

2025 HOUSE POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS

HCR 3020

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Political Subdivisions Committee Room JW327B, State Capitol

HCR 3020
2/13/2025

A concurrent resolution urging North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ.
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2:58 p.m. Chairman Longmuir opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Longmuir, Vice-Chairman Jonas, Representatives Bolinske, Davis, Hager, Hatlestad, Heilman, Klemin, Motschenbacher, Warrey

Members Absent: Vice-Chairman Fegley, Representatives Ostlie, Toman

Discussion Topics:

- Meaning of kingship
- History of Christianity in North Dakota
- Persecution of other religions

2:59 p.m. Representative Nico Rios, North Dakota Representative for District 23, introduced the bill and provided testimony #37676.

3:11 p.m. Christian Wagner, Independent, testified in favor and provided testimony #37650.

3:23 p.m. Brooke Burnett, Independent, testified in favor and provided testimony #37675.

3:27 p.m. Cody Schuler, American Civil Liberties Union of North Dakota, testified in opposition and provided testimony #37707.

3:33 p.m. Carol Two Eagles, Independent, testified in opposition.

3:40 p.m. Sylvia Bull, Reverend in Bismarck, testified in opposition and provided testimony #37423.

3:43 p.m. Gretchen Deeg, Pastor, testified in opposition and provided testimony #37504.

3:50 p.m. Andrew Varvel, Independent, testified in favor and provided testimony #37602.

Additional written testimony:

In favor

#37606, #37607, #36425, #36532, #36881, #36937, #36977, #37067,
#37076, #37148, #37430, #37490, #37508, #37583, #37637, #37548

In opposition

#37536, #36264, #36332, #36349, #36367, #37298, #36445, #36710, #36719, #36739,
#36797, #36850, #36902, #36913, #36925, #36941, #36960, #37030, #37034, #37172,
#37178, #37218, #37228, #37236, #37374, #37391, #37392, #37416, #37428, #37435,

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#37457, #37461, #37475, #37483, #37524, #37527, #37538, #37551, #37553, #37605,
#37622, #37623, #37626, #37633, #37641, #37648

3:55 p.m. Chairman Longmuir closed the hearing.

Wyatt Armstrong, Committee Clerk

February 7, 2025

I am opposed to HCR3020.

There should be a clear separation of church and state in our local and federal government.

This is an absurd resolution which should be swiftly trashed. Religious beliefs are private, personal matters that should remain OUTSIDE of our schools and government.

Not only is keeping the separation of church and state a respectful way to manage the varied religious beliefs of our diverse population, but it is the law. Government, local or federal, is not intended to advance religious views that conflict with the beliefs of many.

Please kill HCR3020 quickly, and please do what you can within your parties to discourage lawmakers from introducing this type of resolution which only wastes lawmakers' and citizens' valuable time, as well as our state's valuable resources.

Lisa Rask

Bismarck, ND

I am opposed to HCR 3020.

This resolution would violate the 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This Amendment prohibits the government from establishing a religion. This resolution would establish Christianity as a religion for the State of North Dakota. This would treat all other religions (Judaism, Islam, Native America religions, Buddhism, etc.) as being lesser faiths.

This is morally wrong and should be voted down.

Testimony on HCR 3020 – In Opposition

February 8, 2025

My name is Jacqueline Beller and I am a Fargo resident in D46.

I am a Christian, but I find this HCR to be quite offensive.

It asks all ND House Representatives to profess allegiance to a faith that isn't necessarily their own. It is exclusionary and heavy-handed. It excludes our brothers and sisters of different faith traditions (or no faith tradition), all of which are just as valid as Christianity.

North Dakota is not a "Christian State." People of all religions and those who have no religion can be elected the ND House of Representatives.

There is a separation of Church and State in this country for a reason. Bringing up Jesus when doing the work of the Legislature makes little sense.

I am writing to express my concern about the potential recognition of Jesus Christ as a king or sovereign in any official capacity within our government. While I respect the deeply held religious beliefs of many Americans, I am deeply troubled by the implications such the move would have for religious freedom, equality, and separation of church and state.

If we were to recognize Jesus as king what does that mean for the followers of other faiths, such as Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or indigenous spiritual traditions? Would leaders like Mohammed, Moses, Krishna, or Buddha also be granted the same recognition? If not, such an action would inherently privilege one religion over others, violating the First Amendment's guarantee of religious neutrality and equal protection under the law.

Furthermore, I fear that this kind of recognition could accelerate our nation's slide into a Christian nationalist state, where the rights and perspectives of non-Christians, atheists, and secular citizens are marginalized or ignored. Christian nationalism, which seeks to fuse Christian identity into American civic life, threatens the pluralism and diversity that have long been strengths of our nation. It risks alienating millions of Americans who do not share the same beliefs and undermines the foundational principles that our government must remain neutral in matters of religion.

Our nation was founded on the idea that no single religion should dominate the public sphere. The separation of church and state is not an attack on faith but a protection of it, ensuring that all individuals are free to practice or not practice their beliefs without fear of discrimination or coercion. I urge you to uphold these principles and oppose any efforts to officially recognize one religion or religious figure above others.

Please consider the broader implications of such actions and work to ensure that our government remains inclusive, equitable, and respectful of all citizens regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue I look forward to your response and hope to see your leadership in safeguarding the values of religious freedoms and pluralism

Sincerely

Tara M Fox

Minot ND 58703

I support the proposed resolution to urge North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ because it would promote the values of religious liberty on which our country was built, it would encourage government workers to operate in accordance with a transcendental moral framework, and it would help to facilitate an end to discrimination against Christians in government policy.

February 9, 2025

Dear Representatives,

I am writing in strong opposition to HCR 3020: A concurrent resolution for North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ.

From a U.S. Constitution stance, the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights protects the freedom of religion. To title North Dakota a "Christian State" goes directly against that.

From the more personal standpoint, I have had many students and coworkers over the years who do not practice Christianity – all in this state, by the way. While I have absolutely no problem with people being able to practice whatever religion they want, that is a very personal thing. Making North Dakota a Christian State is alienating to people of different beliefs. Please, do not make North Dakota citizens feel like they do not belong here over religion of all things.

Sincerely,

Tammy Kruger

Christ is the King and Center of all hearts

February 10, 2025

Dear ND Legislators,

As a practicing and faithful Christian, I am opposed to **HCR 3020**. Our country was founded on freedom of religion. Please review United States history to remind yourself not to repeat the mistakes of other countries and rulers. The Puritans left England for freedom of religion, not because they were persecuted by non-Christian religious groups, but because they were persecuted by the Church of England AND the king who was the head of that church.

As one of my wise pastors from my childhood often reminded our congregation, "Separation of church and state was not created to protect government from the church, but to protect the church from the government." Christians do not need to be protected from other religions in this country. We need to be protected from governmental bodies trying to act as the voice of Christianity. It is only my Lord, Jesus Christ, who is my spiritual ruler. It is not the State of North Dakota, the President or the United States of America. This is not my forever home. My faith and hope is in the everlasting life to come when Christ returns again.

As quoted from the attached web site to the Library of Congress:

www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel01.html

"The religious persecution that drove settlers from Europe to the British North American colonies sprang from the conviction, held by Protestants and Catholics alike, that uniformity of religion must exist in any given society. This conviction rested on the belief that there was one true religion and that it was the duty of the civil authorities to impose it, forcibly if necessary, in the interest of saving the souls of all citizens. Nonconformists could expect no mercy and might be executed as heretics."

I grew up in and still practice doctrinal beliefs that are from a minority Christian denomination. My Sabbath is on the seventh day, as Christ's and the disciple's was. I do not participate in most religious holidays because they are not Bible based and stemmed from historical governmental bodies and the Catholic Church trying to combine pagan holy days and practices with Christianity to maintain control of their people and attract non-believers. (Again, please read your history.)

Will the ND Legislature next be telling me what day of the week I should worship or what holidays I have to observe? Will you tell me what church I have to attend to be a "real" Christian? These are my fears and anxieties. I need freedom of religion as a Christian just as much as individuals who practice religions other than Christianity. If you want to defend Christianity, defend our right to practice religion as we believe to be true.

You may think you are ethical and doing this for the “right” reasons, but what about our lawmakers who come after you? What about the well being of the next generations if these laws are used by individuals, without ethical or moral integrity, who use them for power, control and greed?

My God is powerful enough to defend Himself without our human interference. (1 Chronicles 29:11, Exodus 14:13-14, Isaiah 41:10, Jeremiah 32:17) He has already provided his laws. Christ did not come to overthrow governments, but to show us God in the flesh. He instructed each of us to be disciples and to tell others of God’s grace, mercy, love and forgiveness. He did not instruct us to forcefully impose a belief system on others. God gives all of us a choice. He wants us to love and serve Him by choice, not by force. My choice is to be God’s hands, feet, and mouth. It is NOT up to our government to spread the Gospel. Leave that to our churches and Christian brothers and sisters.

As a legislator, if you want to protect and spread Christianity, do so by serving, doing good works and showing Christ’s love to those you encounter. Do this by defending the US Constitution and our liberties. Allow the United States of America to be a beacon of freedom and hope to all. The “Gentile” rulers were the ones who created laws to control others, remove freedoms and persecute Christians. Please remember that as you vote on any resolution.

Matthew 20:25-28 *“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

May God bless your leadership and provide you with His wisdom.

Respectfully,

Lisa Poppenhagen

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members

I urge you to recommend DO NOT PASS on House Resolution 3020 proclaiming 'Kingship of Jesus Christ over all the world.'

I am saddened to see our ND legislators introduce a resolution against religious liberty. Religious liberty is foundational to the United States and any government proclamation or law that holds one religion, in this case Christianity, over any other.

While proponents may say that this is not technically a 'law' and therefore is not unconstitutional, it clearly infringes on the religious liberty that is guaranteed by the First Amendment.

I will defend anyone's right to speak their religious beliefs in their homes, churches and in the public square, but using one's governmental office to put one's beliefs over those of other citizens is wrong.

I strongly urge the committee to vote DO NOT PASS on HCR 3020 and to discourage lawmakers from introducing further measures and resolutions, in the future, that infringe on our citizen's constitutional rights. Resolutions and bills like this take away too much of the limited time our legislature has to pass meaningful legislation that serves constituents in meaningful ways.

Thank you for your consideration.

Heather Szklarski
Grafton, ND

Dear Committee,

I am writing to you as a concerned citizen regarding the fundamental principle of the separation of Church and State, which is crucial to maintaining our democracy and ensuring the rights of all individuals, regardless of their religious beliefs.

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution establishes a clear boundary between religious institutions and government. This separation is not merely a suggestion; it is a foundational tenet that protects our diverse society. It ensures that no single religious belief can dictate public policy or infringe upon the rights of those who may hold differing views.

Historically, the blending of religious and governmental authority has led to the oppression of minority faiths and the restriction of personal freedoms. When the government favors one religion over another, it undermines the very essence of democracy and pluralism that our nation was built upon. The diverse tapestry of beliefs held by our citizens is a strength, and it is imperative that our laws reflect and respect this diversity.

Moreover, the separation of Church and State fosters an environment where individuals are free to practice their faith, or to choose not to practice at all, without fear of repercussion or discrimination. It protects the rights of non-believers and ensures that religious doctrines do not interfere with personal liberties or the public good.

I urge you to consider the importance of this separation in your legislative decisions. Upholding the First Amendment is essential not only for the protection of individual rights but also for the integrity of our democratic institutions. It is vital that we remain vigilant against any efforts to erode this principle, as doing so could have far-reaching consequences for future generations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I trust that you will advocate for policies that uphold the separation of Church and State, ensuring that our government remains a neutral entity in matters of faith.

Sincerely,

Deb Belquist

Dear Members of the Committee,

I strongly urge this committee to reject this resolution! Not only does it violate our constitution on multiple counts but it risks creating unnecessary restrictions and will have unintended consequences.

The United States constitution explicitly upholds the separation of Church and State stating that no governing entity shall endorse one religion over another. This resolution is in clear violation of that principle and the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

Additionally, this resolution also alienates residents of North Dakota who adhere to different or no faith at all and has the potential of infringing on their constitutionally protected right to religious freedom. Our government must represent all citizens equally, regardless of religious beliefs.

I urge you to vote against this resolution.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Saralynn M. Dobler

Resident of Fargo, ND

Birgit Pruess, Ph.D.
3696 Harrison St. S
Fargo, ND

February 5, 2025

RE: HB1161

Dear members of the 69th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota,

I am a resident of Fargo, ND. Please, accept the below as my testimony IN OPPOSITION of HCR3020 'urging North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ'.

Major point:

The resolution is against the first amendment and that makes it unconstitutional.

Minor comments:

- There is language of 'all nations' and 'all over the world' in the resolution. A rough estimate of the number of Christians is ~2.9 billion or 31% of the world population. That is not even a majority.
- North Dakota can not and should not attempt to control the rest of the world.
- America is a democracy, we don't need a king.

Altogether, I vehemently oppose HCR3020 and recommend a DO NOT PASS vote.

As in all my testimonies, I much appreciate the hard work and dedication that each member of my state legislative assembly puts into our state. Thank you.

Sincerely and respectfully
Birgit Pruess, Ph.D.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God the Father (John 3:16 DRA), who has sent the Holy Spirit (John 15:26 DRA), is the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 17:14, 19:16 DRA). The recognition of Jesus Christ, our Lord, as King, is not simply a title, but helps us to express the truth of who He is.

“Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus, and said to him: Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answered: Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of me? Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thy own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee up to me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to him: Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.” (John 18:33-37)

“24. If We ordain that the whole Catholic world shall revere Christ as King, We shall minister to the need of the present day, and at the same time *provide an excellent remedy for the plague which now infects society. We refer to the plague of anti-clericalism, its errors and impious activities.* This evil spirit, as you are well aware, Venerable Brethren, has not come into being in one day; it has long lurked beneath the surface. The empire of Christ over all nations was rejected. The right which the Church has from Christ himself, to teach mankind, to make laws, to govern peoples in all that pertains to their eternal salvation, that right was denied. Then gradually the religion of Christ came to be likened to false religions and to be placed ignominiously on the same level with them. It was then put under the power of the state and tolerated more or less at the whim of princes and rulers. Some men went even further, and wished to set up in the place of God's religion a natural religion consisting in some instinctive affection of the heart. There were even some nations who thought they could dispense with God, and that their religion should consist in impiety and the neglect of God. **The rebellion of individuals and states against the authority of Christ has produced deplorable consequences.** We lamented these in the Encyclical *Ubi arcano*; we lament them today: *the seeds of discord sown far and wide; those bitter enmities and rivalries between nations, which still hinder so much the cause of peace; that insatiable greed which is so often hidden under a pretense of public spirit and patriotism, and gives rise to so many private quarrels; a blind and immoderate selfishness, making men seek nothing but their own comfort and advantage, and measure everything by these; no peace in the home, because men have forgotten or neglect their duty; the unity and stability of the family undermined; society in a word, shaken to its foundations and on the way to ruin.* We firmly hope, however, that the feast of the Kingship of Christ, which in future will be yearly observed, may hasten the return of society to our loving Savior. *It would be the duty of Catholics to do all they can to bring about this happy result. Many of these, however, have neither the station in society nor the authority which should belong to those who bear the torch of truth. This state of things may perhaps be attributed to a certain slowness and timidity in good people, who are reluctant to engage in conflict or oppose but a weak resistance; thus the enemies of the Church become bolder in their attacks. But if the faithful were generally to understand that it behooves them ever to fight courageously under the banner of Christ their King, then, fired with apostolic zeal, they would strive to win over to their Lord those hearts that are bitter and estranged from him, and would valiantly defend his rights.*

25. Moreover, the annual and universal celebration of the feast of the Kingship of Christ will draw attention to the evils which anticlericalism has brought upon society in drawing men away from Christ, and will also do much to remedy them. **While nations insult the beloved name of our Redeemer by suppressing all mention of it in their conferences and parliaments, we must all the more loudly proclaim his kingly dignity and power, all the more universally affirm his rights.**" (Excerpt from Quas Primas by Pope Pius XI, emphasis and italics added)

Without Jesus Christ, without the recognition of Him as King, things start to go bad.

"Nietzsche was not the first to become a byword for atheism, of course. No one, though—not Spinoza, not Darwin, not Marx—had ever before dared to gaze quite so unblinkingly at what the murder of its god might mean for civilisation. 'When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet.'⁹ Nietzsche's loathing for those who imagined otherwise was intense. Philosophers be scorned as secret priests. Socialists, communists, democrats: all were equally deluded. 'Naïveté: as if morality could survive when the *God* who sanctions it is missing!'¹⁰ Enthusiasts for the Enlightenment, self-proclaimed rationalists who imagined that men and women possessed inherent rights, Nietzsche regarded with contempt. It was not from reason that their doctrine of human dignity derived, but rather from the very faith that they believed themselves—in their conceit—to have banished. Proclamations of rights were nothing but flotsam and jetsam left behind by the retreating tide of Christianity: bleached and stranded relics. God was dead—but in the great cave that had once been Christendom his shadow still fell, an immense and frightful shadow. For centuries, perhaps, it would linger. Christianity had reigned for two millennia. It could not be easily banished. Its myths would long endure. They were certainly no less mythical for casting themselves as secular. 'Such phantoms as the dignity of man, the dignity of labour':¹¹ these were Christian through and through. Nietzsche did not mean this as a compliment."

Dominion, How The Christian Revolution Remade The World, Tom Holland, pg.464

"That human beings have rights; that they are born equal; that they are owed sustenance, and shelter, and refuge from persecution: these were never self evident truths. The Nazis, certainly, knew as much—which is why, in today's demonology, they retain their starring role. Communist dictators may have been no less murderous than fascist ones; but they—because communism was the expression of a concern for the oppressed masses—rarely seem as diabolical to people today. The measure of how Christian we as a society remain is that mass murder precipitated by racism tends to be seen as vastly more abhorrent than mass murder precipitated by an ambition to usher in a classless paradise. Liberals may not believe in hell; but they still believe in evil. The fear of it puts them in its shade no less than it ever did Gregory the Great. Just as he lived in dread of Satan, so do we of Hitler's ghost. Behind the readiness to use 'fascist' as an insult there lurks a numbing fear: of what might happen should it cease to be taken as an insult. If secular humanism derives not from reason or from science, but from the distinctive course of Christianity's evolution—a course that, in the opinion of growing numbers in Europe and America, has left God dead—then how are its values anything more than the shadow of a corpse? What are the foundations of its morality, if not a myth?"

