



## **One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America**

*Kevin M. Kruse*

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We're often told that the United States is, was, and always has been a Christian nation. But in *One Nation Under God*, historian Kevin M. Kruse reveals that the idea of "Christian America" is an invention—and a relatively recent one at that.

As Kruse argues, the belief that America is fundamentally and formally a Christian nation originated in the 1930s when businessmen enlisted religious activists in their fight against FDR's New Deal. Corporations from General Motors to Hilton Hotels bankrolled conservative clergymen, encouraging them to attack the New Deal as a program of "pagan statism" that perverted the central principle of Christianity: the sanctity and salvation of the individual. Their campaign for "freedom under God" culminated in the election of their close ally Dwight Eisenhower in 1952.

But this apparent triumph had an ironic twist. In Eisenhower's hands, a religious movement born in opposition to the government was transformed into one that fused faith and the federal government as never before. During the 1950s, Eisenhower revolutionized the role of religion in American political culture, inventing new traditions from inaugural prayers to the National Prayer Breakfast. Meanwhile, Congress added the phrase "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance and made "In God We Trust" the country's first official motto. With private groups joining in, church membership soared to an all-time high of 69%. For the first time, Americans began to think of their country as an officially Christian nation.

During this moment, virtually all Americans—across the religious and political spectrum—believed that their country was "one nation under God." But as Americans moved from broad generalities to the details of issues such as school prayer, cracks began to appear. Religious leaders rejected this "lowest common denominator" public religion, leaving conservative political activists to champion it alone. In Richard Nixon's hands, a politics that conflated piety and patriotism became sole property of the right.

Provocative and authoritative, *One Nation Under God* reveals how the unholy alliance of money, religion, and politics created a false origin story that continues to define and divide American politics to this day.

## One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America Details

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## From Reader Review One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America for online ebook

### victor harris says

A very cogent account of how business and religious interests merged to establish a formidable and influential flank in the Republican Party, and it could be argued - have come to dominate it. Initially, much of the alliance was part of an anti-FDR and anti-New Deal coalition, and it had no shortage of Democrats in the mix. From Eisenhower on, it would be the Republicans who would attract the most reactionary elements of Christianity as they sought to obliterate the barrier of church-state separation. Aided by corporate moguls with deep pockets (Marriott, etc.) and likes of Billy Graham (who claimed to be non-partisan, but acted aggressively on behalf of a series of Republican presidents), and unholy alliance was forged. It was anti-union, anti-liberalism, anti-government programs, and vehemently anti-feminist. Nixon and Reagan would parlay that into electoral strength and in today's political climate, any type of moderation has become anathema in Republican ranks as they are beholden to the Pat Robertson strain of Christianity.

Dating back to Eisenhower where God became ensconced in the Pledge and on American currency, the United States as a "Christian nation" narrative has become part of the political fabric and dialogue, and no speech is complete without the mandatory "God bless you.", or some variation of that which invokes divine sanction for the candidate or policy in question. As Kruse shows, though some gestures are rather benign and part of the civic tradition, which was particularly true when America had a very active and large Christian population in the 50s, the modern incarnation has a disturbing theocratic strain that harbors anti-democratic impulses and contempt for compromise. When such factions are bankrolled by a wealthy elite, as they currently are, the very foundations of a pluralistic and representative form of government are imperiled. Excellent tracking of the lineage and evolution of the Christian Right/business hydra, and very good analysis.

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### Megan says

Kruse relies on particular, extensive research and storytelling to make his point, always preferable to nonfiction books that simply generalize about a time period or event. You learn a lot from reading Kruse's book: that businessmen in the 1930s used religion (and preachers) to overturn the New Deal, that the phrase "One Nation Under God" was added to currency as late as the mid-20th century and so is \*not\* part of a longstanding religious history as we've believed, that we've been arguing about prayer in schools for the last seventy years, that church leaders often opposed mandating (or even) having prayer in schools, unlike today. Perhaps the most interesting part was the final chapter on Nixon, in which Kruse charts the ways that Nixon consciously, deliberately used the forms of religion to his political advantage; given how the Nixon presidency ended, the chapter serves to reinforce biblical warnings against having prophets who are in league with the government, or paid by the government; there's real benefit in having Daniels and Nathans who will challenge authority.

