

# GOD AND POLITICS

*Mark Dever has provided an insightful exposition of what it means for us to 'render unto Caesar what is Caesar's,' casting a positive vision for Christian engagement in politics. Highly recommended.*

SAM ALLBERRY, AUTHOR OF *IS GOD ANTI-GAY?*

*There's no one I trust more than Mark Dever to teach what the Bible tells us about Christianity and government. I commend this book to you.*

COLIN HANSEN, THE GOSPEL COALITION

*This is a little book full of big surprises. There are many books about God and politics but few that are all about Jesus and very few that are about one verse in the Bible. Mark Dever superbly unpacks Jesus' surprising response to his opponents question, which Jeremy Paxman would have been proud of – is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? He has become every politician's favourite author by daring to thank us for 'doing God's work'. But Mark does not let you or me get away with just giving 'that coin back to Caesar' given his clarion call to 'give yourself to God'. He sets out Jesus' wonderful vision which goes deeper and higher than politics. It leads us to grow in our respect for politics and our hope for better to come.*

DAVID BURROWES, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, UK

# GOD AND POLITICS

JESUS' VISION FOR SOCIETY,  
STATE AND GOVERNMENT

MARK DEVER

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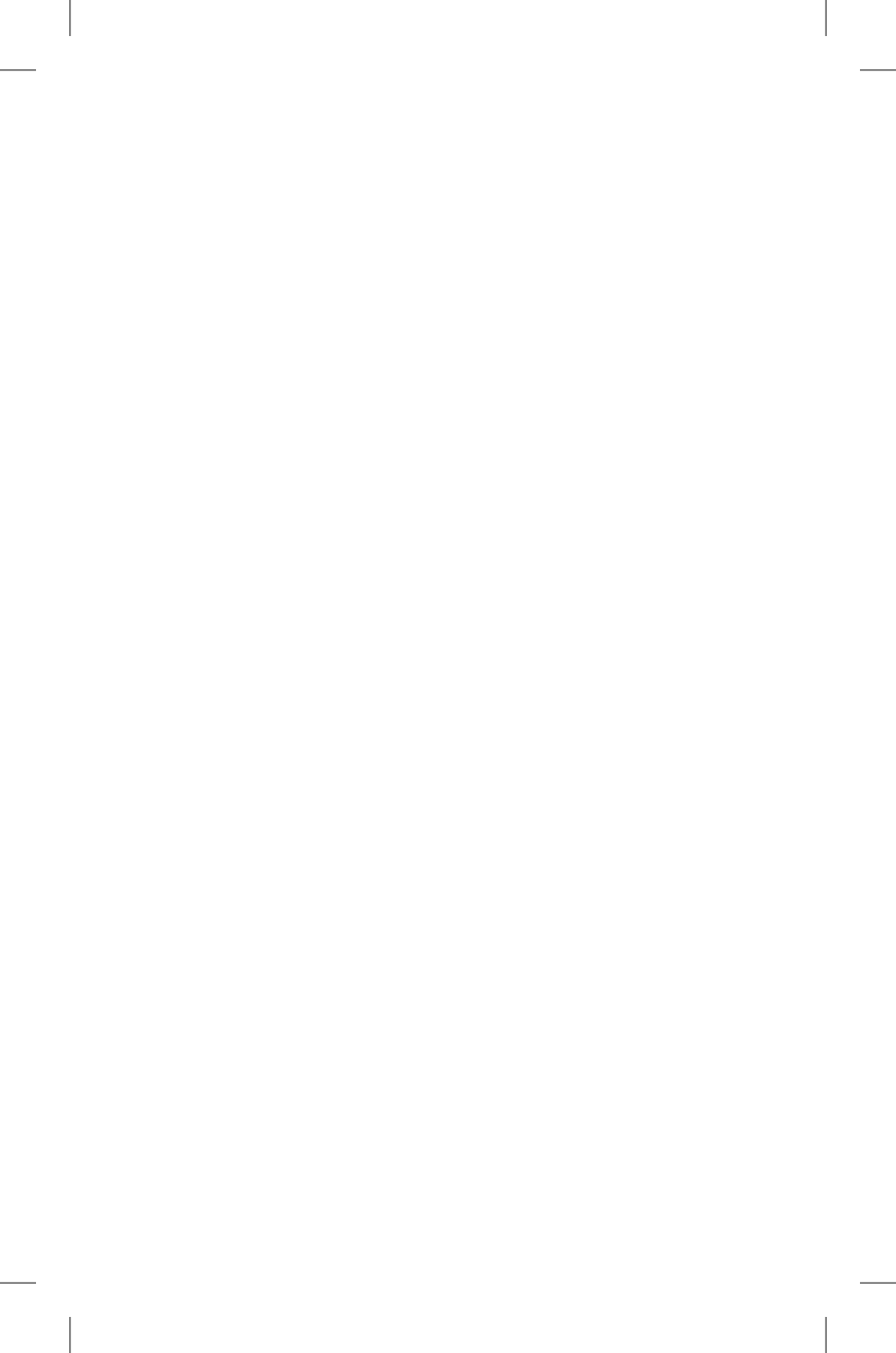
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# NO VISION?