Dominion, How The Christian Revolution Remade The World, Tom Holland, pg.540

The social influence of Christianity is needed. Many of our Western values, as the author Tom Holland has pointed out in his book “Dominion, How The Christian Revolution Remade The World”, come from Christianity. Yet today, many people either recognize that and don't understand its importance, or they don't know it, and have been blinded by the French Revolution, the Enlightenment era, and philosophical falsehoods. They believe that our secular societies are truly maintainable but they clearly aren't, and Michael Jones (InspiringPhilosophy) has made that very clear in his debate with Phil Zuckerman (<https://youtu.be/IMFH38yV1EI?si=lBofhDHfOCmutDPr>). Perhaps for a time they'll survive, but things will get worse, as they already have. Our traditional Christian, Western Society, is dead. Now it has been replaced with Liberalism, Communism, and Fascism. How long will these three keep fighting? We must return to Jesus Christ the King of the Universe. Christian social influence must return. Jesus Christ's Church, the One True Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, must be returned to. The Nicene Creed must be in the mind of us all. We must work towards a better future. We must have children and raise them in the authentically Christian, Catholic faith, in communion with the Bishop of Rome. Death to pridefulness, life to humility. Death to selfishness, like to selflessness. The salvation of our and others' souls are at stake. We must build a future for our children, at the cost of temporary suffering. Jesus Christ is King. It is time to fulfill the Great Commission.

IC XC NI KA

HCR 3020 regarding the Concurrent Resolution Declaring the Kingship of Jesus

February 10th, 2025

I write in opposition to this unnecessary and inappropriate piece of legislation.

No doubt the sponsors of this bill believe in this tenet of their faith, but it has no place in the halls of the State legislature.

I am an ordained minister in The United Methodist Church, and affirm the supreme authority of Jesus Christ in my life and our world, but I see no reason my personal Christian beliefs need to be promulgated in the public square of State government.

“Kingship” can mean many things to many people, and Christians do not all agree on how Jesus of Nazareth who was acclaimed the Messiah 2000 years ago is also a “king.”

I believe he is my personal Lord and Savior, but he is no political king according to the Gospels. “My kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:31)

The Gospels portray Jesus as critical of political rulers, religious authorities, and self-appointed experts in the Jewish law, but that does not make him a king with authority over any secular state then, now or tomorrow.

According to the Gospels, the Kingdom of God resides in believers’ hearts and minds, and the values of love, mercy, tolerance and peace take form through their behavior, individually and collectively.

I find this Resolution HCR 3020 to more divisive than unifying, offensive to not only to some Christians, but to Native Americans, and people of other faiths who live in the State of North Dakota.

Therefore, I oppose HCR 3020, and submit this written testimony against it.

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Martin Toepke-Floyd

I am writing to vehemently OPPOSE HB 3020, which seeks to declare “Jesus Christ as King.”

First, I am appalled that taxpayer monies and legislative time are being wasted in this effort. As a Christian and a pastor’s wife and seminary graduate, I can tell you that this is the last thing Jesus Christ would declare. He repeatedly stated he was NOT an earthly—his kingdom is in heaven and those that seek him will find him.

Second, this legislation is making my treasured state a laughing stock. What does it improve? What does it change? Not a thing.

STOP wasting time and money on trashy legislation. Those that seek Christ will find him. I gather that some of my state legislators could use some remedial Bible studies.

Jan Russell
4910 157th Ave SE
Davenport, ND 58021

My name is Travis Clark. I am writing this on behalf of myself as a resident and citizen of North Dakota. This bill directly violates my First Amendment rights as guaranteed by the United States Constitution.
I am vehemently opposed to the bill. Thank you for your time.

The Social Kingship of Christ: A doctrine no longer recognized

By: Louie Verrecchio



On the liturgical calendar of the Traditional Roman Rite, the last Sunday of October is the Feast of Christ the King, which was established in 1925 by Pope Pius XI so “that the kingship of our Savior should be as widely as possible recognized and understood.” (*Quas Primas* 21) And yet, less than a century later, precious few doctrines are as *unrecognized* and *misunderstood* as the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the last Sunday before Advent, when the feast is (ostensibly) celebrated in *Novus Ordo* parishes throughout the world, unwitting faithful will largely be treated to such nonsense as: *The kingdom of Christ is not in this world. His kingship is a heavenly, not an earthly, reality. His reign is not of the temporal variety. His kingship is all about sovereignty over one's soul.*

I know this from bitter experience as I used to be one of those unwitting people and have heard every single one of these untruths spoken from the pulpit. With this in mind, I offer the following exploration of Our Lord's Kingship, which is taken from a presentation that I was pleased to deliver at the Catholic Identity Conference in 2014.

For most readers, the following essay will likely serve simply to reinforce a doctrine already familiar. Its greatest value, however, may lie in its ability to convey the true Faith to family members and friends who are unaware of Catholic doctrine concerning the Social Kingship of Christ - a truth that resonates immediately with all who genuinely love the Lord and His Church. With this in mind, please give special thought to who you might invite to read it.

Let us begin our reflection by making the opening verse of the well-known hymn, “Holy God we Praise Thy Name,” our prayer. You may even choose to sing it aloud:

**Holy God, we praise Thy Name;
Lord of all, we bow before Thee!
All on earth Thy scepter claim,
All in Heaven above adore Thee;
Infinite Thy vast domain,
Everlasting is Thy reign.**

Now, I can well imagine that as you either spoke or sang the verse, you probably did so as much from memory as anything. After all, the words are very familiar to every one of us, right?

It occurs to me, however, that when we say or sing very familiar words, even when we do so with great sincerity and truly from the heart, we sometimes fall a little short when it comes thinking about what those words actually mean on the deepest level.

In the present case, when was the last time you stopped to considered what it truly means to say that the reign of Christ the King is *everlasting*? Or, what it means to say that His domain is *vast* and indeed *infinite*?

More importantly we might ask, how does our faith in the Kingship of Christ influence the way in which we view the world and the way in which we engage with fellow Catholics and with unbelievers; in other words, how does this venerable doctrine inform our understanding of the role that we're called to play in the mission of the Holy Catholic Church?

These are the kinds of things we're going to consider in this reflection, and I'd like start in earnest with a passage from Sacred Scripture; one that is also comprised of very familiar words:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore *and make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe everything whatsoever that I have commanded; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age. (Matthew 28:16-20)

These words from the Gospel according to St. Matthew contain what is often called the "Great Commission," the divine commission issued to the Holy Catholic Church by Jesus Christ, her Founder and her Head. Just like the words to the hymn that we prayed at the opening, this passage is perhaps just a little bit *too* familiar in the sense that we can recite it pretty much verbatim with very little effort.

And yet, apart from making *a concerted effort* to ponder this text very carefully to consider its deeper meaning, we are all but certain to overlook the substantial treasure that is contained therein; treasure that relates very directly to the topic at hand.

With this in mind, I'd like to invite you to examine this text very closely; to ponder its deeper meaning perhaps more deliberately than you have ever done so in the past, even to the point of focusing on individual words in the text that may initially appear incidental but that, in truth, are incredibly important.

As we proceed, a portion at a time, I think many readers may be surprised to discover just how much treasure awaits us in the text.

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them."



Looking down upon the Sea of Galilee

Just imagine looking out from above upon the Sea of Galilee and the surrounding area. The view was probably rather impressive. Even so, surely Our Lord's choice of location must have been more significant than that, and what might that significance be?

Well, for one, we see throughout Sacred Scripture that the mountain is not uncommonly that place *where God meets man*; not simply to engage in a private conversation, but to impart something of great importance for the whole of humanity unto salvation.

Most famously, perhaps, we see this in the Book of Exodus when Moses encountered the burning bush on Mt. Horeb.

We see it once again in the life of Moses when he received the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai - places that scholars believe to be one and the same; a place referred to in other parts of Sacred Scripture as *the Mountain of God*.

We read about a theophany on a mountain yet again in 1 Kings 19 in a slightly different way when the Lord instructed Elijah, saying, "Go to the mount and stand before the Lord." You may recall that it was there on that mountain where Elijah heard the voice of God – not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in a still small voice.

That still small voice sent Elijah forth to continue serving as a prophet of the God Most High such that he would one day be considered representative of all the prophets that heralded the coming of the Savior.

It is in this capacity that we find him yet again, this time in the New Testament, along with Moses, representative of the Law, at the Transfiguration – a magnificent manifestation of Father, Son and Holy Ghost; one that took place yet again on a mountain, in this case, Mt. Tabor.

Indeed, the mountain is that place where the Creator of Heaven and Earth so often condescends to address His people, and so it is rather fitting, is it not, that Christ the King should issue the divine commission to His Church on a mountain.

Not just any mountain, however, but "a mountain in Galilee."

You see, some seven centuries earlier, the God of all creation revealed through the prophet Isaiah that it would be *in Galilee* that the light of Christ - the anointed one - would one day shine in such a way as to reveal that the Kingdom of the long awaited Messiah, the Son of David, constitutes a *reign that is everlasting*.

We read in Isaiah 9, once again, very familiar words:

In the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. (cf Isa 9:1-2)

A few verses later the prophet writes:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. (cf Isa 9:6-7)

St. Matthew, referring back to these words of the prophet Isaiah, tells us that this prophecy was initially fulfilled at the outset of Our Lord's public ministry:

When Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been arrested, He retreated to Galilee that what was spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled. (Mt. 4:12-13)

He goes on to say, "From that time Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the *Kingdom* of heaven is at hand.'" (Mt. 4:17)

It was there, St. Matthew tells us, walking by the Sea of Galilee that Jesus began calling His Apostles to Himself starting with the fishermen Simon, Andrew, James and John.

With all of this in mind, let us now turn our attention back to Matthew 28 and the scene of the Divine Commission:

There we find the disciples, on a mountain, a high place set apart for Divine encounter, having been *drawn there*, if you will, by Him who said, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself."

As they look down upon the Sea of Galilee, surely Peter, Andrew, James and John are reminded of that moment some three years earlier when Our Lord first bid them to leave their nets and their boats behind saying "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men..."

And now, in the presence of the *Risen* Lord - Christ the King - they're about to find out *exactly what it means* to be fishers of men; the very purpose for which each and every one of them was called, as He came to them and said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

All authority; not just some, but *all*.

And yet how many times have we listened to our sacred pastors speak as if the Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ pertains almost exclusively to matters purely spiritual and to things properly religious?

"*Oh*," they tell us, "*He said so Himself, My Kingdom is not of this world.*"

Yes, but that's not all that Our Blessed Lord had to say about His Kingdom and His Kingship.

Let's take a closer look at what Our Lord had to say *in context* in the Gospel according to St. John:

Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not from Hence. Pilate therefore said to him: Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou say that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. (John 18:36-37)

Some verses later we read:

Pilate therefore said to him: Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee? Jesus answered: Thou should not have *any* power against me, unless it were given to thee from above. (John 19:10-11)

Read in context, what do we see?

First, we see that Jesus does not in any way deny that He is a King; on the contrary, *He confirms it* by confirming that He does indeed have a kingdom:

"My Kingdom is not *of* this world... My Kingdom it is not *from* Hence."

Pay close attention to what our Lord is doing here: He is simply referring to *the origins* of His Kingship; He is *not* commenting on its proper dominion.



Notice as well that when it comes to the mission that He would give to His Church, Jesus *does not* say that His servants will not strive in or do battle in this world. Indeed we must! He is simply making it known that we will fight not as the worldly do.

Rather, the servants of Christ the King will wage war with weaponry from Above; weaponry made available only to those who share in the Divine power.

And it is thus that St. Paul writes to the Corinthians:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of *our* warfare are not carnal but mighty to God, unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exalts itself against the knowledge of God: and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ... (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

When St. Paul says that we do not war according to the flesh, he does not mean to imply that we have no battlefields here in the present order. We most certainly do.

Our Lord came to redeem *all of creation*; therefore, we can fully expect that among the fortifications that will be brought to heel by Christ are those *in this world*, and this will take place in some measure through the cooperation of those who willingly take up the mission that He gave to His Church.

Nowhere does Jesus suggest that His Kingly authority is such that He has no jurisdiction in this world. The very idea is preposterous. On the contrary; He lets it be known that His kingdom *is greater than this world*.

And lest there be any question as to where the civil authorities of this world stand in relation to Him, He even tells Pilate that the only reason he has any power whatsoever is that it has been given to him “from above.”

This is a very clear indication of the duty that is incumbent upon *all earthly rulers* to honor, and worship and give glory to Him who alone is *from* above.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

All authority...

Where?

In Heaven and on Earth. This is a euphemism that means to say *everywhere*.

On this let us be perfectly clear: *There is no place, no person or thing that is not subject to the reign and the rule of Christ the King.*

At this, let's discuss this title, “Christ the King,” for just a moment.

When we say “*Christ the King*,” many today seem to think that we're invoking an honorific; a term of endearment born of Christian piety, as if it is little more than a title of esteem that we the faithful have bestowed upon the Lord.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

When we invoke “Christ the King,” we are drawing, in part, from the great treasure that is contained in the passage from Matthew 28 under discussion here, wherein Our Lord speaks of His authority.

We are proclaiming the glorious truth that Our Lord has *all authority*, and therefore His Sovereignty concerns not just spiritual things in the heavenly realm, but also temporal things *right here on earth*.

And that is what moves the Church to speak of the *Social Kingship of Christ*.

At least the Church used to be so moved.

When is the last time you heard a sermon extolling the *Sovereign Rights of Christ the King in society*?

A better question for most Catholics might be, *Have you ever heard such preaching*?

In any case, it should be clear to everyone reading this text that the all-encompassing authority of Christ *and the title of King that goes with it* has never been ours to give, *nor is it ours to take away*.

Oh, we can fool ourselves into believing that it's OK to avoid the Social Kingship of Christ in our public witness, as the members of the sacred hierarchy have done for the last fifty years...

We can neglect to speak of the solemn obligation that all men have to serve Christ the King, *in particular those who wield civil authority*, as they likewise have failed to do for the last half a century...

But at the end of the day, guess what?

Christ is still King. He stills reigns over society, and those in power are still subject to Him.

While this Kingship was certainly never ours to give, it most certainly was *given* to Christ.

This brings me to one of those individual words in Matthew 28 that merit our closest consideration: ***“Given”***

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been *given* to me."

This tells us something very important about Christ the King, and also something very important about the mission that He gave to His Church.

For insight into the givenness of Christ's Kingship, we'll turn to Pope Pius XI and his very beautiful encyclical *Quas Primas*, by which he established the Feast of Christ the King in 1925.

The Holy Father tells us:

We cannot but see that the title and the power of King belongs to Christ *as man in the strict and proper sense*. For it is only as man that he may be said to have received from the Father "power and glory and a kingdom," since the Word of God, as consubstantial with the Father, has all things in common with him, and therefore has necessarily supreme and absolute dominion over all things created. (*Quas Primas* 7)

So, what exactly is the Holy Father saying?

He is telling us that the Eternal Word – the second Person of the Blessed Trinity - He through whom all things were made, has *always* possessed Kingly authority.

But to the God-man Jesus Christ, to the anointed one of God, has it been *given*. As such, it is right to recognize that Kingship belongs to Jesus Christ in *His sacred humanity*, *“as man, in the strict and proper sense.”*

How does this understanding impact the way in which the Church thinks of her mission and the way in which she addresses the world? Or at least we might ask how it *should* affect the way in which the Church addresses the world?

For one thing, this knowledge should move us to make it known that those who deliberately withhold honor and worship from Jesus Christ cannot properly honor and worship God, *in truth*, as is every man's duty according to the first demand of justice.

Justice...

We hear this word an awful lot these days, especially during election season, but what exactly is it? At its most basic, justice is the rendering unto another what they are due, and there is a pecking order to justice; a hierarchy of the demands of justice wherein (*surprise!*) God comes first.

It's kind of like when we pay our bills. If money is tight, we're probably going to render unto the mortgage company before we pay the gym membership.

This only makes sense, right?

As a matter of justice, rendering unto to God the worship that is due to Him – not in any old way, but as He Himself has revealed that He desires to be worshipped, *albeit for our good*, this is the very first demand of justice.

This necessarily means giving worship to Him to whom “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given” by God.

So it is that the one true Church of Christ cannot content herself with simply encouraging non-Catholics to persist in a religion that simply acknowledges a Supreme Being. Much less can she do the same when it comes to the Muslims and the Jews who explicitly deny Christ the King who said:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded...”

Go where?

To all nations.

To do what?

To make disciples of them.

And what is a disciple?

The word “disciple” comes from the Latin *discipulus*; it is a pupil or someone who learns.

If we’re paying close attention to His words, therefore, we cannot help but see just how much the Lord wished to make it known that His would be a *teaching* Church.

Go make pupils... Go teach... Our Lord is essentially repeating Himself here just to make sure we get it. And yet, there are men in the Church today even to the highest places who like to promote this silly idea that the Church “grows by attraction,” as if she is somehow supposed bring believers unto salvation simply by the attractive power of good deeds, like moths drawn to a lantern.

This seems almost plausible until one considers that the heathens, the heretics, and even Our Blessed Lord’s avowed enemies are out there doing “good deeds” as well.

Which may very well be why the Lord did not say, *Go therefore and see how many random acts of kindness you can perform.*

No, He said *Go teach... Go make pupils ...*

Of whom?

Of the *nations*, and if that’s not peculiar enough, Our Lord commanded the eleven to “*baptize* the nations.”

Think about just how unusual this mission is.

Notice that Our Lord did *not* say, “Go into the various nations and make disciples of, and baptize, as many individual people who live there as possible...”

No, He said, *Go make disciples of, and baptize, the nations themselves.*

And yet we know that Baptism *is* conferred upon individual people, and that it is through Baptism that one is brought into the life of Christ and His Church.

And so what is Our Lord saying?

He’s saying: *Go, bring the nations themselves into the life of the Church. Instruct them in my ways, that they may reflect in their very ordering everything whatsoever that I commanded.*

Bring the nations into the life of the Church...

So much for the separation of Church and State!

With this in mind, let us ask:

Is it enough for our churchmen simply to hope and to pray that the baptized citizens of a given nation might in some way influence the affairs of State?

Of course not!

Our Lord made it clear that He desires more than this; He desires that the nations of the world should be brought into the life of the Holy Catholic Church and instructed in His ways.

This raises yet another question:

What precisely is a *nation*; in other words, what makes a nation *a nation*?

We might point to things like borders, currency, customs, language and so forth...

More fundamental than all of these, however, is the matter of *sovereignty*, so much so that we sometimes even speak of a “sovereign nation.” The two simply go together.

Every nation, regardless of its form of government has sovereignty, it also necessarily has a legitimate civil authority in place; be it a monarch, a dictator, a president, or what have you.

Notice, however, that Jesus did not suggest in any way that His disciples are to submit their cause to the civil authorities in the various nations.

This is noteworthy.

