


Between the Lines + SUPPLEMENT



The Civilians'  
**THIS  
Beautiful  
CITY**



Written by Steven Cosson and Jim Lewis  
Music & Lyrics by Michael Friedman  
Directed by Steven Cosson  
From interviews conducted by Emily Ackerman,  
Marsha Stephanie Blake, Brad Heberlee,  
Stephen Plunkett, Alison Weller and the authors  
Commissioned and developed by The Civilians  
Co-produced with New York's Cineyard Theatre  
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Kirk Douglas Theatre



Center  
Theatre  
Group  
L.A.'s Theatre Company

# How to Use *Between the Lines +*

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This supplemental guide is designed as enrichment material for *Between the Lines +: This Beautiful City*. Below you will find additional questions for discussion and/or research organized under the same rubric as the section headings found in *Between the Lines +*.

I like seeing the perspectives of people on two extreme ends of a debate. It helps me to clearly reflect on my own position.

— Joelle Guzman,  
graduate student

Below is some additional vocabulary to help further your engagement with the play.

<b>Fundamentalist</b>	A person who righteously embraces the complete principles of a religious faith
<b>Ideology</b>	An organized system of beliefs, values, opinions and ideas forming the basis of a social, economic or political philosophy that shapes the ways individuals or a group thinks, acts and understands the world
<b>Rhetoric</b>	Ideology-driven language used to persuade or influence people
<b>Secularist</b>	A person who asserts the right to be free from religious rule and teachings, and free from government imposition of religion upon people

## GOALS

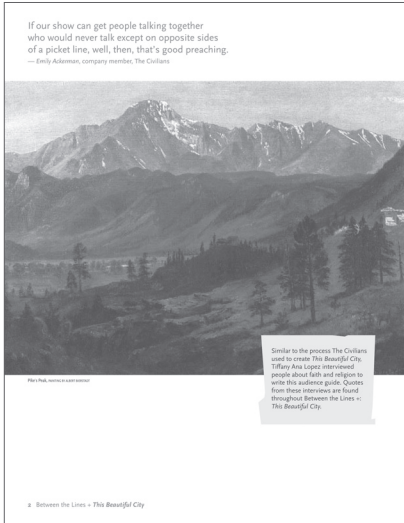
Both the materials for *This Beautiful City* and the play itself work to engage audiences in a series of complex questions about faith and religion. Viewers are challenged to consider the role faith does and should play in various communities, including neighborhoods, government groups and schools, as well as churches. The main goal of this work is to spark discussion. We also hope that your writing, thinking and conversation about the play will provide a springboard for involvement in social change. The materials are constructed to be used independently, incorporated into classroom instruction or included as part of a reading/discussion group.

## NOTE

*This Beautiful City* is a work in progress. All the quotes found here and in *Between the Lines +* have been in the play at some time - not all will be in the version you see.



# The Players and Their World



THE PLAYERS AND THEIR WORLD:  
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1.) In the play, T-Girl explains her process of going “completely political” after losing everything upon coming out. Which other characters in the play also consider themselves politically active by necessity? What is the spectrum of political involvement illustrated in the play? Where do you fit on this spectrum?

## Some potentially illustrative quotes from *This Beautiful City*:

I called the labor commission and they said they had no protections for transgendered people. And that was the last straw, I had lost everything, I had just lost my job, my church, my family, my fortune. And I went completely political after that.

— T-Girl Christian in  
*This Beautiful City*

...friends of mine from out of town will ask me, “Well you’re not gay why do you care?” Because that’s how we think, right? ... Well the Christian right, they don’t think like that. And I’m not necessarily talking about all the goobers who go to New Life and pray to sweet Jesus; I’m talking about their politicized leaders. ‘Kay? They’ve got a big picture and it has to do with big things like dismantling government programs and privatizing public education cause the more they can dismantle the more people need the church to provide those services.

— Fairness Leader in  
*This Beautiful City*

I work for the Tackett Corporation. We’re land developers, and I’m like the company minister. We don’t require all the employees to be Christian, but you have to act like a Christian. And our mission is to provide resources to expand God’s kingdom. And that’s how Mr. Tackett runs this business. And I’m encouraged by things like that, you know, to be more active politically.

