



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.

The Church: Faithful in Battle

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In ***The Covid Apocalypse***. Dr. Aaron Kheriaty joins three theologians for a 45-minute panel discussion that should be heard by God’s people in preparation for what is sure to come. Highlights include:

- + People said: Be a Christian! Love your neighbor and social distance! Wear your mask! Get a shot! But that left our neighbors alone, frightened, anxious, hungry, poor, and more vulnerable.
- + Touch the leper. Feed the hungry. Care for the lonely. Suffer--as Jesus did--for the sake of Truth.
- + Jesus did not isolate Himself from our sin, but entered into and took on our sin, illness, and burdens.
- + Delegate anxiety to the individual, not to bureaucracy.

- + We are to fear God, not the emperor.
- + What happened to our belief that Christ is Lord over all?
- + It is evident that many Christians do not believe in the doctrine of original sin.
- + The Church must not compromise with the spirit of the age.
- + What is the Church willing to negotiate? What is non-negotiable?
- + The Church failed by not insisting on the administration of Word and Sacrament to the sick and dying in hospitals and care centers.
- + If the Church, in principle, does not have the capacity for civil disobedience, then the Church does not have a mission given to it by a much higher authority than the state.

What can we do? Visit the Biblical Frame, the Substack of pastors and theologians, and listen to “The Covid Apocalypse:”

<https://abiblicalframe.substack.com/.../the-covid...> Share this panel discussion with your pastor and elders, adult Bible class, and congregational small groups. Follow this first dialogue with a second by Kheriaty and Farrow entitled “Deliverance Through Death From Death” which reminds the Church that when the world threatens control through death, we need not fear
https://aaronkheriaty.substack.com/p/conversations-theological-reflections?publication_id=491610&isFreemail=true
Pray for your pastor and elders, seminary professors and church leaders, and all in your Christian community who endeavor to help the Church be faithful to the Word of God in this time of spiritual warfare.

Please pray that the Church will fear and love God before all else... in Jesus’ name.

Fear God, Honor the Emperor

In 1994, Richard John Neuhaus and Chuck Colson founded the ecumenical group, Evangelicals and Catholics Together. In November of 2022, *First Things* published a statement by this group titled “Fear God, Honor the Emperor.” It begins:

“Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement urged resistance to laws that enforced racial discrimination. They appealed to natural law and God’s law, with the aim of reforming our civic order in accordance with transcendent standards. In our time, the rule of law denies nature and usurps the authority of God, making the powers of this world into the supreme lawgivers. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court took political possession of the institution of marriage, redefining it so that men may marry men and women may marry women. . . . More recently, the Court adopted the view that men who wish to be regarded as women, and women who want to be seen as men, must be accorded protection against discrimination.”

The “refusal to recognize divine authority puts Christians, and all citizens, in a perilous position. For when transcendent truth is denied, whether natural or revealed, the once fitting and proper instruments of civil authority become absolute. They are deified as all-powerful idols.

“[With no appeal to God’s divine authority, society] sponsors a regime that privileges—and at times imposes—its purely immanent and this-worldly projects and ambitions. . . . Our social policies must pay homage to the sovereign self, even if it means violating the sanctity of life and denying the moral truth inscribed upon our bodies as male and female. On the other hand, the regime accords our bodies a defining role. Powerful ideologies concerning race, intelligence, and sexual desire insist that we are defined by our biology.

“This seems a contradiction: A self-chosen identity that denies the authority of the body is privileged alongside an identity politics that accords the body supreme significance. But these two understandings of identity have in common a repudiation of transcendent authority. The expressive self rejects the demands that moral truths place on our freedom; God’s creation must not hinder self-creation. Identity politics rejects God’s transcendent call and bids us accept our place in the prisons of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

“[But,] we are not simply bodies; the human person is stamped by the image of God [Genesis 1:27]. . . . [N]either are we purely spiritual beings who transcend our physical condition. Our souls animate our bodies, which are formed in accord with the divinely ordained difference between men and women. We are at once capable of transcendence and firmly rooted in God’s creation.

“When political authority no longer serves something deeper—the moral order—or something higher—the promise of transcendence—it becomes sheer power. . . . In a world unable to acknowledge the laws of nature and nature’s God, traditional limits on state power fall away—and without moral authority or divine authority to anchor human affairs, we turn to the state as our only hope, inviting it to become all-powerful in order to hold everything together.”

. . . “The Church has functioned in a remarkable variety of regimes. There is no Christian system of government. Nevertheless, Scripture and the Christian tradition offer a general account of the legitimate purposes of civil authority. . . . St. Paul explains that governmental authority is ordained by God for the sake of restraining sin: to promote moral conduct and punish immoral conduct. . . . If the rule of law perversely turns against morality and justice, civil disobedience may be required, and even rebellion may be justified. But if temporal power is used properly, Christians are called by God to be the most loyal of citizens.” (Excerpted from “Fear God, Honor the Emperor,” *First Things*, November 2022.)

What can we do? We are to fear God and honor the emperor; if we fear the emperor, we cannot honor God. “In our time, the most pressing civic duty for Christians is to insist upon the lordship of Christ. We must witness against the idols of this world. As was the case in the early years of the Church, when the cult of the emperor demanded loyalty, so today our most powerful witness will be the act of refusal.” We are called to be witnesses of Jesus who “teaches that we cannot serve God and Mammon (Mt. 6:24). And we cannot serve God and Health. Or God and Utility. Or God and Progress. Or God and Science. We must hear anew that God alone claims us: Our Lord wants us entire[ly:] heart, mind, and soul.”

Please pray for the discernment and courage of the Holy Spirit, that we remain faithful to Almighty God who judges all... in Jesus' name.

