

**The Foundation for Adventist Education
Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department – General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**

POLITICS: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Jane Sabes, Ph.D.
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, Michigan USA

**3rd Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship
Akumal, Riviera Maya, Estado Quintana Roo, Mexico
March 19-25, 2006**

Politics: A Biblical Perspective

by Jane Sabes

“Praise be to you, O Lord,
 God of our father Israel,
 From everlasting to everlasting.
 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and
 the power
 And the glory and the majesty and
 the splendor,
 For everything in heaven and earth
 is yours.
 Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom;
 You are exalted as head over all.
 Wealth and honor come from you;
 You are the ruler of all things.
 In your hands are strength and power
 to exalt and give strength to all.
 Now, our God, we give you thanks,
 And praise your glorious name.”
 1 Chronicles 29:10-13 (NIV)

This paper is anchored in the belief that Seventh-day Adventists should manifest a presence in temporal politics and governance, in fact, that God has always had representatives in earthly governments for the express purpose of blessing humankind and as a witness to His Supreme Sovereignty. This paper further contends that most laws established for ancient Israel have current and universal application for people and nations.

A subsequent paper should consider how best the Seventh-day Adventist Church, its representatives, and its individual members might manifest a presence in politics. However, for now, this paper deals with one question: Is it proper, from a biblical point of view, for Seventh-day Adventists to occupy a place in politics and government?

Because this discussion is intended principally for Seventh-day Adventist readers, extensive use is made of citations and references from the writings of Ellen White. In so doing, an attempt is made to utilize Scriptures along with specific counsel provided this church regarding politics. While considerable use is made of both the Scriptures and Spirit of Prophecy, other sources are called upon as well.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO POLITICS

We begin our examination of this question by considering passages from the Bible. Indeed, we can trace God’s authorship of government and connectedness to human government throughout history. *Strong’s Concordance* chronicles over four thousand scriptural references to politics with terms and concepts such as king and kingdom (2,958), govern and government (90), ruler and reign (546), nations (473),

citizens (3), ambassadors (13), authority (38), sovereign and sovereignty (14). Scriptures record stories of national valor – for example, Gideon called from the least significant tribe to serve as Israel’s military general. Scriptures relate tales of political intrigue and murder - Queen Jezebel killing Naboth in order to acquire his land, King Herod slaying all Jewish males two years of age and younger to rid his kingdom of would-be rivals, Herodias calling for the beheading of John the Baptist in retaliation of his speaking out against her illicit affair with the king, Caesar ravaged by worms as he delivers a public address, the Israeli FBI receiving assistance from the city prostitute, and the fracturing of a nation due to Rehoboam’s insensitive response to the citizens. Scripture also contains aphoristic accounts of young King Josiah calling his nation to a return to moral living, the government official Cornelius seeking spiritual truth, church member Tabatha providing for the social welfare of the community. And there is the playing out of direct democracy as the Athenians deliberate Paul’s “new philosophy” in the public square.

In the Beginning...

We see from the very beginning that God had every intention of providing structure, law and government for His people. Even before the creation of our world, the law of Jehovah had invariably been the foundation of His government. As it was in heaven, so also it was to be upon the earth. Starting with the Genesis account we read that “by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities.” (Colossians 1:16)

In fact, God’s rule became the pivotal issue in the conflict between the Prince of light and the leader of the kingdom of darkness. As Ellen White comments in the *Desire of Ages*, “After tempting man to sin, Satan claimed the earth as his, and styled himself the prince of this world.... He thought to establish here his empire. He declared that men had chosen him as their sovereign. Through his control of men, he held dominion over the world.”¹ Christ sought to disprove Satan’s claim to the throne.

During the Time of Israel as a Nation

One approach taken by God to overthrow the devil’s coup de’ tat of earth’s rule was to designate one holy nation, one separate people through whom God might demonstrably display His throne of love. At Mount Sinai, the Lord declared to the chosen nation, Israel, “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:5-6)

“At the beginning [of human history], the father was constituted priest and magistrate of his own family. Then came the patriarchal rule, which was like that of the family, but extended over a greater number. When Israel became a distinct people, the twelve tribes, springing from the twelve sons of Jacob, had each a leader. These leaders, or elders, were assembled whenever any matter that pertained to the general interest was

to be settled.... When the Hebrews settled in Canaan, judges were appointed, who resembled governors. These rulers were invested with authority to declare war and proclaim peace for the nation; but God was still the recognized king of Israel, and he continued to reveal his will to these chosen leaders, and to manifest through them his power.

“But increase of population, and intercourse with other nations brought a change.... Dazzled by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they [the Israelites] tired of their own simplicity, and desired to be freed from the rule of their Divine Sovereign. As they departed from the Lord, the different tribes became envious and jealous of one another. Strife and dissensions increased, until it was vainly imagined that the installation of a king was the only means by which harmony could be restored....

“The days of Israel’s greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their king, - when the laws and the government which He had established were regarded as superior to those of all other nations.... And yet, notwithstanding the Lord had so often wrought mightily for their deliverance, the Israelites were now disposed to attribute all their disasters to their manner of government. The Lord permitted his people to follow their own course, because they refused to be guided by his counsels.”² “The misfortunes of Israel were the result of Yahweh’s wrath, and every political crisis was a reminder for Israel to return to the laws of Yahweh and to renew the terms of the covenant.”³

If indeed, God’s preferred design for governance was that of a theocracy, why then should Christian citizens not strive to institute a modern-day theocracy? Ellen White explains: “A theocracy is a government which derives its power immediately from God.... Whenever men have endeavored to form such a government as that of Israel, they have, of necessity, taken it upon themselves to interpret and enforce the law of God. They have assumed the right to control the conscience, and thus have usurped the prerogative of God.... When men, with human frailties and passions, undertake to do this work, it needs no argument to show that the door is opened to unrestrained injustice and cruelty. The most inhuman crimes will be perpetrated, and all in the sacred name of Christ.”⁴

New Testament Times

It is conventionally held that the New Testament brought an end to the Bible’s concern with civic law and government. Thus, there appears to be a difference between the Testaments. The Old Testament is social minded, and tends to deal with the Jewish people as a nation. In contrast, the New Testament appeals to the individual – it does not stress the ceremonial social religion of the Old, but rather a new revolutionary concept of an individual relationship with the Sovereign God. This change in focus, one might assume, would tend to have much less to say about social order and administration of national affairs.

