

The Christian Vision of Government (I)

By Andrew McColl, 15/5/2012

As the church began its slow retreat from the world [after 1660], the humanists began their conquest of it. The state was first of all captured, and, especially after the French Revolution, became more and more openly humanistic in one country after another. Schools were also captured, turned into state institutions, and made the voices of the new established religion, humanism. Law was steadily changed from a Biblical to a humanistic basis and one area after another captured for the new religion. This conquest was capped by the possession of the churches by the new religion. Priest and pastor began to proclaim, not the word of God, but the word of man, not regeneration by the sovereign and saving grace of God, but revolution by the supposedly sovereign power of man. Not the Kingdom of God but the Kingdom of Man was the gospel of the new order in the churches. The new pilgrimage of man was not to Bethlehem or Golgotha, but to Dracula's Castle.¹

The Christian person is obligated to get his directions for all things from scripture, including his understanding about government. The Bible has a lot to say about government and mostly, government has not been good.

There are a host of instances in scripture illustrating the political abuse of power. Two of them are Abimelech (Judges 9) and the reign of King Saul. In some ways Abimelech was a pre-cursor to Saul. Both were authoritarian, ruthless and brutal. Abimelech was a son of Gideon, but the Bible says that

...as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god. Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; nor did they show kindness to the household of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) in accord with all the good that he had done to Israel (Judges 8:33-35).

When Saul became king in Israel a couple of generations later, the nation was in a similarly poor state. In response to the nation's appeal for a king, God said to the prophet Samuel, "...they have rejected Me from being king over them. Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day-in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods-so they are doing to you also" (I Sam.8:7, 8).

As George Grant comments,
Samuel attempted to warn the people of the inherent dangers of their scheme.

¹ Rushdoony, R., "Roots of Reconstruction," 1991, p.882.

*There would be taxation. There would be conscription. There would be coercion. There would be tyranny. It was inevitable. But the people would not be swayed.*²

Samuel explained:

This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place them for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and some to do his ploughing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants. He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use them for his work. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants. Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day (I Sam.8:11-18).

What was the theme of Saul's regime? *Confiscation*. Later, the Bible tells us that "He [God] killed him..." (I Chron.10:14), and God later said of Israel at this time, that "I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath" (Hos.13:11). Clearly, Israel got Saul as their king, because of national apostasy.

In the cases of both Abimelech and Saul, the Bible plainly shows that the nation (or city, in the case of Abimelech) was degenerate before these leaders attained prominence, that it was then led by a degenerate, destructive person who became a means of God's judgment, and after the death of these two men, God made clear that the elevation of these leaders had been His means of punishing the city or nation for its idolatry or disobedience.

We learn from the regimes of Abimelech and Saul that a nation's political or governmental choices are really derived from its religious beliefs. When Israel was degenerate spiritually, it chose degenerate leadership. A nation that hates or ignores God will quickly get an oppressive regime, because when people run from God, they inevitably run into bondage.

This is an aspect of God's righteous judgment certainly evident from the twentieth century. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn observed in his Templeton Lecture in 1983:

if I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the entire twentieth century . . . I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: men have forgotten God.

In every way, the predictions of Samuel regarding the degenerate nature of King Saul's reign from 1096-1056 B.C., are more than fulfilled in the socialist state of the modern era. In fact, in

² Grant, G., "The Changing of the Guard," 1987, p.137.

many ways it is worse today than it was under Saul; wouldn't you be grateful for a tax rate of only 10%, and no government debt?

Now, there are suggestions in Australia that our government is looking covetously at the massive superannuation funds. A working paper from APRA (Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority) suggests that "*[The data] corroborates evidence from previous studies that holdings of illiquid investments can benefit superannuation funds by improving diversification and increasing risk-adjusted returns.*"³ This looks suspiciously like our leaders would like us to invest a portion of our super funds in government infrastructure, and it is conceivable that at some time in the future, we'll be compelled to do so.

All of these things should show us why a Christian vision of government is essential. If we Christians want to have governments that are Christian in nature, a lot of things will have to change, beginning in the Church. Why should this be? Because the Bible says that "it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God..." (I Pet.4:17).

