

# The Christian Right

What impact would 33 million "voter guides" have on the 1994 Congressional elections? The Sunday before that election, 33 million voter guides were distributed by the Christian Coalition providing voters with information on how candidates stood on key issues believed to be important to Christian theology.

The "Christian Right," largely funded by the 1.4-million member "Christian Coalition" provides funds for securing key spots in government which will assist in establishing the conservative "Christian majority" of this country. The result? "Coalition leaders claim their voter guides helped Republicans prevail in 50 important races. According to People for the American Way, a liberal activist group, 60% of all the candidates affiliated with or strongly supported by the religious right won their races" (TIME, November 21, 1994).

"More politicians than ever owe their jobs to the organizing and financial support supplied by religious right groups their expectation is that the right-wing agenda will receive top priority in the next two years" (NEW YORK TIMES, November 12, 1994).

## What Issues Are at Stake?

- Anti-abortion
- Restriction on Sexual Preferences
- End Casino Gambling
- Increased Military Funds
- Immigration Limits
- Prayer Rights Amendment
- Family Values
- Decrease in Foreign Aid
- Liberal Gun Control Laws
- Tougher Crime Laws

The perception of the Christian Right includes the sincere belief that the "liberal left" has betrayed the heritage of the founding fathers of our country and has created a system which deprives them, the Christian majority of this land, of their moral, economic and religious rights. They believe they have a God-given mandate to take control to set matters straight.

## **What of the Liberal Left?**

Whatever the "liberal left" can be accused of, one fact is certain: In the last hundred years, social, political and economic reforms in the United States temporarily defused many internal revolutions which might have erupted from the masses of discontent common folks unable to make ends meet.

But the solutions have not been broad enough, nor able to really solve any social or economic problem permanently. Still, what will come if those meager reforms are now rolled back? Who will help the poor, the dispossessed? "For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. Will help come from President Clinton's "New Covenant"? or from God's New Covenant? (Psalm 72:12; Jeremiah 31:31) But when?

## **Should a Christian be Politically Active?**

Just what legitimate part should the Christian take in influencing or supporting policies of governments?

First, are the convictions espoused by the Christian Right scriptural? In many issues, they are. Certainly the integrity of the family arrangement is scriptural. The God-given privilege of procreation should be cherished and protected. The alternative lifestyle "families" are unequivocally forbidden in the Bible.

Prayer really is the life-line of the Christian to God. Who would deny that resource? In addition, the moral and practical implications of gambling are devastating—and addictive. God's justice calls for rigorous punishment of crime. What is a Christian's responsibility in regard to these principles of God's Word?

Frustration with "the kingdoms of this world"—the inequalities, inconsistencies, the unrighteousness—is understandable. The Christian is to "Lift up a standard for the people" (Isaiah 62:10) and "Let your light so shine before men" (Matthew 5:16). Does holding up a standard and letting our light shine give authority to work with earthly governments? On the contrary, Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). He taught his disciples to pray for a future Kingdom, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth" Jesus was not a political reformer. Jesus spoke of the "new wine" of his Kingdom which could not be poured into the "old bottles" of the current society and government (Luke 5:37,38).

As the worthies of old, Christians are "pilgrims and strangers on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13) whose "citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20 NAS). Thus while Christians need to exemplify God's principles of righteousness in their lives, they are not to force these principles on the world around them.

## **Prayer in Public Schools**

Prayer should be taught in the home. Children should be encouraged to pray in school, at McDonald's and everywhere. But organized public prayer does not need to be practiced in schools.

A student may pray just about any time he or she wishes and does not need state legislation to allow or disallow that privilege. "From the vantage point of the Golden Rule, it [arranged prayer in schools] is undesirable. A lone Baptist student in a mostly Mormon classroom in Salt Lake City would quickly come to empathize with the Jewish pupil surrounded by Southern Baptists in Tennessee. Do we want our elementary school children getting the message that their faith is unacceptable and foreign to their classmates? The student of the minority faith will have three choices: insult her classmates and teacher (and embarrass herself) by leaving the room, plug her ears and try to pray her own prayer, or else listen to others' prayers every day for 12 years of public schooling." (CHRISTIANITY TODAY, January 9, 1995, p.18.)

Religious exercises in public schools is not a new debate. A quote from 1906, THE NEW CREATION, sums up,

"Notwithstanding our reverence for the Bible as the Word of God, we believe that the fact that the Jews are opposed to the teachings of the New Testament that some infidels, skeptics, Buddhists, Theosophists, etc., are opposed to the Bible entirely in view also of the fact that all of these classes are taxed for the support of the schools and required to take advantage of them-it would be both just and wise to omit religious exercises in the schools and ignore the Bible as a religious book rather than give offense to so many who do not agree with us" ("Parental Obligations," p. 542,543).

## **Increasing the Military Budget**

Some issues advocated by the Christian Right are not even in harmony with a Christian spirit or are even directly opposed to Christian teaching. These issues, however, are consistent with the theology of the Christian Right.

Did Jesus exclude the United States when he said, "My Kingdom is not of this world then would my servants fight"? What is a Christian to do with a gun in his hand? "He that lives by the sword shall die by the sword," Jesus said. Our early Christian brethren died in the arena rather than bear arms for the state.

Why would Christians promote military readiness when God's program is total disarmament? "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire" (Psalm 46:9). At this time when the poor of this country and the poor of the world need help from the wealthiest nation in the world, why would Christians instead promote spending on carnal weapons? God's indictment on ancient Sodom gives pause for consideration, "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49).

If the Christian Right believes they are setting up God's Kingdom now in the United States—then a military priority would be consistent with that theology.

Does limiting welfare benefits, toughening immigration laws and decreasing foreign aid reflect a Christian attitude or solution? Neither do these ideas sound like the platform of God's Kingdom: "Good will unto all men." No, but a limited view of God's grace which says only a few professing Christians will have any blessed future—relegating out whole continents of humanity to a torturous eternity—has to have some effect on attitudes about people and life in general.

## **The Christian at the "Center" of God's Will**

While the Christian may not participate in and promote the reforms of our society, the Christian is deeply sympathetic with the poor groaning creation (Romans 8:22). The true Christian attitude longs to bless and help his fellow man—in God's way, in God's time. The Kingdom solution is not an illusionary pie-in-the-sky answer. The establishment of "peace on earth" will be gradual. The first step will be disarmament, converting military resources into peaceful resources, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares" (Isaiah 2:4). Everyone will be an "immigrant" into this Kingdom, yet there will be no "foreigners." It will be crime-free, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). There will be no food or housing shortages because there will be work for all, "And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat" (Isaiah 65:21,22).

The Kingdom will be a learning time, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding" (Isaiah 29:24). Justice and equality will be the norm, "Judgment also will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies" (Isaiah 28:17). There will be no ineptness in government, no specially favored constituents, no failed campaign promises—only God's fulfilled promises and only God's power effectively blessing and favoring all. Why will this Kingdom government be effective? "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33). Instead of

temporary reforms, there will be everlasting answers to man's deepest needs—beginning with the heart.

## **Is God's Kingdom Political?**

Is God's Kingdom for which every Christian has prayed for 2,000 years political? Of course it is. It will replace the "kingdoms of this world" (Revelation 11:15). To be consistent with their prayers, though, Christians are not to involve themselves in this world's politics, but wait for the Kingdom of God. Then they may participate as competent rulers and sympathetic judges (1 Corinthians 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:12). Then prayers in schools will not be an issue at all. Praising God in every continent will be universal, "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth Let the poor and needy praise thy name O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people" (Psalm 48:10; 72:21; 117:1).

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