

Letter from PLYMOUTH ROCK

August, 1986
Vol. 8, #4

ON SELECTING THOSE WHO WILL REPRESENT US *

"Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, having covetousness and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers over hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens."

De 1:17

CHRISTIANS ARE NOT second-class citizens.

When we accept Christ Jesus as our Lord and Master, we are not relieved of our duties or excluded from our rights as citizens of this republic.

As the Apostle Paul wrote, we take on a dual citizenship (Phil 3:20).

We become members of a distinctly different society ("a peculiar people zealous unto good works" -- Titus 2:14). We become citizens of a kingdom not of this world. Yet, as God has ordained, we continue to invoke civil authority to uphold our physical liberty and to secure our public safety (Rom 13: 6,7). Thus, we must properly share in the responsibility of maintaining a public order in which we may be free to worship God, to serve Him and to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mat 28:19,20).

(Let those who would deny the Christian's concern or responsibility in civil matters look to the lot of those Believers under governments where liberty is denied. Let them fully comprehend the obstacles such ungodly systems place in the path of those who seek to fulfill God's dominion mandate and Christ's Great Commission.)

Our citizenship duties are important both to our Christian witness and our physical well-being. Our responsibilities to participate in the selection of those who will represent us in civil government take on an added significance. While others may concern themselves only with material welfare and civil liberty, Christians must seek both religious (spiritual) and civil (physical) freedom. Thus, we must shun the panaceas of secularism and seek to elect as magistrates those men who will be "ministers of God to the people for good."

History testifies that when godly Christians neglect such governmental responsibilities, those who deny God or disregard His word will fill the public void and invade the private domain. To paraphrase the Christian statesman, Edmund Burke, the penalty the godly pay for doing nothing is to be ruled by the ungodly who do something.

* Long time members of the Foundation's "Nightly Family" may recall that this letter was originally published in April 1980. Since then we have had many requests for reprints and the use of our "Family" has increased many times over. Thus, we felt it appropriate to reissue this letter at this time. Copies are available by writing to Plymouth Rock Foundation, Marlborough, NH.

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"It is true that you cannot legislate evil out of the world, but by an impartial, rigorous justice you can make it too costly to practice ... and by wise and Christian legislation you may limit its reach and remove its temptations ... and for this, in its most perfect measure, and to our utmost ability, the God of righteousness holds every man responsible.

"What our country needs in its leaders and legislators are the purest Christian principles, the loftiest personal character, the highest and most unselfish political aims; that they may be men who no gold can buy, no adulation of the people can mislead and no spirit of ambition can pervert." (Rev. S. W. Folsom, 1876).

Who but the godly will seek to elect such men to public office? And, is that not properly part of the Christian's task for Him?

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THE LORD GOD has provided us with rules and measurements to employ in the selection, support and election of those who are to represent us in civil office. These have been too often ignored in the past; we reap the evil fruit. If we continue to fail our God in this regard, the coming harvest will be even more bitter.

Consider these guidelines set forth in His Holy Bible. We are to select for public officers:

- o MEN WHO LOVE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATE INIQUITY; MEN OF TRUTH (Ex 18:21).
[Since men act according to the principles that govern their hearts, an unrighteous man will be an unrighteous ruler - Ps 25:28].
- o MEN WHO ARE KNOWN TO US (Deut 17:15); MEN WHO ARE KNOWN TO BE WISE IN THE FEAR (respect) OF THE LORD (Ex 18:21).
[We are not to support ungodly men; we are not to place our trust in men we do not know. Before we give our support and cast our lot, we are to take time to inform our selves fully as to the person, their principles and their policies.]
- o MEN WHO ARE ABLE AND WHO FEAR GOD; MEN WHO HATE COVERTHOUSNESS (Ex 18:21).
[The need is for men with clear minds and stout hearts; men conscientious in their desire to serve God; men of integrity who cannot be bought and who will not take the property of one to solicit favors from another.]
- o MEN WHO RESPECT TRUTH RATHER THAN THE AREA OF POSITION OR THE POWER OF PRESSURE GROUPS (Deut 1:17).
[Men who will take time to study the issues, measure them by the word of God, and be resolute in the application of His law. Since those in office are to be His ministers (Rom 13:1-4), they are to represent Him faithfully (Ps 75:10).]
- o MEN WHO WILL NOT BE SWAYED BY FLATTERY OR MOVED BY BRIBERY (Deut 16:19).
[Men who will not be turned from their duty by smooth talk or silver coin; men who will stand fast on the whole word of God.]
- o MEN WHO WILL PUT THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE ABOVE PERSONAL, PRIVATE, OR SPECIAL INTERESTS (Deut 17:17; Lev 19:15).
[He who either to advance himself, or to be revenged on another, will push injurious laws, or pervert the true intent of such as are in force, are ... under the influence of a narrow spirit" and not worthy of public trust.]
- o MEN WHO ARE IMPARTIAL; MEN WHO SEEK JUSTICE (Deut 16:18).

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(And, what is justice? Justice is not hyphenated, it cannot be considered apart from obedience to God; it must be "influenced and maintained" by adherence to God's laws.) */

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WE MAY ALSO properly employ the Biblical requirements which deal with ecclesiastical government as guides in our pursuit of civil government; the Christian methodology of government embraces both church and civil polity.

