

# *Christians and Political Action*

*“Government is a dangerous servant and a fearful master.”*

*--George Washington*

- I. The Bible and Politics
  - A. Some secular Americans believe that the Bible should have no bearing upon national politics. Citing the alleged doctrine of “separation of church and state,” some propose to divorce all religious expression from the political and public arena. In addition, a small but growing number of secularists are pushing for the elimination of Christian influence from American politics by seeking to curtail the civil rights of conservative believers.
  - B. The Bible teaches, however, that God is the originator of human government. Following the worldwide flood, God instituted an embryonic government by granting the power of capital punishment to a body politic (Gen. 9). The New Testament echoes this sentiment in Romans 13.
  - C. In the grand scheme of things, God is above government. The Bible presents principles of good government and warns about the scourge of evil government. For the Christian believer, the final authority is always God. When government is at odds with God, the believer is bound to obey the higher authority—God (Acts 5:29).
  - D. Christian columnist Cal Thomas has wisely stated that “salvation and the Saviour will not come to us on Air Force One.” In other words, political figures are not the ultimate answer to our nation’s woes. An over emphasis upon political solutions is NOT Biblical. However, Christians have a duty to diffuse a godly influence in all spheres of life—including politics.
- II. Basic Biblical Principles Relating to Human Government (“the State”)
  - A. God is sovereign over the whole world and all of its spheres and kingdoms.
    - 1. God’s authority does not extend merely to the church.
    - 2. While the church is a separate institution from the state, God has ordained each to function within certain realms of human existence.
    - 3. God’s principles and standards apply to the secular state even if that state refuses to acknowledge Him.
    - 4. Holland’s greatest theologian and eventual prime minister Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) stated,

In the total expanse of human life there is not a single *square inch* of which the Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare, “That is mine!”
  - B. The ultimate source of all authority is not the state, nor even the people—the ultimate source of all authority is God Himself.

1. Both John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserted that the people give to the state, in a social contract, all of their rights. This view is not Biblical.
  2. Historically, the seeds of totalitarianism exist wherever an all-powerful state assumes the right to govern without acknowledging a higher source and standard for that right.
  3. The state is an agency of God's common grace by which He restrains wickedness and punishes evil doers (Romans 13).
- C. The state is limited in its authority and power.
1. The state does not encompass all spheres of life. Areas such as family, the church, science, and education should be independent of state control unless criminality within these spheres requires intervention.
  2. In the Biblical model, the state and its powers are dramatically limited from the increasingly intrusive contemporary American model. Please note that the United States Constitution defines the powers of the state far more narrowly and Biblically than the current practice.
  3. Dr. D. James Kennedy succinctly summarizes the Christian's responsibility to the authority of the state:

...if anyone in any sphere of activity oversteps his authority, the Christian is bound to disobey. If the state commands the Christian to do that which is contrary to the clear teaching of God's Word, it is incumbent that he obey God and not man. There are and have been states that have forbidden Christians to pray and have forbidden believers to worship God and that to this day forbid believers to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ and to proclaim the gospel to others (China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Saudi Arabia all fit this criterion.) In these and all other clear instances where the state is endeavoring to countermand the commandments of God, the Christian is bound to obey God rather than men because the state is limited in its authority.

### III. Church and State Relationships

- A. In the Dark Ages, the Roman Catholic Church taught that the state was under the authority of the church. In the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Roman Church actually achieved that position in Europe—with historically disastrous results.
- B. The Protestant Reformers promoted a model (largely achieved through allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures) of the church being the state and the state being the church. By blurring the distinctions of these separate institutions, the Reformers established a totalitarianism rivaling that of modern Islamic states.
- C. Both Fascism and Communism placed the church beneath the state, strangling the influence of the church while exalting humanism.
- D. The Biblical model places the church beside the state as two separate institutions with authority limited to their separate spheres. For both the ultimate authority is God.