Yet ultimately, the book does not entirely convince me its premise: that the idea we are "one nation under God" can be attributed largely to the corporate push against the New Deal. Yes, this is partly true, but it doesn't explain the fact that millions of everyday Americans were eager to see religion take a stronger hold in the public square, as religion's influence expanded beyond the New Deal to the Eisenhower presidency. Clearly religion was important to these people; having a religious country was important. Why? Since Kruse does not answer that question, we cannot wholly understand the reasons people see their country, specifically, as one of faith.

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### **Robert says**

Anyone who tries to sell you the notion that America was founded as a "Christian nation" is full of shit, as this book explains. Most of what's taken for granted as proof, such as the Pledge of Allegiance, and "In God We Trust" as our motto was cooked up in the 50's, mainly as residue from the Red Scare of The Cold War, and exploited by corporations to keep the sheep in line.

Should be required reading for Everyone.

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### **Peter McLoughlin says**

Book makes an argument for corporate America using advertising and public relations to boost religion in the 30s to foster a better political climate for business. This may be a facet of the rise of religion but not the whole story. A pious unquestioning population may be better than questioning radical one and some elements of the business world may have that preference but it is only part of the story of the rise of religion in 20th century America but like a river many streams can feed into it. The author does a service by picking up this strand but it does not overturn the conventional wisdom that a large part of the rise of religion is a product of cold war anticommunism. It does add some new shading to the standard picture. Nice history.

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### **Amanda says**

**In 1954, Congress followed Eisenhower's lead, adding the phrase "under God" to the previously secular Pledge of Allegiance. A similar phrase, "In God We Trust," was added to a postage stamp for the first time in 1954 and then to paper money the next year; in 1956, it became the nation's first official motto. During the Eisenhower era Americans were told, time and time again, that the nation not only should be a Christian nation but also that it had always been one. They soon came to believe that the United States of America was "one nation under God."**

**And they've believed it ever since.**

I could write an endless review praising this book but not even that would do this book justice.

Kruse has done his research remarkably well on this topic. He goes through the years to show the stages of how America's history was rewritten to fit the Christian narrative. It begins to show how business leaders back in the 30s decided to overturn the New Deal since they felt it imposed on their rights - or perhaps their money, most likely. And through the 40s where businessmen joined with Christian leaders to convince America's citizens they should embrace Christianity and capitalism, because the way they saw it, these two were intertwined; capitalism only worked under God. It continued through the 50s and culminated in Eisenhower's presidency and has continued ever since.

It wasn't that easy, which Kruse shows. It might be difficult to imagine today that back in the mid-1900s

several religious leaders were firmly against Bible reading in schools or mandatory praying in schools as well. Back in those days, many religious leaders, Christian as well as Jewish, firmly believed in the separation of church and state. Several opposed the "one nation under God" and "in God we trust" since they either felt this devalued their own faith or that such general terms were an offense, a least common denomination religious phrase that had no meaning, and if it had no meaning, why use it at all? They opposed endorsement of one particular faith from the government and thus, if say Catholics wanted "their" sanctioned Bible version to be used for mandatory reading, that would impose on the other student's faiths if their faith required a different Bible, or a different Holy text.

As said, much of this might be hard to grasp in today's political climate (in the U.S.) where a presidential candidate more or less "have" to be religious, or at least claim to be. Also as said, my review won't do this book justice, for Kruse packs the book with facts; it leaves no stone untouched. He also puts no personal opinion on the matter; he merely states the facts and connects the dots without taking shots at either religion, secularity, or others. It simply shows how the Christian right and capitalists in the form of business leaders worked to shape the country's perception of itself.

**This history reminds us that our public religion is, in large measure, an invention of the modern era. The ceremonies and symbols that breathe life into the belief that we are "one nation under God" were not, as many Americans believe, created alongside the nation itself. Their parentage stems not from the founding fathers but from an era much closer to our own, the era of our own fathers and mothers, our grandfathers and grandmothers. This fact need not diminish their importance; fresh tradition can be more powerful than older ones adhered to out of habit. Nevertheless, we do violence to our past if we treat certain phrases - "one nation under God," "In God We Trust" - as sacred text handed down to us from the nation's founding. Instead, we are better served if we understand these utterances for what they are: political slogans that speak not to the origins of our nation but to a specific point in its not-so-distant past. If they are to mean anything to us now, we should understand what they meant then.**

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### **Justin Powell says**

It's a shame that this book was so short. The author easily could have added another 200+ pages if he had gone into the Reagan administration and on in more detail. I think there's an interesting story of change and resistance to the theocracy from Eisenhower to George Bush Sr.

Hoping for a part two of this story!