— Tackett Minister in  
*This Beautiful City*

I started this paper called the Toilet Paper. And the first feature we did was this thing called The Church Kicker. We would just pick a church and go and kick it, and then write a caption about why.

— Alt Writer in *This Beautiful City*

# The Players and Their World

**The Players and Their World**

*This BEAUTIFUL CITY* was created from interviews conducted in 2006 with several hundred residents of Colorado Springs, Colorado, including members of New Life Church, a megachurch established in 1984 by a preacher named Ted Haggard, with the goal of seeing Colorado Springs become the capital of Evangelical Christian faith in America. The play explores the impact of New Life Church on the greater community, the reasons that motivated as a result of the church's mission to convert everyone to its vision of Christianity, and the community's grappling with Haggard's fall after allegations of drug use and homosexuality. On one hand, we see Evangelicals brought to a secular world that opposes their belief system. On the other hand, we see those who perceive Evangelicals as a moralistic, unliking, unsmiling, unempathetic force threatening democracy in America.

The play addresses two subjects that are historically taboo in public conversation: religion and politics. People now talk freely with one another about a range of subjects, from celebrity gossip to presidential primaries. While politics has become a more acceptable topic for public discussion and debate, religion is still highly charged. This tension is grounded in a history of religious persecution and an unwillingness to listen to opposing beliefs. The play invites us to look at the complicated ways religion shapes people's lives, both by choice and by imposition.

The most difficult subjects can be explained to the most slow-witted man if he has not formed any idea of them already; but the simplest thing cannot be made clear to the most intelligent man if he is firmly persuaded that he knows already, without a shadow of doubt, what is laid before him.

— an actor

In the process, it raises pressing questions about religious freedom. The play's dialogue is drawn from transcripts of personal interviews, media reports and local news, such as *Seven* and the Colorado Springs *Trial*, *Cradle*, and *Seven* together with original songs and music to represent various perspectives of the community. Both the events and the people are real. The play works to explore different ends of the spectrum of religion and politics in Colorado Springs by presenting polarizing positions. It gives audience a focused portrait of a community grappling with several issues currently at the forefront of national debate, such as the increasingly blurred boundaries between church and state.

Questions:  
 Being and Doing, On and Off the Stage  
 How do these things who we see as well as the kind of people we think we are or can't become?  
 What faith do you offer to people around you? Can you think of a time when you labeled someone and you were wrong?  
 After the play:  
 What does the play reveal about politics?  
 What perspectives are missing from the play?  
 In the play, what are the various factors that motivate people to become politically active?  
 What motivates you to be politically involved?

Find Out More  
 Jay Bakker, Son of a Preacher Man: My Search for Grace in the Shadow of the Great Prosperity  
 Ted Haggard, *Footish No More! Seeing a Life Beyond Belief*  
 Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights From Emerging Christianity*  
 John Markakis, *Reasons to Believe: One Man's Journey Among the Evangelicals and the Faith He Left Behind*  
 Frank Schaefer, *Crucy for God: How I Came Out as One of the Chosen, Fought Against the Religious Right, and Learned to Take All for Almost All of It Back*

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2.) Throughout the play, the Bible is referenced by various characters. What kinds of references are made? What do they communicate about the role of the Bible as a foundation for community building for the citizens of Colorado Springs represented in the play?

3.) The play portrays citizens from several different groups that form the community of Colorado Springs: members of New Life Church, military service people, community organizers and activists. What various ideologies inform the perspectives presented in the play? Where do these ideologies clash? Where do they converge?

4.) The play focuses on a culture clash that results from the friction between seemingly opposing belief systems. How might people with opposing beliefs carve a common ground? What two characters from the play best illustrate your point? Who best exemplifies a middle space where faith and secularism positively work together?

5.) What role does rhetoric have in the play? How does the way people speak reveal their investments in, for example, religion or politics? How does ideology shape the ways people speak?

The lord called us to take a city. What I see here for Manitou Springs is the entire city as a church. We're praying right now for a property that the Lord would give us. And we're praying we can go up Pikes Peak and be up there night and day interceding on top of America's Mountain. God's given us a vision of an entire city that's just erupting with revival and that the church encompasses the whole city. There are people who wouldn't like that to happen. That's why the warfare is necessary. It's spiritual warfare. People misunderstand our rhetoric. What we MEAN is that we're praying and the violence is in the spiritual realm, the invisible realm.

