



Christian Citizenship

“You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:13-16). One way to be salty and let our light shine is by being good citizens on earth. Our vocation as citizens of both the secular kingdom and God’s kingdom gives us the responsibility to proclaim God’s Word and care for our neighbors. We are called to engage the “public square” with our message of Christ’s mercy for all. Please pray for God’s will to be done... in Jesus’ name.

A Defense of Christian Culture

[What follows is an excerpt from *A Defense of Christian Culture in the Post-Pandemic Era* by Rev. Dr. Harold Ristau, president of Luther Classical College.]

Before COVID, most of us had never heard of Christian Nationalism. Due to my participation in the peaceful protests of the Freedom Convoy in Canada in 2022, which sought to halt the government overreach of pandemic mandates into Christian lives and churches, I was accused of being a Christian Nationalist by some local clergy who, instead of confessing that Christ is King of all realms of life, believed in a juxtaposition of “church” and “state.” I found the accusation laughable, as I was unaware the term existed, and I was not alone. Enemies of the Lord have made Christian Nationalism into a powerful gaslighting term, which dissuades Christians from fulfilling their vocational duties in the civil sphere for fear of becoming *persona non grata* due to their concerns about immigration, abortion, or the abuse of children through peddlers of gender dysphoria. By distorting the language employed in public discourse, the godless manipulate the parameters of discussion within it. Unaware of these political tactics, Christians cannot effectively contend for the faith.

. . . Upon closer examination, however, orthodox believers of goodwill will find that Christian Nationalism’s theological and political implications by no means fall afoul of the doctrine and practice of historic Christianity. . . . Why would a Christian dispute the value of Christian culture and its aim to ensure that Christian principles, etiquette, and values are evident in the natural law underlying any honourable society? Without these in place, civilization crumbles into barbarism. Even the new atheists appreciate the invaluable benefits of Christian civilization as the best option among all other alternatives.

. . . America’s founding fathers did not boast a rigid separation of Church and state. The iconic language was intended to protect the life of the Church from overreach by the state, and not the other way around. The outlandish argument that the Two Kingdoms somehow coexist as two self-contained silos was foreign to our fathers. Luther is clear on the Church’s mandate to pray for, rebuke, and advise the prince. The prince was required to protect the Church and the freedom to provide her services. Accordingly, faithful Christians must preserve and ever advance Christian culture in the public sphere. Without it the safety and mission of Christ’s Church on earth is at risk.

The Old and New Testaments are threaded with precedents. Whether Isaiah or Jeremiah, Joseph or David, the prophets warned government officials of the consequences of ungodly rule and kept them accountable. Luther’s distinction between two kinds of righteousness includes “civil righteousness,” which obviously assumes some level of Christian moral expression in the estate of the civil sphere. It cannot be overstated that up until the age of the revolutions in the 18th century, the notion of a radical separation of church and state was absolutely inconceivable.

. . . Whether or not we acknowledge it, all of us as citizens have religious beliefs that influence public policy and legislation at all levels of government. Those concerned that Lutherans would go too far in proclaiming God’s Word in the public sphere should consider how, according to their own descriptions of Christian Nationalism, St. John the Baptizer would come under their scrutiny. He is rightly praised as a martyr for implicitly, but not explicitly, standing for Christ. On behalf of the Church, he condemned the immoral behavior of government officials of the day, and the state executed him. Christians should rejoice in the Holy Spirit’s call to “fight the good fight of faith” (2 Tim. 4:7) even in the public sphere.

. . . Our colonies, later the States, were settled by men and women who were Christians, who came to our shores, among other reasons, because they could here spread the Gospel, erect Christian churches, and worship the savior according to His Word! Those early pioneers had their faults, of course, and I am not endeavoring to glorify something so far distant from us that its frailties cannot be seen; but for the most part,

the people who built America were outstanding in their devotion to Christ. . . . [I]n the Rhode Island Compact, the signers declare, "We submit our persons, lives, and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." In its preamble, the Connecticut Constitution pledges the settlers to help "preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ." The first article in the New Hampshire Charter begins: "We . . . in the name of Christ and in the sign of God." The oath that this instrument requires was to be administered in the name of "the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Savior of His people."