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### **Edward Sullivan says**

The story of how the persisting myth that America is a Christian nation was born and aggressively disseminated in the 1950s with the enthusiastic assistance of Corporate America. A fascinating, lucid, engaging history and, for those who believe in the strict separation of church and state, quite disturbing.

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### **Alan Johnson says**

This is a very good account of the development of the concept of a "Christian nation" from its use as conservative propaganda against the New Deal to the present. The author interestingly shows how President Dwight D. Eisenhower transformed the idea from being simply part of the tool kit of big business to something that the anti-New Dealers had never intended: it took on a life of its own that has permeated American political culture ever since. Although the author does make an occasional bow to nineteenth-century developments, he sometimes seems to forget that the idea of a "Christian nation" was not invented in the twentieth century but rather in the nineteenth, specifically as part of the Second Great Awakening, which explicitly and implicitly opposed the separation of church and state consciously formulated by such Founders as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and embodied in the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. For nineteenth-century developments, the reader is advised to consult David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), which I have reviewed here and which Kruse himself cited in his book. See also Steven K. Green, *The Second Disestablishment: Church and State in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), and Benjamin T. Lynerd, *Republican Theology: The Civil Religion of American Evangelicals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Although I do not agree with everything in these books, they are, along with Kruse's analysis, interesting histories of the anti-First Amendment meme in American history.

All of these authors focus on the combination of religion and politics characteristic of religious nationalism or "civil religion," which is really a throwback to seventeenth-century theocratic dogmas. I develop this theme at considerable length in my book *The First American Founder: Roger Williams and Freedom of Conscience* (2015). Roger Williams (ca. 1603-83) opposed, on both religious and secular grounds, all attempts to merge religion and government, considering them, among other things, blasphemous. All such blending of religion and government results, inevitably, in government using religion for political ends. Kruse's *One Nation under God* demonstrates exactly how religion has become politicized in this manner during the last several decades.

(Originally posted 5/4/2015; revised 10/5/2015)

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### **Craig Werner says**

I have mixed feelings about this book. On the one hand, there's a lot of useful information about the emergence of religion as a central part of American political life in the years surrounding World War II. I learned a lot about the highly ideological "Religion in American Life" and "Freedom Under God" campaigns, both orchestrated by businesses threatened by FDR's New Deal. Similarly, I hadn't been aware of how important Eisenhower was in establishing "civic deism" in our political life--prayer breakfasts, etc. Not an accident that the Eisenhower era gave rise to the addition of the phrase "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance of the establishment of "One Nation Under God" as the national motto enshrined on our money. Kruse certainly establishes his thesis that the now-take-for-granted assertions that "America has always been a Christian country" are myths created to mask the origins of the Christian/political constellation which has grown in power fairly consistently since the 1950s.

But I have some problems with the book, reflected in the subtitle. At some points in the story, Kruse has a compelling case that the motivations for the emphasis on religion came from corporate sources. But once he gets to the 60s (which is my particular interest), he shifts to a much more general examination of places where religion enters into American politics: the Supreme Court cases regarding school prayer and Bible reading; the cynical Nixon use of religion as part of an appeal to the mythical "silent majority." There's certainly a connection between capitalism and a certain brand of Christianity, but Kruse takes the identification of Christianity with conservatism pretty much for granted and he never really considers the ways in which conservative Christians acted independently of corporate control. All of which is to say that while I found the book useful, it ultimately felt like Kruse had tilted his argument and analysis to create more buzz with the subtitle's questionable claim.

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### **Liz says**

"The Devil is in the details" as the saying goes and this book is dense with quotes from newspapers, historical brochures, speeches, letters and personal memoirs that "challenges America's assumptions about the basic relationship between religion and politics in their nation's history."

Why do so many think we were founded as a Christian nation? Despite the facts found in reading the documents of the founding fathers who were clearly deists and Thomas Jefferson's insistence to 'build a wall between church and state' many hold that 'in God we Trust' is a statement found in the Constitution. Where did that belief come from? As it turns out, a period of time much like today when the country was struggling to recover from a depression brought on by the horrendous income inequality and stock market speculation of the late 1920's. As a result, FDR's administration was putting together what is known as "The New Deal" to put people back to work through government funded projects to improve infrastructure and new regulations like Glass-Steagal for Wall Street.

