



CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS

The Jacksonville Declaration — An Open Letter

Help make justice and compassion the hallmarks of our country. Add your signature to this letter. Let the Political and Church Leaders of the Religious Right know they do not speak for you. Help them hear a different understanding of Christian values. Add your voice to the Declaration at <http://www.christianalliance.org/declaration>.

To The Political and Church Leaders of the Religious Right:

As responsible and patriotic Americans, we can be silent no longer. In light of the deepening polarization in our country's social and political life, we feel compelled to speak out to you in a spirit of sincerity.

For many people, your words and actions have identified Christianity with radical, far right politics. We believe that your use of Christianity has sown the seeds of deep discord in our nation and throughout the world. Hear some of your own words:

"You owe liberals nothing. They despise you because they despise your Christ."

-- Church Leader Bob Jones, to George W. Bush after 2004 election

"I hope the Supreme Court will finally read the Constitution and see there's no such thing, or no mention, of separation of church and state in the Constitution."

-- House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas)

"Our job is to reclaim America for Christ, whatever the cost. As the vice regents of God, we are to exercise godly dominion and influence...in short, over every aspect and institution of human society."

-- Dr. D. James Kennedy, Coral Ridge Ministries

"...the liberal, anti-Christian dogma of the left has been repudiated..."

-- Tony Perkins, Family Research Council

"I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians ... the ACLU, People For the American Way ... I point the finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen'."

-- Rev. Jerry Falwell, on Pat Robertson's 700 Club discussing the WTC attacks

We must tell you now that you do not speak for us, or for our politics. We say "No" to the ways you are using the name and language of Christianity to advance what we see as extremist political goals. We do not support your agenda to erode the separation of church and state, to blur the vital distinction between your interpretation of Christianity and our shared democratic institutions. Moreover, we do not accept what seems to be your understanding of Christian values. We reject a Christianity co-opted by any government and used as a tool to ostracize, to subjugate, or to condone bigotry, greed and injustice.

If your politics flow from your faith, then we do not know the Jesus you claim to follow. We cannot imagine a Jesus who would say:

"You are strong and powerful; your ideals are noble. Make war to spread those ideals."

"The end is near - So it doesn't matter what you do to my Father's creation."

"Heal the sick - Provided they can pay."



CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS

"All are welcome at the table - As long as they are the same as we are."

"Follow me - And help me form a government to force others to follow."

Do you believe such statements truly reflect Christian or American values? Do these views follow what Jesus taught? Do you think it is genuinely American to steer our country toward a Christian theocracy? Is it Christian to foster intolerance? Is this the path to which Jesus leads us?

We say "No". Instead, we say "Yes" to values Jesus plainly and passionately practiced. Listen to his words:

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

-- John 13:34-35

We hold up to all fellow Americans the heart of Jesus' teaching: his unwavering commitment to justice, compassion, responsibility, equality, and care "for the least of these". These are values Jesus taught, and they also serve among America's finest traditional values. Our political views flow from these values.

We also reaffirm a well-established American commitment to a clear separation of church and state. In your statements you often characterize America as a "Christian nation". We strongly disagree. As a nation of immigrants, America has been a land of freedom and diversity. Separation of church and state helps ensure liberty and justice for all Americans - not just those who are like-minded. Hear these words:

"The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state."

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Know that you do not speak for us. We oppose so many of your words and deeds. But though we may disagree with you, we offer this declaration in a spirit of openness. We hope you will respond in kind. We call on you to stop dividing our country with your words and actions, and we invite you to turn to compassion and justice, values that Jesus lived.

**In Truth and Faith,
Christian Alliance for Progress**

<http://www.christianalliance.org>