

America was once the New Jerusalem

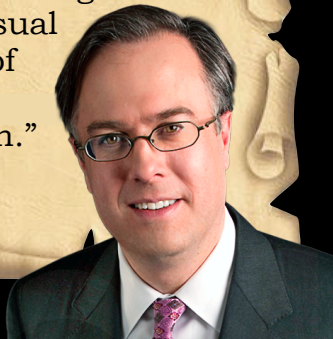
Is it becoming the New Babylon?

The number of Americans who self-identify as Christian has dropped nearly 8 points in the last 7 years. Pew Research Center survey

- If this continues, the future of Christianity in America “looks very bleak.” Rod Dreher in americanconservative.com
- The effect organized religion has had on American politics has been utterly toxic, The Christian right has tried for decades to impose its harsh, Old Testament views on the entire country with its war on women’s reproductive rights and gay marriage. In a modern world torn apart by medieval religious extremism, “who wants to be affiliated with intolerance?.” Rod Robberson in The Dallas Morning News.
- In reality, the drop has been largely associated with mainline denominational affiliation. Peter Manseau in NYTimes.com

Michael Gerson
(nationally syndicated columnist)

“We are certainly seeing the collapse of casual Christianity and of religious belief as a civic assumption.”



George Marsden
(historian)



“Liberals have learned that it’s difficult for the church to survive, if there’s nothing that makes the church distinct from culture.”

Christians have conflicting allegiances.



Matthew 22:21
“Rendering to God ...”

Citizens of the
Kingdom of
God

1 Peter 1:1
“To those who
reside as aliens ...
chosen of God”



Citizens of the
World of
humanity

Matthew 22:21
“Rendering to Caesar ...”

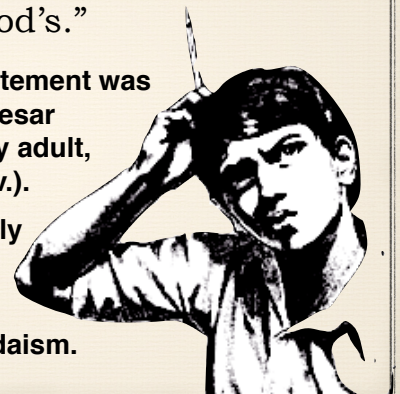


Citizens of the
Country of
residence

Matthew 22:21

“Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

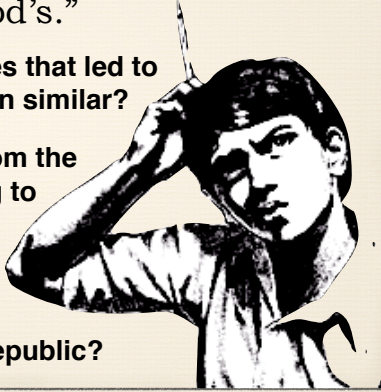
- The context of this statement was the (flat) poll-tax to Caesar (a day’s wage for every adult, to fund the Roman gov.).
- It was disproportionately punitive to the poor.
- It led to the origin of the Zealot party in Judaism.



Matthew 22:21

“Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

- Were the circumstances that led to the American revolution similar?
- How much injustice from the state was Jesus willing to tolerate?
- What do Christians owe Caesar when the state is a democratic republic?



What does the Bible say about Social Ethics?

1. Parochial

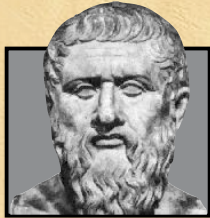
The attention is given to the inner dynamics of the covenant (faith) community rather than the culture outside the church.

2. Pacifist

The posture before the outer (secular) political world is one of peacemaking, and submission rather than revolt or reform.

3. Personal

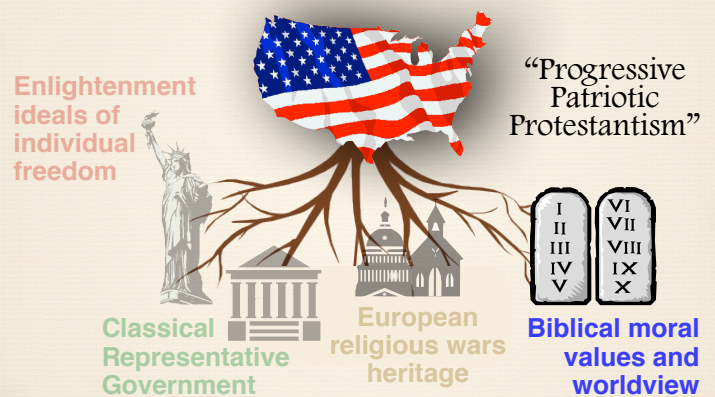
Ethics focuses on the inner heart, the individual soul, and interpersonal relationships rather than political revolutions, movements, or systems.