. . . There is no such thing as a neutral Left-Hand Kingdom. There is no such thing as a neutral public place.

To reject "Christian culture" as a positive contribution to "secular" public space is to welcome any number of other religious cultures to take its place. . . . There is no ideal political system, including democracy, that can perfectly protect the holy ark of the Church in her wrestles with the ways of the world, but some forms are better than others. Christendom and Christian culture are natural consequences of active and lively Christian faith at work through the gathering of sanctified praying Christians. After all, faith produces good works. To deny or discourage the cultivation of the fruits of faith in the public square is to rob the Holy Spirit of opportunities to serve and evangelize through the hands, hearts, and minds of His holy people.

What can we do? Think of ways that Christianity is intentionally being subverted. Consider that religious beliefs of one kind or another underpin political parties and policies. Ask: "What fills the dark vacuum remaining when Christian culture is chased away?" and "Which is a greater threat to the Church and society: Christian Nationalism or Christian apathy?" Read Rev. Dr. Ristau's entire article here: <https://www.gottesdienst.org/gottesblog/2025/4/22/a-defense-of-christian-culture-in-the-post-pandemic-era>

Please pray for a Christian culture... in Jesus' name.

Neopaganism for a Technological Age

Even as Christianity fades from public life, writes John Daniel Davidson, "something else is already taking its place." We are experiencing a new form of paganism, we "might call it neopaganism for a technological and digital age." We may not have temples to Zeus or

Apollo; nevertheless, a contemporary form of paganism is "one befitting our postmodern age of re-enchantment."

Davidson gives examples. "[C]onsider the exploding popularity of 'witchcraft influencers' on TikTok and Instagram. Older people might scoff at this, but they shouldn't. . . . Witchcraft is often presented, especially to young people, as a means of empowerment and identity." We might call it "therapeutic witchcraft" which is easily available online. Or, "consider our shifting rhetoric about abortion. At the time of *Roe v. Wade*, the justification for abortion was that the unborn child was 'just a clump of cells,' and ending a pregnancy was no different from getting an appendectomy." But with "advances in medical technology," mothers could see that their unborn son or daughter was, indeed, human and very much alive. So, for a while, society was told to help "make abortion safe, legal, and rare." Today, a woman is told: "Shout your abortion." There is no denying that the baby is a living human being who can feel pain. Yet, the culture now embraces a new form of slavery. "We believe that, in order to vindicate the rights of women, an entire class of people must be denied all rights, including the most basic right to life. Put bluntly, abortion today is not just a new form of slavery; it is also a new form of human sacrifice, which has always been a feature of pagan societies."

The "pagan worldview is an almost perfect inversion of the Christian one. Instead of a transcendent, almighty God ruling over all His creation, the pagan mind posits a multitude of immanent gods populating our world in the here and now. Instead of objective morality based on the givenness of creation and a fixed moral order, the pagan ethos demands moral relativism appropriate for a world where what is right and true is contingent. Instead of seeing each person as a creature with inherent dignity, created in the image and likeness of God and therefore equal in his human nature before God, the pagan believes in natural and fundamental inequality, and sees no reason why the strong should not rule over and exploit the weak." (Excerpted from "America After Christianity: Neopaganism's Dark Enchantment" by John Daniel Davidson. Read the full article in the May/June 2025 issue of *Touchstone*.)

What can we do? Ask: What happens when Christian civilization is not replenished? How does a de-Christianized society guard human dignity and love for our neighbor? Why does an American Republic require the Christian faith? Why does society need "a God who knew the way out of the grave" (G.K. Chesterton)?

