

# Straight Bible Talk

Manchester Church of Christ, Share Christ's Love and Share His Message

## Can the Government Save Us?

The issue of the relationship of church and state has bedeviled people for centuries. Christianity began in a world ruled by the Romans. And, in turn, their government was heavily influenced by the religion of the Romans.

Christians began as a persecuted minority. They did not enjoy the favor of the Jewish government, nor of those who ruled over the Jews, the Romans. In varying degrees, Christians were persecuted by Jews and Romans. That continued until the days of Constantine when Christians got the upper hand and began to persecute the followers of the old Roman religion and, later, the Jews.

In the years that followed, the Roman empire declined in power and the church increased in power until the day came that the church controlled the government. With the church firmly in control, the laws of the empire were dictated by the church. While one might expect such an arrangement to lead to a high level of moral conduct, in fact, it led to a degeneration of morals in the leadership of the church itself.

In the beginning, Christians did not expect the Roman government to institute moral reforms. They set out to bring a moral revolution by preaching the good news about Jesus. Conversion to the Christian religion meant adopting the principles, ethics and morals of Jesus. Lives were changed and the moral climate of the Roman empire was affected by those who became followers of Jesus.

When the church achieved the power to legislate, the preaching of the gospel to

bring about change was abandoned in a rush to change people's lives by adopting rules and regulations to govern their behavior.

Governments rule through laws and regulations. Those rules and regulations are enforced by people who are often violators themselves. Perhaps the analogy of letting the inmates run the asylum comes to mind as a comparison.

Someone complains that you cannot legislate morality. All governments are involved in legislating morality. Thus we have laws against killing, stealing, kidnapping, drug use and much more. All of these are attempts to legislate morality. Such laws work in a limited way. But ultimately the laws of government do not eliminate immoral behavior, they just define it and inflict penalties on those who break the laws.

Can the government save us from those who want to commit immoral acts, such as killing us? The answer is clearly, no. The government can only make it more difficult. It cannot prevent immorality.

Sometimes the government's attempts to control behavior really accomplish almost nothing. Prohibition is an illustration of this principle. When there is widespread disrespect for the government's laws, behavior remains pretty much unchanged. That seems to be the case now with much of the drug abuse. Laws and enforcement seem to have little impact on those determined to sell and use drugs.

Many are on the bandwagon to have abortion declared illegal. It seems to be the prevailing view that if we could just elect

December, 2006

Volume 1 Issue 12

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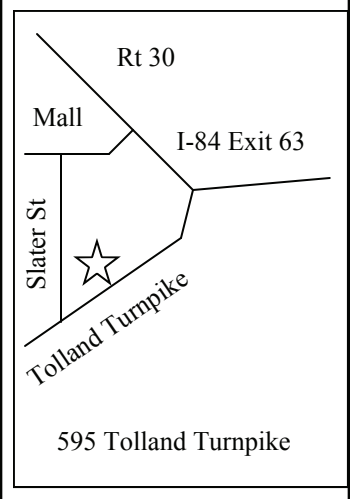
Meeting at  
595 Tolland Turnpike

Sun Bible Classes—9 AM  
Sun Worship—10 AM  
Sun Eve Worship—6:00 PM  
Wed Bible Class—7:00 PM

“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

Acts 17:31

All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated.



- Please send me a free Bible
- I am interested in a Bible study program
- I am looking for a church
- Please send me a free copy of the book,  
"A Christian Survival Manual"
- Please add my name to receive "Straight  
Bible Talk" free each month
- I have a question

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enough pro-life people to positions in government, abortion would cease. I am against abortion so please do not misunderstand me. Electing pro-life politicians will no more end abortion that electing anti-drug politicians will end drug use. Electing anti-killing politicians has not ended murder, etc.

The government cannot save us from immoral conduct. It can make life more difficult for the immoral. That is true for the killers, thieves, drug users and others now. But laws do not change people. It is only the law of God written on the heart that can change a person.

Changing people's hearts is a difficult task. Some people will resist such a change to the very end. For that reason it is appropriate that the government have laws to make their immoral conduct more difficult. But a real change in society will not come from government. It will come from those committed to preaching God's message.

Christians started schools so that children could learn to read the Bible. The government took over the schools and many of them are now producing children that cannot read anything and the Bible is no longer

allowed in the school.

Christians started hospitals and the government took over the hospitals. Something has gone terribly wrong as many people, without insurance, can no longer get the health care that they need. I have no answers within the system that exists now, but it is evident that the government has no answers either.

Hurricanes have ravaged our land. Many lament the lack of government help as though a different government would have solved the problem. When the city government, the state government and the federal government all failed, what is the chance that another government would have made the difference?

We once had a country where neighbors helped neighbors. Nobody needed help from the government or insurance because people helped people. We have now moved away from the principle of people helping people (taught by Jesus) to the idea that the government will save us. It will not. It has not.

Christians are making a difference in rebuilding hurricane ravaged

communities. Christians are making a difference in rebuilding tsunami destroyed villages in Indonesia. Christians are making a difference in health care in Central America, in Africa and in many other places. They are making a difference because their hearts have been changed by the message of Jesus.

The government cannot save us. Only God can save us. His method: He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to die for our sins. God poured out His love in the sacrifice of Jesus so that we would listen to His message, be converted in our hearts and turn from our immoral ways and embrace His precepts.

In the first century, tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, accepted God's message. That commitment was sealed in an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Laws against immoral conduct are not necessary when people's hearts have been changed.

When people today accept God's laws, then justice will "roll down like water" and a great moral renewal will race through the land. People will be saved, lives renewed, hope restored and God's will done. Amen!