However, Christian political theorist, Alan Storkey, posits that there has been a failure of biblical scholars to recognize the political content and implications contained in the New Testament. Storkey attributes this neglect to two causes. First, biblical scholars

have largely been employed by the institutional church and have single-mindedly addressed the concerns of this Christian subculture. Second, secular powers have uniformly sought to exclude Christianity from politics – whether fascism, communism, liberalism or capitalism.⁵

Even Christ Himself, in his New Testament setting, seemed baffled as to how best to describe His kingdom. He queries, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?” (Mark 4:30) Christ could not employ the kingdoms of the world as a similitude. In society He found nothing with which to compare it – neither oppressive Roman rule nor the unreasonable rigors of religiosity. “Earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power; but from Christ’s kingdom every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is banished.”⁶

Thus, with lavish use of metaphors Christ attempts to paint the picture of His kingdom. God’s kingdom is first compared to a newly planted field of grain but which experiences the misfortune of having an enemy corrupt the land with noxious weeds (Matthew 13:24). The kingdom is also like a mustard seed, the most insignificant sized seed but which matures into the most majestic and beneficial of plants (13:31). Like yeast expanding in dough, the kingdom of God permeates the entire life (13:33). His kingdom, Christ continues, is as a treasure hidden in a field and that, upon being discovered, the seeker eagerly separates himself from all that he possesses in order to obtain the treasure (13:44). Similarly, a merchant sells his entire estate to obtain this object of value – citizenship in the kingdom of God (13:45). The kingdom is also characterized as a net, being let down into the waters, catching all kinds of fish – good and bad (13:47). And yet another description of the kingdom of God is that of a king who, when settling accounts, cancels in full the debts of his creditors but expects that those having been forgiven will extend equal grace toward those who owe them (18:23). The landowner of Matthew 20:1-16 depicts the kingdom of God as rewarding each worker with equal remuneration for their labors regardless of whether the worker entered the field early in the day or late.

The two final parables render the most grievous of accounts of humanity’s response to the kingdom of God – one depicts unappreciative tenant farmers slaying first the Owner’s servants, then killing His very Son rather than acknowledging their responsibility to the Owner (21:33-41). The final effort made by the Father’s kingdom is to arrange a wedding banquet to which everyone is invited but to which most decline for trifling and inconsequential reasons (22:1-14).

These earthy portraits by Christ were intended to uplift and ennoble human thought as to the heights a righteous reign can reach.

The Dawn of the Christian Era

Whether under Egyptian or Roman governments, the principles taught throughout Scriptures call on Christ’s followers to have respect for temporal rule. This, more than anything, astounded and annoyed them. How much more attractive their citizenship in Christ would be if it superseded earthly potentates, thus granting the right to ignore tax collection, to hate one’s enemy and return evil for evil. However, the charge given to Christians was to love one’s neighbor as oneself.

Christ's commission is to "go and teach all nations" regarding the kingdom of God. He gives the assurance that "all power in heaven and on earth is given to me." (Matthew 28:20) This power He, in turn, makes accessible to His emissaries for executing their work. Paul references this high calling by Christ as an ambassadorship (2 Corinthians 5:20) affirming that, "Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom." (Hebrews 1:8)

In Future Times

"The servants of Christ will be brought before the great men of the world, who, but for this, might never hear the gospel. The truth has been misrepresented to these men.... Often their only means of learning its real character is the testimony of those who are brought to trial for their faith.... The Savior will be lifted up before the rulers."⁷

And Throughout Eternity

Notwithstanding concerns regarding present-day politics, the Scriptures reflect government as extending throughout eternity. Peering into the future, Matthew records that "when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him." (Matthew 25:31-32)

One day soon, "in the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven the final coronation of the Son of God takes place. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power, the King of kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels against His government, and executes justice upon those who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people.... The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God, on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven.... The working out of Satan's rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe.... With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declares, 'Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.'⁸

Summary

Upon thoughtful examination, one finds abundant references in Scripture to governance, of both a personal and national type. The Bible opens with Lucifer defying God's government; scriptural authors then make perennial reference to kingdoms and potentates and power, and the Divine Word concludes with a portrayal of the Godhead and saints reigning throughout eternity.

AMBASSADORS OF GOD'S KINGDOM – CASE STUDIES

“From the beginning God has wrought through His people to bring blessing to the world. To the ancient Egyptian nation God made Joseph a fountain of life. Through the integrity of Joseph the life of that whole people was preserved. Through Daniel God saved the life of all the wise men of Babylon. And these deliverances are object-lessons; they illustrate the spiritual blessings offered to the world through connection with the God whom Joseph and Daniel worshiped.”⁹

Consider, for a moment, the following - God's representatives, the governmental positions they held, and how those positions were employed in ways that aided humankind while advancing God's name and kingdom.

- a. **Abraham** – “Abraham was honored by the surrounding nations as a *mighty prince and a wise and able chief*. He did not shut away his influence from these neighbors.... Abraham was also wise in diplomacy and brave and skillful in war. Notwithstanding he was known as the teacher of a new religion, three royal brothers, rulers of the Amorite plains in which he dwelt, manifested their friendship by inviting him to enter into an alliance with them for greater security, for the country was filled with violence and oppression.”¹⁰

- b. **Joseph** – “Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. The Lord was with Joseph.... *Potiphar put him in charge of his household and he entrusted to his care everything he owned....*” (Genesis 39:1-4) “Joseph's gentleness and fidelity won the heart of the chief captain, who came to regard him as a son rather than a slave. The youth was brought in contact with men of rank and learning and he acquired a knowledge of science, of languages and affairs – an education needful to the future prime minister of Egypt.”¹¹ “While Joseph was in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. *So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison*, and he was made responsible for all that was done there....” (Genesis 39:20-23) “It was humiliating to Pharaoh to turn away from the magicians and wise men of his kingdom to consult an alien and a slave [regarding his dream], but he was ready to accept the lowliest service if his troubled mind might find relief. Joseph was immediately sent for.... The interpretation [of the dream] was so reasonable and consistent and the policy which it recommended was so sound and shrewd, that its correctness could not be doubted. But who was to be entrusted with the execution of the plan? Upon the wisdom of this choice depended the nation's preservation. The king was troubled. For some time the matter of the appointment was under consideration. Through the chief butler the monarch had learned of the wisdom and prudence displayed by Joseph in the management of the prison; it was evident that he possessed

administrative ability in a pre-eminent degree.... It was evident that a divine power was with him, and that there was none among the king's officers of state so well qualified to conduct the affairs of the nation at this crisis. The fact that he was a Hebrew and a slave was of little moment when weighed against his evident wisdom and sound judgment.... The appointment was decided upon, and to Joseph the astonishing announcement was made."¹² "Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. *You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.*'" (Genesis 41:39-40) Why did the Lord choose to exalt Joseph so highly among the Egyptians? He might have provided some other way for the accomplishment of His purposes toward the children of Jacob; but He desired to make Joseph a light, and He placed him in the palace of the king that the heavenly illumination might extend far and near. By his wisdom and justice, by the purity and benevolence of his daily life, by his devotion to the interests of the people – and that people a nation of idolaters – Joseph was a representative of Christ. In their benefactor, to whom all Egypt turned with gratitude and praise, that heathen people were to behold the love of their Creator and Redeemer. So in Moses also God placed a light beside the throne of the earth's greatest kingdom, that all who would, might learn of the true and living God."¹³