— Revolution House of Prayer  
Leader in *This Beautiful City*



# The Civilians and *This Beautiful City*

## The Civilians and *This Beautiful City*

**THE CIVILIANS WRITE AND PRODUCE** original theater that creatively addresses questions about current events, history and human behavior, especially the relationship between the personal and the social. They employ various techniques (research, interviews, playwrighting and improvisation, multi-character drama) to create work that reflects their intense curiosity about shared connections across what appear to be vastly different histories, cultures and/or peoples.

Is there a particular slant that you would like to put on... the reason I ask is... I try to avoid conversation [with strangers] because people have their ideas: "right wing fundamental evangelical" and I want to say if you're whole belief of who we are is, is formed through the media then let me buy you lunch.

— Evangelical Woman in *This Beautiful City*

Many on the company studied joint Stock techniques together at UC San Diego. While joint Stock does not generally include the recording of interviews (instead, the actor/facilitator writes down all s/he can remember after the interview is over), for *This Beautiful City*, The Civilians realized that the specificity of the topic, as well as the company members' unfamiliarity with it, required a more accurate record, so they did record their interviews. Eight members of the company spent a total of six weeks over seven months talking with the people of Colorado Springs. The actors are trained not to insert themselves into the interview and not to make value statements, interviewees are driven by curiosity and tempered with empathy, respect and neutrality. They aim to capture the human scale of a story, something more personal than a news report. To maintain their integrity with the material, most actors portray the people they interviewed.

4. Between the Lines - *This Beautiful City*

## THE CIVILIANS AND *THIS BEAUTIFUL CITY*: Page 4

1.) In the quote below, a military activist expresses a hope that the play will be received as a "call to action." What might this mean? How is the play calling to you? How does it most challenge or confirm your opinions, perspectives or experiences? What possible actions might you engage in and/or change as a result of seeing *This Beautiful City*?

Now, I know the religious right would love to vilify me as a tree-hugging Northern California Sierra Club membership chardonnay-sipping liberal ... but I'm not. I'm a Republican. ... So at the end of the day, this fight is simply all about just one thing; our beautiful United States Constitution. Each of us free; each of us equal, living lives where we confront not the dead

words of the past but the living truth that is tomorrow. That is America and it is worth dying for. Look, I hope your play will make people view it as a call to action...

— Military Activist in *This Beautiful City*

2.) In the Bible, Jesus answered his followers in story or through parables, delivering symbolic imagery for others to interpret and apply to their own lives. How might the play itself be read as a contemporary parable?

Yeah, the balcony story, why not? If you're on, like, the 30th floor of some hotel and you walk out a sliding glass door onto a balcony, there's a balcony with a railing. People do all kinds of crazy stuff out there, you know, they'll have parties, they'll barbecue, whatever, you know, because they have that security. It's just like in our lives. God lays out laws, all these do's and don'ts of Christianity that people get hung up on cause they say, well, God doesn't want me to have fun. But that's not the way it is. He gives you these boundaries to protect you so you don't go falling off the edge of the balcony and kill yourself, you know. Because outside of God's boundaries, that is not real life, it's an appearance of life, which is in reality death. It's spiritual death...

— Cadet C in *This Beautiful City*

You have to guard your life. As soon as you step out of those boundaries, then, there's consequences.


— Cadet A in *This Beautiful City*

3.) How do The Civilians use various forms of media in the play, from projected images to live music? How are media used to illustrate a character or to highlight an issue? For example, what kinds of media represent people affiliated with New Life Church? How are media used to represent those in Colorado Springs who are not affiliated with the church?

4.) The Civilians emphasize the importance of suspending judgment and resisting stereotypes in creating their work. Where do you see The Civilians' declared goals most strongly evident? What distinguishes this play from a news-based show you might see on television? Is *This Beautiful City* completely neutral in its presentation of story and characters? When it comes to art, why might bias be just as important as neutrality?