The nation's expectation of government will not change for the good, without the Church initiating the process. We must repent of our sin of unbelief, expecting government to be our saviour, for Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the world. It must be re-affirmed that education, health and welfare (according to the Bible) are not aspects of government responsibility: they are individual, family and church responsibilities that we have been avoiding now for generations.

This must change. And we will need to repent of our irresponsibility, in allowing government to try to do so much for us that we should have done ourselves. Christians must start saying to their elected representatives, "stop confiscating my money and spending it on these wasteful projects, or I'll take my vote elsewhere."

If we really do have a Christian vision of government, change will have to begin with us. And isn't that the way God meant it to be?

³ Kris Sayce, quoted in "Money Weekend," 12/11/2011.

The Christian Vision of Government (II)

By Andrew McColl, 22/5/2012

*The more power and money an individual or an enterprise gains, the more effectively it functions, because normally, people and businesses have a productive function which thrives on further capitalisation. However, this is not true of the state. The more power and money the state gains, the less effectively it functions, because it feeds on power and money, not to function in terms of a productive end but to enhance its power and wealth. Power and wealth give muscles to men, businesses and organisations, but they feed a cancer in the state.*⁴

There is one good thing that can come out of difficult and painful times: we can learn from them. We can learn about the ugly aspects of human nature, and of how political, economic and military power can be used destructively. We can also learn that for some people, giving them power over others is a dangerous and destructive thing. As one historian claimed, writing about the experience of Germany from 1933-1945: “The darkest pages in history are often the most instructive.”⁵

No doubt there would be some today who would think: “Andrew, all that nasty stuff from the twentieth century is over now. We won’t see Nazism again, and Communism is going backwards fast. What are you getting upset about?”

Nazism has gone, and Communism does appear to be on the back foot internationally, but the fundamental issues that result from human nature remain the same.

What are these? Since the fall in the garden of Eden, man has been a sinner. The sin of the human heart has many manifestations, some of which are political and governmental, and we’re not just referring to Hitler, Stalin and Mao.

Let’s talk about the democracies. People with power, who want to maintain their power absolutely without respect for ethics and others, tell themselves, “people are irrelevant. The end justifies the means. Whatever it takes, you do what you have to, to retain office.”

Think of the Gulf of Tonkin incident. The US Presidential election was due in November 1964, and President Johnson wanted to use every option to maximise his chances. How about a war? So, in August 1964 he came up with the story that US ships had been “attacked” by units of the North Vietnamese navy. Google says that

Within thirty minutes of the 4 August incident, President Johnson had decided on retaliatory attacks. That same day he used the 'hot line' to Moscow, and assured the Soviets he had no intent in opening a broader war in Vietnam. Early on the 5 August Johnson publicly ordered retaliatory measures stating, "The determination of all Americans to carry out our full commitment to the

⁴ Rushdoony, R., “The Roots of Reconstruction,” 1991, p.779.

⁵ Craig, G., “Germany 1866-1945,” 1980, p.viii.

people and to the government of South Vietnam will be redoubled by this outrage."

Was this "attack" on American ships reality? Of course not; it was pre-planned in Washington.

Did Johnson's lie work? As well as he needed it to. He was re-elected in November. Eleven years later, and after the loss of 58,000 US lives (and Johnson's death in 1973), the US got out of Viet Nam.

Was it any different in 2003? The "Weapons of Mass Destruction" in Iraq we were warned about before the American invasion never did turn up, even after the invasion was complete. WMD never existed. Truth had been conveniently ignored, so that an invasion could be launched on the pretext of these weapons being a real threat, or some other nonsense. And we won't talk about how many of these weapons the United States had.

If you think, "Well, that's America, and that couldn't happen in our country," think of Australia. When our Federal Cabinet (led by the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard and Stephen Conroy, the Minister for Communications), rejected the advice of four Departments, and interfered politically in the normal tendering process for the Australia network (which Kevin Rudd had prepared for), \$2 million compensation had to be paid to Sky, by the taxpayer. As one writer commented,

The documented exposure of the Gillard government's corruption of the Australia Network tender reveals that on media policy Labor cannot be trusted and that it will distort process and policy to achieve its political goals.⁶

At the end of the day, people have great difficulty concealing what they're really like. Leopards can't change their spots, and sinners sin. And when they can get into government and harness the power of the institution of government for their cause, the implications for us all are frightening.