- c. **David and Solomon** – "*In the reign of David and Solomon* Israel became strong among the nations, and had many opportunities to wield a mighty influence in behalf of truth and the right. The name of Jehovah was exalted and held in honor, and the purpose for which the Israelites had been established in the land of promise had fair of meeting with fulfillment. Barriers were broken down, and seekers after truth from the lands of the heathen were not turned away unsatisfied. Conversions took place, and the church of God on earth was enlarged, and prospered."¹⁴ As Solomon entered upon his reign, "all the kings of the earth' began to seek his presence, to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart." (2 Chronicles 9:23) "Many came to see the manner of his government, and to receive instruction regarding the conduct of difficult affairs. As these people visited Solomon, he taught them of God as the Creator of all things, and they returned to their homes with clearer conceptions of the God of Israel, and of His love for the human race."¹⁵
- d. **Obadiah** – "Failing in her efforts against Elijah, Jezebel determined to avenge herself by slaying all the prophets of Jehovah in Israel. Not one should be left alive. The infuriated woman carried out her purpose in the massacre of many of God's servants. Not all, however, perished. *Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's house*, yet faithful to God, 'took an hundred prophets,' and at the risk of his own life, 'hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.'¹⁶

- e. **Daniel** – “Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites... young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace.... They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service. Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.... At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all... in his whole kingdom....*Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men.*” (Daniel 1:3-6 and 18-20 and 48)
- f. **The Three Hebrews** – “Then Daniel requested of the king, and *he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon.*”¹⁷ “As the three Hebrews stood before the king, he was convinced that they possessed something the other wise men of his kingdom did not have. They had been faithful in the performance of every duty.... The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped.”¹⁸
- g. **Ezra** – “The experience of Ezra while living among the Jews who remained in Babylon was so unusual that it attracted the favorable notice of *King Artaxerxes, with whom he talked freely* regarding the power of the God of heaven, and the divine purpose in restoring the Jews to Jerusalem.... Ezra’s faith that God would do a mighty work for His people, led him to tell Artaxerxes of his desire to return to Jerusalem to revive an interest in the study of God’s word and to assist his brethren in restoring the holy city.... So great was the king’s confidence in the integrity of Ezra, that he showed him marked favor, granting his request, and bestowing on him rich gifts for the temple service. He made him a *special representative of the Medo-Persian kingdom, and conferred on him extensive powers* for the carrying out of the purposes that were in his heart.”¹⁹
- h. **Esther** – “In the providence of God, *Esther, a Jewess who feared the Most High, had been made queen of the Medo-Persian kingdom.* Mordecai was a near relative of hers. In their extremity, they decided to appeal to Xerxes in behalf of their people. Esther was to venture into his presence as an

intercessor. 'Who knoweth,' said Mordecai, 'whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' *Mordecai was given the position of honor formerly occupied by Haman. He 'was next unto King Ahasuerus, and accepted of the multitude of this brethren,' and he sought to promote the welfare of Israel.*"²⁰

- i. **Nehemiah** – "Nehemiah, one of the Hebrew exiles, occupied a position of influence and honor in the Persian court. *As cup-bearer to the king*, he was admitted freely to the royal presence. By virtue of his position, and because of his abilities and fidelity, he had become the monarch's friend and counselor.... He resolved that if he could obtain the consent of the king, and the necessary aid in procuring implements and materials, he would himself undertake the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and restoring Israel's national strength. And he asked the Lord to grant him favor in the sight of the king that this plan might be carried out.... Four months Nehemiah waited for a favorable opportunity to present his request to the king.... The recital of the condition of Jerusalem awakened the sympathy of the monarch without arousing his prejudices."²¹
- j. **John the Baptist** – "Why need he have provoked the anger of Herodias by telling Herod that it was unlawful for him to live with his brother's wife?.... With them worldly policy is to have no weight.... They are not to speak their own words, but words which One greater than the potentates of earth has bidden them speak.... God calls for men like Elijah, Nathan, and John the Baptist – men who will bear His message with faithfulness, regardless of the consequences; men who will speak the truth bravely, through it call for the sacrifice of all they have.... *He calls for men who will do faithful battle against wrong*, warring against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."²²
- k. **Zacchaeus** - "A man was there [Jericho] by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a *chief tax collector* and was wealthy.... Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.'" (Luke 19:2 and 8) Jesus commended Zacchaeus but no where is it recorded that he was admonished to change careers. His current employment with the IRS was his career and calling. Neither was Cornelius, the trusted and beloved military commander, admonished to leave government service after having received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 10)
- l. **Philip** – "And, behold a man of Ethiopia, *a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure...* was a man of good standing and of wide influence. God saw that when converted, he would give others the light he had received, and

would exert a strong influence in favor of the gospel.... Philip was directed to go to the Ethiopian.”²³

- m. **Paul** – When encountering Greek scholars and national leaders, Paul reasons with them from their own pagan philosophers (Acts 17:28).

In the book, *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White provides a contemporary example of Christians working in government. She points to John Wycliffe.

n. **John Wycliffe**

“While acting as *chaplain for the king*, he [John Wycliffe] took a bold stand against the payment of tribute claimed by the pope from the English monarch, and showed that the papal assumption of authority over secular rulers was contrary to both reason and revelation. The demands of the pope had excited great indignation, and Wycliffe’s teaching exerted an influence upon the leading minds of the nation. The king and nobles united in denying the pontiff’s claim to temporal authority, and in refusing the payment of the tribute. Thus an effectual blow was struck against the papal supremacy in England.... Again Wycliffe was called to defend the rights of the English crown against the encroachments of Rome; and being *appointed a royal ambassador*, he spent two years in the Netherlands, in conference with the commissioners of the pope. Here he was brought into communication with ecclesiastics from France, Italy, and Spain, and he had an opportunity to look behind the scenes, and gain a knowledge of many things which would have remained hidden from him in England. He learned much that was to give point to his after-labors.... Soon after his return to England, *Wycliffe received from the king the appointment to the rectory of Lutterworth*. This was an assurance that the monarch at least had not been displeased with his plain speaking. Wycliffe’s influence was felt in shaping the action of the court, as well as in the molding the belief of the nation.”²⁴

These examples highlight the value of politics as a Christian vocation. What these persons held in common was respect for the temporal ruler, an ear for God’s voice, a character beyond reproach, and a work ethic that proclaimed that they lived what they believed.