# Terms for Understanding Evangelical Faith

“Grace” and “Works” are pivotal and complicated terms. Grace is a gift from God: God’s unconditional acceptance and love even though one can never be completely Christ-like, no matter how hard one tries. Works are actions that demonstrate the commitment to following and upholding God’s law. It is through Grace that individuals are freed from the burden and worry of whether or not their actions are “good” enough to please God; by embracing God’s grace, one finds faith and redemption. For more about Grace, see *In the Grip of Grace* by Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson, 1996).



What's an Evangelical? You mean how are they different from any other kind of Christian? Wow. That's not an easy question.

— *Reverend Pastor in This Beautiful City*

### Terms for Understanding Evangelical Faith

**EVEN THOUGH THE PLAY FOCUSES** on a religious group with a specific sense of faith, culture and politics, it is important to understand the vocabulary that defines its members: some of the world. Evangelicals come from a variety of denominations, but historically are drawn from Methodist and Baptist traditions.

Generally, Evangelicals are people who have confessed their sins, accepted Jesus Christ as their savior and believe they are going to heaven as a result. This new spiritual opportunity is termed being “born again.” Evangelicals believe they are connected to a God who is wonderfully all-knowing of everything that happens in their lives. This level of intimacy is what prompts the phrase “having a personal relationship with God.” It allows the believer to feel that their lives touch with something more powerful than the individual self. They believe that Satan exists and that eternal salvation is possible only through grace.

The love and support they give one another is understood as crucial to living in God’s grace and honoring His plan. God’s love is perceived as a precious gift that must be shared. The practice of speaking out about this experience of unconditional love is termed “giving testimony,” an important foundation of this (i) building fellow believers and caring others. It is seen as a generous act to testify to others about the power and teachings of Jesus Christ and the event of being born again. Testimony is therefore not focused on the self nor is it associated with casting judgment on others.

...more...

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The point of our work is to throw ourselves into something totally different that we may not know too much about.

— *Sharon Cousins, Founding Director, The Civilians*

**Questions:**

What We Say, Why We Are, How We Act  
How does knowing that the play and the characters are based on real people and events affect your reception of the play?

How are the methods used to create this play similar to and/or different from reality TV? How do the results compare?

Do you think the authors have effectively presented a neutral perspective on the subjects in the play? How was this achieved? Where do you feel any bias might show through?

## TERMS FOR UNDERSTANDING EVANGELICAL FAITH: Page 5

1.) What are some examples of presumptions of the Bible as a canonical text, that is, a book with which everyone is expected to have some familiarity? Within the world of the play, how does the Bible function as social glue that holds people together? In what ways does it have the opposite effect and pull people apart?

2.) Flesh, the realm of the body, occupies an important role in religion as something that must be either controlled or ignored as a necessary means to concentrate on the realm of the spirit. To attain God’s Grace requires a total disciplining of the body. For example, in the play, there is the controversy over Ted Haggard’s alleged drug use and associations with a male prostitute; T-Girl’s transition from male to female; issues of same sex-marriage; abortion; the military (an organization that creates order through physical force if necessary). What are the various paradoxes and contradictions in the play concerning the separation of body and spirit? What is the impact of separating the two?

3.) Language is a living thing. It changes to reflect the ways we think about culture and the role of people within it. What do you make of the language of the play? How does the way that people speak reveal their sense of self and others? For example, what do you make of the employment of military language in reference to God? (i.e., engaged in a religious war or battle?) What about the references to Satan and hell and/or speaking in terms of judging others?

### Some quotes to consider:

Our daughter is afraid that if her friends find out we don’t believe in God that they won’t be her friends anymore. And I kind of like the battle – you know, some people would say that we’re brave. But sometimes I think that bravery is just being too stupid to realize the dangers. And this is not a battle I think I can win, and you know what? I’m not going to sacrifice my children for it.


— *Atheist Woman in This Beautiful City*

# Terms for Understanding Evangelical Faith

Public confessions or pleas for forgiveness are viewed as self-indulgent. Public declarations of personal experience single one out as seeking the judgment of others when accountability to God should be first and foremost. The logic here is, why ask forgiveness from someone who has no control over your salvation? Additionally, admission of behavior deemed morally wrong, such as being with a boyfriend or girlfriend before marriage, can be viewed as deliberately disregarding the moral values that provide the bedrock of evangelical faith.