Remember, this is the same Jesus who willingly submitted to the legitimate civil authority vested in Pilate, recognizing as He did that it was given from above, and He tells us to do the same, “Render unto Caesar...”

So what’s going on here?

Well, He told us when He said:

“All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore...”

Here we come to another of those words that deserve our closest attention: *therefore*.

Jesus is essentially saying:

“Because I am the King who reigns over all things, you have no need of anyone’s permission, not even the legitimate civil authorities need to give ascent to your mission. Just go, do as I say, for I have authority over them.”

The importance of this one word “therefore” is simply this:

It makes a direct, inextricable connection between the mission of the Catholic Church and the Kingship of Christ.

If you take nothing else away from this reflection, please, make it this:

If Christ is not King; if Christ does not have a Social reign; if He does not possess Sovereign authority *even over matters temporal*, then the Church has no right to carry out the mission that was given to her as described in Matthew 28.

Indeed, we may even say that if Christ is not King in all of these ways, *then the Catholic Church has no legitimate mission at all*.

To imagine otherwise is kind of like me sending you on a mission to go into the kitchen of a local restaurant to instruct the staff on the kinds of ingredients they’re to obtain, how they’re to combine them, and the kinds of dishes they’re to offer on their menu, and so on...

Now, if I have no authority over that place and over the people who run its daily affairs, *then you have no legitimate mission*, much less a right to carry it out.

To continue the analogy, imagine that I just purchased the restaurant, and so I really *do* have authority over that place and the people who work there.

Now, imagine trying to carry out the mission that I’ve given to you, but rather than upset the people who run the restaurant, you decide to refrain from letting the staff know that you were sent on the authority of the guy who signs their paychecks.

How effective do you think you’re going to be in carrying out the mission that was given to you?

Well, if the approach taken by our churchmen over the last fifty years is any indication, we already know the answer; not very successful at all.

The simple truth is, Jesus Christ “signs the paychecks,” if you will, of every single ruler on earth whether they know it or not, and the reason so many don’t know it is because our churchmen have lost the wherewithal to tell them that Jesus Christ *is* King, and that He *does* have a Social reign, and that is what gives the Church her legitimate mission.

Her freedom to carry this mission out unencumbered comes directly from the King; not the U.S. Constitution or any other nation’s constitution.

It is for this reason that Pope Leo XIII could write in his encyclical, *Officio Sanctissimo*:

“The Church is a society eminently independent, and above all others...”

The Church is *eminently independent*. This means that she has no need of anyone’s permission – not the president, not the congress, not the United Nations – *no one* – in order to carry out the mission that Our Lord has given to her.

No other entity on earth can claim such freedom of operation as the Holy Catholic Church. *None*.

You wouldn’t know it, would you?

We tend to speak of religious freedom nowadays as something that belongs just as much to the Wiccans as it does to the Holy Catholic Church.

Not so. The freedom of the Church is eminent and “above all others,” and *no one* has the right to impede her.

Now, some will say that this is an overblown notion of the Church’s freedom since only *Catholic* nations can be expected to recognize Christ the King and the Church that He established; much less, they will argue, can we expect non-Catholic nations to give heed to the mission that Christ gave to His Church.

The sure doctrine of the Holy Catholic Church says otherwise.

Quoting once again from *Quas Primas*, the Holy Father Pius XI states:

Thus the empire of our Redeemer embraces all men ... His empire includes not only Catholic nations, not only baptized persons ... but also all those who are *outside* the Christian faith; so that truly the whole of mankind is subject to the power of Jesus Christ. Nor is there any difference in this matter between the individual and the family or the State; for all men, whether collectively or individually, are under the dominion of Christ. (*Quas Primas* 18)

No room for confusion here, is there?

“Oh,” others will say, “*that was then. Such teaching was historically nuanced. The constitution of States in our day has changed; we cannot expect the nations of today to accede to the Kingship of Christ!*”

Oh, really? Again, we turn Pope Pius XI:

In view of the common teaching of the sacred books, the Catholic Church, which is the Kingdom of Christ on earth, destined to be spread among all men and all nations, should with every token of veneration salute her Author and Founder as King and Lord, and King of Kings. (*Quas Primas* 12)

Did you get that? Christ is *King of kings*. He rules over earthly rulers.

And what is His Kingdom on earth? It is none other than *the Holy Catholic Church*. And what is her Divine destiny? *To be spread among all men and all nations*.

Notice that the Holy Father makes no appeal whatsoever to historical circumstances; rather, he bases this teaching on nothing less authoritative than *the sacred books* – Holy Scripture – the very word of God! This is crucially important: As we’re discovering, Catholic doctrine concerning the Social Kingship of Christ and the eminent freedom of the Holy Catholic Church is founded entirely in *revealed truth*. This means that it cannot be changed and is ignored only at tremendous peril.

This brings us to yet another crucially important individual word found in Matthew 28; one that speaks further to the link that exists between the Church’s mission and the Kingship of Christ.

What did Jesus tell His Church to teach?

Everything whatsoever that He *commanded*; not taught, but *commanded*! Consider, by contrast, a school or an institution of higher learning. Do the professors or teachers offer instruction, or do they issue commandments? They teach and instruct, of course.

In issuing the divine commission, however, Jesus can refer to His teachings as *commandments* for the simple reason that He is the King - He who has all authority. His *every word*, therefore, no matter how gently spoken, is a *command* - a Royal command.

And what’s more, He declared that the nations are to “*observe*” the things they are taught by His Church; they are not simply to learn them or acknowledge them. This is significant. What kinds of things do we observe? We observe *laws*.

This means that Our Lord’s teachings – entrusted without error to the Holy Catholic Church alone - *are not optional*. It’s not within the purview of *any* man to encounter the doctrines of the Catholic Church and either *take ‘em or leave ‘em*. No, the doctrines of the Holy Catholic Church are nothing less than commandments; they are laws issued by the King who rules over every man and every nation. They apply to *everyone* without exception.

This means that no one has a God-given right to reject the Holy Catholic Faith, no more than anyone reading this text has the right to rob a bank; even less so, in fact. Sure, some people do rob banks, and others do reject the Holy Catholic Faith, but let us be clear on this point:

God does not grant to human beings the right to do either, He simply gives us the freewill that allows us to do evil, even if sometimes by mistake.



Pope Pius XI established the Feast of Christ the King, 11 December 1925

So, what does this say with respect to the mission of the Church, such as it is being carried out in our day, and how may it, God willing, be carried out more faithfully in the future?

How many times have you heard a priest, a bishop, or one of the post-conciliar popes talk about the right to religious freedom, as if God Himself has given mankind a right to practice whatever religion his conscience happens to embrace?

It seems that they never tire of doing so, but the idea that one has a God-given right to practice Islam, or Judaism (so-called), or Buddhism, or any other false religion has been condemned by the pre-conciliar popes numerous times. The matter is simply not up for debate.

We, and more specifically, those who preach in the name of the Church, need to recover the wherewithal to boldly proclaim, *in love*, that the doctrines of the Catholic Church are nothing less than the commandments of the King. And not just any King, but *Christ the King* - the same who willingly went to the Cross for us.

He is the most benevolent of Kings; a King who is, obviously, exceedingly patient. He also happens to be a King who will never leave us.

“And lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age.”

It is right that we should take great comfort in these words of Our Blessed Lord. And yet, we must take care not to fall into the rather common trap of thinking of Jesus as Good Shepherd and Brother and Friend alone.

Yes, He is all of these things, but He is much more as well:

He is Christ the King; the Sovereign and Ruler before Whom every knee shall bend in Heaven and on Earth.

This is who said, “Lo, I am with you always...”

On the one hand, this means that our acts of reverence, the same that render unto Christ the honor and the glory that He is due as King, *even when done in secret*, are carried out as it were right before His very throne where He graciously accepts, blesses and rewards our faithfulness.

But it also means that when we as individuals, or as a society, or as a nation *ignore the Sovereignty of Christ*, presuming an autonomy that is not our own, these grave offenses against Christ the King take place right before His very throne as well, and make no mistake about it, even though He is patient and kind and slow to anger, Christ the King will render perfect justice one day, and absolutely nothing that takes place in His Kingdom will go unanswered.

This, my friends, should fill us with a sense of holy awe; with that healthy fear of the Lord that is a gift of the Holy Ghost.

Yes, Our Lord has promised to remain present with us even to the end of the age, and I would be remiss if I failed to mention the unique presence of Christ the King in the Person of Peter and his successors.

From about the 8th century all the way up to the 1960’s, the popes have worn the papal tiara or triregnum – a three-tiered crown - as a visible sign of the sovereignty that is vested in their exalted office as Vicars of Christ the King. Know this: Just as certainly as Christ is King, so too in a sense is the pope a king; he is the most eminent of monarchs among men.

As you may know, the papal tiara was retired by Paul VI, who at the close of the Second Vatican Council placed it on the altar at St. Peters and ordered that it be sold and the money given to the poor. And yet, just as the title of King has never been ours to give to Christ, nor ours to take away, the Kingship of the Roman Pontiffs and the monarchical nature of the Petrine Office can never truly be relinquished; it can only be downplayed, ignored, and treated as if subject to reform.

But only for so long... Reality has a way of pressing itself upon those who deny it. It’s really just a question of when.

If we are to recover our Catholic identity relative to the mission of the Church and her proper place in the world, the popes must once more embrace the reality of who they truly are, not by their own merits, but by virtue of the merits of Christ the King.

In conclusion, let’s take a closer look at just one more portion of the passage from Matthew’s Gospel; one that we’ve yet to address by asking: *Who was present there on that mountain in Galilee when Christ the King issued the Divine Commission?*

St. Matthew tells us it was “the eleven disciples.”

Judas the Betrayer was not there, but Thomas was – the same who had said, “I will not believe unless I can see with my very own eyes.”

Prior to that day, Thomas not only saw with his own eyes, he even placed his hand in the Lord’s side and his finger in the wounds of His hands and dropping to his knees he uttered that unforgettable profession of faith, *“My Lord and my God!”*

This means that on that mountain in Galilee that day were eleven good men, eleven holy men, eleven *Saints*. These were the very same men who would go about establishing the Holy Catholic Church throughout the known world, each of whom - save for St. John the Evangelist - would die a martyr’s death.

And yet, St. Matthew goes on to tell us something very interesting... He tells us, “Some doubted.” Not just one, but *some*.

In our day, not a week goes by that one of the bishops – the self-proclaimed Bishop of Rome chief among them – doesn’t give us good reason to believe that *none of them* still really and truly hold the Catholic faith in its fullness. It’s easy to become discouraged; it may even lead some among us, God forbid, to be tempted unto despair.

And yet, St. Matthew is telling us that among the very *first* bishops of the Holy Catholic Church - men who gazed upon the Risen Lord with their very own eyes, men who heard Him speak with their very own ears, and even had the opportunity to touch Him - even among them, *some doubted*.

There is a crisis in the Catholic Church today, make no mistake about it, and we do well to think of it as a Catholic identity crisis. We seem to have forgotten who we are. Many have forgotten who their King, their Queen, and their Mother truly is. It’s a crisis of mission, one that in many ways is unique in the history of the Church. All of this is true.

And yet, if we consider very carefully what St. Matthew is telling us here, it cannot help but lend a bit of hopeful perspective to what we’re going through, and perhaps even give us a greater understanding of *our own* place in the life of the Church at this time of crisis, and the role that we might play in seeing her move forward.

Yes, some among the eleven assembled on that mountain in Galilee doubted, but even more importantly, *others believed*. And if not for the belief of the others, you may not be reading this today.

When we survey the landscape in the Church today, what do we see?

Well, we have to say that that not only do *some* self-identified Catholics, including clergy, doubt, *many* doubt. In fact, one cannot help but to observe that *most* today doubt. They doubt the Kingship of Christ. They doubt the mission that He gave to His Church. They doubt the doctrines of our Holy Catholic faith in ways too numerous to number. *They doubt and they doubt and they doubt...*

And yet *you* believe, don't you?

I can just imagine a lot of nodding heads out there, and that's good, *very good*.

Because you need to know that even though most among us are not members of the hierarchy upon which we depend, our belief in the one true Faith - *if we persevere in it, defend it, and spread it as best we can* - by the grace of Almighty God, will in some way serve to pave the road upon which future generations may come to believe, just as the belief of those men on that mountain in Galilee brought us to this place.

And in those moments when doubt becomes almost unbearable, and you feel like you want to throw your hands up in the air and exclaim *why bother*, do not despair; rather, cling to your belief, hold fast to your belief, and seek refuge in your belief!

Not in retreat, but in *return* – a return to base camp - to be nourished and strengthened in the immutable Faith, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in the Sacraments; a place from which the true Christian Soldier can go forth into the world to *profess* and *proclaim* the Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

And though we know very well that this world that hated Him first will hate us as well, let us put on the armor of God and bravely go forward, committed to doing just as His Holiness Pope Pius XI instructed:

“While nations insult the beloved name of our Redeemer by suppressing all mention of it in their conferences and parliaments, we must all the more loudly proclaim His kingly dignity and power, all the more universally affirm His rights.” (Quas Primas 25)



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NO ON HCR 3020

Chairman Longmuir and members of the House Political Subdivision Committee:

I am writing today to express my **opposition to HCR 3020**. Sponsored by Representative Rios, this is a resolution largely supported in **Christian nationalism**; an ideology that has **no place** in North Dakota or our legislature. Furthermore, any bill or resolution sponsored by **Rep Rios** should automatically be **thrown out** considering his less than sterling reputation and news coverage as of late. **He should be expelled from the house.**

I strongly ask that you **oppose HCR 3020**.

Respectfully submitted:

Kristin Nelson (she/her)

My name is Ambrosia Boehm, I moved to Mandan in 4th grade with my parents who grew up here and wanted to raise me in their home town.

My dad was a pastor, and I was raised in church my whole life, I know the Bible and the word of God. with all this knowledge my parents passed to me I oppose this bill.

Romans 14:1–5 says “Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. 2 One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. 4 Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.” 5 One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.

We cannot be a state that acknowledges “the Kingship of Jesus Christ” not only because of its direct violation of the constitution, specifically the first amendment Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances, but also because those proposing this resolution do not know or follow the word of God themselves.

I end with this, if we presented this resolution with the name of any other God from any other religion you’d be just as mad as I am.

In an age where societal fragmentation and moral ambiguity spread like an epidemic, North Dakota stands at a crossroads. The erosion of shared truths calls for a return to the foundational source of all order and justice: the sovereignty of Christ, whose kingship transcends human constructs. This motion is not merely symbolic; it is a reaffirmation of the eternal principle that governance derives its legitimacy from divine authority, a truth as urgent today as it was timeless.

Before the first star was cast into the heavens, before the concept of "state" took form, there existed a Sovereign whose authority is woven into the fabric of existence. Christ's kingship is not contingent on human acknowledgment—it is *a priori*, the bedrock of reality itself. Philosophers from Aquinas to Augustine recognized this: just as light precedes vision, divine authority precedes human law. To deny this is to build a house upon sand, ignoring the rock upon which all justice stands.

Scripture and reason alike affirm that "there is no authority except from God" (Romans 13:1). Governments are stewards, not originators, of power. The Declaration of Independence echoes this, grounding rights in a Creator. When North Dakota acknowledges Christ's kingship, it does not establish a theocracy but humbly admits a truth that elevates governance: rulers are accountable to a higher moral order. This recognition transforms power into service, aligning laws with the eternal principles of love, justice, and mercy.

Critics may invoke separation of church and state, yet this motion transcends sectarianism. It is not an imposition of dogma but a recognition of the metaphysical foundation of all legitimate authority. The First Amendment prohibits state religion, not state wisdom. Just as the Capitol's architecture nods to timeless virtues, this motion invites leaders to govern with the compass of divine truth, ensuring laws reflect universal moral law accessible to all consciences.

North Dakota, with its legacy of community and resilience, is uniquely poised to lead. By affirming Christ's kingship, the state honors its heritage while offering a remedy to modern alienation. Imagine a governance guided by humility, where policies uplift the vulnerable and leaders govern with integrity. This is not a retreat to the past but a step toward a society

where law reflects the divine "Logos"—the ordering principle that harmonizes chaos into cosmos.

Let North Dakota rise as a beacon, declaring that true authority flows from the King of Kings. In doing so, it plants a flag of hope: that even in a fractured world, governance rooted in eternal truth can heal, unify, and illuminate. The epidemic of despair meets its cure in the recognition of Him who is "before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). Let us affirm this motion, not out of coercion, but as a free people acknowledging the source of our freedom.

In the words of Proverbs 8:15–16: "By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just." May North Dakota's decree echo through history, a testament to the enduring kingship of Christ.

Dear legislators:

I ask you to consider the Anti-Semitic remarks that the bill's sponsor Representative Nico Rios has made about the President of Mexico, his country of descent. Do you think this resolution is made on sincere faith? I think it is but as a way to marginalize some and moralize to others. It alienates our Jewish brothers and sisters, our Native brothers and sisters, our Muslim Brothers and sisters and many others. Is this what the Prince of Peace does? To make our neighbors afraid to live in our public sphere?

NO! We are called to love everyone and not to make life more difficult for those who are different from us. They are to know we are Christians by our love.

Pam Carswell

Mom

Sunday School teacher

Christian

Truly embarrassed North Dakotan

Testimony in opposition to HCR 3020

My name is Amanda Burke, and I have been a resident of Grand Forks for 30 years. I am writing in strong opposition to this bill calling all of North Dakota to acknowledge the kingship of Christ. This opposition stems from multiple important tenets in our fundamental freedoms in this country.

We have, in this country, extraordinary and explicitly protected freedoms - including religious freedom. This bill has no purpose but to clearly favor Christianity against all other faiths. It claims that making this acknowledgement will grant us "great blessings" but I firmly believe that it will only serve to alienate the non-Christian portions of our population. I have had the blessing of living and working next to Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Pagan, and Atheist citizens of this fine state, and they *all* contribute to the strong sense of community that I have come to be proud of as a North Dakotan. I would be remiss to not speak out on their behalf.

The separation of church and state was not an accident in the founding of this nation - it is intentional and must be upheld as the first line of keeping the religious freedoms of all citizens safe. It is not only nationally promised, but in our own state constitution, which states: "The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference shall be forever guaranteed in this state" - and I fail to see how HCR 3020, a clear call for preference, honors that clear declaration.

While I understand that individual Representatives and Senators hold their own religious convictions, I urge you to remember that you represent *all* of your constituents, not just those you share a church with. I call upon you to uphold this pillar of freedom and reject this bill swiftly.

If, in fact, the state of North Dakota is an inseparable part of the American union and respects that the Constitution of the United States is, indeed, the supreme law of the land, then it is only right that we acknowledge that *there are no kings in this nation*. You may keep Christ as king in your heart for all your days, but such a resolution has absolutely no place in our state legislature.

