

Revolution: Faith in Action, American History & the Super Centennial

Featuring Eric Metaxas

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TRANSCRIPT

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Welcome everyone to the Wisdom and Influence podcast here at Cornerstone University, and I have a very, very special guest with us today. A friend of our university, distinguished President's Fellow, Mr. Eric Metaxas. Eric, thank you for being with us.

Eric Metaxas: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You've been here for two full days. We've got you busy.

Eric Metaxas: I like to be busy.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: But it's been a great busy, I think.

Eric Metaxas: It's good busy.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yes.

Eric Metaxas: It's great busy, yeah.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Thank you for being with us in chapel yesterday and even reading some of your new book, Revolution.

Eric Metaxas: This was the first time I have ever done a public reading of my new book, Revolution, about the American Revolution, was yesterday.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yes. Well, it's a first, and it happened here at Cornerstone University. So we're so grateful you were here and you did that, and it was wonderful. And I will tell you, I've heard nothing but great comments from people in chapel, all the members of the community, students, faculty, staff, and have learned a lot.

Eric Metaxas: And I think they've learned a lot, and I know you've learned a lot through doing this book.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yes.

Eric Metaxas: I always do. When I write a book, I think people sort of assume maybe, oh, Eric's some scholar and he knows this stuff, and now he's gonna write a book about it, and that's not the case. Whenever, almost whenever I've written a book, I have an idea, but I don't know what I'm getting into exactly, and then as I get into it, I learn things. So when people first ask me about this, the new book called Revolution about the American Revolution, they say, "What's your angle?" And I said, "I don't have

an angle. I just wanna tell the story of the American Revolution, because I think most of us don't know the whole story or forgot, and somebody needs to tell it in one book. You know, it's a big book, but just tell the story." I didn't know that as I do the research to tell the story, stuff is gonna come out and you're gonna think, "Wow. I didn't know that. I didn't know that. I need to highlight that. That's dramatic." You know, so there was a lot that I did learn in writing the book, but of course now anybody who reads it will know what I know.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Well, you know, we're here this year at Cornerstone celebrating the Supercentennial, and I think we've talked about this before, but I think it's worth telling the story one more time of how you came with Supercentennial. I think it's beautiful for our listeners to hear God working your heart, God working outside of all those things, and why it is so important, Eric.

Eric Metaxas: This is the kind of thing, you know, you can't make this up. This is just nuts. It's crazy, right? About a year and a half ago, I was thinking, "Oh, it's America's 250th anniversary. I wonder what that's called." And, you know, you look it up, and it's called the Semiquincentennial. Now, I grew up, I remember the bicentennial, and it was exciting. Everybody's going nuts. It's the bicentennial. We have Bicentennial Minute on CBS, and there's bicentennial this, bicentennial hats and T-shirts and bicentennial. We're celebrating our bicentennial. And I thought, "I wish we had something like that." Nobody's gonna say, "Hey, it's our—have you heard? It's our semiquincentennial." You know? And I came up with the idea that we should call it the Supercentennial, that just by fiat, like we're naming it the Gulf of America, we just declare it's the Supercentennial. 250 is the Supercentennial. And when I got the idea, and again, if people know me, they know I'm not making this up, I really believe God gave me the idea for President Trump. Now, I can't prove that. So I said, "Well, if it really is God's idea, and if he wants it to get to President Trump, then God has to open the door for me to share it with President Trump, and President Trump has to like it." I can't make that happen. I mean, I know I can't make that happen. So long story short, back in, I don't know, I think it was September, I find myself in the room with President Trump. I share the idea with him, which was itself astonishing 'cause I don't hang out with the president. And I got to share this idea with him. 20 minutes later, he's giving a speech to Fox News in front of the Religious Liberty Commission, and he refers to me, "Eric's on the commission," blah, blah, blah, blah. "And Eric wants to call the 250th the Supercentennial." He declares it. And I looked at my daughter, I thought, "Are we dreaming this?" Like, is the president—20 minutes ago I shared this idea with him off the top of my head. Here's an idea. He shares it publicly, and he goes, "And I think we're gonna do that. We're gonna call it the Supercentennial." And he goes, "To all my staff in the room, you're around here, we're gonna make that change. We're calling it the Supercentennial." I said, "This is a miracle." This is a miracle. I didn't twist his arm. I didn't even, I didn't even know I'd get to share this with him. So yes, where people are calling it the Supercentennial, I think it's celebratory. It ought to be celebratory. Super, super super. Right? Because semiquincentennial kind of sounds, you know, it's so nerdy that nobody's gonna remember it. But to say this is our—I was alive for America's Supercentennial, the 250th, and I really think this year is going to be a big deal.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: This is a year where we celebrate our founding.