Megachurches are super-sized congregations that report 2,000 – 30,000 in average attendance. Many offer childcare, play centers, youth fellowship groups and in-step programs, as well as restaurants, cafes and live entertainment venues. They tend to follow a highly corporate model that includes CEOs and charismatic leaders whose preaching requires the extremely large congregations needed to support these massive churches.

This coffeeshop is inside the World Prayer Center. Next door is New Life's main worship center, and the building past that is the Theater which is mostly used by the twentysomething ministry. ... Well sure I guess New Life is a megachurch. But it doesn't feel big. It feels like you know everybody. —Associate Pastor in *This Beautiful City*



6. *Between the Lines* • *This Beautiful City*

According to the National Association of Evangelicals, there are nine criteria of belief and commitment that define Evangelicals:

- They believe they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus as their savior.
- They have made a personal commitment to Jesus that is still important to them.
- Their commitment to Jesus is very important in their life today.
- They have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians.
- They believe that Satan exists.
- They believe that eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works.
- They believe that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth.
- They believe that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches.
- They believe that God is an all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today.

From Christine Weber, *The Fall of the Evangelical Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2007)

## Some quotes to consider (continued):

Jesus was faced with the temptation of immediate gratification. That all sin is about doing what you want to do when you want to do it. It's about saying what you want to say when you want to say it, it about being angry when you want to be angry, no matter who is discouraged or who is hurt by it, it is about doing whatever you want when you want to do it, and that immediate gratification is how we are built in America.

— TAG Pastor in *This Beautiful City*

Well sure, the evangelization of Colorado Springs does mean that yeah ultimately everyone would become Christian. But from within, the mentality of a New Life church member isn't really "I want everyone to convert," it's more "I want them to know about the freedom you can find in Jesus Christ," you know what I mean?

— Associate Pastor in *This Beautiful City*

## 4.) What is the difference between tolerance and acceptance? In *This Beautiful City*, a young woman shares:

Nowadays, who doesn't have someone in their life who's gay! My father is gay. He just celebrated his 10 year anniversary of his union – he and his boyfriend are still together. For a long time my husband didn't like the fact that my dad was gay, I don't like it – It's a bad example for the children, and it's just easier having him out of state. But now it's fine when my dad comes to visit, so long as he doesn't bring his lover with him.

— Young Woman-God's Grace in *This Beautiful City*

How does this moment in the play illustrate a distinction between tolerating and accepting a person or principle? What are some examples from your own life experiences that illustrate the importance of acting with tolerance and/or acceptance? How are the concepts of tolerance and acceptance significant to both Christianity and democracy?

## TERMS FOR UNDERSTANDING EVANGELICAL FAITH: Page 6

**TOLERANCE AND ACCEPTANCE**  
I am so grateful that my church is the way it is open, welcoming, supportive and inclusive, with a contemporary female pastor who embraces more approaches. Members of our congregation are incredibly diverse and include people of color as well as gay, lesbian, and transgender followers. I like to focus on what I really mean when we open the doors of the church and say "welcome."  
— Christine Weber, *The Fall of the Evangelical Movement* and Christine Weber

[Pastor Reynolds] tells us that he's homosexual... I read it in the paper. With his picture on the front page. Front page. **WORLD NOT BENEATH**. Okay. So you're Hell's Satan. Cause if you do not repent, oh, you go to hell, homophobe.  
— *Between the Lines* in *This Beautiful City*

These conservative people are evangelists, and they have hijacked the ship of Christianity and they are heading it towards the rocks!  
— *For Christ* in *This Beautiful City*

**RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**  
Basically having a relationship with God is just sending your life around Christ and what he did for you. And just being them, just being them. That's what it's about.  
— *God* in *This Beautiful City*

**GIVING TESTIMONY**  
If I genuinely love somebody, how can I not tell them news that will save their soul?  
— *God* in *This Beautiful City*

But then I told my cousin I wanted to get saved. I didn't want to go down to the altar. I was with a little gesture, meaning uncomfortable. So she got two friends and we went to Baker's. They ordered ice cream and stood in a circle and prayed. And I asked Jesus Christ to come into my life. (Pause) And then we ate ice cream.  
— *Jesus* in *This Beautiful City*