PRINCIPLES OF GOD’S GOVERNMENT A PROTOTYPE FOR TODAY?

As Moses spoke to Israel for the final time, He said, “See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ What

other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?" Deut. 4:5-8.

As a result of their years in Egyptian bondage, the Israelites' recognition of God's supreme principles had been deprecated, admixed with Egyptian heathen practices. And so it was that, upon gaining their freedom, God more fully illustrated the principles of the Ten Commandments with the use of judgments.²⁵ Based on these, the leaders of Israel were to make their rulings. Such judgments and laws detailed the procedure for ridding mold and fungus from clothing and human skin (Leviticus 13-14), identified the foods that enhance health and those that are detrimental (Leviticus 11), the inappropriateness of sexual relations with relatives or animals (Leviticus 18), not taking advantage of a prospective buyer (Leviticus 25) or maintaining dishonest weights (Deuteronomy 25). Instruction was given that, when in conflict with a neighboring nation, peace should first be pursued (Deuteronomy 20:10). Other examples of God-ordained policies included:

1. **National Economic Policy:** "If men today were simple in their habits, living in harmony with nature's laws, as did Adam and Eve in the beginning, there would be an abundant supply for the needs of the human family. There would be fewer imaginary wants, and more opportunities to work in God's ways. But selfishness and the indulgence of unnatural taste have brought sin and misery into the world, from excess on one hand and from want on the other."²⁶
 - a. **Employment:** Wages of employees were to be paid promptly. "Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it." Deuteronomy 24:14-15.
 - b. **National Indebtedness:** "The Lord your God will bless you as He has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you." Deuteronomy 15:6.
2. **Immigration Policy:** "When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt." Leviticus 19:33-34
3. **Agricultural Policy:** "The observance of the sabbatical year was to be a benefit to both the land and the people. The soil, lying untilled for one season, would afterward produce more plentifully. The people were released from the pressing labors of the field; and while there were various branches of work that could be followed during this time, all enjoyed greater leisure, which afforded opportunity for the restoration of their physical powers for the exertions of the following years. They had more time for meditation and

prayer, for acquainting themselves with the teachings and requirements of the Lord, and for the instruction of their households.”²⁷

4. **Military Policy:** It had been made a law in Israel that before they went to battle the following proclamation should be made throughout the army: “What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house lest he dies in the battle and another man dedicates it. And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard and hath not yet eaten of it? Let him also go and return unto his house lest he die in battle and another man eat of it. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife and hath not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house lest he dies in the battle, and another man takes her.” And the officers were to speak further to the people, saying, “What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren’s heart faint as well as his heart.” Deuteronomy 20:5-8

5. **Judicial Policy:**
 - a. **Capital Punishment Policy:** “In a trial for murder the accused was not to be condemned on the testimony of one witness, even though circumstantial evidence might be strong against him. Numbers 35:30. It was Christ who gave to Moses these directions for Israel; and when personally with His disciples on earth, as He taught them how to treat the erring, the Great Teacher repeated the lesson that one man’s testimony is not to acquit or condemn. One man’s views and opinions are not to settle disputed questions. In all these matters two or more are to be associated, and together they are to bear the responsibility.... The safety and purity of the nation demanded that the sin of murder be severely punished. Human life, which God alone could give, must be sacredly guarded.”²⁸

 - b. **Government Employee Ethics:** Judges were warned against perverting judgment, aiding a false cause, or receiving bribes. Deuteronomy 16:19-20.

 - c. **Stealing:** Those guilty of theft were required to restore double. Exodus 22:7.

6. **Social Policy:** In this present world “there are many who urge with great enthusiasm that all men should have an equal share in the temporal blessings of God. But this was not the purpose of the Creator. A diversity of condition is one of the means by which God designs to prove and develop character. Yet He intends that those who have worldly possessions shall regard themselves merely as stewards of His goods, as entrusted with means to be employed for the benefit of the suffering and the needy.”²⁹

- a. **Indentured Servitude:** “In ancient times criminals were sometimes sold into slavery by the judges; in some cases, debtors were sold by their creditors; and poverty even led persons to sell themselves or their children. But a Hebrew could not be sold as a slave for life. His term of service was limited to six years; on the seventh he was to be set at liberty.... The holding of slaves not of Israelite birth was permitted, but their life and person were strictly guarded. The murder of a slave was to be punished; an injury inflicted upon one by his master, though no more than the loss of a tooth, entitled him to his freedom....”³⁰ In the year of the Hebrew slave’s release, they were to be provided for liberally. Instruction to slave owners was: “supply him [slave] liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress.... Do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because his service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand.” Deuteronomy 15:13-18.
- b. **Land Ownership:** “That which especially distinguished the year of jubilee was the reversion of all landed property to the family of the original possessor. By the special direction of God the land had been divided by lot. After the division was made no one was at liberty to trade his estate. Neither was he to sell his land unless poverty compelled him to do so, and then, whenever he or any of his kindred might desire to redeem it, the purchaser must not refuse to sell it; and if unredeemed, it would revert to its first possessor or his heirs in the year of jubilee. The land was not to be sold forever. Leviticus 25:23 The Lord would place a check upon the continued accumulation of wealth by one class, and the poverty and degradation of another. Without some restraint the power of the wealthy would become a monopoly, and the poor, though in every respect fully as worthy in God’s sight, would be regarded and treated as inferior to their more prosperous brethren. The sense of this oppression would arouse the passions of the poorer class. There would be a feeling of despair and desperation which would tend to demoralize society and open the door to crimes of every description. The regulations that God established were designed to promote social equality. The provisions of the sabbatical year and the jubilee would, in a great measure, set right that which during the interval had gone wrong in the social and political economy of the nation. These regulations were designed to bless the rich no less than the poor. They would restrain avarice and a disposition for self-exaltation, and would cultivate a noble spirit of benevolence; and by fostering good will and confidence between all classes, they would promote social order, the stability of government.”³¹
- c. **Welfare Policy:** “If the law given by God for the benefit of the poor had been continued to be carried out, how different would be the

present condition of the world, morally, spiritually and temporally! Selfishness and self-importance would not be manifested as now, but each would cherish a kind regard for the happiness and welfare of others; and such widespread destitution as is now seen in many lands would not exist. The principles which God has enjoined would prevent the terrible evils that in all ages have resulted from the oppression of the rich toward the poor and the suspicion and hatred of the poor toward the rich. While they might hinder the amassing of great wealth and the indulgence of unbounded luxury, they would prevent the consequent ignorance and degradation of tens of thousands whose ill-paid servitude is required to build up these colossal fortunes. They would bring a peaceful solution of those problems that now threaten to fill the world with anarchy and bloodshed.”³²