Eric Metaxas: Obviously my book is coming out as part of that, but it is vital that we know who we are, why America came into being. If we understand that, it really changes how we view a lot, and these things have not been taught in our lifetimes.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah.

Eric Metaxas: I mean, it's been hugely neglected. I mean, scandalously neglected. And if you don't teach this and if you don't have Americans who understand this, you lose America. Because America is an idea, and if we don't get that idea and buy into that idea and live into that idea, it goes away. And so I

think this year, this Supercentennial year, is an opportunity for us to refocus on our history, on the heroes of our history, and so obviously a lot of that's in my book, but I think it's gonna be unavoidable wherever you look.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: It's gonna be great. Well, Eric, before we continue, I wanna say thank you. On behalf of the university and our board and everyone, thank you for all that you do and all the writing and speaking to bring this to the forefront. I just wanna say thank you. I was so blessed yesterday being in chapel, and I sat there thinking as you were speaking about Whitefield and the revival and just the profound influence of Christ and the gospel in our founding. I thought, "Lord, thank you that all the students at Cornerstone and faculty and staff could hear this in chapel." So thank you, Eric, for all that you're doing.

Eric Metaxas: Well, listen, I know that this is the assignment the Lord's given me, and it's my privilege to be able to do this. This is a—what a great joy to be doing something that actually matters, you know?

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You said something yesterday, one of our settings that I've been thinking about. It's not just having a Christian worldview, it's also doing it and living it out. Well, this is the heresy of our time. So, yeah, talk to us about that. That's powerful stuff.

Eric Metaxas: This is the heresy of our time. Yeah. And I don't use the word heresy lightly. It's a big deal. I mean, listen, Bonhoeffer wrote about this. Most people, if they know me, they know I wrote a biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Well, what was Bonhoeffer screaming about to the German churches of his day? He was saying to the German churches of his day, "You need to live out your faith. It doesn't matter what's in your head. God doesn't care what's in your head. Are you living it out? He sees your heart. He sees if you say you believe it, but you don't believe it. He knows whether you really believe it, and if you really believe it, you're going to live it out." And he saw that this idea, you know, the good idea that, oh, we're saved by faith. That's Luther. Great. What does that mean? It means you're saved by faith, but it doesn't mean that you're done. You now, if you're, if you actually are saved by faith, you're going to live out your faith in works. And so a lot of evangelicals, they immediately leap to all works is works righteousness. It's like, that's garbage. The Scripture is clear. You're supposed to live out your faith. God has prepared works for us to do. He doesn't translate us to heaven the minute we get saved. He has work for us to do, and He expects us to do it. And so this idea which has really infected the evangelical church is that, oh, it's all about your theology, what you say you believe. And you think, no, you've gotta live it out. You can claim—we just had a scandal with Philip Yancey who said that he betrayed, for eight years, he betrayed everything he believed about marriage. And I thought, first of all, I wanna have grace for everybody, but I thought to myself, "What you just said is not true. You obviously didn't believe this about marriage because you can't betray it for eight years straight. You clearly in your heart of hearts didn't believe it." And so we often talk about, well, I believe this, but if you believe it, this doesn't mean you can't make mistakes, but if you believe something, you're going to live it out. It's gonna be obvious in how you live. And that idea has been so denigrated over time. I mean, imagine Bonhoeffer, you know, this is almost a century ago, was preaching to the German church, "You need to live out your faith." You keep talking about grace. Yeah, but this is cheap grace. If you really believe in the idea of grace, you're gonna take it seriously. You're gonna live self-sacrificially. And that has really weakened the American church to the point that people think, "Well, I don't need to do anything 'cause I'm saved." And you think if you're saved, you're gonna live your whole life to glorify God in every way, and it's gonna be self-sacrificial. And that's the joy. That's what God has called you to do, you know? And so it really is dramatic to me to think that people think, "Well, I believe all the right stuff, or I have a biblical worldview." Okay, great. But there's more. Now you have to live it out, and so that's where we get into—Bonhoeffer used the term faith in action. You gotta put your faith in action. Otherwise, why would you

