constitution’s “wall” is to keep the federal government out of the way of states and churches. In his second inaugural address, Jefferson wrote,

In matters of religion, I have considered that its free exercise is placed by the constitution independent of the powers of the general [i.e., federal] government. I have therefore undertaken, on no occasion, to prescribe the religious exercises suited to it; but have left them, as the constitution found them, under the direction and discipline of state or church authorities acknowledged by the several religious societies.

In other words, the “wall” prohibits the federal government from swerving into the lane of state governments,

which alone hold “power to prescribe any religious exercise . . . as far as it can [rest] in any human authority.” When Jefferson coined the phrase “a wall of separation between church and state,” he was writing a mere political thank-you note to Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut, “to strike back at the Federalist-Congregationalist establishment in Connecticut for shamelessly vilifying him as an ‘infidel’ and ‘atheist’ in the recent campaign,” as American University professor Daniel Dreisbach points out.

History that predates the United States provides hundreds of years of precedent, demonstrating how the church engaged with the state in ways that helped shape Western civilization for good. Even the founding of our nation reveals that the Christian worldview is embedded in our original documents. If it weren’t for the Christian theological framework that convicted and compelled the Founders to prevent the state from overriding the authority of the church, the landscape of freedom to worship would prevent churches from operating the way they do in America today.

Christians need to reject the false claim of the separation of the church from the state and uphold the separation of the state from the church.

CONCLUSION

My family and I had an opportunity to travel to Oxford, England. While visiting, I wanted to see an outdoor site called the Martyrs' Cross. It's a very small cross on the pavement that marks the spot of the martyrdom of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley. On October 16, 1555, these leaders in the Church of England and the Protestant Reformation were burned alive because they refused to recant the biblical truth that man is saved by faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone. They were martyred for their righteous convictions but before the flames consumed them, Latimer turned to Ridley and said, raising his voice, "Be of good comfort Master Ridley and play the man; for we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."

For many centuries, England experienced the light and the heat of that candle in unprecedented ways. The sacrifices for righteousness gave rise to the British Empire, at one time the greatest superpower known to man. God exalted that nation. But I think it's fair to say that that nation has been disgraced. Several years ago, a public

official proudly declared that England was finally a secular nation. I'm afraid to say that the candle lit in 1555 has gone out. But there was another candle lit in this nation in 1776 and I fear that it's quickly being extinguished. We still have an opportunity this day, however, as the people of God to fan those flames and to ensure that the candle does not go out on the next generation.

We are called to be salt and light in America's political sphere. We must not capitulate to secular ideologies, no matter how severely we are pressured socially, legally, or economically. We must not give ground with regard to the moral law. We must not affirm or follow suit when political leaders and parties behave godlessly in the public square. We must never cease declaring that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not. And we must do so for the good of our nation and as a preview of Christ's consummated Kingdom.

We need to pray for another Great Awakening in which the American people can reimagine a nation once again in line with a biblical worldview. So may we humble ourselves, repent, seek the face of God, and never lose hope. Why? Because the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

WHY CHRISTIANS *Must* ENGAGE IN POLITICS

“The critical error to avoid is the dangerously inaccurate view that Jesus’ ministry was apolitical.” So begins Dr. Robert J. Pacienza’s fresh, new look at faith and politics. In it, he shows from scripture and history why Christians *must* engage the world of politics.

The state, he contends, is not beyond the purview of the church. Nor was it at America’s founding. “It is not opinion, but it is fact that Christianity served as the predominant worldview to establish the United States of America,” insists Pacienza.

The founders understood, he points out, that “righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” And for that reason Christians must be agents of righteousness, “salt and light,” in American politics today.



ROBERT J. PACIENZA is President and CEO of Coral Ridge Ministries, the parent organization of the D. James Kennedy Center for Christian Statesmanship. The author of *The Hope of the World: Christian Cultural Engagement in a Secular Age*, Dr. Pacienza is also Senior Pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The D. James Kennedy Center for Christian Statesmanship
is a spiritually-based outreach to men and women in positions of
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