- i. To provide for the poor, a second tithe of all the increase was required.³³
- ii. The law of God gave the poor a right to a certain portion of the produce of the soil. When hungry, a man was at liberty to go to his neighbor’s field or orchard or vineyard, and eat of the grain or fruit to satisfy his hunger. Deuteronomy 23:24-25.
- iii. The gleanings of harvest forgotten in the field, the corners of the field not gleaned all belong to the stranger, the fatherless and the widows. Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Leviticus 19:9-10
- iv. Every seventh year special provision was made for the poor. People were not to sow; they should not dress the vineyard in the spring; and they must expect neither harvest nor vintage. Of that which the land produced spontaneously they might eat while fresh, but they were not to lay up any portion of it in storehouses. The yield of this year was to be free for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and even for the creatures of the field. Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:5
- v. The Hebrews were instructed to assist those in need by lending them money without charging interest. Leviticus 25:35-37

Many of the policies set forth by God in Old Testament chronology were echoed in the New Testament, giving evidence that certain of these original practices remain relevant for today’s societies. For example, 2 Corinthians 13:1 requires that all matters must be confirmed by two or three witnesses; 2 Thessalonians 3:10 speaks to the fact that if a man will not work, then he should not eat.

Whether referencing the theocracy of the Old Testament or Christ’s kingdom of New Testament times, both differed dramatically from temporal governments of that or any time because the principles of Christ’s kingdom are reflective of His pure character. However, many turned away from Christ’s kingdom, disappointed that, rather than assigning them power, it gave preference to the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3); love was to replace the hatred for one’s enemies (Matthew 5:43-44); and external acts were deemed reflections of the heart – that an unfaithful look is equal to that of a divorce (Matthew 5:27-28). Rather than the past practice of exacting “an eye for an eye,” they now were

taught to offer the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-39). The rule of Christ's kingdom continues: not the braggadocios nor self-advancing but the meek will inherit the earth, not the most clever but the pure in heart will see God, and not political hawks but peacemakers shall be known as children of God (Matthew 5:3-9).

In summary, the overarching principle of the kingdom of God suggests that His ambassadors are to exhibit a standard exceeding earthly mandates. For this reason, citizens of Christ's kingdom have something of worth to contribute to the broader dialogue in society, lighting the darkness.

PERPLEXING TEXTS FOR CHRISTIANS REGARDING POLITICS

The vast majority of Christians support the concepts of Creation, the Fall, and Redemption. Creation reminds us that each person was made in the image of God; the Fall underscores the fact that we are at war – between forces of good and evil. And Redemption assures us that, no matter how seemingly at variance with God's image, individuals are redeemable. Furthermore, most Christians acknowledge God as Sovereign, and that both the state and faith communities have an obligation to “act justly and love mercy” (Micah 6:8). However, it is at this juncture that great divergence of thought forms with regard to Christian involvement in politics.

The Jehovah Witness' eschew any form of political participation, including voting, entering military service, or holding elected office based on the belief that “all governments are under Satan's control.”³⁴ In sharp contrast, the Conference of Catholic Bishops formulates positions on social justice and public policy, staffs an Office of Government Liaison representing the church's position before Congress,³⁵ and maintains websites such as www.thecatholicvote.org by which to inform the church laity of positions held on various political issues. Furthermore, the church holds a very real and visible presence at the United Nations, maintaining a voice in discussions relative to global issues and governance.

C. J. Cadoux acknowledges that Christian thought towards the state sways between two extremes, from absolute condemnation and rejection on the one hand, and hearty approval and even cooperation on the other.³⁶ Naturally, both sides rely on scriptural authority to support their positions. But the scriptural references proving most problematic for Christians, as to their involvement in politics, seems to rest on the following five arguments:

1. “And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.... They are longing for a better country – a heavenly one.” Hebrews 11:13, 14, 16. Again, the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Philippians (3:20-21), declares that “our citizenship is in heaven.”

Argument: These texts are often used to denote Christians' alien and stranger status on earth, thereby advancing the notion of no contact at all with rulers of this world, focusing solely on heaven, not becoming involved in government or politics.

Response: The need for temporal government is inherent in human affairs. As Reinhold Niebuhr observed, "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."³⁷

In his polemical work, *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon joins Niebuhr in defense of the need and purpose of human government. "In Irenaeus' view, humanity has departed from God and has reached the apex of savagery.... In response to this savagery, God imposed upon humans the fear of humanity because they did not recognize the fear of God. Thus, human government originated from God because man had disregard for God. God proposed for humans to attain some degree of justice and mutual forbearance by being subjected to human authority and by being educated through the custodial guidance of human laws.... For Irenaeus, the dread of the sword substitutes for humanity's failure to fear God."³⁸

Jesus' call to "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21) clearly indicates that Christians hold citizenship in two worlds. The Apostle Paul likewise recognized that while his ultimate citizenship was in heaven, he did not deny his Roman citizenship.

This dualistic citizenship maintained by Christians is perhaps best captured by Ronald F. Thiemann's notion of "pilgrim citizenship" and the responsibility accompanying this position. "Recognizing the penultimate character of the public realm, believers will not seek their final resting place in this sphere of power and persuasion. Nonetheless, people of faith will often find the public realm to be a place of genuine hospitality and fulfillment, a place in which their own deepest convictions and beliefs are tested, criticized, confirmed, and reformed. Precisely because a pluralistic society requires conversation and exchange with those who are 'different,' public space provides a context within which faith seeks understanding in dialogue with persons holding diverse commitments.

"Conversation makes a crucial contribution to understanding in the public realm because people of faith do not enter that realm with a divinely authorized program of policy prescriptions. Religious persons bring a set of fundamental convictions and orienting principles to public debate, but the specification and application of the resources of faith to particular situations can only be determined in situ.... Religious convictions and principles may provide a basic framework within which policy reflection takes place for the believer, but those resources do not determine choices in the public realm."³⁹

The heavenly citizenship extended to earthlings is not intended to have us pine away nor disparage the here and now but rather to actively engage in this world, and through those contacts, invite persons to become loyal citizens of the permanent kingdom yet to come.

