

NICK GUY & THE MORALITY OF LEGISLATING MORALITY AFFAIR

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THEME: Many times Christians are told that there is no place for their religious beliefs in public affairs. We are admonished that the Constitution of the United States clearly prohibits the mingling of Church and State. And besides, we're told, you can't legislate morality.

That statement, in one sense, is false; and in another sense it is true.

LEGISLATING MORALITY - FALSE: It is impossible, when passing any law, to avoid legislating morality. Every law that is enacted is based upon some sort of morality.

For example, we have laws on the books against theft. By making theft a crime we are making a moral judgement that it is wrong for someone to take something that doesn't belong to him. It is never a matter of legislating morality or not, but rather which morality will be legislated.

It is when the Christian position on an issue is at odds with the non-Christian one that attempts are made to silence the Church by saying that the Christian position is based upon a "religious" belief and therefore it must be rejected, because the U.S. Constitution supposedly sets forth a doctrine of the "Separation of Church and State." And, of course, this is when we hear the charge that we can't legislate morality. By not legislating morality, they mean, not legislating Christian morality.

LEGISLATING MORALITY - TRUE: The phrase, "You can't legislate morality," is true in the sense that men cannot be made moral through legislation. As Christians, we understand that the Law has no power to make us moral or righteous, and it has no power to save us. That is not one of its purposes. The Law of God is the means by which we see our need for God. We cannot fulfill the Law's demands. Romans 3:20 tells us: "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

Our only hope for salvation comes through the finished work of redemption by Jesus Christ. As we read in Galatians 2:16 - "Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified."

Christians understand this, but the Secularist doesn't.

DEFINING TERMS - SECULARIST: A Secularist is one who believes that public affairs and matters of civil policy should be conducted without the influence of supernatural beliefs or dictates. Laws, they believe, should be based solely upon facts and science, not religious beliefs. Those who adhere to Secularism, are those who believe that the laws that govern our nation should be established on purely secular grounds.

They believe this arrangement keeps the State from interfering in the affairs of the Church, insuring religious freedom; and the Church from interfering in the affairs of the State, insuring freedom from religious tyranny. The State, they say, should be neutral toward religion.

MYTH OF SECULARIST STATE: The idea of a purely secular state is a myth. By definition, he said, something is truly Secular only when it denies the existence of God. That is hardly neutral.

Well certainly all men, not just Christians, wish to see the laws that govern their land reflect their own personal views of good and evil. And every man is religious in the sense that all men are faithful to some system or standard of belief to which they ascribe importance.

Also, the Civil Government will be required to legislate on some very serious and deep moral issues of life and death. Issues that will require a determination of right and wrong. Issues of what constitutes life and what constitutes death. The kinds of issues that cannot be argued at the purely secular level.

By excluding the Christian from a place in the Public debate, we are giving privilege to what can be called *irreligious* religions over Christian religions.

DEFINING TERMS - CIVIL GOVERNMENT: Usually, when we use the word Government, we tend to think exclusively of *Civil* Government. But Civil Government is actually only one of three governments God has established and ordained to work in our lives.

There is also Church Government and Family Government. Each of these governments has their own God-given responsibilities and spheres of influence. They are not required nor allowed to exceed their God-ordained roles. These Governments are not meant to function - apart from God. Rather, they are meant to serve under Him.

It is also helpful to remember that the U.S. Constitution did not establish a separation of Church and State. It established the freedom of religion, not the freedom from it.

According to the U.S. Constitution, the Federal Civil Government is designed to be limited and to have authority only over those duties and responsibilities specifically laid out in it.

According to Scripture, Civil Government's primary role is preserving the social order by restraining and punishing evil behavior and approving good behavior.

SECULARIST VIEW OF THE PURPOSE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT:

Denying that man needs God for salvation and righteousness, and assuming that man's problems are not spiritual but material, the Secularist presupposes that his system is the proper, logical, and just way for life to be, and that he possess the answer to man's problems. The belief is: change man's environment and you will change man.

In areas like education, civil rights, poverty and gun control, the Secularists have proposed and passed laws that are designed, in a sense, to save man. These laws are supposedly going to give us a society that is free of ignorance, inequality, poverty, violence and any thing else they consider evil.

