Twitter Thread by Andrew T. Walker



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After seeing the role that civil religion Christianity played in Wednesday's events, I am all the more convinced that religious liberty is absolutely urgent for us as Baptist and evangelicals to prioritize. Why?

Religious liberty is much broader than just about the freedom to believe or act. It is about the relationship between eternal authority and temporal authority. Thus, in discussing religious liberty, we have to get to questions of jurisdiction. Jurisdictions assign roles.

The role of government is not to act as an instrument of salvation. At best, it indirectly serves the mission of the church. The state is a temporal, prudential, and pluralistic arrangement that restrains human ferocity for obtaining whatever common good can be negotiated.

Religious liberty is thus foundational to public theology because it helps clarify the jurisdiction and role of eternal and temporal authority. This is why in every class I teach, I make religious liberty an essential component to our engagement. It's our Baptist heritage.

If we get religious liberty right, we actually get the proper distinctions between church and state and church and world right—which counteracts the confused outworkings of civil religion vis-a-vis Christian Nationalism.

To be clear, I don't usually agree with how "Christian Nationalism" is commonly used. It has become a generalized term to mean "things I dislike about Christians." People using the term are not cautious with it. For helpful clarity, see @ndrewwhitehead and @socofthesacred's work.

But all that to say, I think even those of us who can separate ourselves from the delusions that helped transpire Wednesday's events need to be very vigilant in helping friends not get sucked into the vortex of conspiracy-ladened civil religion.

It's one thing to say that virtue and shared beliefs about the Big Questions are a necessary antecedent to healthy democracy under our system. That is a project of the church to promote. The civic project of Christianity is not synonymous with the coalescence of state legitimacy.

It’s quite another to say that our Constitution was written by Christians for Christians to guarantee a Christian nation. Then, defending, promoting, and upholding Christianity becomes the project of the state and church. That, friends, is untenable.

Did I mentioned I have a book coming out on May 4, 2021 arguing essentially this in expanded form? :)

https://t.co/BuYjwcDu7j