

The Christian's Influence in the Culture War

Intro: Perhaps there has never been a time in American society when people were more polarized in their thinking about moral matters and that polarization now has become manifest in the political process where issues of moral concern are being addressed by those running for office.

As Christians in America we have the awesome privilege of selecting those who govern us. Peter wrote, *“Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond slaves of God. (1 Pet. 2:16).* This week, as at all other times, Christians may “use their freedom as bond-slaves of God” to fashion a civil government in keeping with God’s original purposes.

What is the function of civil government?

Paul explained that it was necessary for Christians to honor governmental officials, obey the laws of the land, and pay taxes because civil government is God’s institution (Rom. 13:1-7). His purpose in ordaining it is clearly stated:

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil” (v. 3-4).

When we participate in the choosing of governmental officials, you might say we are choosing a “minister of God”! What kind of minister should we choose?

God intended that civil government recognize His authority and the concepts of good and evil—to encourage those who do right and punish those who do wrong.

It was His intention that legislation and law-enforcement be rooted in the eternal moral principles of His character and word. An ideal theocratic state seems hardly possible in a country of such diversity. However it is not unreasonable to hope that the leavening influence of God’s word would affect the majority of our citizens so as to secure a country founded upon the rule of moral law and that provides the greatest freedom for spiritual life and work.

Understanding God’s purpose for civil government will enable us to make better informed choices about those who make our laws and those whose job it is to execute them.

Participating in the process

It is interesting to notice how politicians and participants in public debate almost always appeal ultimately to what is “right” and “wrong” to determine what policies should be adopted. Thus, I offer these suggestions for all of us as we listen to the political debate and make our choices.

Try to avoid a “band wagon” mentality and think independently, looking beyond the persuasive rhetoric of political spin.

Be resistance to the tendency to have a blind adherence to a political party.

Listen carefully to each candidate for office and what he/she has to say about the issues that may face our society.

Try to develop a sense of the core beliefs and practices of the person; for these will ultimately affect his policy decisions.

Evaluate each candidate on the basis of a broad spectrum of issues of moral significance, determining which would best help create the divinely-purposed functions of government.

Some current social issues about which God has also spoken

It is truly amazing to see how much of the political debate centers around issues of Biblical significance and upon which the Bible comments.

Domestic issues

Governmental acknowledgement of God

The wicked will return to Sheol, even all the nations who forget God. (Psalm 9:17)

Importance of godly role models in government, leaders who respect God’s word.

“Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. “And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left; in order that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel. (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

Governmental policy toward citizens

Social justice

Vindicate the weak and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked. (Psalm 82:3-4)

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

Crime

“Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. (Genesis 9:6)

Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men

among them are given fully to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

Civil liberties

Respect for all human life

*Our society debates a number of issues related to the power of man over human life. A woman's right to choose, stem cell research on human embryos, euthanasia
Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. (Genesis 9:6)*

Definition of marriage

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

Free exercise of religious faith

*Then He *said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21)
But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)*

Governmental policy toward land

Environmental issues

And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28)

Animal "rights"

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:4-5)

Foreign policy

The war question

The Scriptures suggest in principle the need to be peacemakers.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (Matthew 5:9)

However it also affirms the right of a person or nation to defend itself against evil doers. For example the Scriptures commend the example of Abraham in his response to wicked marauders who invaded cities of the plain and took captive his nephew Lot. Abraham took a contingency of soldiers and fought against them, rescuing his nephew.

Melchizedek, priest of God, met him with words of approval and blessings.

*And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand."
(Genesis 14:19-20)*

Attitudes toward other nations and aliens of other nations.

Appeal to compassionate treatment of sojourners

'When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. 'The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

Obligation of sojourners to honor the laws of the land

"Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him. (Deuteronomy 1:16)

Conclusion: We should not neglect to use what power we have as citizens to create government that acknowledges the authority of the one who ordained it! God is not a Republican or a Democrat; but He is the moral ruler of the universe and He controls the destiny of the nations based on their regard for Him and His law.

Sometimes Christians, in my opinion, place too much emphasis upon political power as a means of securing a better society. Instead I still believe the greatest thing we can do is proclaim God's word to everyone who will listen and to bring men to bow the knee to Almighty God.