

THE BROAD ROAD IN CHRISTIAN CLOTHING

*False Assurance, Counterfeit Conversion, Normalized Sin,
and the Biblical Marks of Saving Faith*

CHAPTER 13

CULTURE, POLITICS, IDENTITY, AND THE RIVAL KINGDOMS OF THE HEART

“Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Philippians 3:20, CSB](#)

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RESEARCH AND THEOLOGICAL NOTE

Scripture governs the theological claims in this chapter, with [Matthew 7:13-23](#) remaining the controlling warning against false assurance. The chapter follows the approved architecture of *The Broad Road in Christian Clothing* and redevelops the author’s mature work on political religion, Christian nationalism, human dignity, church-state relations, information power, conspiracy discernment, digital identity, national sovereignty, international coordination, and eschatological hope without mechanically reproducing earlier prose. Recent peer-reviewed research on Christian nationalism, polarization, conspiracy belief, social-media reinforcement, political identity, and victimhood narratives is used descriptively rather than as a moral canon. Contemporary environmental claims are treated through authoritative scientific assessments while the theological evaluation remains Scripture-first. The chapter deliberately distinguishes patriotism from nationalism, political participation from partisan captivity, international cooperation from political globalism, environmental stewardship from pantheistic or New Age spirituality, evidence-based investigation from conspiratorial certainty, and advocacy for justice from political salvation. It also rejects the opposite errors of political quietism, cynical withdrawal, fatalism, and the use of “the gospel” as an excuse for indifference to oppression, corruption, war, poverty, displacement, or abuse of power. Time-sensitive political, technological, geopolitical, and environmental claims were last rechecked on 23 August 2026. No political party, nation, race, tribe, or ideological bloc is treated as the earthly embodiment of the kingdom of God.

Abstract

Politics can become a form of false assurance when legitimate concern for justice, life, family, freedom, security, poverty, corruption, religious liberty, racial reconciliation, environmental stewardship, or human dignity hardens into saving trust in a party, nation, ideology, leader, grievance, or vision of world order. This chapter argues that the New Testament neither commands political withdrawal nor authorizes political idolatry. Civil authority is real but limited under God; Christians may vote, serve, govern, advocate, protest lawfully, pursue reform, and defend the vulnerable, but no state, movement, leader, or international system can regenerate sinners or establish the kingdom Jesus Christ will consummate. The chapter examines partisan captivity, nationalism and Christian nationalism, state worship and political messianism, ideological idolatry on the left and right, tribal and racial loyalties, patriotism, conspiracy and fear, propaganda, activism that displaces evangelism, environmental stewardship and spiritualized nature, identity politics and victimhood, competing nationalist and globalist utopias, justice without gospel, dehumanization of political opponents, and the kingdom of God as the final horizon of Christian public faithfulness. It distinguishes patriotism from nationalism, political participation from partisan captivity, international cooperation from supranational absolutism, structural justice from group-based salvation, and evidence-based investigation from rumor or unfalsifiable conspiracy. The chapter also confronts New Age and quasi-religious alternatives in which nature, planetary consciousness, manifestation, evolutionary awakening, or sacralized humanity is offered as collective redemption. Against both progressive and conservative political religion, Scripture insists on the Creator-creature distinction, Christ's exclusive saving lordship, the dignity of every image-bearer, truthful witness, limited government, justice, enemy love, and the church's transnational identity in the Lamb. The pastoral summons is not political apathy and not political capture, but public faithfulness under Christ. No flag is a cross, no party is a church, no grievance is a gospel, and no earthly victory is a ground of assurance. The believer's citizenship is in heaven and public discipleship must therefore be marked by truth, courage, humility, repentance, neighbor love, holiness, and readiness for the returning King.

Keywords: political Christianity; Christian nationalism; patriotism; political idolatry; polarization; tribalism; race; conspiracy; propaganda; identity politics; environmental stewardship; globalism; social justice; kingdom of God; false assurance

Introduction: When a Good Cause Becomes a Rival Kingdom

The previous chapter turned the sword toward respectable religious sins and insisted that opposing cultural permissiveness does not prove regeneration. This chapter moves into one of the most emotionally charged places where that lesson must be applied: politics. Here, the temptation to confuse moral seriousness with saving faith becomes unusually powerful because political questions are rarely trivial. Laws can protect life or expose it. Governments can restrain violence or become violent. Courts can defend conscience or narrow it. Public policy can feed the hungry, reward corruption, punish dissent, protect children, exploit workers, welcome strangers wisely, or abandon the vulnerable. War and peace, taxes and debt, policing and protest, schools and speech, religious liberty and state regulation, borders and displacement, technology and surveillance, land and environment all involve real neighbors and real consequences. Christians cannot dismiss public life as if loving one's neighbor ended at the church door.

Yet precisely because politics matters, it can become an idol. Idols do not need to be imaginary in order to become idols. Money is real, sex is real, nations are real, justice is real, security is real, and political power is real. Idolatry begins when a created good is asked to bear divine weight. Political idolatry occurs when a party becomes the practical interpreter of Scripture, when a nation becomes the chosen people, when a leader becomes the savior of civilization, when an ideology becomes the measure of righteousness, when defeat becomes eschatological catastrophe, or when victory becomes proof that God has vindicated "our side." It also appears when Christians assume that because their preferred coalition opposes genuine evil, the coalition itself deserves spiritual trust.

The controlling warning of [Matthew 7:13-23](#) reaches this territory with unsettling force. Jesus' final question is not whether a person voted correctly, belonged to the right historical nation, identified the most dangerous ideology, opposed the worst social evil, or joined the strongest moral movement. The question is whether that person belongs to Him. Political fidelity cannot substitute for the new birth. Neither left nor right can baptize an unregenerate heart. A person can defend unborn life and hate his neighbor. Another can march for the poor and despise the holiness of God. One can speak passionately about freedom while being enslaved to pornography. Another can denounce systemic injustice while lying, slandering, or celebrating violence. One can understand global governance risks and still be ruled by fear. Another can defend international cooperation and quietly worship managerial control. Political correctness, in any direction, is not the righteousness of Christ.

This is not an argument for moral equivalence. Biblical judgment is not achieved by mechanically blaming "both sides" in equal measure. Some policies are more just than others. Some regimes are plainly more oppressive than others. Some claims

are true and others false. Some acts violate explicit divine commands while others belong to prudential disagreement. A Scripture-first approach must retain the courage to say that an abortion, bribe, racist assault, deliberate lie, religious persecution, sexual exploitation, act of terrorism, or theft is wrong even if a favored coalition excuses it. Symmetry belongs to the standard, not necessarily to the verdict. Every side is judged by the same Lord, but the facts of a particular case may not be symmetrical.

The author's prior work has increasingly moved toward this disciplined distinction. *The Gospel According to the Age* treated political religion as the conversion of delegated public authority into a rival moral and salvific jurisdiction, while also affirming that government is a real ordinance of God with legitimate responsibilities (Sangwa, 2026a). The author's study of Christian nationalism argued that church identity can be instrumentalized by national projects and transnational political networks, but it also warned against simplistic accounts that reduce every conservative Christian public claim to authoritarianism (Sangwa, 2025a). The later essay on elite influence sharpened an evidence method that this chapter adopts directly: Christians must reject both naive trust and reckless conspiracy, distinguishing verified fact, responsible inference, contested interpretation, and speculation (Sangwa, 2026b). Work on human dignity likewise argued that law protects but does not create human worth, and that rights are strongest when joined to duties, community, and a moral anthropology deeper than legal positivism (Sangwa et al., 2026). The present chapter advances those strands by bringing them under one question: what happens when political and cultural identities become rival kingdoms of the heart?

Theologically, the answer begins with a tension Scripture refuses to dissolve. Government is both legitimate and limited. [Romans 13:1-7](#) calls governing authority God's servant for good and commands ordinary submission. First Peter 2:13-17 similarly commands honor within pagan imperial society. Yet the same Bible celebrates Hebrew midwives who disobeyed Pharaoh's murderous command ([Exodus 1:15-21](#)), records the apostles saying, "We must obey God rather than people" when authorities forbade gospel witness ([Acts 5:29](#)), and presents beastly political power in Revelation 13 when the state claims worship, coerces conscience, and wages war against the saints. The biblical Christian is therefore neither an anarchist by default nor a court theologian for the state. Authority is real because God ordains civil order. Authority is bounded because rulers are creatures and servants, never gods.

This distinction is essential to understanding political participation. A Christian may serve as a civil servant, judge, soldier, police officer, legislator, diplomat, activist, community organizer, journalist, policy analyst, or voter without betraying the gospel. Scripture contains faithful people operating inside public systems, including Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, the centurion commended by Jesus, and public officials who came to faith without being told that civic office was intrinsically unclean. At the same time, no public vocation exempts the believer from the lordship of Christ. Daniel served Babylon and Persia, but he would not stop praying. The apostles honored authorities, but they would not stop preaching. John the Baptist addressed rulers morally and paid with his life. Christian public service is not withdrawal from the world; it is service under a higher throne.

Modern political polarization makes this harder because politics increasingly functions as social identity rather than only policy preference. Research on political sectarianism describes a pattern in which opponents are not merely considered mistaken but are increasingly viewed as morally corrupt, socially alien, and threatening (Finkel et al., 2020). Media research likewise suggests that sustained exposure to attitude-confirming political content can intensify polarization, although the effects vary across platforms, populations, and measures (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021). Christian nationalism research has documented real associations between sacralized national identity and political behavior, but the field also contains important methodological and conceptual debate about how the construct is defined and whether researchers sometimes overread motivations from survey items (Saiya, 2025; Smith, 2024). These debates should make the church more careful, not less concerned. The goal is not to weaponize social science against a political outgroup. It is to understand how easily belonging, threat, grievance, and sacred language can fuse.

The strongest argument for politically intense Christianity should be stated fairly. Christians do not live outside history. Laws teach. Institutions form. Elections change policy. Persecution is political. Slavery was political. Civil rights were political. Abortion law is political. Education policy is political. Corruption is political. Christians who refuse political responsibility may leave vulnerable neighbors exposed while congratulating themselves for spiritual purity. The Bible's prophets addressed kings and economic injustice. John the Baptist rebuked Herod. Paul invoked Roman citizenship. Revelation confronts imperial power. A church that never speaks where public authority injures people may not be "above politics"; it may simply be comfortable.

That defense is correct as far as it goes. The mistake begins when political responsibility becomes political possession. The church may speak to Caesar, but it must not become Caesar's chaplain. Christians may seek laws that protect life and justice, but they must not confuse legislation with regeneration. They may love a nation, but not as the new Israel. They may cooperate internationally, but not imagine that global administration can heal the human heart. They may resist authoritarianism, but not baptize individual autonomy as the highest good. They may expose propaganda, but not answer propaganda with rumor.