It was then that "corporate titans enlisted conservative clergymen in an effort to promote new political arguments embodied in the phrase 'freedom under God'. As the private correspondence and public claims of men leading this charge make clear, this new ideology was designed to defeat the state power its architects feared the most....FDR's New Deal. With ample funding from major corporations, prominent industrialists, and business lobbies such as the national Association of Manufacturers and the US Chamber of Commerce in the 1930's and 1940's, these new evangelists for free enterprise promoted a vision best characterized as "Christian libertarianism".". (from introduction)

In my opinion, we are seeing the same arguments today. Those that have want to keep what they have inherited. Those who labor to create the wealth are to somehow to 'pull themselves up by their bootstraps' despite unfair tax policies, and lack of enough income to buy the products they make much less pay the rent. Combining religion with politics causes division rather than 'one nation under God.' As the book thoroughly shows, division occurs over whose religion? whose god? whose prayer? whose practice? And that pesky Constitution that says there shall be no establishment of a state religion...

Highly recommend. The story of our history contained here is quite the eye opener.

60 pages of footnotes, several pictures of documents and events of the time are included.

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### **Amber Dunten says**

One Nation Under God is a book that should be of interest to a lot of people. One can gather from the subtitle, How Corporate America Invented Christian America, that it's approaching the topic from a left-leaning point of view, but don't let that put you off - Kruse's coverage of the issue is surprisingly even-

handed.

The book paints a fairly ugly picture of how a cabal of shrewd, rich, white men commandeered American Christianity and forcibly injected a new, strident, politically loaded flavor of it into public life for their own ends, leaving inconvenient portions of the faith on the cutting room floor along the way. Middle America, hungry for a religious revival, or at least willing to believe they should be, jumped aboard without looking too closely at what they were buying into, and readily accepted the new brand of public religion without noticing that it came with some pretty heavy political baggage. The new religion-infused form of American politics, and the politics-infused form of American Christianity, snowballed from there.

Kruse doesn't editorialize much while telling this story. He doesn't have to – the real outrage is not so much, "look what those right-wingers did," but the simple fact of how religion was intentionally politicized and how the new Christian brand was aggressively (and successfully) marketed to the nation. It would be an equally ugly story no matter who did it. It makes me extra mad that right-wingers did it to advance a right-wing agenda that I don't remotely agree with, and it also makes me extra mad that in the process of politicizing religion, they stirred up religious division that harms religious minorities like me, but it should make anyone mad, including Christians. It's not in any way anti-Christian, but a lot of the story may be hard for Christians to accept... because who wants to hear that the version of their religious faith they've been taught all their lives is very likely a product that was carefully and expertly edited, packaged, and marketed to the public for someone else's political gain?

Viewed another way, One Nation Under God is simply a history of a certain aspect of American politics. Many of us, including many of my conservative friends, have noticed that the modern Republican party seems to consist of a couple of different elements whose messages sometimes get mixed and even seem to conflict: There are the fiscal conservatives who believe in hands-off government, and that the government should be less involved in telling people how to live their daily lives. And then there is the religious element who have very firm ideas about how people should live from a religious moral perspective and don't mind legislating their religious principles into law. More than one of my conservative friends have told me, "I'm a real conservative, and to me that means less government intrusion in people's lives – I don't really think all of this religious and moral stuff should be in politics at all."

If you've ever wondered how these two disparate elements came to be represented under the same banner, One Nation Under God tells the story of how those two very different factions got in bed together and founded today's religious right. The link between religion and right-wing politics is a shorter history than you might think because it doesn't start with the Founding Fathers, as the belief is commonly cultivated today. It starts in the 1930s, during the Great Depression and the era of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. A little surprisingly to me, Kruse doesn't delve deeper. I suspect he decided he didn't need to. Once you hear the story of what happened in the 1930s and 1940s, it's obvious enough that this was an utterly new development in American history, regardless of arguments about whether America was intended to be a "Christian" nation from its founding. Even as the orchestrators of the new religious right were building it, they were busily telling themselves and everyone else that they were only reviving the public religiosity that the nation's founding fathers had always intended.

The new religious right slipped "under God" into the pledge of allegiance and "In God We Trust" onto the money almost before anyone could notice, and within twenty years most people willingly forgot what recent developments those had been and quickly came to consider them cornerstones of the American way. They defined taxation as a violation of the eighth commandment ("thou shalt not steal") and any support for government programs designed to help the poor as a violation of the tenth ("thou shalt not covet"), and thus buried the Social Gospel under a wave of libertarianism, with a thin frosting of religion.