2. “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are His. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.” Daniel 2:20-21.

Argument: This response came from Nebuchadnezzar following Daniel’s interpretation of the king’s illusive and disconcerting dream. Some Christians argue that God’s work of establishing and dethroning earthly leaders make unnecessary, even meddling, our involvement in elections, governance, and politics. In short, the argument is that God is the ultimate sovereign and any human involvement in these matters is superfluous. God requires no assistance.

Response: Just as we are assured that God will provide for our every need if we are poor or hungry, the Bible also provides stern warning against laziness and unhealthy behaviors. We are blessed with the knowledge that if we suffer from factors beyond our control, we shall be sustained, but are not to test the Lord’s generosity and lean on it as if Christianity were a culture of entitlement.

Ellen White also powerfully condemns this doctrine of lethargy. “Hearts that respond to the influence of the Holy Spirit are the channels through which God’s blessing flows. Were those who serve God removed from the earth, and His Spirit withdrawn from among men, this world would be left to desolation and destruction, the fruit of Satan’s dominion. Though the wicked know it not, they owe even the blessings of this life to the presence in the world, of God’s people whom they despise and oppress. But if Christians are such in name only, they are like the salt that has lost its savor. They have no influence for good in the world. Through their misrepresentation of God they are worse than unbelievers. ‘Ye are the light of the world.’ The Jews thought to confine the benefits of salvation to their own nation; but Christ showed them that salvation is like the sunshine. It belongs to the whole world... to manifest itself in every business transaction and in all our social relations.”⁴⁰

Consider the case of German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. While believing government to be divinely ordained authority over which earthly dominion was to be exercised, nevertheless, Bonhoeffer felt compelled to speak to the ideological impoverishment of Nazi treatment of Jews. And when the government ascended the pulpits, assuming mastery of the congregations in his native-land, Bonhoeffer moved from a strictly non-political position to assuming a co-conspirator’s role in the assassination of Adolph Hitler. For this, he was hanged, being one of only a few who spoke out against the excesses of that government.⁴¹

Although Bonhoeffer’s case is one of extreme, the point remains: salt only works on contact. When Christians choose not to fully engage in society, not only is the salt of no use, but the steak also remains flavorless. Through the Bible, God has revealed truth to us (John 17:17, Romans 12:1-2) - the church is to work for a just state. However, it is important to note that this is not to be interpreted as a Christian state or theocracy.⁴²

J.P. Moreland comments on what he terms “a loss of boldness in confronting the idea structures in our culture with effective Christian witness.... Anti-intellectualism has drained the church of its boldness in witnessing and speaking out about important issues in the places where ideas are generated. And for those who do have such courage, anti-

intellectualism has created a context in which we Christians often come off as shallow, defensive, and reactionary, instead of thoughtful, confident, and articulate.”⁴³ Indeed, there is a definite need for intelligent interaction between Church members and the State to bear witness to Christ.

3. “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?... ‘Therefore come out from them and be separate,’ says the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 6:14-17

Argument: Politics is corrupt and dirty. Christians are to remain unsullied from the world.

Response: It is true that politics has often degenerated into a very dirty business. “It is emphatically not true, however, that politics is necessarily evil. On the contrary, politics as such is neither good nor bad. The word refers simply to the conduct of public affairs. Basically, politics has... the public good as its main purpose.”⁴⁴

Christians must permeate with their moral leaven by taking stands on issues such as slavery, gambling establishments in the community, what is aired on public broadcasts, on maintaining individual freedoms. Moral issues are constantly being debated in the public arena. What if Christians maintain silence? Will it be thought that we have no position on the issue, no wisdom on which course to pursue, no interest in the critical issues of law, governance, and humankind? Did not Amos insist that justice should roll down as waters (Amos 5:24)? And would it be responsible of the Good Samaritan to repeatedly collect victims along a roadside without inquiring as to how to reduce the crime in the area? Could a Christian dispense bread to the hungry yet never question the nation’s economic conditions that cause the breadline? Formulating public policy aids us in responding to the lawyer’s question of Christ, “Who is my neighbor?”

Daniel Estes refers to Christians as “stewards of the ballot,” and pointing out that “this whole world of citizenship, it is crystal clear, should be entered by the people of God with Christian courage, Christian convictions, and Christian commitment. The alternative is to leave the running of the land to the wisdom of unbelievers.”⁴⁵

When writing on religious liberty, Ellen White stressed the importance of an active church. She wrote, “We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience. Fervent, effectual prayer should be ascending to heaven that this calamity may be deferred until we can accomplish the work which has so long been neglected. Let there be more earnest prayer *and then let us work in harmony with our prayers.*”⁴⁶

The Seventh-day Adventist Church received further counsel from Ellen White with regards to appropriateness in politics. In a message entitled, “Special Testimony Relating to Politics,” she attempts to establish specific parameters with regards to the church’s involvement in politics.

1. Those who “teach the Bible” in the churches and schools are not to make apparent their prejudices for or against certain politicians or political issues. This is understandable in light of the fact that strong variance in political opinions might adversely color scriptural truths taught by church leaders and school bible teachers.
2. Church members are not to vote along party lines “for we do not know whom we are voting for.”
3. Members are admonished not to “take part in any political schemes.” Further on she refers to political maneuverings that would be of a dishonest or crafty nature. Biblical counsel to not be “unequally yoked” means with those who would pursue “darkness, error, sin, and unrighteousness.” Christians are to be governed by elevated and holy principles.
4. Members should not align themselves with politicians who would be unsupportive of religious liberty.
5. Christians are not to wear “political badges” that would in any way lead to division within the church.
6. Tithe should not be used to pay teachers, pastors, or others “speechifying on political questions.”
7. Christian conversation should not have as its theme questions at issue in the world.
8. Church publications are not to laud influential individuals and their works; rather, “let the Lord be exalted. Remember that earthly kingdoms, nations, monarchs, statesmen, counselors, great armies, and all worldly magnificence and glory are as the dust....”⁴⁷

On March 30, 1911, Ellen White continued her admonition to church leaders in dealings with government. She wrote, “By some of our brethren many things have been spoken and written that are interpreted as expressing antagonism to government and law. It is a mistake thus to lay ourselves open to misunderstanding. It is not wise to find fault continually with what is done by the rulers of government. It is not our work to attack individuals or institutions. We should exercise great care lest we be understood as putting ourselves in opposition to the civil authorities....