Christ is King! Psalm 47:7 clearly states that God is the King of all the earth. North Dakota would do well to formally acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ, our coming judge and savior.

I am Amy Barkalow, and I acknowledge that Christ is King. "God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne."

Whether North Dakota chooses to acknowledge His kingship or not, He IS King over us. I volunteer at my church every week to teach the children exactly who our King is. My husband and I are raising 5 children to know He is our King. One of our girls was named to reflect that reality! Heidi Noelle means "the birth of our King brings good news!"

Our nation was not founded in a Godless void. The laws of "Nature and Nature's God" are the cornerstone of our founding documents; North Dakota already acknowledges that God's laws are the foundation for all other laws by virtue of being in the United States. Please vote Do Pass on this resolution.

Testimony in Favor of House Concurrent Resolution No. 3020

Ladies and Gentlemen of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly,

We find ourselves in an era where the postmodern philosophy of personal truth reigns supreme, suggesting that truth is subjective, malleable, and dependent on individual perception. This cultural trend is in direct conflict with the very notion of objective truth, a concept foundational to our society, our laws, and our governance. House Concurrent Resolution No. 3020 seeks to reaffirm an objective truth that transcends personal belief - the Kingship of Jesus Christ as the King of kings.

The Postmodern Dilemma:

In our current cultural landscape, the idea that “your truth” can be different from “my truth” leads to a relativism that undermines the stability and coherence of any society. However, the resolution before us stands on the ground of an unchanging, foundational truth that does not bend to the whims of cultural trends or personal opinion.

Biblical Foundation:

- **Scriptural Authority:** The Bible explicitly declares Christ’s authority over all creation. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus states, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me,” a declaration not limited to spiritual realms but encompassing civil governance as well. This is echoed in Daniel 7:14, where it is said that Christ received “dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.”
- Psalm 2:8 speaks of the nations being given to Christ as His inheritance, a clear directive for leaders to learn from Him. This isn’t merely a spiritual claim but a call for civil acknowledgment of His sovereignty.
- Revelation further cements this with titles like “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16), indicating His supreme rule over all earthly monarchs and powers.

Practical Implications:

- **Moral and Ethical Guidance:** Acknowledging Christ’s kingship provides a moral compass for legislation, policy, and societal norms, rooted in principles of justice, love, and truth. This can lead to a society where real liberty, discipline, peace, and harmony flourish, as mentioned in the resolution.

- **Historical Precedence:** The founders of North Dakota, as noted in the resolution, began our state's constitution with an invocation of gratitude to Almighty God, recognizing divine authority. This historical acknowledgment aligns with the resolution's intent to formally recognize Christ's sovereignty.
- **Cultural and National Identity:** By publicly affirming this truth, we strengthen our cultural and national identity, offering a unifying principle that transcends political divides. It serves as a reminder of the values that have historically shaped our state and nation.
- **Leadership and Accountability:** Recognizing Christ as King implies a standard of leadership where authority is seen as stewardship, accountable not only to the people but to divine justice, promoting humility and integrity in governance.

Conclusion:

The passage of this resolution would not compel belief but would affirm a fundamental truth about governance and authority, countering the corrosive effects of relativism. It would be a bold statement in an age of uncertainty, reminding us that there is an objective truth to which we can all aspire, one that can guide us to a more just, peaceful, and prosperous society.

I urge this Assembly to support House Concurrent Resolution No. 3020, acknowledging Jesus Christ's kingship over all the world, for the benefit of North Dakota and as a beacon of steadfast truth in our time.

Thank you.

Pastor Rob Grunden
Hillside Baptist Church

1123 10th Street East
Dickinson, ND 58601
701.979.4095

February 11, 2025

I am opposed to HCR3020.

The North Dakota resolution seeking to have the state "acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ" is unconstitutional as it directly violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which mandates the separation of church and state. By officially recognizing a specific religious figure, the resolution promotes Christianity and grants it preferential status over other religions, thereby infringing upon the principle of religious neutrality that is central to our constitutional framework. The Establishment Clause is designed to prevent the government from endorsing or supporting any religion, ensuring that citizens of all faiths, or none at all, are treated equally under the law. Acknowledging the Kingship of Jesus Christ through a state resolution would not only alienate those who do not adhere to Christianity, but it would also set a dangerous precedent of government interference in religious matters, undermining the foundation of religious freedom that the First Amendment guarantees. As such, the resolution stands in direct conflict with the constitutional protections designed to safeguard religious liberty and the integrity of a secular government.

Michael S. Danielson

Thompson, ND

House Concurrent Resolution No. 3020, House Political Subdivisions Committee Hearing
February 13, 2025

I am writing to express opposition to House Concurrent Resolution 3020, which calls for North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ. This resolution is not only a violation of the First Amendment, which prohibits government establishment of religion, but also an affront to Christ's own teachings and the very principle of religious freedom.

Which Jesus is this resolution proposing for kingship? What was his response when Christ was offered dominion over all earthly kingdoms? Matthew 4:8-10 recounts how the devil took Jesus to a high mountain and said, All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me. Jesus firmly rejected this offer, responding, Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only. If Jesus refused earthly rule when offered all the kingdoms of the world, can we reasonably believe he is now interested in political authority over North Dakota?

Does this resolution reflect Christ's greatest commandment? Jesus did not command his followers to establish earthly theocracies. Instead, he told us to serve God with absolute single-heartedness (Deuteronomy 6:13) and to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, followed by love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39).

Does this resolution demonstrate that love? Does it uplift the marginalized and the oppressed as Christ commanded? Or does it distort Christ's message into a political weapon? Are the sponsors of this resolution calling for the Messiah who teaches mercy, love, and service to others? Or the version of Jesus who hates the same people they hate?

This resolution is not an affirmation of faith; it is an assertion of Christian nationalism, contradicting both the teachings of Christ and the religious freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. It is a blatant misrepresentation of Jesus, a Jewish prophet who spoke of love, humility, and grace, not government-imposed faith.

Passing this resolution could have serious repercussions for marginalized communities in North Dakota. It risks fostering discrimination against non-Christians and non-religious people, creating social exclusion for those who do not align with its religious endorsement. By favoring one faith over others, the state would weaken religious freedom, fuel division, and set a dangerous precedent for further government intrusion into religious matters.

North Dakota does not need a government-mandated version of Christianity. Faith is meaningful because it is freely chosen, not politically imposed. Legislators should concern themselves with upholding the laws of North Dakota, not writing religious doctrine into public policy. For these reasons, I strongly urge the House Political Subdivisions Committee to issue a Do Not Pass recommendation on this resolution.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kevin R. Tengesdal
Bismarck, District 35



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

February 13, 2025

The Honorable Rep. Donald Longmuir
Chair, House Political Subdivisions Committee
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismark, North Dakota 58505

Re: OPPOSE HCR 3020, Overt Violation of the Establishment Clause

Dear Chairperson Longmuir and Members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee:

American Atheists, on behalf of its constituents in North Dakota, writes in opposition to HCR 3020, a resolution that impermissibly establishes Christianity as the state religion. This is a flagrant violation of the North Dakota State Constitution, the Constitution of the United States, and the founding principles of our nation. We strongly urge you to reject this resolution.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the “wall of separation” between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheists are accepted as members of our nation’s communities and where bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building, and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America.

The First Amendment of the Constitution provides: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”¹ This single sentence — the very first in the Bill of Rights — contains two of the most important clauses in U.S. law: the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause. The first protects religious entities from government interference by granting protections for all religious beliefs. The Establishment Clause protects the United States’ ability to operate as a neutral democratic body by prohibiting religious intrusion into institutions created to serve all Americans, regardless of their creed. Together, these clauses ensure pluralism can flourish in a country filled with diverse religious and nonreligious beliefs. Our secular Constitution is unique in history — a revolutionary departure from the Church of England — and our founding father’s commitment to safeguarding religious freedom for all is one of the most fundamentally American ideals.

HCR 3020 completely disregards the long history and tradition of religious pluralism in America by asking North Dakota to “acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ” and recognize the “Almighty God as the source of authority” within the state. This is an overt attempt to establish a state religion and

¹ U.S. Const. amend. I.

AMERICAN ATHEISTS

225 Cristiani Street • Cranford, NJ 07016-3214
(908) 276-7300 • www.atheists.org

a clear violation of the First Amendment. HCR 3020 would explicitly elevate Christianity above all other religious and nonreligious beliefs. The consequences of approving such a blatantly unconstitutional resolution would be devastating. The establishment of a religion by the state of North Dakota would open the door to discrimination against non-Christians and non-believers. Every person in North Dakota would feel compelled to conform their beliefs to those the government endorses, infringing upon their fundamental rights to freely exercise their religion and enjoy full and equal rights of conscience. Others would feel the need to hide their sincerely held beliefs and nonbelief to avoid negative treatment, in violation of their freedom of speech. Private and public employees would feel compelled to endorse the state religion out of fear for their livelihoods. Non-Christian churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples would become targets for hate crimes by those who believe the government-sponsored religion should be the *only* religion in North Dakota. Religious pluralism would no longer be celebrated but oppressed..

HCR 3020 is an unconstitutional and un-American resolution that seeks to turn North Dakota into a theocratic state in direct violation of the Establishment Clause. No one should be discriminated against for their beliefs, whether they are Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, or nonreligious, nor should they feel compelled to publicly profess adherence to a government-mandated religion to avoid ostracization and hate within their community. We strongly urge you to protect all North Dakotans rights by rejecting this resolution.

Should you have any questions regarding American Atheists' opposition to HCR 3020, please contact me at vanderson@atheists.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" and last name "Anderson" clearly legible.

Victoria Anderson
State Policy Counsel
American Atheists

February 11, 2025

I am strongly opposed to this resolution and find it not only a complete waste of taxpayers dollars to spend any time on this, but also completely embarrassing for the state of North Dakota. Not to mention it literally violates my First Amendment rights.

Please, PLEASE, focus on things that are actually needed in this state.

RaNae Jochim

South Bismarck resident

Currently ashamed to be a born and raised North Dakotan

I am writing as a concerned citizen in strong opposition to House Concurrent Resolution HCR 3020, which urges North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ. This resolution is unconstitutional and directly contradicts the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion and prohibits the government from endorsing any specific faith.

The First Amendment clearly states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

By urging the state of North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ, HCR 3020 effectively endorses a specific religious belief. This is a direct violation of the Establishment Clause, which ensures that all Americans—Christian or not—have the right to practice or not practice any religion without government interference.

This resolution is not just unconstitutional—it is divisive and exclusionary. North Dakota is home to a diverse population of people with different religious beliefs, including Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, agnostics, and many others. Our government should represent and serve all North Dakotans, not just those who adhere to one particular faith tradition.

Furthermore, HCR 3020 undermines the very principles of religious freedom that have long been a cornerstone of American democracy. True religious liberty means that the government remains neutral in matters of faith, allowing individuals to worship as they choose—or to not worship at all—without state endorsement or pressure.

I urge this committee to reject HCR 3020 and uphold the constitutional rights of all North Dakotans. Our government must not favor one religion over another or impose religious beliefs through legislative action. To do so would be not only unconstitutional but also un-American.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I strongly encourage you to vote NO on HCR 3020.

Members of the Committee I am asking for a Do Not Pass on HCR 3020. There are people from many different religions living in our state. Each religion having validity for the people of that faith. To dictate that the people of this State be urged to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus, is an assault on the beliefs of others. This resolution is not really about what each of you on this committee believe in terms of your religion, it is about what you are dictating for others that is important. So when someone says to you that you need to support this resolution to acknowledge your belief in the Kingship of Jesus, that is not accurate. You can always acknowledge it. You just don't have the right to ask everyone else to do the same. I don't know about you, but I know my God is so much bigger than one religion. I also know there are many roads that lead to Him. I cannot believe that He would turn his back on devout followers of any religion who acknowledge Him according to their tenants. Yet somehow, you are asking in HCR 3020 that everyone in the state acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus. Are we then going to acknowledge Muhammad, Brahman, and the Dalai Lama among others? This need to impose our religion on others while denying their own spirituality reminds me of a quote from Gandhi, 'I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.' When I think of Christ, I think of arms wide open. This resolution is certainly not that. Let us please embrace our diversity, honor each other and our individual beliefs, and vote Do Not Pass on HCR 3020. Thank you for your time. Peggy Stenehjem-Titus District 11 Fargo, ND

Testimony Opposing House Concurrent Resolution No. 3020

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I write to you today to strongly oppose House Concurrent Resolution No. 3020. While I respect the faith of those who support this resolution, I cannot support a measure that so clearly blurs the line between church and state. Our government exists to serve **all** people—of every faith and of no faith. This resolution sends a message that North Dakota prioritizes one religious belief over others, and that is not the role of government.

The strength of our country and our state has always been in its diversity. Our founders understood that freedom of religion meant freedom **for** religion and freedom **from** religion. It is a promise that each of us can believe as we choose, without fear of government interference or endorsement. This resolution undermines that promise. By declaring an official acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as sovereign, it disregards the deeply held beliefs of many North Dakotans and sends an unwelcoming message to those who do not share that faith.

And let's be honest—**a lack of religion is not the problem in our state or in our country right now**. Our communities are struggling with real, tangible issues: addiction, mental health crises, economic uncertainty, workforce shortages, and the ever-growing divide between our citizens. This resolution does nothing to address those pressing concerns. Instead, it distracts from the real work that needs to be done.

There is no shortage of faith in North Dakota. Walk into any church on a Sunday morning, and you'll see it. What we need more of is compassion, problem-solving, and policies that bring people together rather than divide them. This resolution is unnecessary, unconstitutional, and unhelpful. I urge you to reject it and focus instead on solutions that truly serve the people of this state.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kara Geiger
Mandan

Written Testimony Opposing HRC 3020

David Gipson 1314 8th St NW APT 207 Minot, ND 58701

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed resolution that urges North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ. While religious faith plays a profound and meaningful role in the lives of many North Dakotans, this resolution presents significant constitutional, legal, and ethical concerns that must not be overlooked.

First and foremost, this resolution conflicts with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which explicitly prohibits the government from endorsing or establishing a particular religion. By officially recognizing the Kingship of Jesus Christ, the state would be taking a clear stance that aligns government policy with a specific religious belief, thereby violating the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

Additionally, North Dakota is home to a diverse population with a wide range of religious and non-religious beliefs. A government resolution that promotes one religious viewpoint over others disregards the rights and freedoms of those who do not share the same faith. This measure would alienate and marginalize members of the community who practice different religions or choose to follow no religion at all.

Furthermore, the role of government should be to ensure liberty and justice for all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliations. Rather than using legislative power to endorse a specific faith, our lawmakers should focus on policies that benefit all North Dakotans, such as improving education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

The United States was founded on the principle of religious freedom, which includes the right to practice one's faith without government intervention or endorsement. If passed, this resolution would set a troubling precedent for government involvement in religious matters and could lead to legal challenges that would ultimately burden the state.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the North Dakota Legislative Assembly to reject this resolution. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

David Gipson

February 12, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the North Dakota Legislature,

As you consider House Concurrent Resolution 3020, which urges North Dakota to acknowledge the “Kingship of Jesus Christ,” I implore you to reflect on the profound implications of such a measure. This resolution not only undermines the foundational principles of our democracy but also threatens the very fabric of our pluralistic society.

Separation of Church and State: The U.S. Constitution explicitly mandates the separation of church and state, ensuring that no single religion is elevated above others. This principle is fundamental to our democracy, safeguarding the freedom of all citizens to believe or disbelieve as they choose. By promoting a resolution that acknowledges the “Kingship of Jesus Christ,” you risk violating this constitutional safeguard and setting a dangerous precedent for religious favoritism.

This measure is antithetical to the very bedrock of our nation as outlined in the **First Amendment** to the **U.S. Constitution** where we find the the Establishment Clause, which states:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Pluralism and Inclusivity: North Dakota, like the United States, is home to a diverse population of individuals from various religious backgrounds, including those who identify as non-religious. This resolution would send a stark message of exclusion to these citizens, potentially relegating them to second-class status. In a society that prides itself on inclusivity and equality, such a move would be a significant step backward.

Constitutional Implications: While this resolution may not carry the force of law, its symbolic impact cannot be overstated. It would embolden a growing Christian nationalist movement that seeks to blur the lines between church and state, undermining the safeguards that protect religious liberty for all. This is not merely a matter of personal belief but a challenge to the constitutional framework that ensures our democracy remains secular and inclusive.

This resolution would also be in direct violation of **Article I, Section 3** of the **North Dakota Constitution** that states:

February 12, 2025

“The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, **without discrimination or preference shall be forever guaranteed in this state**, and no person shall be rendered incompetent to be a witness or juror on account of his opinion on matters of religious belief; but the liberty of conscience hereby secured shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness, or justify practices inconsistent with the peace or safety of this state.”

The Role of Government: Government officials take an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution, not religious doctrine. It is your duty to protect the rights and freedoms of all North Dakotans, regardless of their religious affiliations. This resolution diverts attention from pressing issues that require legislative action and instead focuses on a divisive, symbolic gesture.

Call to Action: I urge you to reject this resolution and uphold the principles of religious freedom and pluralism that have made our nation strong. Instead of promoting religious dogma, focus on legislation that benefits all North Dakotans, regardless of their faith or lack thereof. The future of our democracy depends on our ability to maintain a secular government that respects the beliefs of all citizens.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Loren Keith Henry

Grand Forks, North Dakota

February 12, 2025

I am opposed to HCR 3020 and urge you to vote **NO**.

This bill goes against the constitutional guarantee of separation between church and state, and the right to freedom of religion for all people. This bill is a waste of our lawmakers time. If our lawmakers wanted to make “Jesus the King of North Dakota,” they’d spend more effort and money following the example of Jesus; caring for the poor, sick, hungry, refugee, and most vulnerable in our communities.

This bill is an obvious example of ND lawmakers working towards Christian Nationalism and control over the Gospel message. The plan to reshape the federal government enforces narrow Christian Nationalist beliefs. This plan openly targets church-state separation, LGBTQ+ equality, reproductive freedom, diversity, and more fundamental rights.

As a Christian leader, I urge you to vote NO on HCR 3020.

