

America's Way Out

✖ The role of the church in the public square has been the subject of many recent debates. Much of the concern about Christians and the **evangelical church** has centered on how we will use our considerable secular power at the ballot box. While I agree that the church should fully engage in the democratic process, there is much more we can offer the American public.

This article is something of an open letter to the Christian community. After weeks of reflection upon our current national problems, I arrived at a blinding flash of the obvious. My epiphany is that our spiritual standing before God is our greatest gift to the nation. In a manner of speaking, we have friends in "high" places. We are the ultimate insiders.

When we **pray** and believe things happen. Unfortunately, we have not always understood the **ways of God**.

We often pray when we should lobby and we lobby when we should pray.

For example, during the Bush presidency there has been more prayer

offered up for the nation than ever. As a result of all the prayer the

Lord did many good things. In addition, he also allowed things to occur

which could bring the rest of the nation to her knees. There is a war

raging in Iraq, the economy is in shambles and energy costs

are soaring.

Our national woes may cause millions to lose confidence in **false gods**, humanistic ideologies and even their own abilities.

America needs to return to God and the Bible. Radical **cultural reform** and **repentance** will release the blessing of God to our land. Without such a **spiritual awakening**,

the nation may languish for years in the throws of economic depression

and moral decline. The scriptures say "Righteousness exalteth a nation:

but sin is a reproach to any people" Prov. 14:24 (KJV).

We Christians have been placed in this nation as a source of inspiration and blessing for America as a whole. The Bible promises that

if God's people will humble themselves and pray that God will hear from

heaven and **heal our land** (2 Chron. 7:14). The church can release a **spiritual blessing**

on the nation that can turn the fortunes of the entire land around.

This will happen as the church is renewed spiritually. A third great

awakening is needed to restore personal holiness to the church and

position the church.

In Isa. 55:1-5,

the Lord promises that if His people return to Him, He will heal their

lives and bless their entire nation. Next, we will be a source of

blessings and prosperity to many other nations as well. This has

certainly been the historic legacy of our nation.

In this time of crisis, we must choose to renew our national covenant with God. Isaiah 55 implies that we must return to a sold-out, 100 percent committed form of Christianity in order to see God release an overflow blessing that will cause His people to be a light every strata of society.

Yet there is more! The church has two important roles to play in the nation: an evangelistic role and a prophetic role.

In our evangelistic role, we should be the ultimate voice of hope, encouragement and spiritual direction. In this role, we should desire to win people over to our worldview with love, compassion, and kindness.

As soul winners and evangelists, we must recognize that we have not been called to condemn people that live ungodly lives. Instead, we are called to give them hope and an example that they can live a life of personal victory and freedom.

In addition to our call to impact the world through **evangelism**, the American church also has a very profound **prophetic** role. Similar to the prophets of the Old Testament who called Israel and Judah to remember God and obey His laws, there is a place for us to do the same. The prophetic role of the church often leads to direct confrontation around issues of national sin and the failure of the

church. Politicians often call these prophetic issues “divisive.” In our book *Personal Faith, Public Policy*, Tony Perkins and I went to great lengths to define the church’s prophetic role and give practical, scriptural guidelines for our engagement in public policy and politics.

Even though there is a clear tension between the evangelistic and prophetic roles of the church, America needs both. Let us become the embodiment of The God’s Answer to America’s problems. Join me in a spiritual quest to become more like Jesus—living a life of personal holiness. In addition, let’s be the relevant evangelistic and a **prophetic voice** the nation needs. Together, we can make the difference!

Bishop Harry R. Jackson Jr. *is the senior pastor of Hope Christian Church, a 3,000-member congregation in the Washington, D.C., area. He is also the guest editor of the January-February 2012 issue of Ministry Today about social transformation.*