**HYPOCRISY**  
With my dad I think what happened was he had this kind of performance going on, you know, trying to be like, "You got all together," when the devil, He didn't have a together. None of us have it together... God is unconditional love. He's the only one who can love us completely for who we are, and that's us. So I think he's being honest.  
— *Christine Weber* in *This Beautiful City*

I like your church. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike Jesus Christ.  
— *Anonymous* in *God*

**Find Out More**  
Theodore Geisel and Ronald Grimes, *...Name: Understanding Religion*  
David Kinnaman and Caleb Lyons, *OutChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity... And Why It Matters*  
C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*  
Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*

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## TERMS FOR UNDERSTANDING EVANGELICAL FAITH: Page 7

# Media and Religion



MEDIA AND RELIGION: Page 8



MEDIA AND RELIGION: Page 9

1.) What role do consumers play in the making and distribution of media focused on religion and politics?

2.) What are some various techniques employed in the play that appear drawn from/rooted in other media?

For example, documentary films make strong use of the interview format. Interviews allow filmmakers to place an audience in the middle of an event that, if not previously captured on film, must otherwise be recreated in a truthful way. Examples of interview-driven documentaries

include films by Michael Moore (*Roger & Me*, *Bowling for Columbine*, *Sicko*), Errol Morris (*Thin Blue Line*, *The Fog of War*, *Standard Operating Procedure*), Morgan Spurlock (*Super Size Me*) and Lucy Walker (*Blindsight*). Mockumentaries use interviews with fictional characters and satirize the form of the documentary as a means to humorously generate social commentary, as illustrated in work by Sacha Baron Cohen (*Da Ali G Show*, *Borat*) and Christopher Guest (*Spinal Tap*, *Best in Show*). Interviews also provide the foundation for many television news programs (*60 Minutes*, *Dateline NBC*, *Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel*). Reality television shows such as *Survivor*, *The Real World* and *Big Brother* use a diary camera to generate the kind of intimacy and insight achieved in documentary film through the personal interview.

3.) Theatricality refers to elements of performance intended to capture an audience member's attention. How do churches use theatricality? How does the play use theatricality? What is different about the ways they employ theatricality?

**On theatricality:**

Lord God we are listening Lord God we are waiting for your direction. We praise you Lord God. Sha-laka-laka-lay Sha-laka-loo-laka-lay! Amen Lord God. Tikka tikka tttttt.

— Revolution House of Prayer Member in *This Beautiful City*

Let's turn this room into a house of prayer tonight. Cry out for this church cry out on behalf of the believers all over the nation who are wrestling with the same demons. Oh God, we bow our hearts to you! ..... LORD JESUS! GOD!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

— TAG (youth ministry) Pastor in *This Beautiful City*

Anybody in here ever felt despair in the middle of the night, and all of a sudden God found you and all your troubles just disappeared? Anybody in here ever been driving down the street in your car, all by yourself, and you stuck in traffic, and some kinda way God knew your plate number, found your car, entered in your car and blessed you where you was? ANYBODY IN HERE EVER BEEN IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD! You may lock me up, but you can't lock God outta my life! It's a process and you can't be sleep in yo prison! Who the Son has set free is free indeed. So stop looking at folk to validate you. Stop it. If your phone don't ring, CALL YOSELF! STOP IT! If don't nobody lay hands on you, put your hands on your own head. BLESS YOSELF! STOP IT! God is your validator. Stop waiting for the morning edition of the paper to come out, to see if you made it through the night.

— New Pastor at Emmanuel in *This Beautiful City*



# Church and State in American History

In our own American history, religion has been lifted up for public life in two different ways. One invokes the name of God and faith in order to hold us accountable to God's intentions – to call us to justice, compassion, humility, repentance and reconciliation. Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and Martin Luther King perhaps best exemplify that way. The other way wrongly invokes God's blessing on our activities, agendas and purposes. Many presidents and political leaders have used the language of religion in such ways, and George W. Bush is falling into that same temptation.