This history of political religion in the 20th century is also necessarily a history of fighting over it. It quickly became apparent that there had been good reasons to keep religion out of politics. While simple things like "under God" in the pledge and "In God We Trust" on the money smacked of a vague and relatively inoffensive "ceremonial deism" that only atheists and pagans could object to (and who cares what they think, *riiiight??[/sarcasm]*), things quickly became more complicated when it came to actual religious observances like prayer and Bible readings in public schools. In the new, ultra-pious environment, a popular push sprang up for more and more public demonstrations of faith, and schools became a major target. Just about everyone wanted more religion in schools, but funny enough, Catholics, Jews, and Protestants couldn't seem to agree on exactly what form prayer and Bible readings should take.

Surprisingly enough, the ones who complained the loudest were the Catholics. By papal decree, the King James Bible was and still is considered non-authoritative, and Catholics refused to even hear of their children reading from it at school. But out of the ensuing infighting, they got a result that made Catholics, Jews, and Protestants all co-equals in unhappiness – NO official prayers or Bible readings in public schools. The hilariously ironic thing about this outcome is that they hoisted themselves with their own petards - prayer and Bible readings in schools had been going on basically forever, sporadically and determined at a local, school-by-school level, and no one had ever thought to fight over it because each school (and individual schools were generally pretty homogeneous in those days) did what worked for it. But the new religious right was so keen to legislate religion on a statewide or even national basis that they drove too hard to the basket and fouled. And yet they've been loudly blaming other people for "expelling God from public schools" ever since. So next time someone bitches about how the "godless heathens" or whatever kicked God out of school, you can point out with confidence that in fact it was primarily Christians who kicked God out of school because they couldn't agree on exactly what form God should take in a public school.

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### **Caroline Miller says**

Though the content was very compelling, I found the act of reading this book to be rather boring. I think the author did a great job on researching and sharing the information he gathered for this book, but the writing style to me was that of nonfiction that I tend not to dabble in. I found myself telling people as I was reading the book that I would have preferred to get this information in the form of a one hour podcast, rather than a 13 hour audio book. My two-star rating however is only a reflection of how much I enjoyed this book, rather than on the quality of the content or writing.

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### **Bobby Sullivan says**

There were times I had to put this book down, because it made me so angry. It incenses me that there are so many Americans who think "In God We Trust" has always been on our money, and "Under God" has always been in the Pledge of Allegiance. This book is important, because it goes back to first causes, when big business intentionally tried to cloak their libertarianism in religion, in order to destroy FDR's New Deal. We see the monster they unleashed every day in American politics.

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### **Dan Wilkinson says**

*One Nation Under God* is an important book. We — Christians and Americans — need to understand our

history. This history consists of far more than the agenda-driven narratives promulgated by advocacy groups, it also includes word and events and motivations that have all too often been conveniently forgotten. In *One Nation Under God*, Kruse offers us a potent reminder of where we have come from, and, perhaps more importantly, how far we still have to go.

Read my full review here:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/unfundamentalistchristians/2015/04/one-nation-under-god-how-corporate-america-invented-christian-america/>

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### **Baal Of says**

I was angry almost every minute I was reading this book. It's worth reading, but it's damn infuriating. I had no idea that Christian libertarianism had been around for so long. I will also have no more patience for people who say that removing "In God we trust" from the currency is a waste of time. That fact is used continuously to bolster that claim that this is a Christian nation.

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### **Jodie L says**

Excellent. thoroughly researched and organized. Confirms what I have surmised all along. The profound impact of using religion, not only as a means for corporate America to propagate their own agenda, but to drive a wedge between those in this nation deemed as "the morale majority" and those on the "godless" immoral left, cannot be overstated.

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### **Jason Combs says**

Excellent book! By reading this well-researched book you will learn things like:

- A Christian minister, Francis Bellamy, wrote the original American Pledge of Allegiance without any mention of God because he thought that unifying church & state demeaned & insulted both. He also believed that Jesus taught economic equality and sided with the poor & working class. The original Pledge in 1892 reads,

"I pledge allegiance to my Flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

- The phrase "One Nation Under God" wasn't added to the Pledge of Allegiance until the 1950's, when President Eisenhower's pastor -- who was strongly encouraged by corporate America in their campaign to unite religious piety with anti-government freedom in order to fight New Deal regulations -- urged Ike to add the phrase in 1954, who in turn urged Congress to pass legislation to include the phrase, which they did.

- "E pluribus unum," which is Latin for "One from many," is the phrase that was adopted as the de facto US motto by John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, & Benjamin Franklin. The change for a new, official US motto came in the 1950's via the powerful economic influence of American corporations seeking to dismantle the New Deal by making government regulations anti-God. Hence, an Act of Congress made "In God We Trust" the USA's new official motto in 1956. That phrase was added to paper money in 1957.

