

## Obedience or Obeisance in Political Life?

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It is very difficult today to get American Christians to exercise humility and wisdom in political life. It's even more difficult to make a biblical case for it in a short article. But John Stackhouse has done it. Stackhouse, who holds the Chair of Theology and Culture at Regent College, Vancouver, does it by drawing us into the ambiguity of life that biblical wisdom acknowledges.

Calling us to reflect on where we live ? in this world, fallen, east of Eden ? Stackhouse writes that we should expect things: sin, waste, stupidity, absurdity, vanity, promiscuity, and so on in political life. But he doesn't stop there. He holds a mirror up to us and challenges us to look not just ?out there? in the world but at ?the enemy within.? The ambiguity within.

Citing Solzhenitsyn's brilliant insight that the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being, Stackhouse spends most of the article showing how the all too human penchant for good and bad, right and wrong, love and hate applies even to Christians, and to their congregations, their denominations, and their ecumenical fellowships that engage with social and political life in America.

?But expecting these things does not mean accepting [them], much less ignoring [them],? he writes, then wisely suggests ways in which we as Christians must ?instead intentionally structure our lives, individually and corporately,? to deal with the ambiguity in our own hearts and actions, even ?when the way forward is not immediately present and results are hard to predict.? The article is filled with poignant illustrations.

As in every other area of life, we have obediences to fulfill under God in political life. It's either that, or bow to other gods. Spend the few minutes it takes to read this excellent and nuanced piece, and then spend time reflecting on this: How far am I from obedience to a gospel-shaped wisdom for political engagement? ?[The Ambiguous Political Life](#),? Christianity Today, November, 2012