

What we believe

Governments exist to restrain evil

Governments are vital for civilisation. The rule of law is the basis of order and civilisation. Authorities are instituted by God for the good of everyone to restrain evil. The Bible teaches that governments are ordained by God to punish the wrongdoer and to commend those who do right (Romans 13:3-4; 1 Peter 2:14).

The Bible plainly teaches that it is the duty of every Christian to submit to authority. This includes the payment of taxes: “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established... This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing.” (Romans 13:1,6). “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and commend those who do right” (1 Peter 2:13-14).

It is the duty of those in authority to punish those who do wrong. The punishment envisaged in the Bible clearly includes physical force. The Apostle Paul notes that a ruler “does not bear the sword for nothing. He is an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer” (Romans 13:4).

It is right and proper for the state when deciding on appropriate punishments to consider deterrence and reformation. But desirable though these aims may be, punishment cannot be separated from the concept of just desert or retribution. Justice demands that the guilty are

punished as their deeds deserve. For this reason it is detestable in God's sight for the guilty to be acquitted or the innocent condemned (Proverbs 17:15).

The New Testament teaching on submission to authorities was given to the Church in the context of corrupt authorities. There may be circumstances where the Christian cannot obey the state: if the state should command what God forbids or forbid what God commands then the duty of the Christian must be to obey God rather than man (Acts 4:19; 5:29). The supreme example of Jesus Christ teaches that Christians will experience persecution and injustice in this life.

All judgment dispensed on earth is provisional. One day God will dispense perfect justice "so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God" (Romans 3:19). The Bible teaches that "man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). This judgment will be on the basis of works in this life, and is not to be confused with justification which is solely obtained through the merits of Jesus Christ's atoning death on the cross.

In a democracy Christians can seek to be salt and light and use their democratic rights for the good of the Gospel. It is often said today that the law should not be used to enforce morality. This is quoted against Christians, as if we are the only ones who believe the law should be based on a moral position. In reality, everyone has a 'moral' position upon which their view of the law is based.

Secularists passionately believe that their assumptions should be the basis of our law and policy. However, Christians have always recognised that the purpose of national laws is to restrain evil. So morality cannot be divorced from the law.

God knows how we are made. He knows what is best for us. We believe the Bible contains the 'Maker's instructions'. Only God's moral law can truly protect people and promote what is good. Christians want to see God's moral law obeyed. This brings glory to God and it is also what is

truly best for people. Christians want to see public policy which is consistent with the teaching of Christ and the Ten Commandments.

In a democracy Christians have the freedom to argue their case like everyone else. Our responsibility is to speak out for what is right. We are not responsible if men and women reject what they have heard.

It is because we love our neighbour and want what is best for them that Christians should speak up for what is right.

And when Christians speak up, very often they will find that non-Christians agree with them. Man is fallen, but God's image has not been entirely eradicated. Men and women still have a conscience which can agree with God's standards (Romans 2:14-15).

Christians believe that there is not only special revelation found in the Bible; there is also general revelation which comes through nature and conscience. Thus there is a higher universal moral law as distinct from the specific laws of individual states. Because these specific laws can be in defiance of the moral law and what is right, governments and individuals can be held accountable. This happened with the Nazis in the mid-twentieth century, where laws were held to be immoral. This and similar tyrannies resulted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which are based on the moral law. If governments, ignoring the moral law, enact immoral legislation giving rise to so called "rights", Christians, people of other faiths and people of no faith, seeking to uphold the moral law, have a duty to protest.