even claim to have faith? What is your faith? It's some intellectual construct that you pretend that it's so important, but you need to live it out. If it's so important, it'll affect how you live, so.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You've touched on this yesterday and even just now, and as we think about America's Supercentennial, this amazing opportunity that we have to celebrate, to remind ourselves, re-correct ourselves, talk with us about the role of the church today. Especially, you know, I've talked with this with my colleagues. It's disappointing. So many churches you attend or you visit where oftentimes the pastor will say, "I'm not gonna talk about politics today." And there are some burning questions and some burning issues, but they put it under this thing of, called politics, so we can't talk about it, but you have to talk about these significant issues. How does a church shift? How do pastors shift so that people in the pew are having real meaningful gospel-centered conversations about what they should be doing, not just thinking?

Eric Metaxas: Well, think about what they're doing. In other words, you're supposed to be discipling your flock to think Christianly and to live Christianly. So when people say, like, "Oh, we just preach the Bible, we don't do politics," that is a lie. That is a lie. You're not preaching the Bible. If you're preaching the Bible, you're preaching courage in action. You're preaching—I mean, imagine you're in a place where you're in Nigeria, you're in a place where you can lose your life, literally, because of your faith. We need to be preaching heroic faith, faith that lives itself out. So when you go to a church, I mean, only in America we're so lazy and spoiled that we think, "My faith isn't gonna cost me anything. It's just, you know, I got this happy thing with Jesus, and it's not gonna—" That's not biblical. And so here you have a pretending—I mean, listen, in the 1850s, there were pastors that said like, "You know what? We just preach the happy gospel. We don't talk about slavery." If you're not taking a stand on the moral issue of slavery, you're a coward, and worse than coward, you are using religious excuses to be a coward. That's what the Germans did in the 1930s. They said, "Well, we're not gonna talk about—we're not gonna speak against the Nazi Party, or we don't do politics here." And today you have pastors saying, "Well, I'm not gonna talk about, you know, whether the election was stolen or whether—we don't even get into any of that. We don't touch politics 'cause—" And you think we're supposed to care about corruption. We're supposed to care about truth. We're supposed to care. And it affects how I vote. If I vote for that person or I don't vote, wicked policies will be enacted which will affect human beings that the Lord has commanded me to love. And so if I do nothing, I don't vote, I don't even care was the election honest, was the—if I get away from all that stuff because I pretend like, well, I'm just doing this, the Christian thing, I'm not talking about that, you're misunderstanding the whole Christian project. God calls us to bless the world. You bless the world. If you live in a free country and you, and people have died so that you can vote and so you can have a voice, when you see something wrong, you speak up, whatever. If you live in a free country like that and you don't use your voice, you know, silence in the face of evil is itself evil. You're pretending that you have this religious carve out. You're pretending like, well, I'm gonna sit on the fence. I don't wanna take sides. It's no different saying, "I don't wanna take sides on the slavery issue." That today we would say that's cowardice. That's despicable. You had the ability to influence people on one of the most important moral issues of the day. Today there are many of these kinds of issues—the trans lunacy, killing babies in the womb. You have an obligation in a loving way to share this with your flock and to let them know this is Christianity, is living out God's mandate. It was Christians who abolished the slave trade. It was Christians who led that battle. I mean, it was Christians who rebelled against King George and said, "We will not bow the knee to these things. We think these things are wrong. We're gonna stand up to it." We have an obligation to do that. So if you're going to a church that pretends that they don't need to get involved in this stuff, I always say to people, "Get out of that church." I mean, it's what led me to write my book, Letter to the American Church, because I thought there's so many people that I know, they sort of think this is okay to turn aside from these issues. Children were being mutilated. Babies are being killed in the womb. There's all kinds of things