Plato

“The penalty good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.”

1. Rendering to Caesar in America means involvement in shaping public policy.



What do Christians owe the state?



Support
Submit

and yet
and yet



Separate
Scrutinize

Christians Shape the culture
by their example as Salt and light
that they let the world taste and see.

Matthew 6

“¹³ **You are the salt of the earth**; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. ¹⁴ **You are the light of the world.** A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ **Let your light shine before men** in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

John 17

"¹⁸ As Thou didst send Me into the world, **I also have sent them into the world.** ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for **those also who believe in Me through their word;** ²¹ that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. ²² And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ I in them, and Thou in Me, **that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me,** and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me."

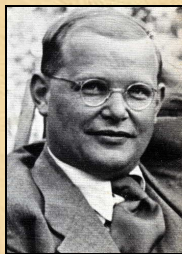
- Disciples were not to withdraw from the world.
- Jesus' model was not military or political.
- Christian witness was to be through relationships within the faith community.

1 Corinthians 1

"²⁶ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and **God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,** ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, ²⁹ that no man should boast before God."

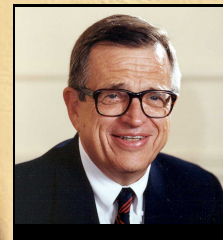
- Jesus and his disciples generally worked outside the halls of political / military power.
- And when they did have (the world's) power, they took the role of a servant - using kingdom power.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer



"To believe the promise of Jesus that his followers shall possess the earth, and at the same time to face our enemies unarmed and defenseless, preferring to incur injustice rather than to do wrong ourselves, is indeed a narrow way."

Charles Colson



"Christian patriots spend more time washing feet than waving flags."

2. Respect the conflicting voices that are deeply embedded in American culture.

"a secular state"



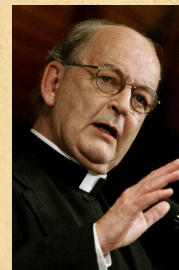
**Man
centered**
Secular pluralism

"with the soul
of a church"



**God
centered**
Biblical revelation

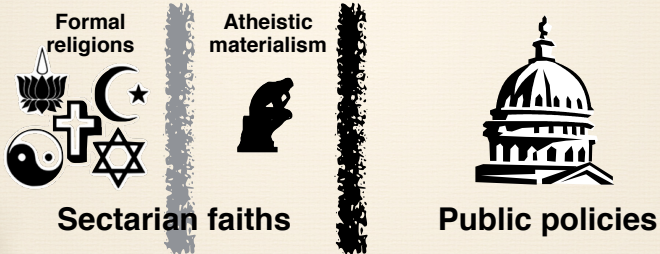
Richard John Neuhaus



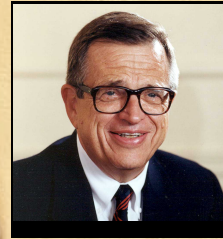
"What we have so often in modern political and religious discourse are communities of differing world views speaking past each other without ever making meaningful contact."

Separation of state from any one **religious sect**

Some wrongly believe that atheism is not a faith and therefore is tenured into public policy.



Charles Colson



"The Supreme Court's working definition of religion, "A sincere and meaningful belief which occupies in the life of its possessor a place parallel to that filled by God."

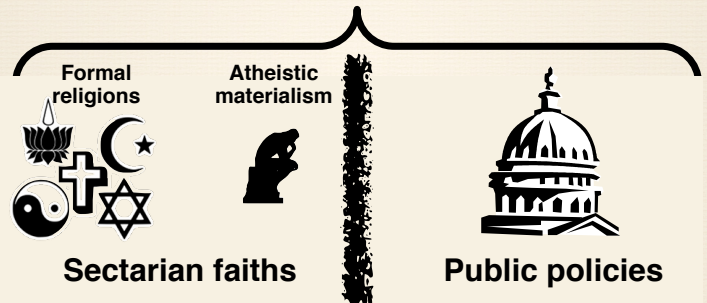
Jim Wallis
(evangelical social activist)



"Some people believe the alternative to bad religion is secularism, but that's wrong. The answer to bad religion is better religion – prophetic rather than partisan, broad and deep instead of narrow, and based on values as opposed to ideology."

Separation of state from any one **religious sect** is not the same as separation from any notion of **transcendent spiritual authority**.

Sacred Canopy - Generic god - General religion



The American model (between England and France)



Union of one religious sect and state

Separation of all religion from public life

Christians & Politics

The Left

Believe the Founders were more like the French

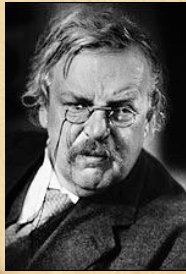
Call for radical separation of state from any religion or external authority.