EXAMPLE OF FAILURE OF THE SECULARIST CIVIL GOVERNMENT -

WELFARE PROGRAMS DETRIMENTAL TO FAMILIES: When excessive importance is placed on the purpose and use of Civil Government there are going to be bad consequences.

Consider the Civil Government's involvement in helping the poor. The Civil Government promised a Great Society free from poverty, with nobody being in need. And this Great Society they intended to usher in through law, making the salvation of man an act of the State. But, in enacting this plan, the Civil Government had to infringe upon the sphere of the Family Government, to the detriment of society.

Civil Government welfare programs were designed, among other things, to provide food and housing to those who could not afford it. These programs did accomplish this. They solved the problems, but created consequences that have had a devastating affect on our society.

Traditionally, the father, as head of the family, was responsible to provide for its members. Things like a home to live in, food to eat, etc. But under State-sponsored welfare, with perhaps the sincere motive of giving aid to those in need, fathers loose their position as provider, thus weakening their authority and dignity as heads of the household. They become unimportant and unnecessary.

In solving one problem another worse one was created.

Also, the State provides more financial support to single mothers. This makes it advantageous, at least financially, for a mother to be unmarried as opposed to married. With this, the father goes from being irrelevant to a liability.

EXAMPLE OF FAILURE OF THE SECULARIST CIVIL GOVERNMENT -

WELFARE PROGRAMS DETRIMENTAL TO INDIVIDUALS: No one is denying that there are those families and individuals in legitimate need. And no one is

denying that we have a responsibility to help them, especially those of us who call upon the name of the Lord. But the Civil Government is neither the proper, nor the most effective, means for effecting that aid.

The short-term need may be food and clothing, but the long-term need is to help them overcome the obstacles that have brought them to poverty. Giving hand-outs that lead people to dependency is not helping the long-term need. Aiding to the destruction of the individual and the family is not help.

IN SECULARIST VIEW, CIVIL GOVERNMENT TAKES THE PLACE OF GOD: Increasingly, people have ceased to look to God for aid, and are looking to the Civil Government to solve their problems, give them guidance and direct their path. The Civil Government has become their savior. They believe the Civil Government has the right to legislate and enforce morality - a morality of their own design, that will usher in a world liberated from poverty, hate, violence and pain.

Unfortunately, what they see as liberating is in reality making them slaves of corruption.

The Founding Fathers of the United States of America sought independence from a tyrannical Government. They were quite suspicious of too much power being vested with the Civil Government. They desired a nation where the Civil Government is limited, exercising authority only over those areas that were necessary.

They believed that the majority of those issues that would need to be addressed by the Civil Government should be done at a local level, through State and Local governments. The Founding Fathers desired a limited Federal Government, but no one can disagree that the Federal Government today is hardly limited. The Constitution says nothing about the Federal Government controlling education, or welfare, or so many other areas that it currently has its hands.

To the Secularist, man has the capacity, in and of himself, to set in place a perfect world. And he sees the Civil Government as perhaps the most powerful and effective tool for making this perfect world a reality, where life, liberty and happiness are enjoyed by all. In areas like education, civil rights, poverty and gun control; they have enacted laws that were supposed to give us a society free of ignorance, inequality, poverty and violence. And when the perfect world does not come about, more legislation is deemed necessary. But this legislation, enacted in the name of Liberty, becomes increasingly more restrictive and destructive to liberty.

Man cannot be made moral simply by a Law that orders him to. For the Christian, the primary objective of Civil Government is Liberty. For the humanist, the primary objective of Civil Government is security. And security, to the degree it is provided, comes only at the cost of Liberty. While promising liberty, they ultimately deliver tyranny.

CONCLUSION: God's standard, which is unchanging and everlasting, is the only one

upon which we must base our lives, and the Civil Government must take its proper God-ordained role of punishing those who do evil, and rewarding those who do good.

Let's look at Romans 13:1-4.

Verses one and two informs us that Civil Government is under the authority of God, as it says, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment."

In verses 3 and 4, the Apostle Paul lays out the role of Civil Government, and its responsibility to insure justice based upon God's standard. It reads:

"For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,
For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."

There is only one Savior, and it's not the Civil Government. The Civil Government serves to restrain evil, but it can not regenerate man. Only God can do that, and that only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

With a God-centered religion, God is the Savior. With a man-centered religion, the Civil Government is.

RESOURCES: Rushdoony; Albert Mohler