happening, and you're saying, "Well, it doesn't concern me." And it's like saying, "Well, I, you know, yeah, maybe I don't believe in slavery, but I'm not gonna talk about that publicly." If you don't say anything about that, you know, God will hold you accountable for being silent when this is happening. And so there's this lie that we're not supposed to be political has really, really dramatically infiltrated the church so that if you wanna know why things are as bad as they are in America, it is because of that theology, which is heretical. It's wrong. It's not biblical theology, but it has really infected the American Church just as it infected the German Church in the run-up to Hitler. It's devastating. When the Church is not the Church, it devastates the culture.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: And one of the things, you know, when I hear pastors or anyone speak about, "What's, it's political, so I'm not gonna speak about it," it's almost as if they're saying, "We can't really know what's right or wrong here," right?

Eric Metaxas: That's what they are saying. "So we're not gonna talk about it." They're sending the message.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: And I think, how can you as a Christian say such a thing? How can Christian universities say this? So a few months back, a Christian university out west banned pro-life student groups on campus because they said the pro-life issue is a political issue.

Eric Metaxas: How—a Christian university.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: How can you say that?

Eric Metaxas: Yeah.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: So it's become—doubt, skepticism has become so fashionable, not just in universities or Christian universities, in churches.

Eric Metaxas: Yeah.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: And I'm shocked by that when I think Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and the clarity that we're given.

Eric Metaxas: I tell people to run from those churches. And I have said publicly many, many times, "If you're going to a church like that, you're tithing God's money to a church like that, you're guilty." And you need to be aware, God is not fooled by the fig leaf of your claims or whatever. He sees how you live. He sees what you do. And you have a responsibility that there are people whose lives will be affected. I mean, you know, it's one thing to say this in 1975 or even 1985, to say, like, "Well, both parties," blah, blah, blah. You know, you could say that, and it was not really all that wrong. I mean, if you vote for, you know, Bob Dole, if you vote for—the point is that over time it has gotten worse and worse and worse, so you're now dealing with open cultural Marxism, which is anti-God. It's not pro-God but different on some issues. It is anti-God. It's a secular, anti-American, anti-biblical worldview that the left has adopted and has taken over the Democratic Party. And so if you don't know that, then you ask, "Well, what's the difference?" The difference is very dramatic. And of course, this is not to say that the Republicans are great. Many Republicans are part of the problem, but the point is that you have to care about who we elect for president, what judges will they appoint, who will be in their cabinet, who will have a voice. What we saw under the last administration was devastating, devastating to people of faith, to pro-life people. And how many Christians said, "I'm not gonna vote," or, "It doesn't matter." Shame on you. It matters. It matters. It matters dramatically. And, you know, if you're going to a church, as I say, that pretends that it doesn't matter, that would be no different than going to a church in 1850 that says, "You know, the slavery issue, that's not a Gospel issue." And you say that's not a gospel issue? What gospel are you preaching? Or in Germany, that we're not gonna speak against the Nazis. Are you aware what the

Nazis did? Are you aware what the Nazis did because the churches didn't stand up to this? Are you aware of that? So I mean, it's why I wrote my book *Letter to the American Church*, but it's something that I'll probably never cease talking about because there's always this kind of lie that's so tempting to say, "Oh, yeah, I can just be neutral."

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You can't be neutral. One of these amazing declarations from our president, President Trump, was that in May there'll be a massive prayer event to rededicate the nation to God, and I thought, "This is incredible."

Eric Metaxas: Oh, you're saying Kamala Harris wouldn't have done that? Oh, come on. Oh, come on. Really?

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: It thrilled me to no end to see that, because as you've spoken about, I mean, and please share with us with your book *Revolution*, the incredible grounding of God and the scriptures for this country. And to have the president now say that and calling the whole nation, whether people like it or not, just the proclamation, I think it's so powerful.