Conclusion:

Ronald Reagan said in 1986: *The nine most terrifying words in the English language are, 'I'm from the government, and I'm here to help.'*

We are well overdue to re-think government. The notion that it is some distant institution, located and untouchable in a capital city, which makes up its own rules as it goes along and will use power for its own ends, has no base in scripture. But what's the solution?

⁶ Paul Kelly, "The Australian," 7/4/2012.

To whatever degree a society allows the teaching of the Bible to bring forth its natural conclusions, it is able to have form and freedom in society and government.⁷

⁷ Francis Schaffer, "How Shall We Then Live?" 1976.

The Christian Vision of Government (III)

By Andrew McColl, 29/5/2012

The welfare state is an aggrandizer. It is a self-proclaimed divinity. It tries to become a substitute family and a substitute church. It tries to provide men with institutional defence against all disasters. A local private charity can legitimately admit that it doesn't have the resources to solve every problem, but it can concentrate its assets in an attempt to mitigate the effects of some problems...But the modern welfare state cannot admit defeat. Defeat is only for private, limited, non-saving institutions. Any defeat suffered by a messianic state is blamed on its enemies.⁸

Governments that refuse to acknowledge the God of the Bible, invariably portray themselves and their services as vital substitutes. This has been the common procedure, at least back to when Saul was king of Israel. When Saul became fearful and insecure about his level of support, and he witnessed the success of his young rival David, Saul asked his followers, "Hear now, O Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give to all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?" (I Sam.22:7)

The text doesn't tell us whose fields and vineyards he was ready to hand around, and he had achieved some success in his military activities against Moab, Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, the Amalekites and the Philistines (I Sam.14:47-48).

But the original warning issued by Samuel concerning Saul contained this warning: "He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants" (I Sam.8:15). So what Saul conveniently forgot to mention, was that he had gained what he was offering his supporters by *confiscation*. To his hapless followers he was saying, "First I steal assets from other Israelites, then give them to you!" Some reward.

It is also significant that I Samuel 22, which shows Saul's confiscation and redistribution, also illustrates his envy-driven murder of the priests of Nob (v.12-20). Are the two related? Of course.

The Bible tells us that "...there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccles.1:9), and this is certainly evident from the activities of governments today, when their policy is *confiscate and redistribute*.

It should be the ideal for every system of civil law to remove all positive sanctions by the State and impose only those negative sanctions authorized by biblical law. The State is to impose negative sanctions only: punishing public evil. It is not a wealth-creator; it is a wealth-redistributor. It is not safe to

⁸ Gary North, "Unconditional Surrender," 2010, p.229.

*entrust to the State the power of making one man rich at the expense of another. It is also not moral.*⁹

If governments refuse to submit to Biblical restraints on their activities, their next activities will be tyranny and abuse, like King Saul in Israel three thousand years ago. And sometimes, really shrewd political leaders figure out how to manipulate naive Christian people away from Biblical truth, by invoking God's Name for a policy which is overtly anti-Christian. Roosevelt said in his first inaugural address in 1932, as the Great Depression was biting in the US:

...we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is made, no leadership becomes effective. We are, I know, ready and willing to submit our lives and property to such discipline, because it makes possible a leadership which aims at a larger good. This I propose to offer, pledging that the larger purposes will bind upon us all as a sacred obligation with a unity of duty hitherto evoked only in time of armed strife.

He ended with a direct invocation: *"In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come."*

...I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis—broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.

The failure of the Church to faithfully address and confront the fundamentals of government opened the door to the dreadful incursions and abuses that nations suffered from their governments in the twentieth century, and continue to suffer. But how do governments get away with it?

They invoke justifications of race (like the Nazis), or class (like the socialists and communists), or the poor (the modern welfare state), or use some other pretence to justify plundering one group to give to another.