“We should not work in a manner that will mark us out as seeming to advocate treason. We should weed out from our writings and utterances every expression that, taken by itself, could be so misrepresented as to make it appear antagonistic to law and order. The less we make direct charges against authorities and powers, the greater work we shall be able to accomplish, both in America and in foreign countries.”⁴⁸

Some within the church have asserted that Ellen White wrote and spoke in opposition to Seventh-day Adventists’ involvement in politics. However, was this church leader not the same to provide encouragement to young people contemplating politics as a Christian vocation when she wrote, “Dear Youth, What is the aim and purpose of your life? Are you ambitious for education that you may have a name and a position in the world? Have you thoughts that you dare not express that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these

aspirations. You may every one of you make the mark. You should be content with no average attainments. Aim high, and spare no pain to reach the standard.”⁴⁹

White, herself, was found to speak publicly and publish extensively against the enactment of Sunday laws (RH, March 30, 1911), in opposition to Western Australian church members being imprisoned for working on Sunday (RH, March 30, 1911), in favor of the strictly-enforced city and town ordinances closing saloons (ST, December 4, 1907), against those who were oppressing the colored race (1T p. 534), against the “sin of slavery” (1T p. 264), and against Seventh-day Adventists taking up arms in the Civil War (2 BIO p. 40-45). White’s life demonstrated that there is a call to Christian involvement in politics born, not of partisanship but rather a thoughtful study of the issues, careful consideration of the various points, and responsible action.

4. Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” John 18:36

Argument: The most important task of the church is to preach the Good News. We are here because of rebellion against God – that is a spiritual reality. Thus, the cure for humankind’s condition is spiritual, not just ethical or political. The better world and government will reign only once the gospel goes to the entire world (Mark 13:10) – making the spiritual of paramount importance.⁵⁰

Response: In this present day, many well-intended religious groups are staging a return to a moralistic, scripture-based government, believing this political restructuring to be the path to salvation for the entire polity. “They desire to make our Lord the ruler of the kingdoms of this world, the ruler in its courts and camps, its legislative halls, its palaces and market places. They expect Him to rule through legal enactments, enforced by human authority. Since Christ is not now here in person, they themselves will undertake to act in His stead, to execute the laws of His kingdom. The establishment of such a kingdom is what the Jews desired in the days of Christ. They would have received Jesus, had He been willing to establish a temporal dominion, to enforce what they regarded as the laws of God, and to make them the expositors of His will and the agents of His authority. But He said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’ He would not accept the earthly throne.”⁵¹

As early as the 1700s, John Jacques Rousseau recognized that sectarian religions inevitably breed factionalism, the kind of theosophical warfare that plagued Europe in centuries past.⁵² Likewise, James W. Skillen finds that various faiths entering the political fray often divide. “It leaves the body of Christ unnecessarily fragmented, bringing a ‘scattered voice’” in the political arena.”⁵³ In short, within the worlds of faith there are seemingly irreconcilable differences; how much more so if religions move into temporal governance.

True, with justice, fairness and concern for the vulnerable, Christians can show evidence of their faith through their works. However, we must be clear in our purposes. An account is related of Father Taylor, during an exciting election campaign. Following the offertory he rose to pray, “O Lord, give us good men to rule over us, pure men who fear Thee, righteous men, temperate men, who – pshaw, Lord, what’s the use of veering and hauling and boxing around the compass? Give us George N. Biggs for governor.”⁵⁴

5. Christians regularly call for the separation of ‘church and state.’

Argument: This separation of church and state is allegedly in an effort to maintain religious practice free from encroachment, interference, or domination of government. It is further argued that the state will one day prove to be the enemy of “believers.” “Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils.... On my account you will be brought before governors and kings, as witnesses to them....” Matthew 10:17-18.

Response: The history of humankind provides ample evidence of the deleterious effects when religion and politics commingle. There have been times when the church dominated the state (Constantine), when the state dominated the church (Nazism), and when the state and church co-opted (Puritanism, Taliban).

Alexis de Tocqueville observed that “there have been religions intimately linked to earthly governments, dominating men’s souls both by terror and by faith; but when a religion makes such an alliance, I am not afraid to say that it makes the same mistake as any man might; it sacrifices the future for the present, and by gaining a power to which it has no claim, it risks its legitimate authority.... When a religion chooses to rely on the interests of this world, it becomes almost as fragile as all earthly powers.... It does not need their support in order to live, and in serving them it may die....

“When a nation adopts a democratic social state and communities show republican inclinations, it becomes increasingly dangerous for religion to ally itself with authority. For the time is coming when power will pass from hand to hand, political theories follow one another, and men, laws, and even constitutions vanish or alter daily, and that not for a limited time but continually. Agitation and instability are natural elements in democratic republics, just as immobility and somnolence are the rule in absolute monarchies. ...if the Americans, who have handed over the world of politics to the experiments of innovators, had not placed religion beyond their reach, what could it hold on to in the ebb and flow of human opinions? Amid the struggle of parties, where would the respect due to it be? What would become of its immortality when everything around it is perishing?”⁵⁵

Although utmost caution must be exercised regarding church-state relations, “the separation of church and state is not a doctrine to disfranchise Christians while guaranteeing them freedom of worship. It is rather a doctrine that guarantees the opportunity of both the churches and the state to realize their maximum potential.... It permits a creative interchange of ideas in which the best interests of both church and state are preserved.”⁵⁶ Advocates of church – state separation never intended to produce an amoral state. Religion cannot be compartmentalized in our lives. It is the total of all that we are.

Augustine of Hippo resolved for himself the conflict of church and state by framing a theory of two cities. “The two cities mean that the spiritual and the political realms are instituted by God and accountable to God; but they are guided by different kinds of law and serve different ends.... The institutions and activities that are prescribed by God for the spiritual realm... are governed by divine law, with little flexibility for prudence to adapt them to time and place. But the temporal realm is of a different

character. There, God has not clearly revealed a principle of divine law to determine the major choices; God thus leaves a huge opening for prudence to operate in politics, economics, social relations, and military matters. God has not clearly indicated which form of government in this present world is best (monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy); which economic system is best (feudalism, capitalism, or socialism); which arrangement of social classes and distribution of wealth is best (pure equality or various degrees of inequality); and which organization of the military and which rules of diplomacy and warfare are best. Since God's will is not clearly specified by divine revelation in these areas; prudence must decide what is best on natural or human grounds, taking into account the fallen but rational nature of man and serving the secondary and limited goals of earthly happiness."⁵⁷

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In summary, it would appear that four options exist with regards to manifesting a presence within the political arena. The first is to deny and work in opposition to the kingdom of God, to work as did the men of Babel, determined to establish a government independent of God, "endeavoring to substitute laws to suite the purpose of their own selfish and cruel hearts."⁵⁸ But, as Tocqueville confessed, "the incomplete joys of this world will never satisfy his heart... and constantly drive his soul toward contemplation of the next world, and it is religion that leads him thither. Religion, therefore, is... as natural to the human heart as hope itself."⁵⁹

The second option is to work for the establishment of a God-government on earth has did the Shakers and, more recently the Taliban, forcing all of society to subscribe to a singular belief. But forced participation is diametrically in opposition to God's voluntary form of citizenship.