Eric Metaxas: No, no, it's—and I'm gonna be there, and I'll probably be involved, and I have to say that when I heard that, I was astonished. I thought, "This is what we voted for." And because to dedicate, to rededicate the nation to God, our nation was dedicated to God. The founders put out proclamation after proclamation. The Continental Congress, starting in 1774, over and over through the war, they put out one proclamation after the other, proclaiming a day of fasting and praying. They basically said, "If we're not on God's side, we don't wanna win. We wanna be on God's side. We want the Lord to be with us. We wanna humble ourselves. We don't wanna do this if this is not God's idea." And they said it over and over. It was a covenant theology, that we're looking to the Lord directly, and that is who we are as a nation. It is what has made us thrive as a nation, our fidelity to God or at least our desire to be faithful to God. And so the fact that this president has declared that for May 17th, I thought it's amazing 'cause in a way that's the subtext of my book *Revolution*, is that this is what made America come into being. And now 250 years later, we are rededicating the nation to God. And I didn't plan this, but May 17th is the day that my book comes out.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: That's great.

Eric Metaxas: That's the exact day that my book comes out. So I'll be in DC launching my book in one way or another on that day, and then probably being at the National Mall. But this is a sacred prophetic act, for a president to declare we're rededicating the nation to God.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: It is, yeah. Things will happen as a result of this. This is a major thing. It happens in the spiritual realm when you make a declaration like this. God hears this. God sees and hears this.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You said something yesterday. I've been thinking since you said it and it was beautiful. Oftentimes you in chapel and a follow-up event about the things you've discovered in your book as you wrote your book and you said, "These are facts. These are facts." These are facts. So I'm mindful of the Enlightenment thinker called Voltaire who'd said, "History is a bag of tricks we play on the dead." And how many academic historians have perhaps led us down this dark path of saying that there—about the revolution, right? It wasn't Christian. God was not at the center. It's stuff that we've made up. You've uncovered a treasure trove of material that say, "No, you're wrong. These are actual facts."

Eric Metaxas: Oh, no. This is—it's funny because the late great Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, I have the privilege of, I, privilege of meeting him, and I know his daughter. He once famously said, "You're entitled to your own opinions, but you're not entitled to your own facts." Facts are facts. Right?

And John Adams, in his defense of the soldiers in the Boston Massacre, he said, "Facts are—" now I'm gonna forget it. This is the great quote that I can't remember. "Facts are stubborn things," I think he said. But the point is you have to be based in reality. And it doesn't matter what you like or don't like. The question is what are the facts? And then you can decide what the facts are. But there are people who simply don't like the idea that God is central to our founding, that God is central to the American project. They just don't like that, so what do they do? They pretend like, "Oh, well, it was the Enlightenment. It was the—" I've now done the research. It's like, ladies and gentlemen, it was not the Enlightenment. It was Christian faith. It was Puritan Reformation-based faith that led, in the run-up especially to the revolution in Boston. That was all Reformation Puritan theology. There was a famous preacher in Boston, Jonathan Mayhew, who preached a sermon in 1750, just like what we were talking about 10 minutes ago, rebuking this idea of Romans 13 means we don't need to stand against wicked government, that we go—whatever the government says, we go along with it. In 1750, he preached a sermon on this issue saying that if the government is telling you to do the wrong thing, you have an obligation to dissent, to resist. Our fidelity is to God alone. And that sermon, John Adams said, was read by everyone. It was published and it was read by everyone, so that's 1750. So by the time you get to the 1760s and the Stamp Act and all of this stuff, the Bostonians were steeped in what does it mean to be a Christian? How does that affect my view of politics, my view of the king, my view of my role as a subject? They understood all of this stuff, and so this is the base of it and it's almost endless that that culture was so dramatically Christian, that even those who weren't that Christian were Christian, you know? That's not escapable. Those are the facts. And I mean, my book is not about that, but it's just inescapable. When you read the story, you think, "How come I didn't learn this in school? This is very interesting. I had no idea that this was the case." And I wrote about it in my book, *If You Can Keep It*, which is a much shorter book than my *Revolution* book. But it's simply not avoidable, so if you don't like it, that's one thing, but let's look at the facts, that it was Christian faith that led to the creation of the United States of America. It was Christian faith that led to the abolition of slavery. Those are just facts. Now, if you don't like it, we can talk, but to pretend that it was an Enlightenment project, no, it was not an Enlightenment project. The Enlightenment, Enlightenment thinkers were involved, but—and then related to this, you constantly hear, and this is now I realize nonsense, that, oh, the founders were all deists. Nonsense. Or secret Freemasons or something, you know. Well, no, they may have been. That's, you know, in some ways, that part is complicated, but the idea that they were deists is nonsense. George Washington over and over and over again does not write or speak like a deist at all. In fact, he was involved in the 1760s in Virginia on a commission to push deism out. He was actually on this commission. But when you hear him talk, I mean, in his first inaugural, I think more than a third of the entire speech is talking about God. I mean, it's startling, and he talks about a God who operates in history, who sees what we do and responds to what we do. That's not a deist clockmaker God. There are innumerable cases of this. So when people say that, they're basically lying that, oh, they were all deists—that's simply not true. And but you have respected historians, even like Joseph Ellis, who says, "Well, Washington was not a typical Christian. He was a deist." And you hear Ken Burns—this is simply not true. And again, if I hadn't now done the research, I would say, "Well, I guess it's complicated." That's not complicated. That part is not complicated. Washington was a very serious Christian. Martha Washington and George Washington's mother were very serious Christians. It's just not deniable. And the idea that people keep doing that, keep pretending that, you know, Thomas Jefferson was central in independence, he actually was very peripheral to our independence. He was tasked with writing the words to the Declaration of Independence, but most of that was, you know, it's kinda like they gave him everything to write, and then he put it in his own words. And Adams forced him to do the first draft 'cause he said, "I know that he will—he's capable of some wonderful felicity of phrasing," or something like that, that the way he writes, he'll put it in a way, you know, which of course he did. But the idea that Jefferson, because he wrote that draft, was responsible for independence or one of the main thinkers—that's simply not true.

