

Christians and Politics

Government, a Reflection of Culture – or – Culture, a Reflection of Government?

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Dear Friend

The word *myth* is defined by *Webster's Dictionary* this way: “A real or fictional story that appeals to the consciousness of a people by embodying its cultural ideals or by giving expression to commonly felt emotions.” That definition expresses exactly what has happened to the American church in regards to politics.

An emotional, heartfelt desire to see our Christian ideals represented in government has led to the creation of a myth. That myth says this: Christians will lose their religious freedoms unless they become actively involved in the political system. But is that true?

In the 1970s and 80s, this philosophy caused the largest grassroots movement of evangelical Christians into the political process that we have ever seen. That movement helped elect a conservative president to the White House twenty of the last twenty-eight years, and it subsequently changed the makeup of the Supreme Court.

While these are good results, it is easy to see that politics have not solved our real problems. At best, many social ills were stayed off a little longer. Abortion still claims the lives of millions of innocent children every year, and the moral fabric of America appears to be unravelling at an alarming rate.

Does this mean we are doomed? It does if we believe the government can do what only the church has been called to do. Our form of government was never intended to change society; it is incapable of producing morality through legislation. It may help restrain immorality, but only if the church has established a moral foundation in the hearts of the men and women who govern.

As we have seen through judicial activism, judges with great legal power and no moral character are making judgements contrary to any reasonable interpretation of the law. They are calling good evil and evil good (Is. 5:20), often making the victims feel guilty while creating sympathy for the perpetrators.

John Adams, the second president of the United States, wrote in 1789, “*Our Constitution was designed only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of*

any other ... Free government rests upon public and private morality.” It is not our government that has failed; it’s the church that has failed to be the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13).

Read what Dr. Jedediah Morse said in 1799: *“In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation, either through unbelief, or the corruption of its doctrines, or the neglect of its institutions; in the same proportion will the people of that nation recede from the blessings of genuine freedom ... Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and the blessings which flow from them, must fall with them.”* He was saying that Christianity, not government, is the driving force behind true freedom.

When World War II brought America back to her knees, a revival broke out that is still referred to as the era of the highest church attendance in recent history. A time of repentance and seeking God brought peace and a period of great prosperity. The result of those good times was a church that was lulled to sleep. And while it was sleeping, a new generation, the ‘baby boomer’, became obsessed with materialism and freedom from moral constraint.

How did the church react? In variety of ways, some of which were very good. People began seeking the Lord, and the Lord answered through what is often called *The Jesus People Movement, The Charismatic Movement, The Word of Faith Movement, The Lay Witness Renewal*, etc. These revivals were not spearheaded by any individual, yet they had worldwide impact. Truly, these were mighty moves of God’s Spirit.

Yet, as a whole, the church responded by promoting political involvement as the answer to society’s woes. Make no mistake – Christians who live in a country that provides them the freedom to govern through voting or holding political office have a responsibility to participate. However, for many, politics has not been a weapon against the moral decline; it has been the only weapon.

Calvin Coolidge, the thirtieth president of the United States, declared, *“The foundations of our society and our government rest so much on the teachings of the Bible that it would be difficult to support them [the foundations of society] if faith in these teachings would cease to be practically universal in our country”* (brackets mine).

Our society isn’t sick because of the government; it’s sick because the church has not made faith in the teaching of the Bible ‘practically universal in our country’. Once we cease to win the hearts of men, it is inevitable that ungodly men will make their way into leadership and take the country with them.

If we change people’s hearts with the Gospel, the people will change government with their votes. Government merely reflects what people believe in their hearts; it does nothing to form those beliefs. William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, wrote in the early 1700s, *“Government seems to me to be a part of religion itself ... Let men be good, and the government cannot be bad.”*

It’s good to pursue legal action and political means to right wrongs. But the power of the Gospel has more power to change the hearts of men than all the military might and legislative bodies of any government. Billy Graham understands this. When asked to run for president in the 1950s, he responded by saying he would not lower himself to that position. He was not attempting to diminish the office of the president; he was elevating the office of a minister of the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul lived in one of the most immoral and politically corrupt societies that the world has ever known. Yet he advocated no political action. Instead he told the Christians to submit to government (Rom. 13) and pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-4). He effected change in society one heart at a time. In a short period of time, Christianity became the official religion of the empire that once threw its followers to the lions.

Elias Boudinot, president of the Continental Congress in 1783, and later a congressman from New Jersey who served as president of the American Bible Society, said, ***“The moral character of a people once degenerate, their political character must soon follow.”***

There is a civil war going on in America today, but it is not political. Sure, the courtrooms and congressional halls are the battlegrounds, but the war itself is between light and dark, the truth of the Gospel and the lies of the devil. It’s between the people of God and the children of the devil.

In this war, the enemy tries to hide his true objectives behind the mask of individual rights and personal liberties. But make no mistake – the real goal is the elimination of God and His influence from our society so that people can indulge in their carnal lifestyles without conviction or guilt.

The way to win this war and save the political character of this nation is to use the Gospel to change the moral character of its people. Our founding fathers understood that. The quotation below shows that they weren’t looking to government to change their society, but to safeguard the values that already existed.

“Nothing can be politically right, that is morally wrong.”

Benjamin Rush, 1786

The church needs to refocus its energies back to the great commission that our Lord Jesus Christ gave us:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Approximately 30 percent of Americans say they are born again. If each one, in the next four years, would lead just one other person to the true faith, over 60 percent of the population would be born again by the time we once again face a presidential election. If that happened, then there really would be change.

To help you change someone’s heart, Don Krow, a CBC instructor and Bible teacher, and I have created a course called *Discipleship Evangelism: Condensed Version*. It is a spiral-bound book with forty-eight easy-to-understand-and-use lessons on the basics of Christianity.

It makes the discipleship of a friend or loved one easy. If you can read, you can use this tool to help change someone’s life. Included with the book is a CD-ROM that allows you to reproduce and distribute copies of the material contained in the book to those you are discipling. We are seeing this used to change lives around the world.

In Uganda last year, a graduate of CBC used this very tool to disciple over 800 pastors. He read it word for word from the text and then followed the teacher's study guide. After hearing the lesson, the pastors went back to their churches and taught their congregations the same lesson. This year, over 2,000 native pastors are participating. They are being taught by last year's graduates, and all together they represent over 200,000 people in their congregations.

It's being used effectively in America as well. Many use it for their Bible studies, home groups, Sunday schools, and one-on-one with friends and family. No matter whom God places on your heart to reach, this tool will help you change their life. Jesus never told us to make converts; He told us to make disciples.

To order, go to our website at www.awme.net, call our Helpline on +44(0)1922 473300 or send the enclosed response form to the address below. Remember, a CD-ROM is included.

God bless you,

Andrew and Jamie

P.S. I also have a single teaching in CD/Tape format called 'Christians and Politics'. It is my gift to you when you order the *Discipleship Evangelism: Condensed Version* teaching course. Or you may order the teaching 'Christians and Politics' separately for a price of £3 or more.