Molly Haagenson,

Director of Youth and Family Ministry of United Lutheran Church

Grand Forks, ND

Sylvia Bull

Regarding House Continuing Resolution No. 3020

12 February 2025

To the members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on House Continuing Resolution 3020. I urge a strong NO vote on this continuing resolution which resolves that the state of North Dakota acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ. As a Christian, and a local pastor in Bismarck, I acknowledge the authority of Jesus Christ and his teaching in my own life and in the life of our church community. However, Article 1, Section 3 of the North Dakota Constitution states that “the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination *or preference* shall be forever guaranteed in this state.” This continuing resolution clearly establishes a preference for the Christian religious tradition, thereby contradicting our state constitution. This preference for the Christian tradition above other religious traditions also has real potential to violate the free exercise of religion of non-Christian residents of North Dakota, as well as their liberty of conscience. An official recognition of and preference for Christianity in our government could easily lead, by inference, implication, or actual policy, to discrimination against non-Christians and/or preferential treatment for Christians. This is not the way to honor Christ, or to make disciples. Jesus’ invitation to discipleship is always that - invitational - never coercive or controlling.

In the book of Daniel, chapter 3, the Bible itself shows the dangers of the State enforcing religious beliefs and practices on minorities. When King Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to worship in a certain way that violated their conscience, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did what all people of conviction and integrity are called to do in such a situation, they stood up to the State and said, “No! No, you cannot and will not dictate my faith to me.”

As a person of faith, I say no, too. And I encourage you to say no with me. Say no to this preferential establishment of religion. Say no to this violation of the rights and free conscience of our neighbors. We can and must do better as North Dakotans.

Again, I urge you to vote NO on House Continuing Resolution 3020. Please direct your efforts to legislation that serves and benefits the lives of all North Dakotans, irrespective of faith tradition or belief.

In Christ,
Rev. Sylvia Bull
Bismarck

February 12, 2025

I am opposed to HCR 3020 and urge you to vote NO.

The idea that the ND state legislature would even allow a bill like this to be introduced is a waste of taxpayer dollars, time and energy.

I am a Pastor at a rural parish in Northwood, ND and my congregation members are increasingly concerned about the blurring of the separation between church and state. The Christian faith is not something to be forced on people by lawmakers. It lies with the clergy and church denominations to call people into Christ's mission to love and serve our neighbors local and abroad.

Claiming Jesus to be king of North Dakota goes against everything he preached and taught about. According to our scriptures when the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he offered Jesus the power to be king and ruler of the world and he was soundly rejected. Jesus's kingdom is not of any state, political party, or country.

A bill like this alienates all our friends of other faith traditions, and a nationalistic approach to faith is not concerned with care for marginalized groups, it seeks only power.

As a Christian leader, I implore you to vote NO on HCR 3020.

Steve DeKrey,

Minister, Northwood/Washington Lutheran Parish

Testimony in Favor of House Concurrent Resolution 3020

Members of the North Dakota Legislative Council,

Thank you for considering this resolution, it is an encouragement to see legislators standing up for the objective truth of the Scriptures. I affirm the Biblical evidence used in this resolution to affirm the all-encompassing Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is true that not only in a religious book, but in time and space history Jesus Christ, the son of God affirmed the truth that He has all Authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18-20). He possesses and exercises this Authority by virtue of the fact that He is indeed God, the second person of the Trinity, (Psalm 45:7; Romans 1:4) and by the express delegation of His Father; an agreement from before the creation of the world. (Psalm 2:8). This is no new teaching, the entire history of redemption (and therefore reality as we know it) has revolved around the God-Man Jesus Christ.

As far as I can tell the main opposition to this resolution is the misconceived idea that it would violate the first amendment. This couldn't be further from the truth. This comes from a misreading of the first amendment and from a misunderstanding about the nature of reality.

The first misunderstanding by those who oppose on the basis of the first amendment is that they think that the first amendment prohibits any religion from entering into the public sphere or being acknowledged in any way by the state. In other words they think that the separation of Church and State means that the state must be "neutral" or atheistic. This is not what the first amendment means. The First amendment says that "Congress shall make no law respecting an *establishment* of religion", this resolution simply doesn't do that. The first amendment is meant to protect the Institution of the civil government from mixing with the Institution of the Church and so as to have one or the other confused. Violations of Church and State would include activities such as a Church passing house bills by the vote of the Pastors in a given congregation or the State requiring dress codes for the deacons during Church services. This resolution would do no such thing. Furthermore, the idea of functional separation of Church and State as institutions is something that came from the Bible as reflected in the kingdom of Israel per God's decree. (2 Chronicles 19:11 and 26:16-21). On the Basis of Scripture Christians can say that that it is good to have Church and State as separate institutions. Someone who rejects Christ, and therefore the Scriptures has no basis to appeal to in order to support the 1st amendment (other than their own biased opinion).

The second misconception by those who oppose this resolution is the foolish presupposition they hold, namely, that any person or entity can be religiously "neutral". No matter what anyone believes, it is impossible to be religiously neutral. Matthew 12:30 (the words of Jesus) says: "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters." For the case of Logical argumentation people can be divided into two categories: Christians and Non-Christians. Non-Christians are not religiously neutral. They can try to be neutral as hard as they want to but as long as they are not a Christian, they have chosen to show partiality against at least one religion: Christianity. The requirement for Christianity is that you be fully dedicated to the Lordship of Christ, or you are not a Christian. The person that is demanding "neutrality" in the government is not demanding to total neutrality, but rather they are demanding anything except Christianity. This is not neutral by anyone's standard; this is a biased religious view point. If the 1st amendment were to mean you couldn't show any religious bias in matters of Government, it would violate the 1st amendment to be any form of Non-Christian, just as much as it would to be Christian.

I want to urge you to support this resolution. Jesus Christ is Lord of every sphere of this world. There is an inescapable concept we must face, a question of not whether but which. Who will we submit to as king of North Dakota? Jesus is The True King of all creation, both the institution of the Church and the State. If you oppose this, you are opposing what the God who created you says about reality.

Tanner Simons

If you have any questions for me please reach out.
Tcolbys1@icloud.com

I am opposed to HB 3020 which would enshrine a particular religious position rather than supporting the constitutional right all North Dakota residents have to practice the religion of their choice or no religion. This bill promotes a narrow understanding of Christianity which does not reflect the teachings of Jesus. Those who would like to see those teachings elevated should care for the poor, feed the hungry, respect the dignity of all persons (including their right to choose their own spiritual practices), welcome refugees and strangers among us, and practice love in all decision-making. They should not waste time on unconstitutional resolutions. I strongly urge the committee to recommend that this bill not pass.

HCR 3020**Urging ND to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ**

This legislature has denied free lunch to the school children of North Dakota, but you want to pass a resolution that Jesus Christ is King? Have you read any of the teaching of Jesus? Seems like NO to me. If your faith tells you Jesus is King then I would hope you would strive to pattern your life and actions in his example.

On another point, the US is not a theocracy. We are guaranteed by our constitution freedom of religion it should not be mandated by the government. Read the constitution. I encourage all in our legislature to take their job more seriously. These stunts do not serve well the people of North Dakota.

**Testimony of Pastor Jared Carson, Calvary Lutheran Church Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Grand Forks, ND
Before the North Dakota Legislative, House Political Subdivisions Committee
In Opposition to HCR 3020**

Chairperson and Members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee,

My name is Pastor Jared Carson, and I serve as a pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Grand Forks, ND. I offer this testimony in opposition to House Concurrent Resolution 3020, which urges North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ. While I am a devoted follower of Christ and deeply committed to the Gospel, I believe this resolution is both theologically and constitutionally problematic.

First and foremost, as a Lutheran pastor, I affirm that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord and King, but His reign is not of this world (John 18:36). The Kingdom of God is not advanced through governmental decree but through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of individuals and faith communities. The Lutheran tradition, rooted in the teachings of Martin Luther, upholds the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, which distinguishes the authority of the Church from that of the State. According to this doctrine, earthly governments exist to maintain justice and peace, while the Church exists to proclaim the Gospel and administer the sacraments. When these two realms become entangled, both the integrity of the government and the mission of the Church are compromised.

From a constitutional perspective, HCR 3020 directly contradicts the foundational principles of religious liberty and pluralism enshrined in the non-establishment clause of First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Our country and state are home to people of many different faiths, as well as those who adhere to no faith at all. To urge the government to recognize Jesus Christ as King is to blur the essential separation of church and state, risking the alienation of those who do not share this belief. Such an action not only undermines the religious freedom of all North Dakotans but also sets a dangerous precedent for government endorsement of religious doctrine.

Furthermore, this resolution does not reflect the humble and servant-hearted kingship of Christ. Jesus Himself rejected political power and calls His followers to love and serve their neighbors rather than seek governmental authority to impose religious belief. As a pastor, my role is to shepherd my congregation in faith and witness to Christ's love—not to seek legislative affirmation of my religious convictions. The Church is most faithful to Christ when it proclaims His Gospel through word and deed, not when it relies on political mechanisms to declare His Kingship.

I urge this committee to reject HCR 3020, not out of opposition to Christ, but out of deep respect for both the integrity of the Christian faith and the foundational principles of our democracy. Let us honor the freedom of conscience that allows each person to respond to the Gospel in their own way, rather than compelling a particular religious affirmation through governmental action.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Jared Carson
Calvary Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND (ELCA)

Calvary Lutheran Church
1405 South 9th St.
Grand Forks, ND 58201
701-772-4897

Dear Honorable Members of the North Dakota House of Representatives,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill Resolution 3020, which seeks to “recognize the kingship of Jesus Christ.” While I understand the personal and religious significance that such a resolution may hold for some individuals, I believe this proposal raises critical concerns regarding the separation of church and state, as well as the fundamental principles upon which our democratic society is built.

First and foremost, the U.S. Constitution guarantees the separation of church and state in the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. This clause prohibits the government from endorsing, promoting, or aligning itself with any specific religion or religious figure. By attempting to recognize the kingship of Jesus Christ, this resolution risks undermining the constitutional principle of religious neutrality, and could be perceived as an official endorsement of Christianity over other religions, which are equally protected under the First Amendment.

In a state as diverse as North Dakota, with citizens who adhere to various religious beliefs, agnostic or atheistic viewpoints, and those who practice no religion at all, it is essential that our government remains neutral in matters of faith. Any official recognition of Jesus Christ as a king could alienate and marginalize individuals who do not share this specific belief system. This divisiveness is contrary to the inclusive and pluralistic values that allow all North Dakotans to coexist peacefully and respectfully, regardless of their personal faith or lack thereof.

Furthermore, I believe this resolution distracts from the vital issues facing our state and does not address the pressing concerns of North Dakotans, such as economic development, healthcare, education, and public safety. While individuals are certainly entitled to practice their faith freely, legislative action should focus on tangible solutions that improve the quality of life for all residents, irrespective of their religious affiliation.

It is essential that we preserve the integrity of our political system, which has always functioned best when the state refrains from involving itself in religious matters. I urge you to consider the broader implications of this bill and its potential to divide our community, rather than unite it.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that you DO NOT PASS House Bill Resolution 3020 and uphold the core principle of religious freedom that protects the rights of all North Dakotans, such as myself, regardless of their beliefs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amanda Germundson

February 12, 2025

Dear Chairman Longmuir and members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee,

My name is Anita Tulp and I am writing to you in reference to HCR 3020. I sincerely request that you vote "Do Not Pass" on this resolution.

As a Christian, I hold Jesus in my heart as King and do my best to follow his example and principles He demonstrated himself. I do not believe that Jesus would want or expect to named King for any political reasons or to be used by any governing body that may or may not have his practices in mind. His authority comes from God and is a very spiritual thing for each person that believes in Him. I do not believe it would be appropriate to force this belief on anyone else. Making this proclamation in this resolution will only ostracize those who do not believe and marginalize their ability to be heard as fellow North Dakotans.

Jesus would be mortified with this behavior! Matthew 21:5 states, "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt the foal of a donkey.'" Jesus often rejected socializing with the rulers and leaders of his time opting to share a meal with the lowly tax collector, lepers, and other that were seen as "unclean." He was chastised for that by leaders, yet he continued to teach and be seen with those that were rejected by society, that were labeled unclean, and those that did not know or recognize him.

Jesus calls us to be like him, not to become some kind of power-hungry rulers that will drive out those that he also considers his children even though they may not know him.

Passing this resolution will not bring us "great blessings." We are already blessed with the opportunity to share his love to every person in our state without requirement of believing in Jesus or even acknowledging Jesus. Recognizing that every person has value and is precious in Jesus' eyes is the only way to truly serve Him.

Please vote "Do Not Pass" on HCR 3020. Thank you for your time.



REPRESENTATIVE LOGAN MANHART | DISTRICT 01

Greetings North Dakota Assembly,

I write this letter to express my support for HCR 3020. We have been told for too long that there ought to be a separation between Church and State. This is historically incorrect. In the United States the 10 commandments were taught as curriculum until as recently as 1980. "In God we Trust" is labeled on many of our State and Federal buildings. We are a Christian nation first and foremost.

I support this bill and intend to bring legislation like this in South Dakota next year. Thank you.

February 13, 2025

Representative Longmuir and Committee Members,

I am Rev. Gretchen Deeg and I serve a congregation with members from Bismarck, Mandan, Lincoln, and the surrounding areas. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. As an ordained Christian pastor, I urge a "Do Not Pass" on HCR 3020.

HCR 3020 is a direct violation of the freedom of religion. It was absolutely essential to our nation's founders that our government contain a separation of church and state. James Madison was strongly opposed to opening congressional sessions with prayer. Thomas Jefferson sought to create a "wall of separation between Church & State." Many of our founding fathers experienced religious persecution by Christianity controlled by the British government. When Christianity becomes combined with Empire, it ceases to be Christian.

However, if you are still considering the passage of this resolution, allow me to remind you what that means.

When asked, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:35-40).

To proclaim the Kingship of Jesus Christ means to love your neighbor as yourself. Our neighbors are people of all abilities, ages, ethnicities, genders, races, religions, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses. To love your neighbor as yourself means to put others above your own selfish wants. It means to treat all people with dignity and respect regardless of the color of their skin or their country of origin. It means to welcome all people as you would welcome Jesus Christ. For as you do to the least of these, you do unto Christ. (Matthew 25:40).

In modern day, this means dramatically increasing support for those who struggle to have their everyday needs met. It means putting the wellbeing of all people above the demands of capitalism. It means prioritizing the health of our land, water, and air over profit and desire to make a name for our state. It means letting go of our egos and ensuring that all people are able to live their healthiest life.

To proclaim the Kingship of Jesus Christ means to welcome the stranger as our beloved neighbor. In modern terms, that means making North Dakota a sanctuary state where refugees and immigrants from every country are protected from persecution and treated like citizens regardless of their citizenship status. It means pouring money into non-profits and social service agencies which support refugees and immigrants of all races, religions, and origins.

To proclaim the Kingship of Jesus Christ means to remove the yoke from our neighbors' shoulders. Predatory debt crushes the people of North Dakota. The poor struggle to afford rent and food. A single medical emergency can spiral into crushing credit card debt, job loss, and homelessness. In modern terms, proclaiming the Kingship of Jesus Christ means following the Biblical mandate of total debt forgiveness to all people every 7 years. This means forgiving student loans, car payments, mortgages, credit cards, medical bills, and all other forms of debt after a period of 7 years.

The biggest hurdle against tangibly loving our neighbors as ourselves is the hoarding of wealth and basic necessities. To proclaim the Kingship of Jesus Christ means that if you live above the poverty line, then you must go and sell all that you have. It means drastically increasing taxes on the wealthy and large corporations. It means increasing property taxes and further reducing the cost of rent for individuals who live below the poverty line. It means giving homes to the homeless. It means access to free meals to not just school children, but to all people. It means ensuring every single individual has access to truly affordable health care. Proclaiming the Kingship of Jesus Christ means never giving favor to the wealthy. But in fact, giving preference to the poor.

Should you proclaim the Kingship of Jesus Christ by the state of North Dakota, massive overhaul will be needed. North Dakota will need to become a state that welcomes and protects the refugee and immigrant, a state that tangibly cares for the poor, a state that treats ALL people, with no exceptions, as beloved children of God.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. Normally, out of respect for the separation of church and state, I would not offer the tenants of Christianity as a reason for passing a state resolution or bill. However, the consideration of this resolution encourages sermons from Christian leaders to be preached in committee hearings and on the session floor.

I will stand to receive public confession on the ways you have failed to love your neighbor as yourself in the past and how you will lead the work of loving your neighbor as yourself with absolutely everything that you have – materially, emotionally, and mentally – in our great state of North Dakota. It is not my place to invite the resolution sponsors to speak in this committee hearing, but I would encourage the committee to ask them to lead the offering of public confessions as their first act in proclaiming the Kingship of Jesus Christ.¹

Otherwise, I urge a "Do Not Pass" on HCR 3020 in committee and a "No" vote on the floor.

Rev. Gretchen Deeg
Bismarck, ND

¹ Every item in this document is a repeated command throughout the Old and New Testaments. These commands are started in the Old Testament and Jesus strengthens all of them in the New Testament. The full Bible would need to be quoted in order to include scripture references for this testimony. However, here is an incomplete starter list of scripture references: Lev. 19:34, Ex. 22:21, Jer. 7:5-7, Ps. 146:9, Prov. 19:17, Matt. 25:31-46, Luke 10:25-37, John 3:16-18, Rom. 12:13, Gal. 6:2, Eph. 4:32, James 2:15-16. I am willing to organize Bible Studies for all legislators at the State Capital should this resolution be passed.

Jesus is King over all, He is the Lawgiver. If our legislators are to govern justly they must acknowledge this, as our Founding Fathers, and generations after them, did.

The right to freedom is the gift of God Almighty....The rights of the Colonists as Christians may be best understood by reading, and carefully studying the institutes of the great Lawgiver and head of the Christian Church: which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the New Testament.

-Samuel Adams

[pray] that all may bow to the scepter of our Lord Jesus Christ and that the whole Earth may be filled with his glory.

-John Hancock

By our form of government, the Christian religion is the established religion...

-Samuel Chase

The people of this state, in common with the people of this country, profess the general doctrines of Christianity as the rule of their faith and practice, and to scandalize the author of these doctrines is not only, in a religious point of view, extremely impious, but, even in respect to the obligations due to society, is a gross violation of decency and good order.

-James Kent

Heed the advice of those who came before you and let this state acknowledge Christ as our Lord. God has placed you to govern over us in His Providence; govern us well or be crushed by Christ.

HCR 3020 directly violates the First Amendment of the United States Constitution by establishing a state religion. The separation of church and state has been well-established in this country since its inception. It allows for the freedom of religion by not establishing a state or federal religion. Our government should not be dictating the faith its citizens follow. The moment we do, we open the window for punishing those who don't follow the religion dictated by the government. History has proven time and again that when one religion is believed to be superior to another, division and war are the only outcomes. Is that what we want here? I oppose this bill, and so should our representatives.