And I think we have to give the credit where it's due, mostly to John Adams in that case. But there are people that they just, you know, they say, "I don't like that Christian stuff, so we're gonna focus on Jefferson as though—"

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: The only one, right. And he was virtually uninvolved in, you know—I mean, anyway, it's just facts are facts, and you really, you have to be honest. Eric, you mentioned yesterday something about frailty. You know, If You Can Keep It in some way speaks about, we'll see if you can do this, but it also speaks about the frailty of a country. And you also spoke yesterday about the incredible moral character of George Washington. And I thought we can talk about the frailty of human character, the frailty of the national character. I'm mindful of Proverbs 4, where the writer tells us, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it flow the issues of life." How frail we are as people, how frail a new country is. As you think about the Supercentennial, what would you want our listeners to know about the frailty of the national character and what we need to do to keep it with all diligence?

Eric Metaxas: Well, I'll state it dramatically to begin with. We all deserve to live as slaves. God, in His Mercy, has given us the ability to govern ourselves and to be free. And that comes with a price, but it's God's will that we pay that price and that we live as free citizens governed by God, governing ourselves, looking to God. The founders were really reestablishing the Sinai Covenant. They wanted to go back to a time when people were not governed by a king, but they looked directly to God. So that's the Sinai Covenant, 1400 BC. I mean, it's unbelievable. And that idea goes away effectively forever until 1776. You don't really get people governing themselves. And it's amazing to me that that is just the normal way that human beings exist is not to be free. To be free, you need God. You need people who look to God, and who are willing to govern themselves and pay the price of what does it mean to be free and to govern ourselves? That is fragile, it is rare, and we don't deserve it, but God says, "But if you want it, it's my will that you have it, but you have to live it. You have to pay that price." And the fragility of it, I mean, it's become really clear in the last 50 years that we've been drifting in this secular direction. And of course, if you drift in a secular direction, government just gets bigger and bigger because government begins to replace God because you're not looking to God, so you're gonna have to look to government. That's the short way of putting it. And that's been happening so that suddenly in just the last few years, we've seen astonishingly crazy things that you thought could never happen in America, and that takes decades to creep in. And only because it's gotten this bad that have a lot of people woken up and said, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I'm reality-based. I don't think a man can become a woman, and I don't care what you say. We all know that a man can't become a woman. You're telling me now I have to accept this, you know, to be accepted socially or culturally, I have to spout these things that I know are not true." I mean, that's one example. Or I have to suddenly start saying that, "Well, socialism's not so bad, or communism is a—" Have we forgotten the basics? I mean, this is basic stuff. Anybody whose family comes from a communist world, talking to you, you're talking to me, we know. Okay? Anybody who's come from that world thinks like, "Are you kidding me?" I would do anything to avoid that. My mother escaped East Germany, which was taken over by Stalin, right? East Germany, she was 17 years old. I talk to her every day. She's 91 years old. She escaped as a 17-year-old because it was unbearable. And most of our relatives stayed behind, and they lived under that until 1991. They lived under that oppressive, horrible, cynical system. And so cynical people like Voltaire, these are cynical people who, you know, their life is okay, so they don't really care, and they can make these cynical statements. But people would do anything to live free. And, you know, we're only living at a time now where I think a lot of people have woken up. Things got so bad that they said, "Okay, I guess I need to pay attention." Because of COVID, you know, I saw what my kids were learning in school, and I thought, "Are you kidding me? I wasn't paying attention to this, and I'm hearing this lunacy. I need to homeschool them, or I need to get them a—" A lot of people have been waking up, so great things are happening, I think because things got so bad that some people finally woke up.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah, and it's my hope, and I know yours as well, that this year people really, really wake up. You think about Tim Kaine, what he said, right?