“That’s the problem with Christianity,” my friend told me. “You have no vision for the state, for society as a whole.” He was a Muslim but had become a good friend. I remember where we were when we had this conversation. I had had others like it before but not with as good a friend as this man had become. He had been a guest in our home recently and as we were talking together he expressed how thankful he was that my wife and I were trying to raise our children to be ‘holy’, as he put it. We both commiserated about the moral state of late twentieth century Britain where we then lived. And then he said this, ‘That’s the problem with Christianity. You have no vision for the state, for society as a whole.’

Is he right? Does Christianity have a vision for the state or for society as a whole or is Christianity, as my friend implied, so heavenly minded that it is of no earthly good? This difference between Christianity and Islam has often been noted.

Marx and Freud thought that Christianity had a pacifying escapism. Later Communists had been more suspect of its revolutionary implications. Some rulers have condemned it as treasonous while others have found Christians to be useful dupes. In the name of Christ some people have withdrawn into lives of hermits or monasteries or Amish enclaves.

In the name of Christ others have imagined their faith lived out in military crusades or in cleansing purges where those who are theologically wrong are burned to death, or where slavery is abolished, or abortion is opposed.

In the West and in our day, writers wonder about the impact of Christian faith on public life. David Brooks wrote in *The New York Times* wondering if US Christian writers and preachers like David Platt signal a new spirit of responsibility and frugality and repentance for excess. Brooks notes that after times of boom in America, when bust follows, there are always creatures who come in and preach frugality.<sup>i</sup>

In the US, intellectuals speculate about the vanishing of Protestants and in the upper echelons of our legal community, politicians speculate on what the effect of the evangelical vote will be on the coming elections. In an increasingly multicultural setting in many countries, politicians wonder about the effect of religious groups on voting patterns. And older Christians simply wonder what has happened. They wonder what they have done in their own lifetimes that have caused things unthinkable in Eisenhower's America or Churchill's and Macmillan's Britain to now be the case.

TV quickly moved from appearing to support families to undermining them instead. Divorce and abortion have moved from being illegal to being



inalienable rights. Births to married couples have become rarer, while illegitimacy and co-habitation, once unacceptable, are now the norm in many communities. Pornography floods our societies, and in our brave new world, it is more acceptable socially and legally for a man to have a husband than for someone to pray publicly in a school in the name of Jesus.

Is my Muslim friend right? Does this show us the problem that there is with Christianity? As Christians, those who recognize Jesus Christ as God Incarnate and who worship Him, what do we do? How does Jesus teach us to think about these matters? Let us consider that as we join Jesus in the last week of His earthly ministry.