A third option of manifesting a Godly presence in our world is to construct impenetrable barriers between the faith community and those outside the faith as did ancient Israel. The concern by religious communities is that of becoming contaminated by irreligious civil community thought, activities and dealings. It is true that "civil community... shares no common awareness of their relationship to God.... No appeal can be made to the Word or Spirit of God in the running of its affairs. The civil community as such is spiritually blind and ignorant. It has neither faith, nor love, nor hope. It has no creed and no gospel. Prayers are not part of its life, and its members are not brothers and sisters."⁶⁰ But which is the greater error – to be isolated from a failing world or to grasp a better reality of how to serve the nations as salt (flavoring) and light (enlightenment)?

The final, and I believe, preferred option of Christians in politics is somewhat along the lines of the idea advanced by Augustine. His theory of two cities is that while the earthly city and the City of God are distinct, that does not eliminate religion from national life. In fact, he held that religion enriches the life of the nation.⁶¹ Augustine's

worldly order provides a framework within which the church can exist and flourish. In this way, the church can actively exert an influence for good within the global community while serving as a witness to Sovereign God and the kingdom of heaven. Christians cannot get by with practicing a private religion. We must enter the dialogue; be part of the deliberations. How else will others be fitted to “see and glorify our Father which is in heaven”?

“Your kingdom come,
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”
Matthew 6:10

-
- ¹ White, Ellen G. *The Desire of Ages*. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, pp. 114-115.
- ² White, Ellen G. "Israel Desires a King." In *Selected Testimonies*. July 13, 1882.
- ³ Murphy, Francis Xavier. *Politics and the Early Christian*. NY: Desclee Company, Inc., 1967, p. 32.
- ⁴ White, Ellen G. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958, pp. 761-764.
- ⁵ Storkey, Alan. *Jesus and Politics. Confronting the Power*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005, p. 298.
- ⁶ White, Ellen G. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947, p. 12
- ⁷ White, Ellen G. *The Desire of Ages*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, p. 354.
- ⁸ White, Ellen G. *The Great Controversy*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911, pp. 666, 668, and 671.
- ⁹ White, Ellen G. *Acts of the Apostles*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947, p. 13.
- ¹⁰ White, Ellen G. *Prophets and Kings*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947, p. 134.
- ¹¹ White, Ellen G. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958, p. 217.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p.216-221.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 368-369.
- ¹⁴ White, Ellen G. *Prophets and Kings*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947, p. 25.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 499.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 507-509
- ¹⁹ White, Ellen G. *Prophets and Kings*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947, pp. 607-610.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 601-602.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 628-631.
- ²² *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.
- ²³ White, Ellen G. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947, pp. 107-108.
- ²⁴ White, Ellen G. *The Great Controversy*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911, pp. 82 and 84-85.
- ²⁵ White, Ellen G. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958, p. 310
- ²⁶ White, Ellen G. *The Desire of Ages*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, p. 367.
- ²⁷ White, Ellen G. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958, p. 532
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 515-516.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 535.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 310-311.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 534-535.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 536.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 530-531.
- ³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah's_Witnesses#endnote_w96_0601_1.
- ³⁵ www.usccb.org/index.shtml.
- ³⁶ Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1931, p. 97.
- ³⁷ Niebuhr, Reinhold. *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*. NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944, p. 11.
- ³⁸ Bingham, D. Jeffrey. "Irenaeus and the Kingdoms of the World." In *God and Caesar*. Edited by Michael Bauman and David Hall. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1994, p. 30.

- ³⁹ Thiemann, Ronald F. *Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy*. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996, p. 169.
- ⁴⁰ White, Ellen G. *The Desire of Ages*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, pp. 306-307.
- ⁴¹ de Visme Williamson, Renee. *Politics and Protestant Theology. An Intrepreation of Tillich, Barth, Bonhoeffer, and Brunner*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1976, pp. 65-100.
- ⁴² Geisler, Norman L. "A Premillennial View of Law and Government." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142, (July-September 1985): 250-266.
- ⁴³ Moreland, J. P. *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*. Colorado Springs, CO: NAV Press, 1997, p. 31.
- ⁴⁴ Valentine, Foy. *Citizenship for Christians*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1965, p. 8-9.
- ⁴⁵ Estes, Daniel J. "Psalm 101 and the Ethos of Political Leadership" In *God and Caesar*. Edited by Michael Bauman and David Hall. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1994, p. 23.
- ⁴⁶ White, Ellen G. *Testimonies to the Church*. Volume 5, Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, p. 714.
- ⁴⁷ White, Ellen G. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1923, pp. 475-484.
- ⁴⁸ White, Ellen G. *Review & Herald*. (March 30, 1911) paragraph 2 and 5.
- ⁴⁹ White, Ellen G. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1923, p. 29.
- ⁵⁰ Harper, Brad. "The Kingdom of God in George Eldon Ladd as a Theological Foundation for the Role of the Church in Society." In *God and Caesar*. Edited by Michael Bauman and David Hall, Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1994, pp. 187-200.
- ⁵¹ White, Ellen G. *The Desire of Ages*. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, p. 509.
- ⁵² Thiemann, Ronald F. *Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996, p. 29.
- ⁵³ Doyzis, David T. *Political Visions & Illusion*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003, pp. 184-185.
- ⁵⁴ Seifert, Harvey Seifert. *The Church in Community Action*. NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952, p. 164.
- ⁵⁵ de Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*. Translated by George Lawrence, Edited by J. P. Mayer New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. 1988, pp. 297-298.
- ⁵⁶ Valentine, Foy. *Citizenship for Christians*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1965, p. 19.
- ⁵⁷ Kraynak, Robert P. *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy: God and Politics in the Fallen World*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press 2001, pp. 184-185.
- ⁵⁸ White, Ellen G. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958, pp. 119 and 123.
- ⁵⁹ de Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*. Translated by George Lawrence, Edited by J. P. Mayer New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1988, p. 296
- ⁶⁰ Barth, K. "The Christian Community and the Civil Community." In *Selected Writings* edited by C. Green. Glasgow: Collins, 1989, p. 267.
- ⁶¹ Kraynak, Robert P. *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy: God and Politics in the Fallen World* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press 2001, p. 192.