Eric Metaxas: Listen, yeah. Or you think about the politician speaking about the warm embrace of socialism. Okay. Right? Tim Kaine, for a lot of people listening to this, they have blissfully forgotten who's Tim Kaine. Tim Kaine was chosen by Hillary Clinton as her running mate in 2016. And he recently said, this is a United States senator who was recently mocking Ted Cruz and saying, "Oh, you think our rights come from God?" And you almost think like, that's like somebody saying, "Oh, you think one plus one equals two?" And he accuses it of being like Iran. And I thought, well, but that's the point, is like these people don't have the beginning of an understanding of America and liberty. And of course, our rights come from God. Have you ever heard of John Locke? You're a US senator. You don't understand that our rights come from God? That's why they're sacred and inalienable. It's in an obscure document called the Declaration of Independence. Has Tim Kaine read that? Like, the fact that we have US senators not just that ignorant, but publicly proclaiming their ignorance of the most basic facts, and they can't tell the difference between free America and a theocracy like Iran, or a theocracy like North Korea, where you're told, if you believe, you'll be imprisoned. That's a different type of theocracy. It's an atheist theocracy, right? It's an atheocracy. It is evil, and we are free. And in America, people have religious liberty, but people like Tim Kaine, they're not interested. But this is, this is for the whole world of leftists. They think they understand this, but every now and again, when they speak, you realize that they don't, they don't have the beginning of a clue of what everybody used to know. I mean, any Democrat, you know, in 1960 knew all this stuff. We all were on the same page.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Right. And we are now living in a day where, you know, the level of ignorance, actually, it's frightening because if enough people don't know this, you lose the country, which is why we've almost lost the country. You know, one of the beautiful things about this year as well in our Supercentennial is the opportunity we have to speak about American exceptionalism, the grandeur of America. And I love the fact that your book is not *The American Revolution*. You mentioned this tidbit yesterday, which I thought was wonderful—just *Revolution*. And you spoke so eloquently about how exceptional the revolution was, how exceptional the country is. So would you share with our listeners, just a tidbit of that, of the exceptionalism of our founding, of our beginning, of our principles, of who we are now, so that we don't forget or remind ourselves this year and moving forward?