They may defend victims, but not make victimhood the final identity. They may pursue environmental care, but not worship creation. They may work for peace, but not imagine history can be redeemed by diplomacy alone.

The thesis of this chapter is therefore precise: **Christian public faithfulness requires political engagement without political conversion, cultural belonging without cultural lordship, and concern for justice without surrendering the unique saving work of Jesus Christ.** Every nation, party, ideology, movement, identity category, and institution is a creaturely arrangement under judgment. None is the kingdom of God. None can justify. None can regenerate. None will survive the appearing of the King except insofar as what is true, just, and good is gathered under His reign.

The reader must therefore ask harder questions than "Which side is right?" What makes you afraid enough to excuse sin? Which political sins do you notice instantly, and which do you rationalize? Whose lies anger you, and whose lies do you call strategy? Which suffering counts as real to you, and which suffering becomes inconvenient because it weakens your coalition? Would you obey Christ if obedience cost your party an election, your movement a victory, your nation prestige, or your ideological tribe approval? If your political identity cannot be contradicted by Scripture, it has already become a rival authority.

The next chapter will develop the detailed moral framework for distinguishing explicit command, biblical principle, wisdom, conscience, and Christian liberty. The present chapter applies the necessity of that distinction to public life. Some political questions are governed by direct biblical prohibitions. Others require prudence among competing goods. Christians may disagree faithfully on tax rates, trade policy, administrative design, levels of government, particular environmental instruments, immigration quotas, military strategy, or welfare mechanisms while sharing biblical moral commitments. Treating every policy inference as a divine command produces political legalism. Treating every political question as morally neutral produces political antinomianism. The church needs neither. It needs mature disciples whose consciences are captive to Christ.

13.1 Political Christianity and Partisan Captivity

Political Christianity arises whenever Christian identity is fused with a political project so tightly that the project becomes a practical condition of belonging. The fusion can occur on the right or the left. A church may function as a campaign office with worship music, or it may function as an activist organization with liturgy. A pastor may never formally endorse a candidate yet preach as though one party contains the righteous and the other contains the wicked. A congregation may learn to infer a person's spiritual maturity from voting behavior before it knows whether that person is truthful, sexually faithful, generous, forgiving, humble, prayerful, or reconciled to Christ.

Parties are not inherently evil. In representative systems, parties aggregate interests, develop policy platforms, recruit candidates, and make collective action possible. A Christian may conclude that one party's policies better protect life, religious liberty, economic justice, family stability, national security, the poor, or another morally weighty concern. It is not idolatry to make a political judgment. It is not "division" to say that some public policies are unjust. Neutrality can itself become a moral evasion.

The danger is captivity. Partisan captivity occurs when the moral sequence is reversed. Instead of Scripture judging the party, the party teaches the Christian which parts of Scripture matter. A platform becomes a canon of selective righteousness. The believer learns to speak loudly about sins committed by political opponents and softly about the same sins when committed by allies. Corruption becomes "lawfare" when one's own leader is accused and "accountability" when the opponent is accused. Protest becomes "courage" or "mob rule" depending on who marches. Executive power becomes tyranny under the other party and necessary leadership under one's own. Deficits, surveillance, censorship, sexual misconduct, family values, free speech, immigration, poverty, violence, and truth itself can all be subjected to the same selective moral calibration.

This is precisely where Christian assurance becomes distorted. A person feels safe because he is politically "on the right side." The political tribe supplies a constant stream of sinners worse than oneself. The heart receives the Pharisee's prayer in modern form: "God, I thank you that I am not like these voters." [Luke 18:9-14](#) does not become less relevant because the moral comparison is political. The justified person is still the one who abandons self-righteousness and cries for mercy.

The strongest defense of partisan loyalty is that moral emergencies require coalition. Political systems reward organization, not detached purity. If Christians never coordinate, they surrender outcomes to those who will. That is true at the level of prudence. Coalition is often necessary. The biblical problem is not cooperation but subordination. A Christian can work with a party without allowing the party to own his conscience. Paul used Roman citizenship without preaching Roman salvation. Joseph administered Egypt without worshiping Pharaoh. Daniel served kings without becoming their prophet-for-hire.

The practical test is whether correction remains possible. Can you publicly criticize your own coalition when it lies, mistreats the vulnerable, exploits racial fear, normalizes sexual sin, protects corruption, mocks the poor, manipulates Scripture, or treats

political opponents as subhuman? Can you admit that a policy favored by your side produced harm? Can you acknowledge moral courage in an opponent without feeling disloyal? If not, the issue is no longer ordinary political preference. The political community has begun to exercise ecclesial authority over the conscience.

Pastors carry special responsibility because the pulpit can turn prudential judgments into sacred commands. Some political questions are direct applications of biblical morality. A church may clearly condemn bribery, murder, racial hatred, torture, theft, persecution, false witness, exploitation, sexual immorality, or deliberate oppression. Other questions involve prudential means on which faithful believers may disagree. A preacher who collapses those categories can bind consciences where God has not bound them. That is not courage. It is a form of legalism with a party logo. Recent work on congregational leadership in the United States likewise identifies polarization and Christian nationalist pressure as concrete pastoral challenges, while remaining context-specific rather than universally descriptive (Henderson, 2025).

Political engagement becomes healthy when it is downstream from discipleship. The Christian begins not with "What will help my side win?" but with "What is true? What does love of neighbor require? What does justice require? What facts are established? Which biblical category governs this question? What are the foreseeable consequences? Where may Christians disagree?" Sometimes those questions will lead to firm political action. Sometimes they will create tension with one's allies. That tension can be a sign of freedom.

No party died for your sins. No manifesto rose from the grave. No election result can pronounce you righteous. If partisan belonging has become one of the evidences by which you reassure yourself that you are a true Christian, return to the cross. Christ does not ask you to become politically indifferent. He asks you to become politically unowned.

13.2 Nationalism and Christian Nationalism

A nation can be loved without being worshiped. That distinction is easy to state and difficult to maintain because nations carry memory, language, sacrifice, ancestry, law, landscape, trauma, victory, and belonging. For people who have experienced colonial domination, genocide, occupation, racial subordination, or forced migration, national identity may also represent survival and recovered dignity. For citizens of stable states, patriotism may express gratitude for institutions that provide security, education, legal order, infrastructure, and freedom. Scripture does not require contempt for one's people or homeland.

Nationalism becomes morally dangerous when the nation is sacralized. At that point, the nation is no longer simply a political community deserving responsible service; it becomes a chosen vessel whose history is providentially purified, whose interests are presumed righteous, whose enemies are morally suspect, and whose political destiny is treated as part of the gospel. Christian nationalism is one form of this sacralization. The term is contested and used differently across scholarly and political debates. Recent scholarship describes multiple varieties rather than one uniform ideology, while critics of the research field warn that survey measures can sometimes be interpreted through essentialist assumptions that overstate motives (Saiya, 2025; Smith, 2024). Therefore, this chapter does not use "Christian nationalism" as a slur for every Christian who wants faith to influence public life. Influential sociological work has described American Christian nationalism as a cultural framework that fuses Christian symbols and national identity; this literature is useful but must be read alongside the conceptual cautions already noted here (Whitehead & Perry, 2020).

A more precise theological definition is needed. Christian nationalism, in the problematic sense addressed here, is the fusion of Christian symbols, narratives, or authority with a national political identity in a way that grants the nation a sacred status, treats a particular cultural form of Christianity as constitutive of legitimate citizenship, or imagines political power as a primary instrument for securing the church's religious mission. This differs from believing that law is morally accountable to God, that public officials should act justly, or that Christian citizens should influence society. There is no morally neutral state in the sense of a state without underlying visions of the person, justice, freedom, family, responsibility, and the good. The question is not whether moral commitments will shape law. The question is whether the church will confuse its transnational identity with a particular nation and whether coercive power will be mistaken for the power of the gospel.

The strongest defense of Christian nationalism begins with several truths. Nations need moral memory. Laws reflect values. Religious heritage can shape public institutions for good. A purely procedural state cannot avoid substantive judgments about dignity, sexuality, family, life, speech, education, and justice. Secularism can itself become aggressive and can marginalize religious reasoning while pretending to be neutral. Christians are therefore right to resist the claim that faith must be reduced to private sentiment.

But those truths do not establish that any modern nation is the covenant people of God. The New Testament expands the people of God across national boundaries around the crucified and risen Christ. Revelation celebrates a redeemed people from every tribe, language, people, and nation ([Revelation 5:9-10](#)). Peter applies covenantal identity language to the church as a people called out of darkness, not to the Roman state in which they lived ([1 Peter 2:9-12](#)). Paul can love his fellow Israelites

intensely while insisting that saving membership is defined in Christ rather than by ancestry ([Romans 9:1-8](#)). [Galatians 3:28](#) does not erase ethnicity, but it removes ethnicity, class, and sex as grounds of covenant superiority in Christ.

This is why a "Christian nation" is an ambiguous category. A country may be historically shaped by Christianity. Its laws may reflect biblical moral influence. A majority of citizens may identify as Christian. Its constitution may recognize God. None of those facts regenerates the population or transforms the state into the church. Chapter 3 already warned that nations are not born again. The present point is political: civil society and the covenant community have overlapping members but distinct identities, means, and ends.

The author's earlier research on exporting Christian nationalism argued that national-religious frames can travel through media, activism, funding, and political networks, reshaping churches beyond the originating country (Sangwa, 2025a). That insight should be retained with one crucial qualification: transnational transmission does not prove a hidden centralized project. Ideas travel because actors learn, imitate, fund, translate, and adapt. The church should be alert to political instrumentalization without inventing a command center where evidence shows only networks and convergence.

The biblical danger appears when national preservation becomes morally ultimate. If protecting the nation requires lying, cruelty, racial hierarchy, torture, unjust war, corruption, dehumanization, or suppression of the gospel, the Christian must refuse. [Acts 5:29](#) sets the boundary: God is obeyed above human authority. The same is true when nationalism is directed against the Christian's transnational brothers and sisters. A believer cannot speak of a baptized brother from another nation as though the flag makes him less family than an unbelieving compatriot. [Ephesians 2:11-22](#) describes Christ as breaking hostility and creating one new humanity. Political borders remain, but they cannot become walls inside the body of Christ.

The pastoral test is simple and severe. Does national shame feel more threatening to you than the reproach of Christ? Do you interpret criticism of your nation's sins as hatred of the nation, while gladly naming the sins of others? Does your country's greatness function as part of your hope? Would you rather the church be politically powerful and spiritually compromised, or socially marginalized and faithful? The answer reveals whether patriotism has become worship.

