

Many good Christians hold, "The government cannot legislate morality." Let's study. Ancient Israel, as well as surrounding nations were consistently promised political stability and might if their religion and morality were godly, and warned of destruction if evil reigned (Judg. 2:11-23; 2 Sam. 7:12-14; 2 Chron. 7:14; Prov. 14:34; Isa. 1:4, 16-17; 3:15-26; 10:6; 13:9, 11; 28:3-8; 30:8-17; Jer. 3:1-16; 4:1, 13-18; 5:26-31; 6:14-15; 7:28-34; 8:11-12; 14:7, 11-12; 15:1-6; 19:4-9; 22:1-5; 25:15-38; 51:6-8; Lam. 4:22; Ezek. 7:3-4, 23-27; 8:17-18; 14:12-19; 16:23-30; 22:1-16; 23:36-49; Hos. 4:1-6; 10:13-15; Joel 2:13-17; 3:1-3; Amos 1:3-2:5; 4:1-3, 11-12; 5:24; 6:1-8; Jonah 3:1-10; Nah. 3:3-7; Hab. 2:12-14). The economic and final destruction of Revelation's Babylon was due to their immoral whoredom (18:1-8). God instituted government to be "an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (Rom. 13:4; cf. 1 Pet. 2:14). Though some governments "call evil good and good evil" (Isa. 5:20), they have, as disobedient individuals, shirked their God-given responsibility. The Bible asserts that morality is inextricably tied to government; sensible observation also so attests.

Laws and enforcement agencies are concerned with murder, drunkenness, rape (both forcible and statutory), domestic disputes, polygamy, civil unions of homosexuals (i.e. marriage issues), thievery, extortion, and even disturbing of the peace (cf. revelries, Gal. 5:21). That list sounds like the lists of sins scattered throughout the New Testament (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Rom. 1:28-32). If a government does not legislate morality, what does it do?

What could be the origin of the phrase, "The government cannot legislate morality"? Could it be an attempt to escape Christian responsibility to connect moral issues with voting patterns? Do some want to focus so much on a good economy that they seek sound-byte justification for turning a blind eye to candidates who stand for such social evils as abortion? Or, maybe it is just an innocent observation of the truth that no man or group of men can force willful morality on anybody else. Indeed, that is true. A government will never make a saint out of a sinner. But, does this mean that a Christian is free to separate biblical issues from his polling? Does this mean that governments have no moral function or culpability?

The arguments above answer in the negative. Belief in the Bible necessitates a belief in a providentially active God who, even in New Testament times (Acts 17:26) "rules over the nations" (Psalm 47:8; Dan. 2:21; 4:17; 5:21). This belief then requires an effort to please God to seek His blessings. Military prowess, economic success, and peaceable stability cannot be counted on without submission to God's moral demands. That is correct—an economic stimulus bill that would do any good would read with one word—REPENT! A recovering economy would depend upon actually shutting down some industries—those of alcoholic beverages, pornography, and abortion to name a few.

Of late, moral issues have topped the political news with glaring inconsistencies. A new President has signed executive orders closing a terrorist detainee camp and outlawing interrogation techniques deemed by some as torture. For these moves, he has been praised for restoring "moral authority" (Rhee). During the same week, though, he rescinded the ban on taxpayer money being used

to fund international dismembering and salt poisoning of innocent children—abortion (Tapper, et al.) He stands in favor of the gruesome practice of partial-birth abortion (Gerson), in which a half-born child has his skull pierced by scissors and his brain sucked out. And he voted, in the Illinois legislature, to deprive babies born alive of any comfort care (Lynn-Hope). These things sound a lot like torture. Inhumanity to adult criminals is thus deemed a moral wrong. OK! The government has legislated on a moral issue. But, then killing the innocent is deemed choice. The higher-ups in government would not deny their role in issuing decisions and regulations on fundamentally moral issues. The trouble is that they invent their own inconsistent and ungodly standards.

For some time since about 2004, many media outlets gave a daily counting of the war dead in Iraq. After no Weapons of Mass Destruction (the supposed impetus for the war) were found, each tragic death was trumpeted as blood on the hands of a Machiavelian, hawkish administration. The number of those dead now—after six years—stands at approximately 4,500. But no one reports the 4,500 that die DAILY by abortion. Moral outrage persists on the one hand, but isn't it interesting that the angry equate willing recruits with pre-born helpless? It is an ethical inconsistency that sifts its way down to the common Christian.

It is time—if there still is time—for the brotherhood and the nation to open its eyes to the reality that a government of necessity deals primarily in moral issues. And since one's religion determines one's morality, it follows that politics cannot be separated from religion. As demonstrated by the back-and-forth volleys of laws and court cases involving abortion and homosexual rights—a government either legislates morality, or it legislates immorality. Christians involved in a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" cannot hide from the force of this truth. Ω

#### Works Cited

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