Eric Metaxas: Well, I say in the introduction to my book, which I read yesterday publicly here at Cornerstone, I state that our way of governing that began in 1776 is unlike anything in the history of the world. That's a fact. And so when people talk about, oh, the American Revolution or the French Revolution, you think, wait a minute. There's only been one real revolution. That's the American Revolution. That's the revolution. The French Revolution is a dark joke. It was a secular, misguided—you know, a lot of good people got sucked into thinking like, "Oh, we can have freedom without God." Actually, you can't, and actually they didn't succeed. Or the Bolshevik Soviet Revolution, which is a demonic parody of a revolution. It is wickedness purporting to be for the people, but then crushing the people. So our revolution is the only real revolution in human history, political revolution, and it comes out of the Enlightenment, which was another kind of revolution. This is not deniable. This is just, these are the facts. Now, it doesn't mean that Catholics or Muslims or atheists or whatever, you know, can flourish in America. But the ideology was Reformation Puritan ideology that led to our founding. And in terms of exceptionalism, you always have to say, when we refer to American exceptionalism, we don't mean Americans are exceptional. Americans are the same as anybody or—we're all human beings, sinners. But the ideas of America that we have the privilege to live under, we don't deserve it. We get this gift that we get to live in a government where we can govern ourselves. That is an exceptional idea in the history of the world. And I think we've all been led to believe like, well, we're not so special. There

are other wonderful countries that—and you think, well, first of all, we have led the way in this, and then all of these other countries that, you know, sort of have what we have, don't have what we have. They—when push comes to shove, you say the wrong thing in England today, you say the wrong thing in Germany, you can go to jail for saying the wrong thing. How is that different from China? I mean, you do not have freedom. You don't have freedom of speech. JD Vance gave a beautiful speech, I don't know, a year and a half ago in Munich. He lays this out to our so-called NATO allies and says like, "We used to be on the same page after the war." But you have drifted dramatically. And how can we be allies completely with people that are—I mean, we're going to be allies with people with whom we disagree, but let's stop pretending we're all on the same page when it comes to liberty, and what's going on in Europe right now is utterly scandalous. It is secular. The EU Constitution is totally secular. What a joke that is. How do you even define Europe apart from Christendom? Christendom was Europe. Europe was Christendom, and they have drifted so far in the secular direction that in many ways we're not their ideological allies anymore. We wish they would come back. But they have really lost their way. And so American exceptionalism simply means that we have a system of government which is beautiful and true and real, and the first president not to say that we're exceptional was Barack Obama. He says, "Oh, I think we're except—" And again, what's embarrassing to me, it shows his ignorance, that he doesn't even understand what American exceptionalism is. He thinks American exceptionalism is we're awesome. No. American exceptionalism means that we have a system of government that no one else has around the world. We wish everyone would have it. It's not—we didn't patent it, you know? We're not gonna charge you money to be free, but we're the only country that has had it in the way that we've had it. And he said something like, "Yeah, we're, I guess we think we're exceptional, you know, just like the Greeks think they're exceptional and the—" And you think, you're missing the point. We're not talking about national pride. We should be proud to be Americans, just as Greeks should be proud to be Greek, and I'm proud to be the descendant of Greek—you know, we have that kind of pride which is healthy and beautiful, but American exceptionalism is something else. Here we're talking about facts. This is not just like, you know, we're the guys that love vanilla ice cream. No, this is something that people have died for this way of governing ourselves. And because of that, America didn't just come into being, but it has flourished dramatically, you know? We put the 12 men on the moon and brought them home. We have done things in history that the whole world is looking at us, just like John Winthrop, you know, in 1630. He says, "We wanna be like a city set on a hill." He's quoting Jesus. We want everybody to look at us and say, "Whatever they have, we want that. What is that?" And he knew, John Winthrop did, that if people looked to what they had in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the answer would be robust Christian faith. We have Christian faith here, and that's why we're flourishing, and that's what's beautiful. And that's basically what happened in the United States of America when we became a country. Over time, more and more people look at us and they go, "What do they have? That's amazing there. I wanna go there. Can I go there?" My parents said, "Can I go there?" They were able to come here and become citizens. And why? Because we have something beautiful. But it is incumbent on us to understand what that is, and to do everything we can to make sure that it lives on. And so I really do believe that this Supercentennial year is like a reset for America, and that President Trump's declaration that on May 17th we're gonna rededicate the nation to God, there's something very special happening.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah. This is not just a political decision, that this is a God thing. Eric, thank you for being here. Thank you for all you do for the Lord, for our country, and thank you for being a part of Cornerstone. We greatly appreciate it, Eric. Thank you so much.

Eric Metaxas: My privilege. Thank you.

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