13.3 State Worship and Political Messiahs

States ask for taxes, obedience, service, and sometimes sacrifice. In many circumstances those demands are legitimate. Scripture assumes that governments exercise coercive authority in a fallen world. [Romans 13:1-7](#) does not describe the state as optional. It describes civil authority as a servant ordered toward good and restraint of wrongdoing. First Peter 2:13-17 likewise tells believers living under a non-Christian empire to submit to human authorities for the Lord's sake, honor everyone, love the brothers and sisters, fear God, and honor the emperor. The sequence matters. The emperor is honored. God is feared.

State worship begins when that order is reversed. The state becomes more than a limited servant and takes on sacred attributes. It claims to define ultimate good and evil, demand unconditional loyalty, control conscience, rewrite truth, or determine which human beings possess worth. Political messianism is the personal form of the same temptation. A leader is presented not simply as a skilled public servant but as the one person who can save the nation, restore history, cleanse corruption, defeat hidden enemies, heal social division, or deliver a new age.

The strongest defense of strong leadership should not be caricatured. In crisis, weak institutions can cost lives. War, corruption, state collapse, terrorism, economic breakdown, or severe social fragmentation may require leaders capable of decisive action. Scripture itself praises rulers who execute justice and condemns rulers who tolerate evil. Leadership matters. Competence matters. Character matters. Christians need not pretend that every political style is equally effective.

But competence is not messiahship. The Bible is relentless in stripping rulers of divinity. [Psalm 146:3-4](#) warns against placing trust in nobles and mortal human beings who cannot save. Nebuchadnezzar's pride is humbled when imperial glory becomes self-worship ([Daniel 4:28-37](#)). Herod receives divine acclamation and is judged rather than corrected by the applause ([Acts 12:20-23](#)). Revelation intensifies the warning by portraying political power as beastly when it demands worship, blasphemes God, and coerces the saints ([Revelation 13:1-10](#)). The lesson is not that every government is the beast. The lesson is that political authority becomes spiritually monstrous when it crosses from administration into worship.

Political messianism often survives through moral exemption. Supporters know that the leader is flawed but argue that the stakes are too high to care. "We are not electing a pastor" can be a reasonable reminder that public office and church office have different qualifications. It becomes a dangerous slogan when it means character is irrelevant, truth is optional, sexual exploitation does not matter, corruption is acceptable, or cruelty is justified because the leader fights the right enemies. Public office is not pastoral office, but moral agency does not disappear at the cabinet door. Proverbs repeatedly connects righteous rule with justice, truth, and protection of the weak. A Christian cannot demand moral character from an opponent and then call character irrelevant when an ally fails.

Recent social-scientific work on Christian nationalist in-group identity has examined how strong religio-political identification can shape expectations of political leaders and the willingness to overlook in-group inconsistency (Perry & Whitehead, 2025). Such findings should be interpreted cautiously and not treated as spiritual diagnosis. They do, however, illustrate a biblical reality: human beings are skilled at selective judgment when identity is at stake.

State worship can also appear without a charismatic leader. Bureaucracy itself can be sacralized. Law can be treated as the source of dignity rather than its guardian. Administrative systems can be assumed morally legitimate simply because they are legal, expert-driven, or internationally endorsed. The author's work on dignity before law argues that positive law is indispensable for protecting rights but cannot create the human worth it is meant to recognize (Sangwa et al., 2026). That distinction matters for Christians. Romans 13 does not say whatever the state commands becomes good. [Isaiah 10:1-4](#) pronounces judgment on unjust laws. Government is God's servant only in a derivative sense. It remains answerable to the God whose justice it can violate.

This is also why civil disobedience cannot be reduced either to rebellion or to personal preference. Scripture provides examples of disobedience when authorities command what God forbids or forbid what God commands. The Hebrew midwives refuse infanticide ([Exodus 1:15-21](#)). Daniel's friends refuse idolatry ([Daniel 3:1-30](#)). Daniel continues prayer despite prohibition ([Daniel 6:1-28](#)). The apostles continue preaching Christ despite official orders ([Acts 4:18-20](#); [Acts 5:27-29](#)). These cases do not authorize disobedience whenever a Christian dislikes policy. They establish a boundary at conscience under God.

The church must therefore resist two opposite errors. One is anarchic suspicion in which every state action is interpreted as persecution and every regulation as tyranny. The other is statist piety in which lawfulness is confused with righteousness. The Christian can honor office, obey ordinary law, pay taxes, pray for rulers, and serve the public while preserving a conscience the state does not own.

If your hope rises and falls with one political personality, examine what you are asking that person to do. If criticism of the leader feels like blasphemy, the category has changed. If the leader's enemies have become your enemies before you have judged their actual conduct, the heart is being catechized. Christians need wise rulers, just laws, competent administration, and courageous public servants. They do not need another messiah. One has already come, and He will return.

13.4 Left-Wing and Right-Wing Ideological Idolatry

Modern political language often arranges public life along a left-right spectrum, but Scripture did not arrive from either end of that spectrum. The Bible can affirm concerns commonly associated with the political left and condemn the ideologies built around them. It can affirm concerns commonly associated with the political right and condemn the ideologies built around them. This is not an attempt to manufacture an artificial center. The gospel is not the midpoint between two secular platforms. It stands above both and judges each according to the character and revelation of God. These labels are historically contingent and do not map neatly across African, Asian, Latin American, European, and North American political settings. They are used here as broad analytical shorthand, not as universal moral categories; Scripture, not a Western ideological spectrum, supplies the final standard.

The political left, in broad and diverse forms, often emphasizes structural injustice, material inequality, protection of marginalized groups, labor rights, social provision, environmental protection, anti-discrimination, and the dangers of concentrated private power. Christians should not dismiss those concerns simply because progressive movements may combine them with views on sexuality, abortion, family, or religious authority that contradict Scripture. The prophets denounced economic exploitation, corrupt courts, land theft, violence against the poor, and rulers who turned law into predation ([Isaiah 1:21-23](#); [Isaiah 10:1-4](#); [Amos 5:10-15](#); [Micah 2:1-2](#)). James condemns preferential treatment of the rich and the withholding of wages ([James 2:1-9](#); [James 5:1-6](#)). A Christianity that defends private morality while ignoring public theft is not more biblical because the theft is legal or respectable.

The strongest defense of left-leaning reform is therefore serious. Individual charity cannot repair every structural wrong. Laws, institutions, economic incentives, inherited disparities, discrimination, and collective practices can create patterns of harm larger than one person's intention. Scripture itself recognizes corporate consequences and unjust systems. Pharaoh's oppression is institutional, not merely interpersonal. Naboth's murder uses state procedure. The prophets address rulers and marketplaces, not only private hearts. Christians who say "only preach the gospel" as a reason never to address institutional injustice can turn a true doctrine of spiritual regeneration into an excuse for civic irresponsibility.

Yet progressive political visions become idolatrous when they treat human beings primarily as products of social structures, when liberation from external domination becomes the highest salvation, when group identity determines moral authority, when equality is pursued by denying created distinctions, when sexuality is insulated from divine command, or when the state is expected to engineer a just humanity through administration. Sin is more than an unjust structure because the architects

and victims of unjust structures alike possess hearts capable of pride, greed, lust, hatred, envy, deception, and self-justification. Structural reform can restrain evil and repair injustice. It cannot create the new birth.

The political right, again in broad and diverse forms, often emphasizes personal responsibility, family, property, social order, national sovereignty, religious liberty, market freedom, cultural continuity, limited government, and security. Many of those concerns can be morally legitimate. Scripture affirms responsibility, work, property, family obligations, lawful order, and the danger of rulers who accumulate unchecked power. It condemns theft and covetousness, praises diligence, recognizes household duties, and repeatedly warns against rulers who use power for themselves ([Exodus 20:15, 17](#); [Proverbs 10:4](#); [1 Timothy 5:8](#); [Mark 10:42-45](#)).

The strongest defense of conservative politics is likewise serious. Bureaucracies can become coercive. Centralized power can suppress conscience. Markets can create opportunity and distribute information more flexibly than administrative planning. Families and local institutions can be weakened by state overreach. National borders can serve legitimate goods of order, security, and democratic accountability. Traditions can carry wisdom that revolutionary movements destroy too quickly. Christian political thought should not treat every defense of authority, property, nation, or inherited moral order as fear or oppression.

Yet right-wing visions become idolatrous when liberty means freedom from obligation to the poor, when property becomes absolute possession rather than stewardship, when national security excuses cruelty, when markets are treated as morally self-correcting, when wealth becomes proof of merit, when family rhetoric hides domination, when nostalgia erases historical injustice, or when "law and order" means strong law for outsiders and convenient exceptions for allies. Scripture does not allow the rich to rename greed as enterprise, nor rulers to rename brutality as security, nor majorities to rename partiality as tradition.

The central temptation on both sides is utopianism. Utopian politics offers an earthly mechanism capable of resolving the human problem if only the right class, market, leader, administrative structure, cultural restoration, technological system, or revolutionary consciousness prevails. Christian theology rejects that promise not because improvement is impossible but because sin is deeper than institutional arrangement. Good institutions matter because bad institutions magnify evil. They do not abolish the need for redemption.

This is where the church must refuse selective suspicion. Some Christians can identify Marxist reductionism immediately but cannot see market absolutism. Others can identify ethnonationalism immediately but cannot see progressive coercion. Some recognize state surveillance when administered by ideological opponents and defend it when used against perceived threats. Others condemn corporate power while excusing expansive government power. The heart's bias is revealed not only by what it opposes but by what it exempts.

Faithful political judgment therefore requires issue-by-issue moral reasoning rather than ideological adoption. A Christian may agree with a progressive policy on one matter and a conservative policy on another without theological confusion. The disciple's task is not to construct a perfectly balanced political identity but to remain correctable by Scripture. If a political philosophy cannot be contradicted by the Bible, it is functioning as a rival canon.

13.5 Tribal Allegiance, Race, Ethnicity, and Culture Wars

Political identity is rarely only about policy. It is often about who "we" are and who "they" are. Tribe, race, ethnicity, language, region, class, historical memory, and religious culture can shape political loyalties so deeply that a vote becomes an act of group defense. In societies marked by colonization, genocide, apartheid, ethnic conflict, racial slavery, caste, civil war, or displacement, these identities carry wounds that cannot be dismissed with a slogan. Scripture does not require people to forget history in order to become Christians.