- It was religious leaders who were not in bed with corporate America who had finally had enough and stopped prayer from being instituted in public schools in the 1950's, because they found the marriage of church & state demeaning to their beliefs, much like Francis Bellamy thought when he did not include any mention of God when he authored the original Pledge.

Those are just a few of the many things you'll learn in this very informative historical book that has great relevance to contemporary American politics & culture. Read it!

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### **Michael Schellman says**

Like most Americans, after the Great Depression, many Christians believed that corporations and Wall Street were the ones responsible for the crash of the market, and they favored the new tough measures put in place to hold corporations in check. At the time Evangelicals were associated by most people with wholesome American values. This book shows that the foundations of the Christian Conservatism start much earlier than Roe V. Wade - as Corporate Moguls sought to rehabilitate their image by winning over the most credible messengers of their day. This book answers a lot of questions about modern Evangelicalism's faithfulness to Corporations usually at the expense of human interest.

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### **Melora says**

Fascinating, edifying, and sometimes horrifying. Kruse examines how certain aspects of religion in American government and institutions which are often taken to be "foundational" are actually relatively recent innovations. Beginning in the 1930's, with the efforts of conservative businessmen to counteract FDR's "New Deal," Kruse looks at conflicts over Social Security, unions, prayer in schools, the Pledge of Allegiance, etc. From backroom deals between businessmen and preachers to courtroom battles, Congressional filibusters, Nixon's White House religious services, and Barack Obama's campaign speeches, Kruse reminds readers that the *sort* of nation we should be, *which* denomination, not to mention religion, if any, should dominate, what *exactly* we mean when we say "Under God," are far from the settled issues which the famous phrase in his book's title would seem to suggest. (As a Christian reader who felt a bit of trepidation about possible anti-religious fervor before starting this, I will note that Kruse is *not* critical of religion or religious people but, rather, of those who calculatingly use the religious beliefs of their fellow citizens to manipulate their behavior to achieve their own economic and political ends.)

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### **Lene Jaqua says**

This is a significant book for Christians to read through, in particular when contemplating their own personal deeply held private beliefs in conjunction with the overtly political ostentation that often passes for Christianity in America. Does ostentation equate piety? Does bending down on a public football field in front of forty thousand people in the stadium (and who knows how many watching on TV), does praying demonstrably in front of the entire nation during a sports event make you more or less Christian?

(Mat 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then

your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.)

Is a president more or less Christian if -- he rarely darkens the door of a church -- but he likes to put on pious displays of religious leaders during all public ceremonies of state? (Meet Ronald Reagan)

The book is well-documented (academically speaking), and one character that stands out to me is Billy Graham the ardent supporter of Richard Nixon, he was basically the White House pastor during those years. I did not realize the extent to which Graham was politicizing his Christianity during the 50s and 60s. I had been under the impression that his crusades were more neutral politically.

The other 'character' that stands out is corporate America, the moneyed influences that shape political events, support political characters, and influence public thinking on many issues.

The sections on prayer in school are significant not just for their thorough historical detail, covering arguments on both sides of the issue during the 50s and 60s. It was a complicated matter where there were pious men and women on both sides of the issue. Do we want a national watered down one-size-fits-all prayer in school that is devoid of content, in order to say (show) that we prayed? Some devout people said no. Prayer has to belong in the private realm because making prayer public makes it meaningless because we do not agree on what it should say. (A side rarely explained today where prayer being absent in the public schools is seen as a lack of godliness).

If you have always wondered why Christians tend to vote with people who are pro-oil, anti-environment, pro-business, anti-government regulation, look here. It starts with abortion as a litmus test, it continues with those who advocate against abortion having all those other interests (oil, tobacco, sugar, etc.), and then you as an abortion opposer swallow the whole rest of that party platform. -- It is politics as a brilliant stroke.

This book is a hard read. It is long. It has almost too many documented details in it. (Took me 6 months to read gradually at night, a snippet now and then). -- It does leave me with the sense that while I remain deeply committed to Christianity and consider myself religiously conservative, given the currently political climate where we are wrapping a not-so-holy president both in the flag and (as far as we can) around the cross, I want to retreat privately and not be wedded to party or ostentation, because it seems to me that in all things American the bigger it gets and the more political it gets, the more moneyed interests are infused (on either side of the political aisle) the less Christian it really is.

Next, I would like to read about the corporate or lobbying interests that control the left of the political spectrum, of their brushings with Christianity, and their ostentation.

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