**Church and State in American History**

**THE PILGRIMS WERE A GROUP** of religious separatists from the Church of England who left their country in search of a place to practice their religion in peace. John Winthrop was a Puritan writer whose thoughts about God became integral to the social, political and religious growth of the colony. A great fear gripped him as he sailed England as a "holy land" instead of religious freedom and envisioned creating in the new world "a city of God" where Puritans would practice Christian ideals in their daily living. Ironically, within just 10 years, the Puritans engaged in acts of persecution against a newly formed religious group, the Quakers, many of whom they arrested and imprisoned, even executed, because of their rejection of particular religious creeds and civil obligations, such as military service.

In thinking about their own history, framers of the Constitution, such as Thomas Jefferson, saw tremendous risks in not having clear separation between church and state. The First Amendment to the Constitution reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This clause prohibits the government from establishing any religion as an official religion and prohibits the authority of the government over the authority of churches, church leaders or spokespersons for any gods.

The concept of separation is not a form of hostility toward religion. Rather, the framers did not want religion to be an official part of government because they saw it as something people to actively promote and kept out of the realm of state interference. Separation ensures that government officials cannot impose any aspect of their private beliefs on others and that government is not involved in promoting particular religious doctrines. Two separate religious groups cannot act through the government to have their own doctrines and beliefs made into law or policy. Separation of church and state is what guarantees the existence of religious liberty. While the phrase "separation of church and state" is not in the Constitution, this absence does not mean that it's not a central legal concept.

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American Christians will have to make some difficult choices. Will we stand in solidarity with the worldwide church, the international body of Christ – or with our own American government? Only from inside some of our U.S. churches does one find religious voices consonant with the visions of American empire.

— Jim Wallis, public theologian, Editor-in-Chief, *Sojourners* magazine

## Additional Information on Colorado Springs

Focus on the Family is one of the largest religious groups to have its headquarters in Colorado Springs. It is a parachurch organization, meaning that they work to broadly promote their evangelist mission across denominations both within and outside their main church of operations. They deliver a daily syndicated radio broadcast and also produce books. While they are strongly embraced by the conservative right, they have been widely criticized by medical and mental health organizations for presenting flawed and inaccurate information, and by academics for manipulating research data and skewing statistics to favor their moral agenda.

The military boom in Colorado Springs dates to 1942 when the first base was established there to train and house troops in preparation for World War II. Recent military bases located in Colorado Springs include: Fort Carson, Peterson Air Force Base, Schriever Air Force Base, NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command), Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station and the United States Air Force Academy.

## CHURCH AND STATE IN AMERICAN HISTORY: Page 10

**RELIGION IN THE MILITARY**

[The Christian Embassy is] one of those parachurch organizations and their targets are the leaders... So in this Christian Embassy video, there are generals, admirals, senior people in their positions, in the Pentagon, saying they serve God first in the country. I mean, it's supposed to be the "First Principles," not the First Amendment. — Mike Adams in *This Beautiful City*

People just need to calm down and realize, you know, that Christians are gonna be here, and we would never surrender, but we reserve the right to exempt to the unburdened. I mean, that's a part of our religion. — Gabe in *This Beautiful City*

There are people that believe that Jack Benny, Dr. Seuss, Gandhi and Anne Frank are burning in an eternal fiery lake of hell... If you want to believe that little girl is resting in hell, I'll support with my last floor of my being under our social contract your right to believe that. But if you try to engage in the power of the state, and in the armed forces, and have my government tell me who are the children of the greater God and who are the children of the lesser God, I will I will tell you or I will go down trying. — Mike Adams in *This Beautiful City*

**Questions:**

**One Nation**  
How does a secular society grow and develop? How does growth of a religious society affect what are the roles of faith and reason in the patterns of evolution for each? Are faith and reason mutually exclusive?

**In the separation of church and state only about monitoring the use of religion to advance or control government in the larger public culture? What about when politicians allow religious institutions to perform community and social services, usually the purview of government?**

**After the play**  
Religious freedom includes the right to express oneself both publicly and privately, the freedom to worship as one chooses and the freedom not to practice religion. What viewpoints does the play demonstrate about religious freedom?