The Bible itself is full of peoples, tribes, languages, genealogies, lands, and communal memories. Pentecost does not erase languages; it makes the gospel intelligible across them ([Acts 2:5-11](#)). Revelation does not picture redeemed humanity as culturally colorless. It depicts a multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language before the Lamb ([Revelation 7:9-10](#)). Ethnicity is not the enemy. Ethnic superiority is. Cultural belonging is not the enemy. Cultural lordship is. Remembering injustice is not the enemy. Building identity around vengeance can be.

Tribalism becomes sinful when moral judgment bends toward the group. The wrong committed by "our people" is minimized; the same wrong committed by another group becomes proof of collective character. Corruption by an ethnic ally is tolerated because "at least he is ours." Historical suffering is used to justify present cruelty. Political appointments are judged first through kinship. Churches divide along lines Christ died to relativize. Inter marriage is treated as betrayal. Whole populations are narrated through stereotypes. In extreme forms, the neighbor becomes an obstacle to demographic survival rather than an image-bearer.

Race can operate similarly, though racial categories have distinct histories and social meanings. Christians should resist two opposite errors. The first is colorblind denial that refuses to acknowledge documented patterns of racial injustice because speaking about race feels politically uncomfortable. The second is racial essentialism that treats moral insight, guilt, innocence, or worth as inhering in a racial category itself. Scripture allows neither. It recognizes partiality and oppression, commands truthful judgment, and grounds human dignity in creation rather than race ([Genesis 1:26-27](#); [Acts 17:26](#); [James 2:1-9](#)).

The strongest defense of identity-conscious politics is that injustice often becomes visible only when those who experience it can name the pattern. Group categories can help measure discrimination, trace historical exclusion, mobilize protection, and correct institutions that treat individual cases as isolated. This is a real public good. A society cannot repair what it refuses to see. Christians should therefore be cautious about dismissing all group-conscious advocacy as divisive.

But identity analysis becomes a rival gospel when it supplies ultimate innocence to one group and ultimate suspicion to another, when inherited group membership becomes a moral verdict, or when reconciliation is impossible because grievance must be preserved as identity. Social-psychological research on intergroup conflict has increasingly examined how victim and perpetrator identities create competing needs for agency, recognition, morality, apology, and repair (Shnabel & Ullrich, 2026). Such work does not settle theology, but it helps explain why groups can become locked in "competitive victimhood," each reading recognition of the other's suffering as a denial of its own.

The gospel addresses this without trivializing injustice. Zacchaeus' encounter with Christ produces restitution, not denial ([Luke 19:1-10](#)). Reconciliation does not mean the powerful say "we are all sinners" to avoid accountability. Biblical repentance names concrete wrong, makes repair where possible, and rejects favoritism. But reconciliation also refuses to make inherited hostility permanent. [Ephesians 2:14-18](#) presents Christ as our peace, not because social difference vanishes but because the cross destroys hostility and creates a new people.

For readers carrying wounds from genocide, ethnic cleansing, civil war, racial terror, displacement, political imprisonment, or communal violence, this call to reject vengeance must never be turned into pressure to forget, reconcile unsafely, or trust unrepentant perpetrators. Biblical forgiveness does not erase truthful memory, civil justice, lament, prudent boundaries, or the protection of the vulnerable. [Romans 12:18](#) recognizes that peace is pursued "as far as it depends on you"; peace is not always fully within one party's control. The gospel frees the wounded from being ruled by hatred without requiring them to call evil good, abandon lawful accountability, or expose themselves again to preventable harm.

Culture wars intensify these identities by turning symbolic disputes into tests of existence. Questions about sexuality, race, history, immigration, education, language, public monuments, religion, and national memory are narrated as battles in which losing one policy means the annihilation of a people. Sometimes stakes are indeed serious. Laws can alter social norms and institutional freedoms. Yet the language of total war can form Christians into permanent combatants. Every neighbor becomes a representative of a hostile bloc. Listening becomes weakness. Correction becomes betrayal. Mercy becomes surrender.

Christ does not call His church to political naivete. He calls it to a deeper identity. The Christian can love a tribe without despising another, honor ancestral memory without sanctifying ancestral sin, name racial injustice without making race salvific, and defend cultural goods without pretending culture is revelation. The cross creates a community in which no ethnic majority can claim spiritual ownership and no minority needs political victimhood to possess dignity. The believer's primary "we" is the people purchased by the blood of the Lamb.

Ask whether your anger changes when the victim shares your identity. Ask whether evidence standards change when the accused belongs to your group. Ask whether you can confess the sins of your ancestors or community without feeling personally annihilated. Ask whether you can honor the suffering of another people without hearing it as an accusation against your existence. These questions do not erase public policy. They reveal the kingdom governing the heart.

13.6 Patriotism Versus Idolatry

Patriotism is love of country expressed through gratitude, loyalty, service, memory, and concern for the common good. Properly ordered, it can be a form of neighbor love. A person knows the language, institutions, history, dangers, and needs of a particular place and therefore bears concrete responsibilities there. Paul can express profound love for his own people without turning that love into saving privilege ([Romans 9:1-5](#)). Jeremiah can tell exiles to seek the welfare of the city in which they live, even though Babylon is not their covenant home ([Jeremiah 29:4-7](#)). Christians need not become rootless in order to be heavenly citizens.

Patriotism becomes idolatry when the country is loved without moral limit. The distinction resembles the difference between family love and family worship. A good son can love his father and still refuse his father's sin. A good citizen can love a country

and still lament its injustice. In fact, moral criticism may be a form of patriotism when it seeks the country's good rather than humiliation.

The strongest defense of robust patriotism is that communities cannot survive on abstraction. States need citizens willing to pay taxes, obey just laws, serve in emergencies, defend the vulnerable, preserve institutions, and sometimes accept costly public duties. Cynical detachment can become parasitic. A Christian who enjoys public order while refusing every civic responsibility should not call that pilgrim identity.

Military and public service require special care. Christian traditions disagree over whether discipleship permits participation in war. Historic just-war traditions argue that force may be morally permissible under strict conditions such as legitimate authority, just cause, proportionality, discrimination between combatants and noncombatants, and last resort. Christian pacifist traditions argue that Jesus' enemy-love and the church's cruciform witness prohibit lethal violence. This chapter does not settle that intramural debate. It does insist that neither soldier nor pacifist may make his position the ground of justification. Those who serve in military, police, intelligence, or security institutions remain morally accountable to Christ. "Following orders" cannot sanctify atrocities. Those who refuse military service must likewise resist self-righteousness and continue to bear costly obligations of neighbor love.

Public service can also be corrupted by nationalism. Civil servants can become party servants. Police can become instruments of ethnic bias. Soldiers can be catechized to hate populations rather than restrain threats. Diplomats can treat truth as expendable. Journalists can become propagandists. Religious leaders can bless national power as though prayer converts strategy into righteousness. These are not arguments against institutions. They are reminders that institutions need moral limits precisely because they wield real power.

The state likewise has legitimate claims that are not unlimited. Taxes are not theft merely because citizens dislike them; Jesus and Paul both assume taxation within political order ([Matthew 22:15-22](#); [Romans 13:6-7](#)). Borders are not inherently unchristian; political communities have territorial responsibilities. Citizenship rules, security screening, public health regulations, and administrative procedures can serve legitimate goods. But legality cannot settle every moral question. A lawful policy can be unjust, and an unlawful person can still possess inviolable dignity.

The author's work on regulation of faith-based organizations in Rwanda illustrates the kind of tension Christian public ethics must hold together: states have real responsibilities for public safety, fraud prevention, and accountability, yet regulation can also become intrusive when the state effectively determines religious legitimacy through administrative criteria (Sangwa, 2025b). The lesson extends beyond one country. Religious freedom is not freedom from every law, and state regulation is not automatically persecution. The Christian question is whether regulation pursues legitimate public goods proportionately while preserving conscience, worship, doctrine, association, and institutional autonomy.

Patriotism also needs eschatological modesty. The Christian can pray for national flourishing without believing the nation must survive forever. Every border is temporary before the final kingdom. Every anthem will fall silent before the song of the Lamb. Every constitution is provisional before the judgment seat of Christ. This does not make civic life meaningless. It makes it accountable.

Healthy patriotism therefore sounds different from idolatry. It can say, "I love my country, and my country can be wrong." It can thank God for national blessings without rewriting history. It can honor those who served without sanctifying every war. It can protect borders without despising foreigners. It can pursue sovereignty without imagining moral self-sufficiency. It can criticize international pressure without assuming every foreign influence is evil. Above all, it can lose politically without losing hope.

13.7 Conspiracy, Credulity, and Fear-Driven Christianity

Conspiracies exist. Human beings sometimes coordinate secretly to deceive, exploit, commit crimes, manipulate markets, corrupt institutions, wage covert operations, hide abuse, or evade accountability. Scripture itself records conspiracies, from Joseph's brothers plotting against him to leaders conspiring against Jesus and Paul. Therefore, a Christian should not use the word "conspiracy" as a rhetorical device to shut down every uncomfortable investigation.

Conspiracy theory, however, describes a particular kind of explanatory claim about hidden coordination, and such claims vary enormously in evidence. Some later prove true. Some contain a mixture of fact and inference. Some become unfalsifiable systems in which every denial is treated as proof and every lack of evidence is explained by the conspirators' competence. The moral problem is not curiosity. It is certainty without warrant.

The author's later work on elite dialogue offers a useful discipline: begin with what is publicly verifiable, distinguish documented networks from inferred motives, and refuse to move from "these actors met" to "therefore they secretly control the outcome" unless evidence supports the causal claim (Sangwa, 2026b). This matters because elite influence is real even

when a total conspiracy is not. Policy forums, corporate networks, donors, think tanks, intelligence communities, industry associations, religious networks, media ecosystems, and international organizations can shape agendas, language, funding, access, and consensus. Influence does not require one command center. Sometimes convergence, incentives, shared ideology, professional networks, or mutual interest explain coordinated-looking outcomes better than a secret master plan.

The strongest defense of conspiracy-focused inquiry is that powerful institutions do hide wrongdoing. Governments classify information. Corporations conceal misconduct. Churches cover abuse. Intelligence services conduct covert operations. Political campaigns manipulate. Historical scandals often show that dismissive official narratives can be wrong. Christians who have learned from such cases may reasonably resist the command to "trust the experts" without examination.

That skepticism becomes dangerous when it abandons the biblical duty of evidence. [Proverbs 18:13](#) condemns answering before listening. [Proverbs 14:15](#) contrasts the inexperienced person who believes anything with the prudent person who watches his steps. [Deuteronomy 19:15](#) establishes the principle that serious accusations require adequate witness. The ninth commandment forbids false testimony ([Exodus 20:16](#)). These texts do not command institutional gullibility. They command epistemic righteousness.