Sincerely,

Michele Schaaf
Mandan, ND

**House Political Subdivisions Committee
HCR 3020 - Testimony in Opposition
February 12, 2025**

Members of the Committee,

I am writing in opposition to HCR 3020. This unserious bill is an embarrassment, a waste of time and resources, and frankly an insult to each sponsors' constituents. Wasting our time on their personal interests that do not represent the diverse makeup of our communities is absurd.

There are far more pressing issues affecting the residents of North Dakota. I urge you to vote NO on HCR 3020.

Thank you,
Shannon Krueger
District 3
Minot, ND

Chairman Longmuir and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lindsey Bertsch and I am a resident of District 3 in Minot, North Dakota. Today, I am very strongly urging you to give a Do Not Pass recommendation on House Concurrent Resolution 3020. I was born in Minot and have lived most of my life here, and this resolution goes against the beliefs of so many of the Christians - and even Catholics - whom I've known and loved throughout my life. I believe this resolution is wildly disrespectful to Christianity, in addition to being an overstep of the government. The Jesus Christ I have learned about does not require our state to pass a House Resolution declaring his Kingship for our prosperity. The Christ I grew up knowing would possibly even find this whole ordeal concerning, and more akin to idolatry than true reverence. Christian Nationalism has cooked up this false prophet version of Jesus to fit their narrative, and it is deeply troubling that it has taken root in the form of this House Resolution.

This resolution is also of suspicious origin, as it seems to be an experiment of Christian Nationalism as law being beta tested in our state. I found it odd that the first five "In Favor" testimonies submitted are all from out of state, and I believe you should find that odd as well. It seems that there are out of state organizers trying to influence legislation in place of North Dakotans deciding our beliefs and values for ourselves. In a [video](#) from a YouTube channel called Scholastic Answers, a man named Christian B. Wagner claims to have helped author this resolution. He was the guest speaker at a North Dakota Young Republicans (NDYR) event last month, and on a [Facebook post](#) from the group, it is implied that he travelled from out of state to be there. Why is proposed North Dakota legislation being written by an out-of-state author? In addition, the NDYR [Facebook event](#) for Wagner's visit describes his efforts as working toward "the conversion of the Muslim World." This makes the potential ulterior motives of the resolution increasingly concerning. On top of all of that, his [Twitter account](#) is full of misogynistic and anti-semitic remarks. An example implying Christian superiority over Jews is attached below. HCR 3020 does NOT represent North Dakotans, I urge a Do Not Pass recommendation.

Thank you for your time.

Lindsey Bertsch

District 3 - Minot, North Dakota



Scholastic Answers Video where he claims to have co-authored HCR 3020:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGt0qjKrDwE&t=1057s>

Christian B. Wagner "braves the cold" to come to North Dakota:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=980373617523671&set=pb.100066531265783.-2207520000>

Christian B. Wagner works toward the conversion of the Muslim World:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=973606991533667&set=gm.1572015647522824>

Christian B. Wagner Twitter account: <https://x.com/walmartthomist?lang=en&mx=2>

February 12, 2025

RE: Testimony Opposing HCR 3020

Dear North Dakota Legislators,

I am a constituent, and I'm writing to state my unequivocal opposition to HCR 3020 entitled "A concurrent resolution urging North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ".

HCR 3020 blatantly ignores our great nation's separation of church and state. Furthermore, a bill that declares kingship of any entity is a direct challenge to our democracy. What could be the ultimate purpose of such legislation? Even in good faith, I cannot imagine the true intent of this bill is to "receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace, and harmony" as it claims. Those things come from hard work and compassion, not writing a wish list into law.

Introducing a bill like HCR 3020 is absurd; passing it would be detrimental. Please see reason and stop HCR 3020.

Sincerely,

Sarah Bradford
Mandan, District 34

Lanny Kenner
District 7

Chairman Longmuir and committee members, I am requesting a DO PASS on HCR 3020.

As you all know this country was founded on Christian principles.
It was not founded on Buddhist, Muslim or Satan worship etc.
No, like it or not it was Christian principles!

For that reason alone I am requesting a DO PASS on House Concurrent Resolution bill 3020.

Thank you, Lanny Kenner

If Teddy Roosevelt were alive today, he would never visit.

What has happened to my home state? It appears to have been overrun by politicians who want to impose their personal religious beliefs on every resident regardless of theirs. The North Dakota I knew would never do this. Teddy would have been ashamed.

In 1908, Roosevelt wrote that asking religious questions of a candidate for office was un-American, that a politician's theology was irrelevant to his qualifications for office. He would loathe North Dakota in 2025.

The greatest threat to freedom and democracy is not foreign terrorism. It's homegrown Christian nationalism and it's alive and well in the North Dakota Legislature. House Resolution 3020 is evidence of using the power of the state to sanction and elevate a single religion above the state, simply because the religion is taken as fact by believers who wish to subjugate and minimize the beliefs of others.

HR3020 is part of a triad of religious intrusions on North Dakotans:

HOUSE BILL 1145: Rep. Jeff Hoverson wants the Ten Commandments displayed in every public classroom. Like a biblical Welcome Wagon, he speculates, "That's why people want to move here — because of the freedom largely influenced by the Ten Commandments. Even atheists can appreciate them. ... You can't find a better document for freedom." I can. The Constitution. It prevents the federal

government from establishing a religion, a restriction North Dakota would be wise to follow.

SENATE BILL 2355: Sen. Michael Dwyer wants science classes to teach a deity created all that we see. He thinks the Earth is 6,000 years old. Science says 4.5 billion. House Majority Leader Mike Lefor says, "I believe that God created the universe and that there needs to be something in our instruction that relays that." There is. We have numerous houses of instruction that teach this. They're churches. Would he agree to teach science in a church? No. But religion in a science class? He wants to require it.

But, the purest definition of Christian nationalism:

HOUSE RESOLUTION 3020: This was introduced by Rep. Nico Rios, who recently posted, "Wonder if the CIA would help Trump overthrow and kick this Jew out of power in Mexico?" His resolution is equally astounding. It's un-American. It's written like a Taliban manifesto. Everyone should read it. It's copied below.

North Dakota's Constitution states, "The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall be forever guaranteed in this state." Note the "without preference" part and the "forever guarantee". Do your jobs and protect every citizen equally.

— —

"Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3020 of North Dakota

"Introduced by Representatives Rios, Christianson, Henderson, Holle, Hoverson, Morton, Nehring, VanWinkle, K.

Anderson, J. Johnson, Senators Walen, Weston

"A concurrent resolution urging North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ.

"WHEREAS, Christ said all power is given to me in heaven and in earth (Matthew, 28:18), not only spiritual, but civil, including over this great state; and

"WHEREAS, Christ is said to have received power, and glory, and a kingdom so that all people, tribes and tongues shall serve Him (Daniel 7:14), including this great state; and

"WHEREAS, the Father is said to give to Christ all nations and the utmost parts of the earth for His inheritance and possession, and, in response, people and their leaders are called to learn and receive instruction from Him (Psalms 2:8, 10), including those in this great state; and

"WHEREAS, Christ is named the ruler of Kings on earth and the King of Kings and presented with crown and royal robe (Revelation 1:5, 17:14, 19:12-13, 16); and

"WHEREAS, the founding fathers of this great state begin the constitution with the words, "We", the people of North Dakota, grateful to Almighty God, and, as expressed by Reverend R.C. Wiley during the First Constitutional Convention of North Dakota, we desire there shall be a recognition of Almighty God as the source of authority; of the Lord Jesus Christ as the rightful ruler of nations;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF NORTH DAKOTA, THE SENATE

CONCURRING THEREIN:

"That North Dakota acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ over all the world so that this great state may at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace, and harmony; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State forward copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Governor, and each member of the North Dakota Congressional Delegation."

Committee chair and members of the committee,

My name is Christopher Sprague, and I am in opposition of HCR 3020.

HCR 3020, which urges North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ, violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. This resolution blatantly disregards the principle of separation of church and state, which is fundamental to American democracy and religious freedom.

The Establishment Clause prohibits the government from establishing an official religion or favoring one religion over others. By explicitly promoting Christianity and the "Kingship of Jesus Christ," HCR 3020 clearly violates this constitutional principle.

The separation of church and state is crucial for several reasons:

1. It protects religious freedom for all citizens, including those of the many denominations of christianity itself, minority faiths, and non-believers.
2. It prevents the government from interfering with or influencing religious practices.
3. It ensures that all Americans are treated equally under the law, regardless of their religious beliefs.

This resolution will erode the fundamental principle of religious neutrality in government. HCR 3020 represents a clear violation of the constitutional principle of separation of church and state, which has been a cornerstone of American democracy and religious freedom since the nation's founding.

Respectfully,

Christopher Sprague
Fargo, ND

Dear Assembly,

Christ is King and will be regarded as such. Every knee will bow to Him, even governments. He is the King of Kings. To oppose this is to oppose Him. Give glory to the one true God.

God Bless,

Cade Powers

House Political Subdivisions Committee

House Concurrent Resolution 3020

Andrew Alexis Varvel

February 13, 2025

Chairman Longmuir & Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Alexis Varvel.

I live in Bismarck.

HCR 3020 is not only unconstitutional, but it would potentially act as a battering ram against the very foundations of our federal republic.

Divine Right Monarchy was the reigning ideology of France at the time when France claimed Louisiana Territory by Right of Discovery.

And much of North Dakota was theoretically part of Louisiana.

Other parts of North Dakota were claimed by the British Empire.

Divine Right Monarchy was overthrown by England in 1689 with the Glorious Revolution, to be replaced by Parliamentary Supremacy.

The United States of America separated from the British Empire in 1776, confirmed in 1783 by the Treaty of Paris, to reject both the lawmaking supremacy of Parliament and royal supremacy of King George III.

Our founding fathers fought the Revolutionary War against the principle of Divine Right Monarchy. Our Constitution established three equal branches of divided government to function as a bulwark against tyranny.

One of the great achievements of General George Washington was maintaining cohesion among men from various different backgrounds. To this end, he prohibited Guy Fawkes celebrations on November 5, 1775, to maintain discipline and avoid offending Catholic religious sensibilities.

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0279>

On August 18, 1790, President George Washington sent a letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island. He wrote:

It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0135>

House Concurrent Resolution 3020 seeks to impose theocracy. This intolerance tends to dissolve the social glue keeping free people together.

That said, HCR 3020 should be commended for its honesty in one respect. Federal Indian policy has historically been two-faced, presenting the face of a free republic to its own citizens while simultaneously presenting the face of a theocratic monarchy – of a “Great Father” – to Indian nations.

Although Indians have seen this face of theocratic monarchy for a very long time, this aspect of America is not one that we should celebrate.

Please give this resolution a strong **DO NOT PASS** recommendation.

Thank you. I am open for questions.

I wholeheartedly reject and oppose HCR3020 as it is an insult to Christianity and the constitution.

Jesus himself was tempted by the devil with the offer to rule over man kind, and he rejected Satan and rejected ruling over earth.

Mathew 4:8-11.

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

10 Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’[e]”

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

To claim kingship of North Dakota in the name of Jesus Christ is blasphemy. It reduces the sanctity of religious theology to legal arguments and is antithetical to Christianity itself, the constitution of the state of North Dakota, and the constitution of the United state.

Hello,

My name is Jesse Hughes. I am a 1L at the Liberty University School of Law and a committed Christian who wishes to see the historical vision of the United States carried forward.

I am in full support of the resolution to declare the Kingship of Jesus Christ over the state of North Dakota, as it should be declared in every state across the nation. There are three reasons for my support, one based on irrefutable proof, one theological, and one historical.

First, it is irrefutably clear that Jesus Christ exists and is who He says He is. Countless historical documents, including the accounts of the Gospels, the writings of Roman historian Josephus, and the writings of Roman historian Tacitus. The truth of the matter can also be established through the actions of the Apostles. The Apostles saw their Lord crucified, found the tomb empty three days later, claimed to have seen Christ risen (along with over 500 other witnesses), and died proclaiming this as truth. If this was a lie, at least one of these men would have told the truth instead of dying, but all of them died proclaiming Christ's resurrection. No one dies for a lie.

Secondly, if it is true that Christ is who He says He is and that the Bible is an accurate depiction of His word, then the Bible is the final authority on the matter. The Bible teaches that God instituted civil government as His servant on this earth to promote what is good and to punish what is evil. The Bible further proclaims in Psalm 2 that the kings of the earth should "kiss the Son, lest he be angry... and smash you with a rod of iron." As King, Christ expects the awe and worship of all, including the kings of the earth. Our government is obligated to recognize the Kingship of Christ, or else we will be subject to His judgment.

Third, it follows historically that we should declare the Kingship of Christ over the State of North Dakota and the nation as a whole. When the United States was founded, all 13 of the original states had an established Church and paid reverence to the Lord Jesus Christ. When North Dakota became a state in 1889, the State Constitution followed this historical trend, declaring, "We, the people of North Dakota, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of civil and religious liberty, do ordain and establish this constitution." The North Dakota Constitution already declares reverence to the Almighty God, it follows that the legislature should go one step further and declare the Kingship of Christ over the state as a whole.

This testimony is only the tip of the iceberg on why this resolution is a just and righteous one that should be passed. I could fill pages upon pages on why the Kingship of Christ should be declared over every state and the nation as a whole. I hope you will consider this testimony positively and pass this resolution. Thank you and God bless you all, God bless the State of North Dakota, and God bless the United States of America.


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THE SUPERNATURAL END OF GOVERNMENT

STIVEN PETER / AUGUST 23, 2023

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A Case Study of Bucer's De Regno Christi

There are few topics as heated in current Reformed circles as the relationship between Church and State. Interest in magisterial political theology, Christian Nationalism, and even neo-Calvinist political teaching in recent years point to an overall dissatisfaction with the current evangelical conception of politics. Two vital questions surrounding this discussion are: “What is the role of the State?” and “What is the role of the Church?” The common answer to this question is something along the lines of a “two-kingdoms” doctrine, where the Church has authority over spiritual matters and the State has authority over matters of civil justice. However, while there is agreement over a temporal-spiritual distinction, the implication of these widely varies. One notable

position takes the two-kingdoms doctrine to exclude the possibility of a “Christian” society by limiting the role of the government to uphold matters of temporal, not spiritual, good. Notably, John Piper, in an [article](#) earlier this year, argues from this distinction that while, “The civil government may rightly pass laws that make the spread of the Christian faith (and other faiths) easier, for example, laws protecting free speech and free assembly,” followers of Christ should not use the sword of civil government to enact, enforce, or spread any idea or behavior as explicitly Christian.” Piper explicitly encourages the passing of laws in conformity with protestant social teaching, the types of laws that belong in the second table of the Decalogue, which govern our relationship with each other (you shall not murder, commit adultery, steal, etc) However, his understanding of the Kingdom of Christ leads him to exclude the State from passing laws in line with enforcing the first table of the Decalogue, which concern our relationship with God (No false gods, no graven images, don’t take the Lord’s name in vain, etc). In fact, the State engaging in the defense and promotion of the Christian faith risks obscuring the spiritual nature of Christ’s Kingdom. Piper writes, “When the state encourages external forms of righteousness in the name of Christ and as an expression of the ‘Christian’ way, it... does harm to the cause of Christ.” Instead, the state should concern itself with maintaining the social and civil conditions amenable to the flourishing of the Churches, ranging from the strong support of marriage to a robust economy. Jonathan Leeman, in [9Marks](#), calls this a “protectionist” view of justice since it limits the affairs of the government to protecting its citizens from injustice, instead of promoting their perfection, which is proper worship and obedience to Christ. Leeman’s analogy cuts to the heart of the matter:

You might say that the Bible approaches governments like parents do a babysitter. “You’re not responsible for teaching our kids to love and obey us,” they instruct the sitter. “You just need to keep them fed and safe and prevent them from fighting.” The babysitter is entirely “under” the parents, but the sitter’s jurisdiction is limited. The babysitter knows the parents’ return is imminent and will seek to fulfill the parents’ will. Still, the

babysitter has been given a modest job: “Your job isn’t to teach the kids to love us or worship God.

Thus, Piper and Leeman take a two-kingdom distinction between Church and State to imply the promotion of a pluralistic society where the State acts as a fair referee, using its force to minimize harm among others, and the Church operates freely using the means of persuasion to bring its citizenry to their heavenly perfection in Christ.

However, this configuration misunderstands the historical intention of the two-kingdoms doctrine in magisterial political thought. The two-kingdoms doctrine seeks to encourage, not minimize, the government’s promotion of the virtue of their citizens, including their worship. Whereas most popular treatments of two-kingdoms limit themselves to the origin of this distinction in Luther and Calvin, Martin Bucer’s, *De Regno Christi* (*The Kingdom of Christ*), promotes a symbiotic vision of the Church and State, casting a vision for a properly Christian society. By exploring Bucer’s conception of the similarities and differences between the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of Man, along with their mutual submission to each other, and examining the underlying assumptions behind his vision, Piper’s and Leeman’s vision emerges as more of an artifact of classical liberalism instead of classical Christian thought. Specifically, Bucer clarifies the dissection between the two kingdoms as following the dissection between law and gospel, where the differences lie in the method of enforcement instead of the object of the kingdom, which is the promotion of the good. Second, Bucer clarifies that the function of the state is to promote virtue, the substantive good of its citizens, instead of merely protecting its citizens. Finally, Bucer argues that there is no State that can be just without acknowledging its subordination to the Triune God and its responsibility to buttress the Church. For Bucer, the two kingdoms, far from implying the State’s ‘neutrality’ towards religion, provides the grounds for its involvement in promoting true religion.

The Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of Christ

Mirror the Difference between Law and Gospel.

Bucer's treatise establishes a distinction between the Church and the State by highlighting their shared ultimate goal while acknowledging their differing means to achieve it. Bucer begins by elucidating the biblical differentiation between the Kingdoms of God/Heaven/Christ and the Kingdom of Man. First, the various names for God's kingdom provide insights into the nature and perfection of His reign. The Kingdom of God, as the embodiment of God's goodness, wisdom, and power, represents the pinnacle of perfect rule (177). The "Kingdom of Christ" emphasizes the humility of Christ's reign. Despite humbling Himself to the point of death, Christ retains universal authority over all things (178). However, the central focus of Christ's kingdom lies in the flourishing of the Church, as Bucer affirms, "The Kingdom of our Savior Jesus Christ is that administration and care of the eternal life of God's elect" (225). Lastly, the "Kingdom of Heaven" signifies the fundamentally spiritual and eternal nature of Christ's reign. From these names, Bucer comes to this definition of the Kingdom of Christ:

"The Kingdom of our Savior Jesus Christ is that administration and care of the eternal life of God's elect, by which this very Lord and King of Heaven by his doctrine and discipline, administered by suitable ministers chosen for this very purpose, gathers to himself his elect, those dispersed throughout the world who are his but whom he nonetheless wills to be subject to the powers of the world. He incorporates them into himself and his Church and so governs them in it that purged more fully day by day from sins, they live well and happily both here and in the time to come." (225).