**In the play, certain geographic locations are said to be either blessed by God or cursed by Satan. What other places in America are put into these grandiose?**

**What do you make of the play ending with a movement to extend the church to a new city?**

**Find Out More**  
Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism*  
Jeff Sharpley, *The Family: The Secret Fundamentals at the Heart of American Power*  
Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*  
Christine Wicker, *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation: The Surprising Crisis Inside the Church*  
Garry Williams, *Heard and Heared: American Christians*

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## CHURCH AND STATE IN AMERICAN HISTORY: Page 11

# Church and State in American History

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1.) A large number of military bases and religious groups' headquarters are located in Colorado Springs. In the play, what are the points of intersection and/or conflict between the military and the church? How do both similarly/differently approach the goal of performing a "mission"? How is it that these two organizations have grown so large in recent decades?

2.) Compare and contrast the ways characters in the play blend the language of religion with the language of the state. Where in the play do the two discourses overlap? Where in the play do you see references to the state (i.e. the military, government or law) mixed in with references to church, religion and/or faith?

3.) What are the differences/similarities between the role of New Life Church in Colorado Springs as portrayed in the play and the role of the film industry as you have experienced its influence here in Los Angeles? What happens when a single industry or organization dominates the economic life and social culture of a city?

4.) How might National Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* be read as a response to what can happen when the church and state are not separated?

5.) Historically, the Bible has been used as fuel for politics, from the conceptualization of community to the legislation of morality. What is the difference between citing the Bible as a cultural referent point and using the Bible to rationalize or legislate behavior? What role should the Bible play in the government of secular society?

## Additional quotes to consider:

Pikes Peak country is a vast playground sprawling over a million acres. And best of all, these public lands belong to you. The trails in this guide are legal and open to everyone. And a great many people can share them, if everyone shows a little consideration.

— Trails Guide in  
*This Beautiful City*

The way my Mom tells it, before all the Evangelicals moved in, the Libertarian ethos was very genuine. Colorado Springs was very live and let live. But then New Life exploded and Focus on the Family moved in and the Evangelicals had taken over. It was like, I'm from here?

— Alt Writer in  
*This Beautiful City*

When the kingdom of God is established, you know it will be a kingdom, it's not a democracy, and there will be people, more than likely (unless everyone gets saved, which I would love), that really just won't like it. And that's a tough thing. It gets hard for people to separate the battle and the person.

— Revolution House of Prayer  
Leader in *This Beautiful City*

I think so much of the power of the Evangelicals is imaginary. It's extremely inflated. But we give them their power cause people are afraid. You know, like the local printers here will refuse to print something if they think it'll offend Focus on the Family. Cause Focus will find out and cancel their orders. So yeah Dobson and their ilk – they're bullies. But it only works if people allow themselves to be bullied.

— Alt Writer in  
*This Beautiful City*

People need to calm down and realize that Christians are gonna be here, and we would never proselytize, but we reserve the right to evangelize to the unchurched. I mean, that's a part of our religion.

— Cadet A in *This Beautiful City*

# Church and State in American History

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## Additional quotes to consider (continued):

The line between the church and the state's armed forces has been completely dissolved. Read the July 12, 2005, front page of *The New York Times*. General Richardson, the number two ranking chaplain in the Air Force, makes an astonishing statement. Front page: it's official policy to evangelize anyone who comes into the service who is "unchurched." My wife and I have three kids in the U.S. Air Force. And we're Jewish. Now, do our kids fall in this category being unchurched? And if so, Air Force, are you going to exercise your fucking right to Evangelize them?

— Military Religious Freedom Activist in *This Beautiful City*

This is a beautiful city. A lot of my friends say, well why don't you just move, it's just too ornery, it's too hostile, they don't want you here. You know what? This is AMERICA, I like it here. I LIKE seeing Pikes Peak out of my front door. I'll be dog-gunned if some guy is gonna tell me where I can or can't live. The moment we have to run and hide and live in shadows, that is the moment when we have lost our liberties. And it's NOT gonna happen, not on my watch. You didn't get permission from me to be who you are, so damn sure I'm not gonna get permission from you to be who I am.

— T-Girl Christian in *This Beautiful City*

We all think there's simple easy solutions to everything. But the truth is the world is complex. It's more complex than ever before.

— Fairness Leader in *This Beautiful City*

This college guide and performance are a new adventure for Center Theatre Group education. As we continue to expand and refine our programming, please let us know how we are doing: [rfain@centertheatregroup.org](mailto:rfain@centertheatregroup.org).