Contemporary research helps explain the emotional appeal of conspiratorial narratives. A 2025 meta-analysis synthesizing 279 independent studies and more than 137,000 participants found small but significant associations between conspiracy beliefs and epistemic motives for explanation, existential motives for control and safety, and social motives related to identity and group esteem, with substantial variation across studies (Biddlestone et al., 2025). The finding should not be weaponized to dismiss every dissenter as psychologically needy. It simply confirms a pastoral truth: fear, uncertainty, powerlessness, and threatened identity can make totalizing explanations emotionally attractive.

Fear-driven Christianity occurs when discernment becomes an atmosphere of permanent alarm. Every symbol is coded. Every policy is a prophecy. Every technological change is the mark of the beast. Every international meeting is a step toward one-world government. Every unusual weather event is assumed engineered. Every public-health measure is a control rehearsal. Every opposing religious leader is an infiltrator. The believer becomes highly informed about rumored darkness and increasingly inattentive to prayer, repentance, family, work, church, mercy, and ordinary holiness.

This can create its own false assurance. "I see what the masses do not see" becomes a spiritual credential. Discernment is confused with suspicion. The Christian feels safe because he has decoded the system, though he may be proud, unforgiving, isolated, and chronically afraid. Scripture gives no assurance based on conspiracy awareness. Jesus says His sheep know His voice, not that they correctly map every hidden network.

The opposite error is naive institutional trust. Christians should investigate credible evidence of corruption, censorship, abuse, financial conflicts, surveillance, or manipulation. Whistleblowers can tell truth. Investigative journalism can serve justice. Official statements can be false. The proper Christian response is not credulity but disciplined verification: What is directly documented? What is a primary-source claim? What is corroborated independently? What is an inference? What alternative explanations fit the facts? What evidence would change the conclusion? If no possible evidence could change it, the claim has moved from investigation toward ideology.

Eschatology especially requires restraint. Revelation does present a final concentration of blasphemous political, economic, and religious coercion. Christians should therefore take seriously technologies and institutions that could facilitate surveillance, exclusion, or conscience control. But resemblance is not fulfillment. A digital identity system, international institution, currency innovation, treaty, or political leader should not be declared the beast system merely because it could be used coercively. The church has endured centuries of failed prophetic identifications. Watchfulness requires more truth, not less.

If fear has become your primary spiritual fuel, return to Christ. The final book of Scripture does not reveal the dragon so that the church will become fascinated with the dragon. It reveals the Lamb who conquers. Discernment without hope becomes another captivity.

13.8 Ideological Propaganda and Manipulated Information

Propaganda is not merely false information. It is communication strategically shaped to mobilize belief, emotion, loyalty, or action. Propaganda can contain truth, half-truth, omission, imagery, slogans, selective examples, emotional framing, and repeated associations. Governments use it. Political parties use it. Corporations use it. Activist movements use it. Religious institutions can use it. So can individuals forwarding a clip chosen precisely because it humiliates the other side.

Christians are especially vulnerable when propaganda arrives as moral urgency. "Share before it is deleted." "The media will never show you this." "If you love your country, you must act now." "Silence is violence." "Only evil people could oppose this."

"This proves everything." Urgency collapses verification. Identity supplies trust. Outrage supplies energy. The believer becomes a distribution node for claims he would never accept from an ideological opponent.

The strongest defense of partisan media is that all communication involves selection. Journalists cannot report everything. Advocates naturally emphasize evidence relevant to their cause. Movements need rhetoric, not only footnotes. Political actors must simplify complex realities for public communication. That defense is valid up to a point. Selectivity becomes deception when contrary evidence is deliberately hidden, uncertainty is erased, images are miscaptioned, statistics are stripped of context, opponents are assigned motives without evidence, or emotional reaction is intentionally engineered before facts can be checked.

Scripture treats truthful speech as a covenantal obligation. "Lying lips are detestable to the LORD" ([Proverbs 12:22](#)). Paul commands believers to put away lying and speak truth to one another because they are members of one body ([Ephesians 4:25](#)). James warns that the tongue can set a whole life on fire ([James 3:5-10](#)). These commands do not contain a political exemption. A false claim does not become righteous because it harms a wicked movement. The ninth commandment does not say, "You shall not bear false witness unless the election is close."

Research on political communication underscores how selective media environments can deepen polarization. Kubin and von Sikorski's systematic review of 94 articles found consistent evidence that attitude-congruent media exposure can exacerbate polarization, while also noting substantial methodological limitations and an overconcentration on American and Twitter-based studies (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021). This is a useful warning against both denial and exaggeration. Media effects are real but not magical. Users remain morally responsible for what they seek, believe, repeat, and reward.

Manipulated information now includes synthetic media, but Chapter 10 has already examined deepfakes, AI-generated content, and digital deception in detail. The present concern is political formation. Even true information can be used deceptively when a feed shows only crimes committed by one ethnicity, only corruption by one party, only suffering caused by one war actor, or only hypocrisy by one religious group. The result is not a direct falsehood but a constructed moral universe. What is repeatedly absent becomes psychologically nonexistent.

Christians should therefore practice informational repentance. This means more than fact-checking opponents. It means examining one's own media diet. Do you consume sources that ever correct themselves? Do your preferred commentators distinguish news from opinion? Do they cite primary documents? Do they acknowledge uncertainty? Do they report wrongdoing by allies? Do they correct viral errors after those errors served the cause? A media system that never surprises you may be informing your identity more than informing your judgment.

Where misinformation has already been spread, repentance should become visible. If you shared an accusation that later proved false, do not quietly delete it while leaving others deceived. Correct it with comparable clarity, apologize where appropriate, and repair reputational harm as far as possible. Good intentions do not convert false witness into truth. Christian credibility is strengthened, not weakened, when believers publicly correct themselves.

Pastors must take this seriously because congregations can become political echo chambers. A sermon illustration drawn from a viral claim can convert misinformation into sacred memory. A leader who repeatedly shares unverified accusations teaches the flock that zeal excuses carelessness. Conversely, a pastor who refuses to address documented manipulation because he fears appearing political abandons discipleship in truth.

The Christian duty is neither to trust mainstream institutions automatically nor to assume alternative media is more truthful because it is alternative. Truth has no party label. The mature believer asks for evidence, checks context, delays sharing, reads beyond the headline, distinguishes reporting from interpretation, and refuses the spiritual pleasure of being first with a scandal. The goal is not informational perfection. It is a heart that would rather lose an argument than win by a lie.

13.9 Activism Replacing Evangelism

Christian love has public consequences. The church that proclaims a holy God and ignores the crushed neighbor contradicts its own message. Scripture commands practical mercy, economic honesty, impartial justice, defense of the vulnerable, care for the poor, and truthful witness before rulers. Isaiah rebukes worship severed from justice ([Isaiah 1:10-17](#)). Micah joins justice, covenant loyalty, and humble walking with God ([Micah 6:8](#)). James rejects a faith that offers religious words to a hungry or poorly clothed person while withholding needed help ([James 2:14-17](#)). The good Samaritan does not conduct a theological interview before binding wounds ([Luke 10:25-37](#)). Political quietism can therefore become a pious form of indifference.

Activism, however, becomes a counterfeit gospel when it is expected to do what only Christ can do. A movement may use Christian vocabulary, invoke prophetic justice, mobilize moral outrage, and produce genuine reforms while never addressing guilt before God, the lordship of Christ, repentance, the cross, resurrection, new birth, or final judgment. The church then becomes a moral pressure group with hymns. Its members may be highly active and spiritually unconverted.

The strongest defense of activism is historically serious. Many social evils persisted partly because churches preached private salvation while tolerating public injustice. Christian involvement in abolitionist movements, campaigns against trafficking, prison reform, civil-rights struggles, humanitarian relief, anti-corruption efforts, and care for refugees has often been an expression of neighbor love. The Lausanne Covenant's insistence that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of Christian duty helped correct a false divorce between proclamation and public responsibility, while still insisting that reconciliation with God is not identical to political liberation (Lausanne Movement, 1974). That distinction remains vital.

The error is not activism. It is substitution. If a congregation can explain its preferred policy agenda with precision but cannot explain justification by faith, something has gone wrong. If a ministry's public identity is clearer on climate policy, migration, race, nationalism, abortion, poverty, or religious liberty than on the person and work of Jesus Christ, its mission is being displaced. Conversely, if a church speaks fluently about the gospel while refusing all concrete costly love, its proclamation is being contradicted by its practice.

Political activism can become especially seductive because it offers visible metrics. March attendance, signatures, policy wins, court judgments, election outcomes, grants, media mentions, and institutional statements are measurable. Conversion is less controllable. The Holy Spirit cannot be managed by campaign strategy. The cross looks weak compared with access to power. Prayer seems slow compared with mobilization. Yet the apostles did not build the church by seizing Rome. They preached Christ crucified and risen, formed holy communities, cared for the poor, confronted sin, endured persecution, and witnessed before rulers.

Acts offers a model of integrated mission. The early church proclaims the resurrection publicly, shares resources generously, cares for widows organizationally, refuses state prohibition of the gospel, and maintains discipline within the community ([Acts 2:42-47](#); [Acts 4:32-35](#); [Acts 5:27-32](#); [Acts 6:1-7](#)). Word and deed are not rivals. The gospel creates a people whose life becomes social evidence of another kingdom.

This also guards against the conservative version of activism replacing evangelism. A church can become consumed with defending religious freedom, national heritage, family policy, school curricula, anti-abortion legislation, or resistance to progressive ideology while assuming those battles are themselves evangelism. They are not. Some may be morally urgent. None can reconcile a sinner to God. Winning a Supreme Court case or parliamentary vote may protect neighbors and create space for witness. It cannot create a single new heart.

The progressive version makes a similar substitution when social liberation is treated as salvation itself. Economic redistribution, anti-discrimination law, trauma care, ecological reform, or representation may produce real goods. They cannot remove guilt, defeat death, or unite a sinner to Christ. A more just society can still be populated by unregenerate people. The Christian does not despise reform because it is incomplete. The Christian refuses to call it redemption.

Pastoral self-examination is necessary because activism can also supply righteousness by association. The person feels holy because he attended the march, signed the statement, donated to the cause, defended the unborn, served refugees, exposed corruption, protested a war, opposed censorship, or campaigned against trafficking. These acts may be good. They are not an atonement. At the judgment seat, no cause will stand as mediator.

The church should therefore pursue public justice as fruit of love, not as replacement for the gospel. Christians should be willing to advocate where advocacy is warranted, to serve where service is needed, to protest lawfully where protest is necessary, to vote according to conscience, and to accept costs for truth. But the church must continue to say what no political movement can say: the deepest human crisis is estrangement from the holy God, the only Savior is Jesus Christ, and the final liberation requires resurrection.