The Right

Believe the Founders were more like the British

Call for common law "Biblical" ethics to be tenured into national, public life.

G. K. Chesterton



"The poor have sometimes objected to being governed badly;

the rich have always objected to being governed at all."

How do we try to remove the tension?

Little separation

Mild separation

Full separation

Integration

Liberal

The state sets the agenda for the church

Become a chaplain for the culture

Domination

Roman Catholic

The church sets the agenda for the state

legislate Christian morality

Isolation

Anabaptist

The church is to be salt & light to the state

Affect the culture from the outside

Puritan Reformed

The church is to reform the state by infiltration

Change the culture from within

3. Appeal to common ground in civic debate.

Enlightenment



- * Reason over superstition
- * Respect for the individual
- * Common sense



Judeo-Christian

4. Challenge presuppositions.

Enlightenment

- * Natural insight only
- * The problem is external (environment)
- * The solution is external (political)

superstition
the individual
sense

- * Supernatural revelation
- * The problem is internal (sin nature)
- * The solution is internal (Spiritual)

Judeo-Christian

"American civil religion"

Robert Bellah



Freemasonry

eometry (reason)
od (religion)
nosis (righteousness)

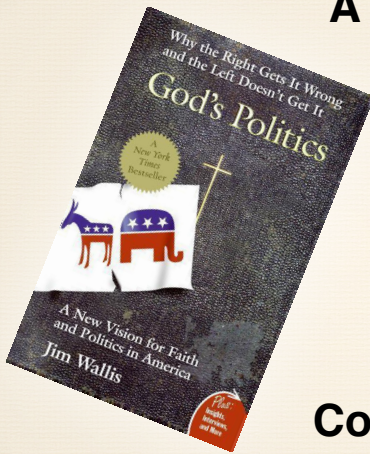
NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM,
"a new order has begun."

The essence of **rational, moral, religion**
- virtue, courage, loyalty, prudence,
truthfulness, compassion, etc.

Without a Biblical ethical spirit:

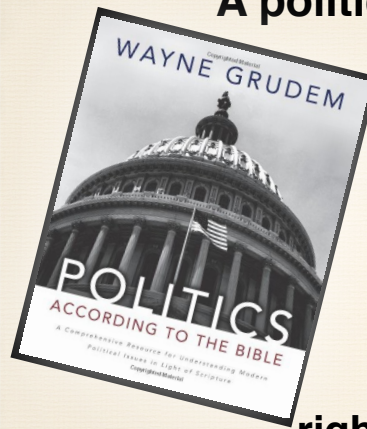
1. **Capitalism** becomes the exploitation of the poor by the rich.
2. **Democracy** becomes an endless litigation of rights or the marginalization of the minority by the majority.
3. **Pluralism** dignifies every kind of divergence as a form of creativity.
4. **Competition** without the cooperation and compassion of community is counterproductive.

A political liberal perspective



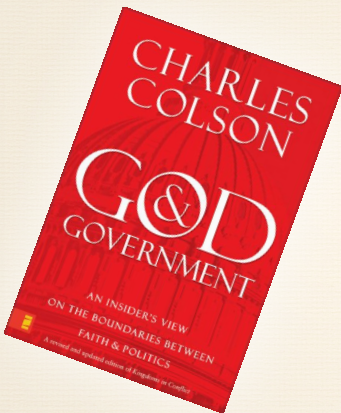
Confuses church with state

A political conservative perspective



Too often reads right winged politics into rather than out of the Bible

A politically non partisan perspective



Insightful, sensitive, & balanced

5. Model a 4G operating system.



Shape the state by appealing to:

common good - liberty & justice for all,
common goals - to reach the common good,
common ground - caring, respect & responsibility,
common grammar - facts, reason, honesty, & listening.

Being Salt and Light to the culture

1. **Build a church community** that practices social justice, courageous honesty, gracious humility, and sincere love.
2. **Model** - E Pluribus Unum (one out of many) in and through the church.
3. **Go public with your model** - let the world see the kingdom of God in action through your relationships in the world and especially in the church.
4. **Show faith, hope, and love, in your response to life** - Turn hard times, failures, and trauma into show-time, grace, and peace.
5. **Civic involvement** - You are part of the government.

Seven rules of engagement in shaping American culture through politics.

1. **Respect** one another as bearers of God's image.
2. **Work hard to listen** to those who see things from a different perspective.
3. **Built a 4G common sense OS** - common good, goal, ground, grammar.
4. **Clarify** the issues with truth not "speaking points."
5. **Prioritize** the issues with common not self interest.
6. **Fight fair** without destroying relationships.
7. **Compromise when necessary** with grace and forbearance.