Bucer's definition locates the Kingdom of Christ in His care for the Church, in their spiritual and temporal conditions. This Kingdom has at its end the eternal

life of the Church, and the names of this Kingdom highlight the effective, perfect, and wholly just reign of Christ over His elect. This reign does not just guarantee the eternal life of God's elect through the sanctification of their souls, but also the sufficient material conditions to live well and happily in this life as well. Thus, spiritual and temporal concerns are not divorced, but the latter is ordered towards the promotion of the former. For Bucer, for Christ to will our good as such, which is blessed communion to Him, also means for him to will the means to that, which include concrete temporal goods.

Likewise, for Bucer, the Kingdom of Man also will the goods of its citizens. In fact, the virtues of the Kingdom of Man are derived from God's reign: "Whatever good properties exist in any human kingdom exist and are found in fuller perfection here, inasmuch as God is above all men" (177). Any good kingdom desires the well-being of its citizens, such that everyone is formed to a virtuous and responsible way of life. The Kingdom of Christ does this in a most excellent manner, while good kings imitate the virtues in God's reign.

For this delineation, Bucer intends to explain the difference between these two kingdoms primarily in the methods of their reign, as opposed to the show the difference in the purpose of their reign. In fact, Bucer acknowledges the common purpose of both kingdoms. He writes "that the kings of this world also ought to establish and promote the means of making their citizens devout and righteous who rightly acknowledge and worship their God and who are truly helpful toward their neighbors in all their actions." (180). The true earthly kingdom is ordered towards making its citizens flourish, which, by revelation and reason, is the love of God and love of neighbor. The good for every citizen, of both kingdoms, is the same. However, each kingdom has different methods of leading citizens to this good. For example, both kingdoms seek to provide their citizens with life's necessities (182). Earthly kings can employ external power and resources to ensure that none of their subjects lack the essentials (183). Christ, however, accomplishes this through the transformation of His subjects' inclinations, particularly within the Church. As Bucer describes it, "Our King...the dispenser of true love and

patience, by His Word and Spirit renders the minds of His subjects as willing and strong as possible for this salutary sharing of their wealth and patience in poverty” (184). The king can use external power to ensure not a single citizen is needed, while Christ can simply move the hearts of his subjects to provide their resources willingly and cheerfully. In other terms, the Kingdom of Man can use the threat of force to coerce obedience, while Christ uses the words of the Gospel to effect obedience out of gratitude. The divergence in methods between the two kingdoms derives from the contrast between law and conscience. While the law can teach what is good and coerce right behavior, it cannot change the heart. However, Christ, through the Word and the Spirit, can demand obedience by renewing the natures of His subjects, representing a more perfect form of governance. The “kings of the world...use, by God’s command, beatings, whippings, prison, exile, and various forms of execution,” while the Kingdom of Christ guides its citizens through “the chains of repentance” (181). Nonetheless, the end of both kingdoms remains the same—promoting a love of God and neighbor: “The governance of the kingdoms of the world and of Christ have this in common, that the kings of this world also ought to establish and promote the means of making their citizens devout and righteous who rightly acknowledge and worship their God and who are truly helpful toward their neighbors in all their actions” (180). But, just as Christ came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, so the kingdom of Christ came to perfect the imperfect laws of kings. The two-kingdoms are distinguished, thus, not by protectionist v.s. perfectionist accounts of justice or by the scope of reign, but by the method of leading their citizens to their good.

The End of the State: The Promotion of Virtue

By making the division on the basis of imperfect coercion, v.s. perfect, personal obedience, Bucer paves the way for the State to involve itself in not just preventing harm, but promoting the good, which includes right worship of God. Bucer supports this idea by citing Isaiah 49:23 and Psalm 72:11 as evidence that all kings must acknowledge Christ as Lord. Additionally, the kings

of Israel serve as examples of magistrates who prioritized proper worship (188). To confirm the conclusion of these authorities, Bucer offers this argument:

It is the duty of all good princes to take every precaution to prevent any one of their subjects from doing injury to another... How much more, then, is it necessary to see to it that all governors of commonwealths, when they realize that all their power is from God alone and that he has appointed them shepherds of his people, govern and guard those subject to them according to his judgment (190).

This demonstrates the inadequacy of a state solely focused on harm prevention/protectionist justice. The magistrate understands his responsibility to prevent harm as entrusted to him by the Lord. Furthermore, the magistrate should recognize that the same Lord appointed him as custodian of his people. Consequently, he is obliged to promote right worship and suppress false worship, just as the kings of Israel were instructed to do. The king's mandate to promote the common good originates from his recognition of a law-giver above him, who should be acknowledged and revered by him and the citizens of the land. In short, the king's ability to enforce obedience from the second table of the law, stems from acknowledgment and adherence to the first table. There can be no love of neighbor, without first love of God. The State cannot promote secondary goods, without first acknowledging the ultimate good.

In fact, the king's concern over his citizens' piety gives him broad abilities to reform the Church and suppress false worship. Bucer praises kings who punish blasphemy and false worship, stating, "When pious kings are thus guarding against wrongs against God, the impiety of many is not indeed eliminated, but it is suppressed, lest it is an outrage before God or a stumbling block for the weak" (190). The magistrate suppresses false religion because it contradicts the common good, as it ultimately harms his citizens by leading them astray. The ultimate good for human beings lies in their flourishing, which is realized through the proper worship of God. If the king is mandated to suppress false religion because it

obstructs his citizens from attaining the good, then he is also authorized to promote true religion to enable others to attain the good. Therefore, the magistrate can take positive action to rejuvenate the Church. Here, Bucer appeals to historical and biblical examples wherein kings appointed sound priests for the benefit of the Church and the polity. He states, “When true religion had seriously fallen apart in their times and the priesthood was perniciously corrupted, these men [Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah] personally undertook the task of the renewal of religion as a matter of royal right and duty” (266). He instructs King Edward VI to appoint faithful clergy to reinforce the fundamental teachings of the faith, identify potential clergy, provide rigorous training, and send them out into the State to renew their moral character (273). In Book II of *De Regno*, Bucer outlines the laws of the Commonwealth, with the first law emphasizing the catechizing of children. He suggests, “Your Royal Majesty will make a law that orders parents to educate and establish their children in Christ’s faith and obedience with great care, with a just penalty appointed for those who themselves infect their children with either false doctrine or bad morals” (280). This law serves the purpose of building up the Church by providing it with a solid foundation in early childhood, and it benefits the Commonwealth by nurturing citizens to readily accept the precepts of the faith and live as good citizens in the Commonwealth. The magistrate, under the mandate to use the law for the welfare of the commonwealth, possesses the authority to renew and invigorate the Church.

The Fundamental Subordination of the Kingdom of Man to the Kingdom of Christ

At the same time, the Kingdom of Man stands under the Kingdom of Christ. Bucer writes, “Every true kingdom of the world ... subjects itself to the Kingdom of Christ, and the kings themselves are among the first to do this” (17). Bucer employs the distinction between a true kingdom and a tyranny to show that the only truly legitimate rule is one that acknowledges Christ

as Lord. A kingdom that does not acknowledge Christ lacks accountability and is, therefore, a tyranny. By acknowledging Christ as Lord, the king legitimizes his rule and is obligated to cultivate piety within himself and his subjects. Moreover, the baptism of the king binds him to the authority of the Church. Hence, “all true kings and princes humbly hear the voice of Christ from the ministers and respect in them the majesty of the Son of God,” (19). Therefore, the king stands under the Kingdom of Christ insofar as he adheres to the Word of God. In other words, as a Christian, he is bound by the Word and, in his temporal authority, is duty-bound to support and strengthen the Church. As a believer who listens to and submits to the Word, the king becomes the guardian of the Church and his citizens.

Conclusion

Bucer’s concern with the piety of the State, the welfare of the Church, and the well-being of citizens underscore his assumption that the purpose of the government is to lead people to virtue. Here, Bucer calls us from the modern understanding of government as a set of enforced rules to the classical conception of the highest form of community. Politics is about living well with your neighbor and sharing a common way of life. Ultimately, disagreement over the final goods of human life makes for divergent ways of life. Liberalism, as a political project, claims that such a society is, in fact, possible, and the role of the State is to act as a referee that minimizes harm among competing parties in the country. Piper and Leeman, and those sympathetic to their understanding of two kingdoms, are really sympathetic to liberalism. Within their exegesis of biblical texts on civil government, their reading of Israel’s governments, and their theology of political engagement lies a fundamentally liberal view of government superimposed onto the biblical text.

In contrast, Bucer believes that the goal of politics is to make a beautiful society. The Kingdom of Christ is the most perfect/beautiful form of government because of our King’s immediate and effective rule. The Kingdom of Man is an imperfect derivative of this perfect rule, modeling God’s perfect government through the

right laws, the upbuilding of their citizens, and the flourishing of the Church. The laws in a Christian society teach the citizens what is good and prepare them for the persuasion of the Gospel to reform their hearts. This is neither ‘moralism’ nor hypocrisy, but a valid understanding of the purpose of the law: to teach and promote the good. The charges of hypocrisy or the dismissal of cultural “Christianity” deny the preparatory work of law of leading people to heartfelt worship.

Herein, the true stakes between the competing visions of the two kingdoms emerge. While Leeman and Bucer would agree on enforcing and upholding the second table of the Decalogue, Leeman’s divergence on upholding the first table means that he fundamentally believes that a State can pass laws and govern its people while being agnostic towards God, the ultimate good. But this position is itself a judgment on the ultimate good, namely its irrelevance for a functioning society and Christianity’s other-worldly aims. However, the Lordship of Christ is an objective fact. Bucer understands His Lordship as a claim upon reality, a truth that bears on the life of all people, and conformity to it as the best conditions for human flourishing. The State and the Church are both under this reality and govern in their respective ways to bring each person to love God and their neighbor. Above all, Bucer calls us out of political liberalism and acknowledges the priority of not-blind freedom, but the good, the true, who is ultimately God.

[Print article](#)

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North Dakota Legislative Council

State Capitol

600 E. Boulevard Avenue

Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Honorable Members of the North Dakota Legislative Council,

I am writing to express my opposition to House Concurrent Resolution 3020 (HCR3020), which urges the state of North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ. While I respect the personal beliefs of all individuals, I believe this resolution is in conflict with the principles of religious freedom guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and the fundamental values of our diverse state.

The United States Constitution, specifically through its First Amendment, guarantees two key provisions related to religious freedom. The Establishment Clause prohibits government entities from establishing, advancing, or promoting any particular religion. The Free Exercise Clause, on the other hand, ensures that individuals and groups are free to practice their religious beliefs without government interference. These provisions are designed to protect both religious individuals and non-religious citizens, maintaining a fair and neutral stance regarding religious matters at the government level.

By urging the formal acknowledgment of the Kingship of Jesus Christ, HCR3020 not only aligns the state with a specific religious view, but it also risks undermining the constitutional separation of church and state. Such an act could inadvertently send the message that North Dakota prefers one religion over others, or over non-religious perspectives. This, in turn, could alienate residents of diverse faiths or those who do not subscribe to any religious belief.

Religious freedom in North Dakota should remain a cornerstone of our society, where all individuals can practice their beliefs without government endorsement or interference. There are pressing issues facing our state—such as economic development, healthcare, education, and infrastructure—that demand the time and attention of our legislative body. Diverting attention to the religious declarations of HCR3020 does not address these real challenges and does not serve the diverse needs of North Dakotans.

For the well-being of all our citizens, I urge you to reconsider HCR3020. Let us continue to uphold the values of freedom, inclusion, and respect for all religious and non-religious perspectives in our state.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I hope you will give my concerns full consideration when making your decision.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Allen

Representative Longmuir and Committee Members,

I am Rev. Deborah Blood and I serve as Conference Minister for the Northern Plains Conference, United Church of Christ, providing leadership, support, oversight and guidance to our congregations and pastors. Our Conference includes congregations in all parts of North Dakota, from Grand Forks to Scranton, from Minot to Hankinson, from Dickinson to Fargo and many places in between. We are rural and urban, conservative and liberal, large and small congregations. I submit this testimony In Opposition to HCR 3020, and as an Ordained Christian pastor, I urge a "Do Not Pass" on that bill.

Our country was founded by people seeking religious freedom. The United States Constitution guarantees the Free Exercise of Religion, and prohibits governments from establishing any religion. This is a founding principle of our nation. HCR 3020 is in direct violation of these well-established Constitutional provisions, as it seeks to codify one aspect of some Christian theologies. Our government has no business dabbling in theology. Leave that to the people who preach and practice their faith.

As Christians, we are bound to Christ, not by citizenship, but by faith. We believe that patriotism does not require us to minimize our religious convictions. One of our faith commitments is that government should not prefer one religion over another or religion over nonreligion. Religious instruction is best left to our houses of worship, other religious institutions and families.

We love our communities and are grateful that America's historic commitment to religious pluralism enables faith communities to live in civic harmony with one another without sacrificing our theological convictions.

We also believe that conflating religious authority with political authority is idolatrous and often leads to oppression of minority and other marginalized groups as well as the spiritual impoverishment of religion.

Whether we worship at a church, mosque, synagogue, or temple, America has no second-class faiths. All are equal under the U.S. Constitution.

As Christians in the Congregational and Evangelical/Reformed traditions, including Germans from Russia, we do not need or want the government to tell us what we should believe, nor do we want others told what they should believe.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and for your good work on behalf of the people of North Dakota.

I strongly urge a Do Not Pass on HCR 3020.

In Christ, Rev. Deborah J. Blood, Conference Minister

Opposition Testimony Against HCR 3020

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am strongly opposed to House Concurrent Resolution 3020, which urges the State of North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ. While I respect the right of every individual to practice their faith freely, this resolution directly contradicts the fundamental principles of religious freedom enshrined in the United States Constitution and the North Dakota Constitution.

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution explicitly states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Similarly, Article I, Section 3 of the North Dakota Constitution affirms that "the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall be forever guaranteed in this state." By urging the state to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ, this resolution places governmental endorsement on a specific religious belief, thereby violating these core constitutional protections.

Religious freedom does not mean the government should favor one religion over another; it means that all individuals have the right to choose their beliefs—or to choose no religion at all—without government interference. HCR 3020 not only threatens this right but also raises critical questions: If the state acknowledges the Kingship of Jesus Christ, does it also plan to recognize all other religious beliefs equally? Will North Dakota officially recognize Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Paganism, or Satanism? What about those who do not believe in any religion at all? If the state is to be fair and just, then it must either recognize all religious beliefs equally or none at all.

Furthermore, what authority does the state legislature have to dictate the religious beliefs of every resident of North Dakota? Government should serve all its people, not just those who adhere to a particular faith. To endorse one religion through government action is to exclude and alienate those who do not share that faith, fostering division rather than unity among North Dakota's diverse citizens.

Legislators take an oath to uphold the Constitution, and HCR 3020 runs counter to that oath. This resolution sets a dangerous precedent that undermines the religious freedoms of North Dakotans and opens the door for future government overreach into matters of personal faith.

I urge you to reject HCR 3020 and stand for the principles of religious liberty and government neutrality in matters of faith. Our Constitution protects all people—believers and non-believers alike. Let us not erode these protections by endorsing one religious doctrine over all others.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

February 13, 2025

Dear Representatives,

I am writing in opposition to HCR 3020:

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution has provisions concerning religion, prohibiting state sponsored churches, and guaranteeing the right of every citizen the freedom of religion. HCR 3020 is going against the U.S. constitution. The very foundation of our democracy.

If ND passes this resolution, it is essentially saying that the U.S. Constitution doesn't apply to our state, that ND doesn't care about religious freedom, and if we've learning anything from World History religious persecution, The Inquisition, Salem Witch Trials, the Holocaust, the ones that declare themselves true believers were also the ones that did the genocide.

ND has a choice, a choice to follow what the framers of the U.S. Constitution fought for, religious freedom, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Religion is deeply personal to the individual, you would be forcing beliefs on people who don't want it.

I urge you to vote Do Not Pass.

Thank You.

Melissa Lloyd

Buffalo, ND

This testimony is given in strong support of HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3020, which rightfully acknowledges the Kingship of Jesus Christ.

Western governments for two thousand years, whether explicitly or implicitly, have confessed that Christ is the ruler of the universe. The preamble of the North Dakota Constitution gives thanks to "Almighty God"; the Declaration of Independence reminds us that peoples' rights are "endowed by their Creator." These are but two examples, and our history is replete with evidence of how our ancestors freely, humbly, gratefully, and dutifully acknowledged, praised, and proclaimed the simple fact that God is the Supreme Being of the Universe. Scripture, as shown in part in HCR 3020, is even more direct - it is not some vague and nameless deity whom our ancestors have honored, it is Jesus Christ our Lord, the King of the Universe.

Most of the opposing arguments to this resolution attack a straw man - they say that this resolution violates the 'separation of church and state.' Nothing in this resolution establishes a Church of North Dakota, nothing in this resolution declares it shall be unlawful for any citizen to worship as they please, nothing in this resolution gives executive, legislative, nor judicial power to unelected clergymen. What these opponents conflate are the ideas of a "state-mandated church" and the unshakeable principle that God is supreme in all aspects of life - civil, familial, and ecclesiastical.

This resolution is particularly needed today (though valuable for all times) due to the degree to which our nation has turned away from God. Citizens need to be reminded of His presence, His goodness, His dominion, His Kingship. The state must also be reminded that it is not supreme and the only power it has, ultimately, is that which it is given by God. Acknowledging the Kingship of Jesus Christ via this resolution is a good first step.

I urge all members to vote yes.

The first amendment of the United States constitution:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof

Section 26 of the North Dakota declaration of rights:

The state of North Dakota is an inseparable part of the American union and the Constitution of the United States is the supreme law of the land.

Section 3 of the North Dakota declaration of rights:

The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference shall be forever guaranteed in this state

With this information in mind I implore our legislators to stop wasting tax payer dollars by attempting to remove our personal freedoms in direct conflict with both the US and ND Constitutions. To pass this bill would be an expensive disgrace to ND.

My name is Dahlia Hamilton. I am writing to oppose HCR 3020, which attempts to declare the “Kingship of Jesus Christ” in North Dakota.

North Dakota is a state with more diversity than many would like to admit. A large population does not recognize or actively practice the Christian faith. By pushing this resolution, ND is taking a reckless stance regarding Christian Nationalism that has historically pillaged and eradicated marginalized communities and religions– Native & Indigenous populations, Islamic faiths, and more. Each citizen in North Dakota is given the freedom of religion, and should never have a specific religion imposed on them.