13.10 Environmental Stewardship Versus Spiritualized Nature

Environmental questions often become politically tribal long before they become theological. Some Christians hear climate, conservation, biodiversity, pollution, or sustainability and immediately suspect ideological capture. Others hear concern for creation and assume resistance can only come from ignorance or greed. Both reactions are too quick. Creation care is a biblical question before it is a partisan one.

Genesis begins with a world God calls good. Human beings are made in God's image and given dominion, but dominion is delegated, not absolute ([Genesis 1:26-31](#)). [Genesis 2:15](#) depicts the human vocation in the garden with language of working and keeping. [Psalm 24:1](#) declares that the earth belongs to the LORD. The law includes restraints on exploitation of land, animals, and vulnerable neighbors. The prophets can connect social injustice and environmental devastation. [Romans 8:18-25](#) places creation within the groaning and future renewal associated with redemption. Revelation ends not with the annihilation of God's creation but with new creation and the dwelling of God with humanity.

The Old Testament makes that stewardship concrete. Israel was commanded to give the land sabbath rest ([Leviticus 25:1-7](#)), to show restraint even toward fruit trees during siege ([Deuteronomy 20:19-20](#)), and not to muzzle an ox while it worked ([Deuteronomy 25:4](#)). [Hosea 4:1-3](#) even links human covenant-breaking with devastation in the land. None of these texts supplies a modern regulatory program, but together they prevent a theology of dominion from becoming permission for careless exploitation.

Christian theology has sometimes reduced dominion to license. Bauckham argues that the Bible's wider ecological vision places humans within a community of creation rather than above it as autonomous exploiters (Bauckham, 2010). Douglas J. Moo and Jonathan A. Moo similarly develop creation care from the full biblical storyline, insisting that human stewardship must be ordered to God's purposes rather than consumer sovereignty (Moo & Moo, 2018). Christians need not accept every environmental policy proposal to recognize the theological weight of those claims.

Empirical environmental questions should also be handled honestly. The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Synthesis Report concluded that human activities, principally greenhouse-gas emissions, have unequivocally caused global warming and that climate change is already affecting weather and climate extremes across regions (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023). Scientific assessments do not determine Christian ethics by themselves, and policy responses remain contestable. Yet Christians should not dismiss strong evidence merely because a political outgroup emphasizes it. Evidence about foreseeable harm matters to stewardship and neighbor love.

The strongest defense of environmental activism is therefore compelling at the level of principle. Pollution harms people. Resource depletion can burden future generations. Poor communities often have fewer resources to adapt to environmental change. Species and ecosystems have creaturely value beyond their usefulness to wealthy consumers. Governments and businesses can create externalities that private choices alone cannot remedy. Environmental regulation, technological innovation, conservation, and international coordination can all serve legitimate goods.

The strongest criticism is also serious. Environmental rhetoric can be used to justify coercive policy, regressive costs, opaque subsidies, centralized control, restrictions that disproportionately burden the poor, or symbolic measures with little measurable benefit. Climate language can become a prestige code through which institutions demand conformity beyond the evidence. Christians may disagree about carbon taxes, energy mixes, land-use regulation, international financing, market mechanisms, or the pace of transition. Such disagreements should be judged prudentially rather than turned automatically into tests of faith.

A different error emerges when environmental concern becomes spiritualized nature. New Age and related forms of contemporary spirituality sometimes speak of Earth as a living sacred organism, cosmic consciousness, divine energy, or a source of spiritual awakening. These currents are diverse, and environmentalism itself is not New Age. Hanegraaff's historical study shows how New Age spirituality often dissolves firm boundaries between God, self, cosmos, and spiritual evolution (Hanegraaff, 1996). Taylor's account of "dark green religion" likewise documents modern forms of nature spirituality in which nature itself becomes sacred or spiritually ultimate (Taylor, 2010).

The boundary is theological rather than partisan. Concern about emissions, forests, water, biodiversity, pollution, or conservation is not New Age merely because secular environmental movements also discuss those subjects. The concern becomes religious when creation is treated as divine, when humanity is urged to awaken into a higher planetary consciousness, when manifestation or impersonal cosmic energy is invoked as a means of collective transformation, or when ecological healing is presented as salvation apart from the Creator and His Christ.

Christian creation care must reject that move. The earth is sacred in the sense that it belongs to God and reveals His glory, but it is not God. [Romans 1:25](#) identifies the ancient human temptation to worship and serve what has been created rather than the Creator. A forest can evoke wonder without becoming divine. The ocean can display God's power without becoming a mother-goddess. Ecological interdependence does not erase the Creator-creature distinction. Human beings are part of creation but also bear a distinctive image-bearing vocation.

This matters because spiritualized environmentalism can become another salvation story. Humanity is cast as a species that must awaken to planetary consciousness, transcend anthropocentrism, align with cosmic energy, or enter a new spiritual age. Christian language may be blended with manifestation, indigenous spiritual motifs, goddess imagery, or evolutionary consciousness. Christians should listen respectfully to genuine ecological wisdom across cultures while refusing syncretism. The biblical hope for creation is not achieved by awakening the divine within nature. It comes through the Creator's redemptive purpose in Christ.

The opposite Christian error is practical atheism about creation. A person may reject pantheism correctly and then live as though God does not own land, water, animals, atmosphere, resources, or future generations. Waste, pollution, corruption in extraction, cruelty to creatures, and reckless consumption do not become righteous because New Age environmentalism is wrong. Romans 1 condemns worship of creation; it does not authorize abuse of creation.

Environmental stewardship is therefore best classified as a strong biblical principle with many prudential applications. Scripture does not command one modern climate policy. It does command worship of the Creator, neighbor love, justice, responsible dominion, gratitude, restraint, and accountability for what God entrusts. The Christian should neither make ecology a gospel nor make ecological care an enemy of the gospel.

13.11 Identity Politics and Victimhood as Ultimate Identity

The phrase "identity politics" is often used so broadly that it explains little. At a basic level, politics has always involved groups whose social identities shape interests, memories, and claims. Workers organize as workers, veterans as veterans, ethnic communities as ethnic communities, religious minorities as religious minorities, women around sex-specific concerns, people with disabilities around access, and racial groups around discrimination or historical exclusion. Group-conscious political organization is not inherently sinful.

The strongest defense of identity politics is that formally universal systems can hide unequal treatment. A rule can appear neutral while its history or implementation burdens some groups disproportionately. Marginalized people may need a collective voice because isolated complaints are easily ignored. Naming a pattern can make invisible suffering visible. Biblical justice does not require victims to speak only as detached individuals. Israel remembers slavery communally. The prophets address exploitation of widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor as recurring social categories.

The danger begins when identity becomes ultimate. In secular politics, the self can be reduced to a bundle of social locations whose moral meaning is defined by power. Oppression can become the master category through which every relationship is interpreted. Some groups acquire presumptive moral authority because of historical or present disadvantage, while others acquire presumptive guilt because of social location. Personal agency, repentance, forgiveness, shared creatureliness, and moral complexity can disappear beneath the taxonomy.

Christians should be especially careful with the language of victimhood. Scripture takes victims seriously. God hears Abel's blood from the ground. He sees Israel's oppression in Egypt. The Psalms give language to the afflicted. The prophets condemn those who exploit the poor. Jesus identifies Himself with the vulnerable and is Himself the innocent sufferer. Telling a victim to "stop playing the victim" can become a cruel way of protecting perpetrators.

Yet victimization is not the same as identity's final horizon. A person who has been harmed deserves truth, protection, justice, lament, and often restitution. He or she also remains more than the harm. The gospel does not demand denial of injury. It refuses to let the injurer have permanent authority to define the injured person's deepest identity. In Christ, the abused person is not merely "the abused," the refugee not merely "the displaced," the racial minority not merely "the oppressed," and the poor not merely "the poor." The believer is united to Christ, adopted, sanctified, and destined for resurrection.

Recent psychological scholarship on intergroup reconciliation explores the identity needs that can arise when groups are socially represented as victims or perpetrators. Shnabel and Ullrich (2026) show that recognition, agency, moral identity, apology, and competitive victimhood can all influence intergroup relations. Such research is helpful precisely because it warns against simple moral theater. A harmed group may need restored agency, not merely sympathy. A group associated with perpetration may respond defensively when every member is treated as morally contaminated. Reconciliation requires truth without essentializing people into inherited moral categories.

The biblical doctrine of sin also prevents romanticizing victimhood. A victim can sin. A historically oppressed group can oppress. A perpetrator can repent. A person born into a dominant group is not justified by dominance, but neither is he condemned before God by demographic category apart from personal and covenantal realities. Ezekiel 18 insists on personal moral responsibility within a context where communal consequences are real. Scripture can speak of corporate sins and inherited consequences while still refusing automatic transfer of personal guilt merely by ancestry.

This does not mean every appeal to collective responsibility is illegitimate. Institutions can inherit obligations. Governments can owe repair for policies they continue to administer. Churches can repent for institutional wrongs. Communities can benefit from unjust arrangements without personally designing them. The moral work is to define responsibility accurately rather than using collective language as a shortcut around evidence.

Identity politics becomes spiritually dangerous in churches when political categories become ecclesial identities. Christians begin to introduce themselves primarily through race, nation, gender ideology, class grievance, partisan status, or victim category. The church then reproduces the world's hierarchy of moral credibility. Paul offers another order: "you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified" ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#)). The gospel does not make embodied identity irrelevant. It places every identity under a new Lord.

The conservative reader must hear the mirror image. Majority identity can become its own identity politics. Appeals to "our people," "our civilization," "traditional families," "real citizens," or "the silent majority" can function exactly like the group

essentialism being condemned elsewhere. National or cultural victimhood can be weaponized just as minority victimhood can. A movement can build permanent grievance around demographic change, loss of privilege, censorship, or cultural displacement. The issue is not which group tells the grievance story. The issue is whether grievance has become a source of righteousness and purpose.

The gospel offers something more demanding than either denial or fixation. It permits lament, requires justice, calls perpetrators to repentance, restores agency, commands forgiveness without trivializing accountability, and creates a people whose deepest identity is received from Christ. Political identities may describe part of your history. They must not become your savior.

13.12 Nationalism, Globalism, and Competing Political Utopias

"Nationalism" and "globalism" are among the most emotionally loaded words in contemporary politics, and both are often used imprecisely. Nationalism can mean simple support for national sovereignty, a strong preference for one's national interests, ethnic nationalism, civic nationalism, or a sacralized vision of national destiny. Globalism can mean support for international cooperation, economic integration, multilateral institutions, cosmopolitan ethics, supranational governance, or a technocratic project that shifts decision-making away from local democratic control. Christians should define the claim before judging it.