There is good guidance to be found in the study of [1 Tim 3:1-13] as we seek to choose those who will represent us. Consider these qualifications; require them in those you would have represent you -- in both church and civil affairs:

1. THEY MUST BE BLAMELESS, WITHOUT SCANDAL IN PERSONAL OR PUBLIC LIFE. They must be on guard against the wiles of satan and the ways of this world; temperate in their actions; honest and direct; not given to wessel words or frothy statements or ambiguous posturings; not double-minded, not luke-warm. They should be willing and able to communicate their knowledge of God's word (and Word) and the Biblical principles and precepts of government (v 2).
2. THEY SHOULD BE FIRM IN THEIR BELIEFS, KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THEIR POSITIONS; BUT NOT MEAN, AND NOT QUARRELsome (anger can hide ignorance). As they are not to strike with their hands so they are not to brawl with their tongues. They are to be ambassadors for Christ, commissioned by Him. They must not be covetous, knowing that covetousness is always a sin but even more grievous in one who is charged with being a public servant (v 3).
3. THEY MUST GOVERN THEMSELVES AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS WELL. The manner in which they control themselves and their families indicates the manner in which they will handle the affairs of office (including the way in which they appoint and administer their staffs). The personal habits and private lives of those who would seek public office is very much a matter for close examination by the electorate (v 4,5).
4. THEY SHOULD BE PERSONS OF EXPERIENCE, OF SOUND JUDGMENT AND PURPOSE. Just as a pastor must know God's word and the workings of Christ's church, so the civil officer (who also is to be a minister of God) should know God's word and the Biblical principles and purposes of civil government. The more knowledgeable an office-holder is of the principles and proper purposes of civil government, the less susceptible he will be to false pride (keeping in mind that vanity -- the great snare of politics -- was the sin which turned angels into devils) (v 6,7).

FINALLY, AS HIS, we are to seek to do all things pleasing unto The Lord. Thus, decisions relating to public office-holders are to be approached with prayer for His guidance and direction (Eph 3:6). We are told to pray for those in authority ([1 Tim 2:2]). Such de facto prayer is vital as we seek to construct

* For a more comprehensive development of these qualifications, see "The Character of a Good Ruler," Rev. Samuel Willard, 1894, The Christian Ministry of The Churches of The United States, pg. 79-7. Foundation for American Christian Education, 2946 Terry Park Ave., San Francisco Ca 94111.

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a godly nation. But, prayer before the fact of the election is just as important so that men acceptable unto God may be selected to seek public office (Deut 17:15).

We are to be discerning; not taken in by calculated words or slick slogans. We are to "try the spirits whether they be of God" (1 John 4:1) lest we be led astray by demagogues. There are "many false prophets gone out into the world" — even into the world of politics. Remember: The man who will do/say anything to get into office is the man who will do/say anything to stay in office.

Consider our Master's parable of the two sons (Mat 21:28-31).

When the father told the first son to go work in the vineyard, that son answered, "I will not." But, he repented and did go. The second son, by contrast, was quick to reply to his father, "I will go, sir." But, he went not. Both sons were at fault but, as Jesus asked, "which of the two did the will of his father?"

Consider, now, this parable patterned after The Lord's.

There were two men seeking election to public office. The first man did not profess to follow Christ. Yet, in his personal life and in his public affairs, he sought to be a God-fearing man. He voted against federal funding of abortions; he opposed ERA; he stood against the political and economic and cultural co-habitation of this nation with the Soviets; he insisted that industry was wrong and refused to bow down to those who pressured him for "gay" rights; he insisted deficits were immoral, that they mortgaged future generations, and he was strongly pro-family — standing firm against those who pushed for government intervention into the rights and responsibilities of parents.

Now, the second man was quick to profess his being "born again." He was often invited to speak from the pulpit; he gave forth a winsome witness of love. But examine his voting record — his political fruits: He voted for federal funding of abortions; he was strongly in favor of ERA and "gay" rights; he urged making covenant with the Soviet Union as the expedient thing to do; he advocated a continuing debt-economy with growing deficits and inflation, and he pushed for a federal agency to oversee the affairs of the parent and the child.

Which of the two obeyed God the more? Which was, in fact, a better minister of God to the people for good according to Biblical principles and precepts?

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Be not deceived. Not every one who cries, "Lord, Lord!" is of God or knows His Word). There are many who say — and do not. A man's word may be sweet but his works can be bitter. Words are but buds that promise; it is the deed that is the fruit.. And, it is by their fruits that we shall know them (Mat 7:16).

"Tell me how the American Republic will treat Christ and I will tell you the future of the republic.. Because the destiny of a nation depends upon its relation to Christ, I stand at the portals of our nation and, as a loyal citizen, cry, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in' ..."

The votes we cast for public officers are the seeds we sow
and the harvest we reap in civil affairs.

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Letter from PLYMOUTH ROCK is published by the Plymouth Rock Foundation, Inc., JOHN G. TALCOTT, Jr., president; BUS WALTON, executive director. Plymouth Rock is a non-denominational, non-profit, non-sect educational foundation incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Financial support comes from those who voluntarily associate themselves with the Foundation and its programs to restore the

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