Everyone is free to choose their religious belief. By claiming the “Kingship” of Jesus Christ, the ND House is further promoting Christian Nationalism and further marginalizing communities that have been consistently subjected to oppression. The North Dakota legislation should focus on cultivating an environment in the state where all religions are accepted and uphold the “wall of separation” that was coined by Jefferson– a founding father.

Adopting this mentality into the North Dakota government is a blatant attempt at adopting a state religion-, which is unconstitutional at the state and federal levels of government. The establishment of a religion would be disastrous and open opportunities for discrimination against non-Christian citizens. Hence, resulting in further marginalization and religious genocide of non-Christian religions.

I urge this committee to withdraw the resolution for the sake of religious freedom and autonomy in North Dakota and to deepen their understanding of religious diversity and protection as well.

Chairman Longmuir and members of the committee,

My name is Christian B. Wagner and I am a resident of Troutman, North Carolina.

I stand before you today in support of HCR 3020, the "Christ is King" Resolution. This resolution is not an imposition, nor is it a demand for religious conformity. Rather, it is an honest acknowledgment of reality—that Christian values have shaped this state and this nation from their founding, and that those values continue to be a guiding force for the majority of North Dakotans today.

A recent study confirms this.¹ 54% of North Dakotans believe the U.S. government should declare America a Christian nation. Additionally, 71% believe that our laws should be based on Christian values. These are not small numbers. This resolution simply affirms the truth of what North Dakotans already believe—that Christianity has played, and continues to play, a defining role in our way of life.

The fact that this great country is a Christian Nation has been recognized at the highest level, including in the famous supreme court decision, *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*, which I linked in my written testimony.² The unanimous decision was authored by Associate Justice David Brewer. In fact, Justice Brewer actually wrote a book explaining the decision called *The United States: A Christian Nation*, which I have linked in my written testimony.³

When we call America a Christian nation and call forth such a resolution, we do not seek to impose the Christian religion on the citizens of this state. Rather, we wish to highlight two realities, a historical reality and a social reality. I won't bore you with the history of this, you can read Justice Brewer's study that I mentioned earlier.

By saying that America is a Christian nation socially, we don't mean that the entire population is Christian, this is true of 80% of the population of this great state according to a recent poll,⁴ but what about the 20%? Even while these individuals are not Christian, they still are influenced by Christianity and enjoy the liberties and blessings that come from a tradition of law and governance shaped by Christianity. I will give you an example. How many of you have secular friends who are polygamists? None. This is actually a practice that is common among most cultures, it is almost uniquely from Christian influence that polygamy is uncommon in this great nation. I could give you a number of different examples, but it is clear that, even among those

¹ <https://northdakotamonitor.com/2024/05/29/poll-finds-ndgop-voters-fear-country-losing-christian-values/>

² <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/143/457/>

³ <https://dn720501.ca.archive.org/0/items/unitedstateschri00brew/unitedstateschri00brew.pdf>

⁴ <https://ava.prii.org/#religious/2022/States/religion>

who are not Christian themselves, we can truly say that there is a social effect of Christianity that is present among them.

I know what many of you are thinking, you would love to support this resolution, but believe that it is against the Constitution, and, therefore, despite your agreement with it, you cannot, in good conscience, pass this resolution. I believe that this comes from common misunderstandings about the Constitution spread by liberal education, more than it does the historical reality of the matter.

There are three clauses touching religion in the Constitution, the religious tests clause, the free exercise clause, and the establishment clause.

The religious tests clause states that “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.” I give an example in my written testimony,⁵ but a religious test refers to an oath given before installment into office where one is required to make certain statements about what they believe religiously. It is a complete abuse of history to apply such a clause in our situation.

Further, this resolution does not violate the free exercise clause. In the American and common law traditions, to be “free” to do something is to have the ability to engage in some act without the government stepping in and restricting that act. Refer to my written testimony for a link to Justice Clarence Thomas’ illuminating study on this point.⁶ Is this resolution meant to stop a Muslim North Dakotan from fasting during Ramadan? Of course not. It isn’t meant to restrict the religious acts of anyone and therefore it is a complete abuse of history to apply the free exercise clause against this resolution.

Lastly, we have the establishment clause which states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.”⁷ As before, to attempt to call this resolution unconstitutional on these grounds is an abuse of history.

An “establishment of religion” refers to the pre-modern practice of having a tax funded Church, which was permitted to the states, such as Massachusetts, but was not permitted for the federal government. To state that this resolution would violate the establishment clause should be laughable to anyone with a basic knowledge of the history of established Churches. In my

⁵ “I do believe in one God, the creator and governor of the universe, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked. And I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine inspiration.”

⁶ <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/576/644/>

⁷ There is also the clause in the North Dakota State Constitution that mentions that “The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination **or preference** shall be forever guaranteed in this state.” The idea of a “preference” does not have in mind such a resolution, but material benefits, e.g., tax benefits. For example, cf., Gerhardt v. Heid, “compulsory support, by taxation or otherwise.”

written testimony, I have linked three scholarly articles on this topic.⁸ We are not trying to follow after England and start paying the salaries of the Christian Pastors of North Dakota.

To those who say this resolution violates the Constitution, was it unconstitutional when the Supreme Court called the United States a Christian Nation? Was it unconstitutional when one of the authors of the constitution, the great supreme court justice Samuel Chase said “by our form of government, the Christian religion is the established religion?”⁹ Was it unconstitutional when Supreme Court Justice James Kent, one of the greatest jurists in American history, said in one of his decisions “We are a Christian people...[Christianity] is part and parcel of the law of the land?”¹⁰ Was it unconstitutional when Chief Justice John Marshall said “it would be strange indeed, if with such a people, our institutions did not presuppose Christianity, and did not often refer to it, and exhibit relations with it?”¹¹ Was it unconstitutional when Justice Joseph Story, founder of Harvard Law School, “Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the State so far as was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience and the freedom of religious worship?”¹² Or is it only unconstitutional when North Dakota acknowledges this simple truth?

I could multiply quotes on this point from American history, which you can read in David Barton’s book *The Myth of Separation*, which I linked in my written testimony, but you get the point.¹³

This is a resolution of honesty and not one of coercion. Opponents will claim this resolution is exclusionary and will alienate non-Christians. That is not the case.

Christianity has always been the majority faith of this state, but it has never demanded persecution of others. Rather, it has provided the moral foundation upon which our freedoms are built. It is precisely because of Christianity that we enjoy equal treatment under the law and the rights we enjoy today. In fact, the greatest violation of these rights have been under the various secular, despotic regimes of the 20th century, it is only under the kingship of Christ that we can ensure them.

A study found that 75% of North Dakotans believe that if the U.S. moves away from its Christian foundations, we will lose our country. The citizens of this state realize that we are in

⁸ [A Political History of the Establishment Clause](#), [The Establishment Clause: Its Original Public Meaning and What We Can Learn From the Plain Text](#), [The Original Meaning of the Establishment Clause and the Impossibility of Its Incorporation](#)

⁹ <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/runkel-v-winemiller/>

¹⁰ *The People v. Ruggles*, 1811

¹¹ Letter to Jasper Adams, May 9, 1833.

¹² *Familiar Exposition of the Constitution of the United States*

¹³ <https://archive.org/details/mythofseparation0000unse>

the midst of a civilizational crisis. This fear is not irrational—it is a recognition of reality. As legislators, you have an obligation to your people, people who fear that their country, the country their fathers fought and bled to establish, will be no more.

If the majority of North Dakotans believe in this resolution, why should their will be ignored? Why should the opinions of a vocal minority dictate the moral direction of this state? This resolution does not impose a theocracy. It does not force anyone into church pews. It does not demand adherence to doctrine. It does one thing: it tells the truth.

Thank you for your time. I ask for a Do Pass Recommendation on HCR 3020, and will stand for any questions.

Brooke Burnett

Chairman Long Meier, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this resolution affirming that “Christ is King.”

I come from Colstrip, Montana, but I attend college in Dickinson and have found a new home here in North Dakota—a state whose enduring Christian values have not only shaped its communities but also transformed my own life. It is here that I embraced my Catholic faith and learned the true meaning of service, justice, and love.

North Dakota has always been a state deeply rooted in faith, tradition, and strong moral values. Christianity has played a foundational role in shaping our communities, guiding our laws, and inspiring service and charity. This resolution affirms that heritage, recognizing the profound influence of Christian teachings—not just in our state, but in the very fabric of Western civilization.

While the Catholic Church has long proclaimed the kingship of Christ—especially through the institution of the Solemnity of Christ the King by Pope Pius XI in 1925—this belief is not exclusive to Catholics. Protestants, too, affirm Christ’s sovereign rule over all creation. Even within Judaism, the expectation of a Messianic King is deeply rooted in Scripture, as the Hebrew Bible foretells a ruler from the line of David who will bring justice and peace to the world. The belief in God’s sovereign rule over humanity is shared across these faith traditions.

Some may question whether this resolution conflicts with the First Amendment, but that concern is misplaced. The First Amendment protects freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. Recognizing Christ as King does not establish a state religion or compel anyone to worship in a particular way. Instead, it acknowledges the historical and cultural influence of Christianity—something our nation’s founders openly recognized. The Declaration of Independence affirms that our rights are endowed by our Creator, and our national motto remains “In God We Trust.” Even today, elected officials at every level of government take their oaths on the Bible, and our legal system is built upon moral principles rooted in Scripture.

North Dakota, in particular, has a strong Christian identity. Recent data from a 2021 Gallup poll indicates that nearly 55% of North Dakotans attend weekly religious services—significantly higher than the national average—demonstrating a profound and active commitment to faith. Here, faith is not just a private matter—it shapes our communities, inspires service, and fosters unity. Passing this resolution is not about enforcing religious doctrine but about affirming the values that have strengthened North Dakota for generations.

Moreover, the kingship of Christ is not about political rule but about truth, justice, and moral leadership. At a time when our society faces increasing division and moral uncertainty, this resolution reminds us that ultimate authority does not rest in government or human institutions, but in God Himself. It calls on our leaders and citizens alike to pursue justice, humility, and service to others—values that benefit all people, regardless of religious affiliation.

For these reasons, I urge you to support this resolution. Thank you for your time, and I welcome any questions.

Representative Nico Rios

District 23 – Williston, North Dakota

Chairman Longmuir and honorable members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee, thank you for having me back here with you all today. I bring before you today House Concurrent Resolution 3020, a resolution urging North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ. This resolution reads:

WHEREAS, Christ said all power is given to me in heaven and in earth (Matthew, 28:18), not only spiritual, but civil, including over this great state; and

WHEREAS, Christ is said to have received power, and glory, and a kingdom so that all people, tribes and tongues shall serve Him (Daniel 7:14), including this great state; and

WHEREAS, the Father is said to give to Christ all nations and the utmost parts of the earth for His inheritance and possession, and, in response, people and their leaders are called to learn and receive instruction from Him (Psalms 2:8, 10), including those in this great state; and

WHEREAS, Christ is named the ruler of Kings on earth and the King of Kings and presented with crown and royal robe (Revelation 1:5, 17:14, 19:12-13, 16); and

WHEREAS, the founding fathers of this great state begin the constitution with the words, "We", the people of North Dakota, grateful to Almighty God, and, as expressed by Reverend R.C. Wiley during the First Constitutional Convention of North Dakota, we desire there shall be a recognition of Almighty God as the source of authority; of the Lord Jesus Christ as the rightful ruler of nations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF NORTH DAKOTA, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN: That North Dakota acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ over all the world so that this great state may at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace, and harmony

This Resolution echoes the will of our state's founding fathers. On July 15th 1889 the Representative of North Dakota's first District, R.B. Richardson from Drayton, North Dakota brought forth Filing 48 to be included in our State's preamble. File 48 read.

"We, the people of North Dakota, acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority, the Lord, Jesus Christ as the ruler of nations, and His will as the supreme law to which all human law should conform, do ordain this Constitution."

During the debates of the First Constitutional Convention Reverend R.C. Wiley spoke to this sentiment saying.

“In one sense the Constitution of North Dakota is already made. There is an unwritten Constitution of North Dakota in the minds of the people... And, inasmuch as our civilization is Christian, this part of the unwritten Constitution is all ready... We say that power is inherent in the people. They do not create it; it is a gift bestowed on them by the sovereign ruler. While we recognize the authority of the people, let us recognize the divine source from which that authority comes, and the Divine Ruler with whom we have to do, and the supreme law that is over us.”

To address the critics who will say citing our foundational documents is a waste of time or absurd. Christianity has played such a foundational role in our society, and acknowledging that should not be controversial. Furthermore, recognizing our heritage and moral foundations is never a waste of time. It is more important now than ever that our great state recognize our great ruler and the one who bestows upon us the blessings that the people of North Dakota have enjoyed and will continue to enjoy for years to come.

Chairman and members of this committee I know what everyone is going to ask me, so I'll get straight to the point. Why did you bring this resolution? It's a real simple answer. It is because I have only recently found God. I always considered myself to be a man of strong faith, I always believed in God. I just never had a real relationship with God. I was essentially, turned away from God. Until I came to North Dakota. I came here 11 years ago to work in the oilfields of Western North Dakota so I could make some money. A lot has happened to me in these last 11 years, too much to list that's for sure, but the culmination of these 11 years of me living in this beautiful God fearing state we call North Dakota has resulted in me coming home to Jesus. Coming home to find Christ and making the decision to get confirmed into the Roman Catholic Church this Easter. This is the single greatest thing I have ever done or will ever do. So I just wanted to bring this Resolution forward to say thank you to North Dakota, I couldn't have done it without you.

As for the constitutionality of this resolution, I'd like to refer all questions to my friend Cristian Wagner, or as I call him Chrissy Wags. I now stand for any questions.

Sixty-ninth North Dakota Legislative Assembly
House Political Subdivisions Committee
H.C.R. 3020
February 13, 2025



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Fargo, ND 58107
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aclund.org

Chair Longmuir, Vice Chair Fegley, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of North Dakota, I stand in opposition to House Concurrent Resolution 2030 acknowledging the Kingship of Jesus Christ.

While concurrent resolutions in North Dakota do not have the force of law, they are an official expression of the opinion or will of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly. By explicitly recognizing the “Kingship of Jesus Christ,” HCR 3020 signals governmental preference for Christianity over other faiths and non-religion, which is a clear violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and creates an environment of religious favoritism, alienating those who do not share the endorsed beliefs.

It is a fundamental principle of religious freedom that the government cannot require individuals to express a belief in God. As the Supreme Court has explained: “[i]f there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.”¹

HCR 2030 also is in direct contradiction with the fundamental principles and protections established in Article I, Section 3 of the North Dakota State Constitution:

“The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall be forever guaranteed in this state, and no person shall be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry, against his consent; nor shall any control of or interference with the rights of conscience be permitted. No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification for any office or public trust, nor shall any person be rendered incompetent to be a witness or juror on account of his opinion on matters of religious belief; but the liberty of conscience hereby secured shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness or justify practices inconsistent with the peace or safety of the state.”

The North Dakota Constitution guarantees that no person shall be compelled to support any place of worship or ministry against their consent. While this resolution does not force religious participation, it still sends a message that North Dakota’s government aligns itself with one religious tradition, which is not only unconstitutional, but also impertinently inappropriate in a state that serves a diverse population. North Dakota has been rated the most religiously diverse state in the country.² North Dakota residents practice a variety of religions and faiths, and many are nonreligious. Passing this resolution is unnecessary and sends the message that North Dakota prefers people who believe in Jesus over those who do not. No one should feel unwelcome or rejected by their state government because of their religious beliefs.

Religious belief is a deeply personal matter that should be determined by individuals and faith communities, not promoted by the state. This resolution says that the state government

¹ *W. Virginia State Bd. of Educ. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 642, (1943).

² Keith Darnay, [North Dakota is nation’s most religiously diverse state: survey](#), KX News (Sep. 15, 2022).

holds an official position that Jesus Christ is King and that all North Dakotans agree. This undermines the religious freedom of all citizens by excluding members of the community whose religious views do not align with the expressed opinion of the state. When the state takes an official stance on religious doctrine, even in a non-binding way, it frames governmental and societal conformity to a particular worldview and marginalizes its citizens who practice other faiths or hold secular beliefs. True religious freedom means the government remains neutral, showing no preference for religion or non-religion to ensure all citizens—regardless of their beliefs or practices—are treated equally under the law.

In the end, enacting this resolution would tell citizens of the state that hold different religious beliefs that they “are outsiders, not full members of the...community, and an accompanying message to [only certain] adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the community.”³

The ACLU of North Dakota urges lawmakers to reject HCR 3020. While not holding the weight of law and seen by some as merely symbolic, this resolution is a powerful symbol and statement that clearly erodes the constitutional protections that safeguard religious liberty for all people. The government’s role is not to promote religious doctrine but to protect the rights of every individual to worship—or not worship—according to their conscience.

The ACLU of North Dakota urges the House Political Subdivisions Committee to give a resounding “Do Not Pass” recommendation on HCR3020 and protect the fundamental rights of all North Dakotans.

Submitted by:
Cody J. Schuler
Advocacy Manager, ACLU of North Dakota
ND Lobbyist #367
cschuler@aclu.org

³ *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 309-10 (2000) (quoting *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668, 688 (1984) (O’Connor, J., concurring)).

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Political Subdivisions Committee Room JW327B, State Capitol

HCR 3020
2/13/2025

A concurrent resolution urging North Dakota to acknowledge the Kingship of Jesus Christ.
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4:26 p.m. Chairman Longmuir opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Longmuir, Representatives Bolinske, Davis, Hager, Hatlestad, Heilman, Klemin, Motschenbacher, Warrey

Members Absent: Vice-Chairman Fegley, Vice-Chairman Jonas, Representatives Ostlie, Toman

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Action

4:26 p.m. Representative Warrey moved a Do Not Pass.

4:26 p.m. Representative Hager seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Donald W. Longmuir	Y
Representative Clayton Fegley	A
Representative Jim Jonas	A
Representative Macy Bolinske	Y
Representative Jayme Davis	Y
Representative LaurieBeth Hager	Y
Representative Patrick R. Hatlestad	Y
Representative Matthew Heilman	N
Representative Lawrence R. Klemin	Y
Representative Mike Motschenbacher	Y
Representative Mitch Ostlie	A
Representative Nathan Toman	A
Representative Jonathan Warrey	Y

4:27 p.m. Motion passed 8-1-4

4:28 p.m. Chairman Longmuir will carry the bill.

4:29 p.m. Chairman Longmuir closed the hearing.

Wyatt Armstrong, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HCR 3020 ([25.3069.03000](#))

Political Subdivisions Committee (Rep. Longmuir, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** (8 YEAS, 1 NAY, 4 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HCR 3020 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.