The strongest case for national sovereignty begins with accountability and human scale. Governments are responsible for concrete populations. Borders can protect legal order. Local institutions often understand context better than distant administrators. National self-government can guard cultural memory, democratic participation, and religious freedom. Countries emerging from colonial rule are especially justified in resisting arrangements that reproduce external control through debt, aid conditionality, trade pressure, or policy dependency. A Christian universalism that treats sovereignty as inherently selfish can repeat imperial habits under moral language.

The strongest case for international cooperation is equally serious. Pandemics, climate systems, migration, war, trafficking, financial crime, cyber threats, aviation, oceans, trade, and humanitarian disasters cross borders. No nation can manage every transnational problem alone. Treaties, regional bodies, international courts, scientific cooperation, standards organizations, and humanitarian institutions can coordinate action that would otherwise be impossible. Christians should not confuse "global" with "evil." The gospel itself is global. The church is transnational. Cooperation among nations can be an act of prudence rather than a rehearsal for tyranny.

The danger lies in political eschatology. Nationalist utopia imagines that restored sovereignty, cultural homogeneity, strong borders, traditional morality, economic independence, or national greatness will heal the social order. Globalist utopia imagines that enlightened international law, expert administration, integrated technology, managed markets, universal rights regimes, or planetary governance will overcome conflict and irrationality. Both can identify real problems. Both become false gospels when they offer a final human solution to the problem of sin.

[Genesis 11:1-9](#) is often invoked in debates about global governance, sometimes too quickly. Babel is not a proof text against international cooperation. The sin is not that people coordinate across distance. The narrative presents a united human project of self-exaltation, technological ambition, centralized security, and the desire to "make a name" apart from obedient creatureliness. The theological warning is against collective autonomy, not against translation treaties or cross-border disease surveillance. Pentecost, by contrast, does not restore one imperial language. The Spirit proclaims one gospel through many languages ([Acts 2:1-11](#)). Biblical unity is not uniformity.

Revelation provides a more direct eschatological warning about political-economic concentration. Revelation 13 portrays coercive authority, worship, and economic exclusion converging in opposition to God. Christians are therefore right to ask hard questions about systems that could make ordinary participation conditional on ideological, biometric, financial, or political compliance. The author's earlier work on digital identity highlighted legitimate concerns about systems of identification becoming gateways to services and participation when safeguards are weak (Sangwa, 2025c). Those concerns deserve public debate about privacy, due process, decentralization, alternatives, and conscience.

But responsible prophecy must stop where evidence stops. A digital wallet is not the mark of the beast merely because it is digital. A central bank digital currency is not automatically Revelation 13. An international treaty is not a one-world government simply because multiple countries sign it. A multilateral organization is not a prophetic beast because it has global reach. Such systems can be wise or unwise, just or unjust, liberating or coercive depending on design and use. Eschatological resemblance can justify vigilance. It does not justify certainty without textual and factual warrant.

The same restraint should govern claims about global elites. Networks of corporate, political, academic, technological, media, and philanthropic influence are real. Closed-door forums can shape agendas and normalize shared assumptions. Funding can

create incentives. International institutions can exert pressure without direct democratic election. None of that should be denied. Yet it does not follow that every institution belongs to one coordinated satanic hierarchy. The author's mature evidence discipline is superior to sensational shorthand: document the network, trace the policy, identify the mechanism, distinguish influence from command, and label inference as inference (Sangwa, 2026b).

Christian political hope therefore resists both nationalist and globalist absolutism. Nations are real but temporary. International institutions can serve peace but cannot establish the kingdom. Sovereignty matters, but no nation is sovereign before God. Cooperation matters, but human unity apart from repentance can become Babel with better software.

The practical question is not "nationalism or globalism?" in the abstract. It is: Which level of authority is competent for this task? What protects human dignity and conscience? What preserves accountability? What distributes power responsibly? What helps the vulnerable without creating unnecessary coercion? What evidence supports the policy? Which goods are in tension? Christians may answer those prudential questions differently while agreeing that every authority is limited under Christ.

13.13 Justice Without Gospel

Justice matters because God is just. The Christian cannot respond to exploitation, corruption, trafficking, racist violence, arbitrary detention, theft, sexual abuse, dishonest courts, oppression of workers, or persecution by saying that earthly justice is irrelevant because eternity matters more. The God who justifies the ungodly also commands honest scales, impartial courts, truthful testimony, protection of the weak, and care for the neighbor. To preach a gospel that never reaches public wrongdoing is to preach a truncated discipleship.

At the same time, justice can be detached from the gospel and turned into a rival salvation. The language of justice is powerful precisely because it names real moral goods. Once detached from divine revelation, however, the definition of justice can be captured by ideology. One movement defines justice primarily as equality of outcome, another as individual liberty, another as national restoration, another as recognition of identity, another as law and order, another as decolonization, another as market fairness, another as ecological sustainability. Each may identify genuine dimensions of the common good. None possesses a self-authenticating definition merely by using the word "justice."

The strongest defense of justice-centered Christianity is that the gospel itself has social consequences. Jesus announces good news to the poor, liberty to captives, and the year of the Lord's favor ([Luke 4:16-21](#)). The prophets tie true worship to justice. The New Testament church practices economic generosity and refuses status partiality. Revelation judges violent and exploitative imperial systems. It would be an evasion to reduce salvation to a private feeling while social structures continue to crush people.

But the strongest biblical case for justice is also the strongest case against justice without gospel. Biblical justice is grounded in who God is, who humans are, what sin is, and what redemption requires. Human beings possess dignity because they bear God's image, not because a state or movement grants it. The author's work on human rights and legal positivism makes this point forcefully: law is indispensable as guardian of rights, but it is not the ontological source of human worth (Sangwa et al., 2026). If dignity depends finally on law, then the same legal system that recognizes a right can redefine the person whose right is at stake. Christian philosophical work on justice likewise argues that rights and wrongs are not created ex nihilo by political will but answer to the moral worth of persons and the justice of God (Wolterstorff, 2008).

Justice without gospel also misdiagnoses evil. It tends to place evil primarily somewhere else: in the oppressive class, the corrupt state, the colonial legacy, the capitalist structure, the patriarchal system, the immoral subculture, the foreign ideology, the criminal population, the global elite, or the decadent nation. Some of those systems can indeed be deeply unjust. The gospel adds a harder truth: the seed of injustice also lives in the heart of the reformer. The activist can become cruel. The victim can become vengeful. The oppressed can oppress when power changes hands. The moral conservative can become self-righteous. The revolutionary can become authoritarian. The humanitarian can manipulate. The pastor can exploit. Political reform therefore needs moral limits because reformers are sinners too.

This is why Christian public ethics cannot be reduced to either individualism or structuralism. Individual repentance without institutional reform can leave unjust systems intact. Institutional reform without personal repentance can reproduce injustice under new management. Scripture addresses both. Zacchaeus makes restitution personally. Kings are judged institutionally. Churches discipline members. Employers are told to pay fairly. Judges are told not to take bribes. The gospel creates persons and communities who practice justice because they have been reconciled to God, not because justice earns that reconciliation.

Justice without gospel can also become unforgiving because political movements often survive through permanent moral distinction between innocent and guilty groups. Biblical justice includes judgment, but it also leaves room for repentance,

forgiveness, restitution, and restoration. The cross is not the abolition of justice. It is the place where divine justice and mercy meet in the substitute. A political ethic formed by the cross therefore refuses both impunity and hopelessness.

Conservative Christians must hear the same rebuke from another direction. "Gospel not social justice" can become a slogan used to protect privilege. If a Christian employer steals wages, a sermon on personal salvation that never confronts the theft is not more spiritual. If a church hides abuse, it cannot defend itself by saying its mission is evangelism. If ethnic favoritism governs hiring, if bribery is normal, if refugees are treated as less human, or if the wealthy receive preferential access to leadership, the church is already making public moral claims through its conduct.

The right order is gospel first in the sense of saving foundation, not gospel only in the sense of social indifference. Christ saves sinners by grace through faith. Those sinners are then taught to do justice, love mercy, speak truth, protect the vulnerable, practice generosity, and pursue peace. The church should therefore refuse the choice between evangelism and justice. It should refuse to call justice the gospel and refuse to preach a gospel that produces no justice.

If your pursuit of justice has made Christ unnecessary, the cause has become a rival gospel. If your doctrine of Christ has made justice optional, the doctrine has become disobedient. The crucified Lord exposes both distortions.

13.14 When Political Opponents Become Enemies Rather Than Neighbors

Political disagreement becomes spiritually dangerous when the opponent ceases to be a neighbor and becomes a moral category. At that point, the person's argument no longer needs to be heard because his identity already explains it. Motives are assigned in advance. Complexity becomes betrayal. Friendship across political lines becomes suspicious. A joke about the other side's suffering feels harmless because they are not really "us."

This is affective polarization at its most corrosive. Research on political sectarianism describes a combination of othering, aversion, and moralization in which political opponents are perceived not only as wrong but as socially alien and morally contemptible (Finkel et al., 2020; Mason, 2018). Such scholarship is often developed in democratic contexts, especially the United States, and should not be universalized carelessly. Yet the mechanism is recognizable in many societies: political identity becomes a moral tribe, and the tribe's enemies become less worthy of empathy.

Jesus' command in [Matthew 5:43-48](#) directly attacks this logic. Love of enemies is not sentimental approval. Jesus does not command disciples to call evil good, trust dangerous people blindly, abandon justice, or refuse legitimate self-protection. Enemy love means that hatred does not become the controlling moral principle. The Christian seeks the neighbor's good even while opposing the neighbor's injustice. Prayer replaces fantasies of annihilation. Truth replaces slander. Justice remains bounded by mercy and human dignity.

The Good Samaritan deepens the point because Jesus chooses a socially despised outsider as the moral exemplar of neighbor love ([Luke 10:25-37](#)). The question "Who is my neighbor?" becomes dangerous when politics answers, "Only those inside the coalition." Jesus refuses that narrowing.

The strongest defense of hard political rhetoric is that evil must be named. Prophets used severe language. Jesus called some leaders hypocrites and whitewashed tombs. Paul named false teachers. Public wrongdoing sometimes requires moral clarity, not therapeutic niceness. A politician inciting violence, a movement defending genocide, a corrupt official stealing public funds, or an institution protecting abuse should not be shielded by polite vocabulary.

The biblical question is not whether severe speech is ever justified. It is whether the speech is true, proportionate, directed toward justice, and free from dehumanizing hatred. Calling an act evil is different from declaring an entire population vermin. Naming corruption is different from inventing crimes. Warning against a dangerous ideology is different from celebrating suffering among its adherents. Christian speech can be sharp without becoming carnal.

This distinction matters in war. Christians may have legitimate moral reasons to support national defense or resist aggression. They must still refuse racialized or ethnic hatred of enemy populations. Governments wage war through soldiers, but civilians remain neighbors. Prisoners remain image-bearers. Torture does not become holy because the victim belongs to an enemy nation. Propaganda that turns whole peoples into animals prepares the conscience for atrocity.

It matters in elections as well. A Christian may sincerely believe that an opponent's policies will harm children, the poor, religious freedom, national security, or moral order. That belief can justify urgent political action. It does not justify lying about the opponent, mocking disability, spreading fabricated stories, rejoicing in private tragedy, or refusing ordinary civility. If your politics requires sins you would condemn in another context, your politics is disciplining you away from Christ.

Churches should be places where this captivity is interrupted. The Lord's Table gathers people who may differ on prudential politics yet confess one Savior. Baptism does not ask for party registration. Elders should not allow congregations to become

spaces where one political identity monopolizes belonging unless the disputed issue is truly one of explicit biblical fidelity. Even then, correction must be directed at the moral issue, not converted into contempt for a demographic category.

The believer should therefore cultivate the difficult discipline of charitable accuracy. State an opponent's position in a form the opponent would recognize before criticizing it. Distinguish the strongest argument from the loudest caricature. Admit when your side misrepresents facts. Recognize moral goods that opponents are trying, however imperfectly, to protect. Refuse guilt by association. Maintain boundaries where trust is unsafe, but do not confuse boundaries with hatred.

The deepest self-examination is this: do you want your political enemy to repent and flourish before God, or merely to be humiliated? Jonah wanted Nineveh judged more than he wanted Nineveh spared. God's question to Jonah still exposes the heart. Political opponents may indeed be guilty. So are we. The Christian stands against evil as a forgiven sinner, not as a member of an innocent tribe.

13.15 The Kingdom of God Versus Every Earthly System

Every chapter in this book must finally return to the question Matthew 7 forces upon the reader: what are you trusting? Politics exposes the answer because it gives the heart so many respectable substitutes. A party can offer belonging. A nation can offer identity. A leader can offer protection. An ideology can offer moral certainty. Activism can offer purpose. Conspiracy awareness can offer the feeling of secret insight. Victimhood can offer innocence. Patriotism can offer honor. Global governance can offer managed peace. Environmental spirituality can offer cosmic belonging. None can reconcile a sinner to God.

Jesus announces a kingdom, but it is not another ideological project competing for space within the present age. Before Pilate, He says, "My kingdom is not of this world" ([John 18:36](#)). The statement does not mean His kingdom is irrelevant to the world. It means its source, authority, means, and destiny are not generated by the world's political systems. If His kingdom were of this world, His servants would fight to prevent His arrest. Instead, the King conquers through the cross and resurrection, gathers a people through the gospel, and will return in glory to judge and reign.

The kingdom is already present in the reign of Christ and the life of His people, yet its public consummation awaits His return. That biblical tension protects Christians from two errors. The first is political withdrawal, as though Christ's present lordship has no implications for justice, truth, sexuality, economics, government, family, technology, or neighbor love. The second is triumphalism, as though the church can establish the final kingdom through elections, revolution, legislation, national restoration, or global administration.

This distinction has deep roots in Christian political reflection, though tradition remains subordinate to Scripture. Augustine's contrast between the earthly city and the City of God warns that political communities are finally shaped by what they love, while O'Donovan's political theology insists that earthly authority is intelligible only under God's rule rather than as an autonomous source of moral order (Augustine, 1998; O'Donovan, 1996). These traditions do not settle modern policy disputes, but they reinforce the chapter's central point: no political order may claim the ultimacy that belongs to God alone.

[Philippians 3:20](#) gives the church its political center: "Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." Heavenly citizenship does not make earthly citizenship meaningless. Paul invokes his Roman citizenship when justice requires it ([Acts 22:25-29](#)). Yet Roman status never becomes his final identity. He awaits a Savior from heaven, not from Caesar.

This pilgrim identity is not escapism. First Peter calls believers foreigners and exiles and then immediately commands honorable conduct among the nations, submission to lawful authority, doing good, and honoring everyone ([1 Peter 2:11-17](#)). Pilgrims are not irresponsible because they are temporary residents. They are freer to serve because they know the state is not God and history is not hopeless.

This freedom should produce unusual public character. Christians can lose elections without despair. They can win without triumphal arrogance. They can serve in government without worshiping office. They can protest without hatred. They can obey laws without surrendering conscience. They can resist tyranny without becoming tyrannical. They can love country without pretending it is eternal. They can cooperate internationally without trusting world administration as savior. They can investigate hidden power without becoming captive to fear. They can acknowledge injustice without making grievance ultimate. They can care for creation without worshiping it. They can argue strongly without dehumanizing opponents.

The church's political witness is strongest when it refuses to be bought by any side. A party should know that faithful Christians may support some of its aims and oppose others. A ruler should know that the church will pray for him and rebuke him when necessary. An activist movement should know that Christians may join a just cause but will not surrender the gospel, biblical sexuality, truth, or the uniqueness of Christ. A nationalist movement should know that Christians can love country while refusing ethnic supremacy and political messianism. A global institution should know that Christians can

cooperate for peace, health, trade, or humanitarian relief while resisting coercion of conscience and the treatment of human beings as administrable units rather than image-bearers.

That kind of freedom is impossible if political identity has become assurance. The reader must therefore examine the heart. When you imagine the future, what outcome would make you feel safe? A particular leader in office? A restored Christian nation? The defeat of progressivism? The defeat of nationalism? A border closed? A border opened? Global institutions weakened? Global institutions strengthened? A corruption network exposed? A revolution completed? A culture returned to traditional values? A fully inclusive society? Environmental crisis solved? Digital systems brought under control? None of those hopes is morally irrelevant. Some may be worth pursuing. The spiritual question is whether Christ would still be enough if the political outcome did not come.

False assurance often survives by changing the subject. Instead of asking whether I am reconciled to God, I ask whether my worldview is superior. Instead of confessing sin, I identify the enemy. Instead of mortifying pride, I expose propaganda. Instead of forgiving, I narrate grievance. Instead of evangelizing, I campaign. Instead of praying, I doomscroll. Instead of trusting providence, I track conspiracies. The soul remains unexamined because the world supplies endless evidence that someone else is worse.

The gospel breaks that spell. The King before whom every ruler will answer became a servant. The Judge of nations bore judgment for sinners. The One with all authority allowed Himself to be crucified by an alliance of religious and political power. He rose bodily, not as a symbol of social renewal but as the firstfruits of the coming resurrection. He now commands all people everywhere to repent, and He will return to judge the living and the dead.

That means the political idolater can repent. The partisan Christian who excused lies can repent. The nationalist who despised foreigners can repent. The progressive activist who replaced Christ with justice language can repent. The conspiracy-obsessed believer can repent of false witness and fear without becoming naive. The civil servant who enforced injustice can confess and make what restitution is possible. The pastor who turned the pulpit into a campaign platform can return to preaching the whole counsel of God. The wounded citizen consumed by grievance can seek justice without surrendering the heart to vengeance. The politically exhausted believer can recover ordinary faithfulness.

Repentance does not require withdrawing from public life. For some, repentance may mean more courageous engagement. A silent Christian may need to speak against corruption. A wealthy believer may need to advocate for exploited workers. A pastor may need to protect refugees or abused women. A public official may need to refuse an unlawful command. A voter may need to reject tribal pressure. A scholar may need to correct misinformation. A business leader may need to resist a coercive policy. A citizen may need to defend religious liberty for people with whom he profoundly disagrees. Holiness can be public.

But public holiness remains fruit, never the ground of justification. The believer's assurance rests in Jesus Christ, His finished atoning work, His bodily resurrection, His promises, and present faith in Him. Political integrity may confirm the reality of discipleship, but it cannot become a second gospel. The most politically principled sinner still needs the righteousness of Christ.

Tender consciences need this distinction. You do not need perfect political knowledge in order to be saved. You may vote wrongly out of incomplete information and later learn. You may change a policy judgment. You may belong to a party whose platform contains things you oppose. You may be uncertain about complex questions of war, taxation, migration, climate policy, digital governance, or constitutional design. Salvation is not by policy expertise. What matters spiritually is whether you are honestly submitting your conscience to Christ, seeking truth, repenting when wrong, loving neighbor, and refusing to call evil good for the sake of your tribe.

Presumptuous consciences need the opposite word. Political sincerity does not excuse rebellion. "I believed I was protecting my country" cannot justify hatred. "I was fighting injustice" cannot justify lying. "The stakes were too high" cannot sanctify cruelty. "Everyone in my community believed it" cannot excuse false witness. "My leader was the lesser evil" cannot become a blank moral check. Christ is Lord of means as well as ends.

Eschatology finally places every system in perspective. Christians await the Blessed Hope, not the perfection of the current age. This book maintains the pre-tribulation expectation of Christ's coming for His church while refusing date-setting and speculative identification of every contemporary development. Whatever sequence one emphasizes in end-times chronology, the ethical command is clear: watchfulness must produce holiness, courage, truthfulness, evangelism, endurance, and hope. Revelation's final confidence is not in the church's ability to outmaneuver the beast but in the Lamb's victory.

The kingdoms of this world will not become safe enough to save us. They will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ by His sovereign action ([Revelation 11:15](#)). Until then, Christians live between Romans 13 and Revelation 13, honoring legitimate authority while refusing idolatrous authority; between Jeremiah 29 and Philippians 3, seeking the welfare of earthly cities while knowing their citizenship is in heaven; between Micah 6 and Ephesians 2, doing justice while proclaiming reconciliation through the blood of Christ.

Do not give Caesar what belongs to Christ. Do not give your party your conscience. Do not give your nation your worship. Do not give your grievance your identity. Do not give fear your imagination. Do not give a political leader the title Savior, even in the secret language of the heart.

Give yourself to Christ.

He is not the mascot of your ideology. He is Lord. He does not need your nation to complete His kingdom. He calls every nation to bow. He does not need propaganda to defend His truth. He is the Truth. He does not need hatred to establish justice. He will judge with perfect righteousness. He does not need fear to keep His people awake. His love casts out fear, even as His warnings summon us to sober watchfulness.

If you have rested in political correctness, cultural identity, national belonging, ideological insight, activism, or discernment as though these could prove you belong to God, abandon that false peace. Come again to the narrow gate. Confess the sins your tribe taught you to excuse. Receive mercy from the crucified and risen Christ. Walk in truth. Seek justice. Love your neighbor. Test every claim. Serve faithfully. Hold every earthly loyalty with open hands.

And wait for the King.

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