This is what Friedrich Hayek spoke of in *The Descent to Serfdom* (1944). Hayek (the Nobel Prize winner in 1974), explained how governments purport to be helping people as they meddle in the free market, expanding their welfare programs. But in the process, their society loses its freedoms, is dominated by self-serving bureaucrats and loses both prosperity and liberty. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher acknowledged Hayek's insights, and applied his ideas to Britain.

Of course, governments that hate God will crawl over broken glass before they admit that their's are self-serving devices, they want to portray themselves in a good light. But their

⁹ Gary North, "Inheritance and Dominion," 1999, ch.54.

ultimate outcome is always one that suits politicians and their enforcers-the bureaucrats. This was what George Orwell explained in *Animal Farm*:

Somehow it seemed as though the farm had grown richer without making the animals themselves any richer – except, of course, for the pigs and the dogs.

Our task requires a new sense of responsibility on the part of the Church, and Christians in general - a massive awakening.

Of course, this challenge is a big one: a quantum shift in attitude on the part of the Church, and action so that we are able to take up the load required of us, everywhere. Our words will need to be matched by deeds. Ultimately, this should lead to the restructuring of government according to Biblical restraints.

Politics cannot produce character: Christianity must. The decline of faith is a decline of character and a decline of character is the forerunner of political decay and collapse. Christianity has an obligation to train a people in the fundamentals of God's grace and law, and to make them active and able champions of true political liberty and order.¹⁰

Is that what you're ready for?

¹⁰ Rousas Rushdoony, "Roots of Reconstruction," 1991, p.552.

The Christian Vision of Government (IV)

By Andrew McColl, 5/6/2012

For it is the essence of the Christian position that there are limits both extensive and intensive to the scope and exercise of secular authority. I do not need to remind the reader of the history of this issue; but I do need to emphasize the fact that it is a uniquely Christian tradition and that, whenever and wherever it is denied, the community ceases in both theory and practice to be Christian. Its values as well as its policies undergo a radical change.¹¹

One of the first things we can note about ungodly governments of history, is that they have been oppressive. They require levels of taxation that are a burden to the community, and they pass unjust laws, making people groan. This is in stark contrast to the promise of Jesus Christ. He commanded us to “come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Mat.11:28-30).

This teaches us that Christian government should be liberating in nature. It should lift the burden of taxation, and because it conforms itself to God’s law (summarised in the Ten Commandments), it should begin the process of getting rid of the oppressive legislation which is endemic to the western world.

Can we be sure of this? Absolutely.

Peter, in explaining to the Gentiles what had previously taken place in Jesus’ ministry, told them that “you know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). John also wrote that “the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (I Jn.3:8).

God made it clear that Israel under Saul would be cursed, and one of the examples of this curse would be a taxation rate of 10%. So, any Christian government should have as one of its primary goals, to reduce taxation to below 10%. Yes, this will require massive social change over time in the community, as so much of the community has grown used to the social irresponsibility and high rates of expenditure that accompany an overall tax rate of 30-50%. There would need to be a fundamental re-assessment of the tasks of government, a huge shedding of bureaucracy and the abandonment of most government projects, and all of this would be contingent on community support for change.

¹¹ Orton W., “The Economic Role of the State,” 1950, p.29.

*If people in the pews will vote against the welfare-warfare state, we will win. If they don't, we won't. The power of envy is too great.*¹²

All of this will not be painless, and the road could be bumpy, but in the long-term that's really the price of change. Believers must be prepared to go public on what Christian government really means, so that the general public gets the opportunity to throw its support behind the notion, and the subsequent changes.

True Christian government is unique. Moses explained to Israel,

see, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it...[for] what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today? (Deut.4:5, 8)

Of course there will be opposition to this, both within the Church and without it. The children of Israel with their slavery mentality, opposed Moses' leadership to liberty too. Antinomianism (the hostility to God's law) won't disappear overnight.

But as individuals, families and churches in subjection to the Gospel take more responsibility for their lives, when people begin to taste liberation from political oppression, bureaucracy, the high tax rates and all the trappings of political humanism; when there begins to be an end to political self-serving, corruption, and the waste and inefficiency that has characterised western government now for generations, they may just say, "we want more of this."

And we must be there to give it to them.

¹² North, G., "Why We Have not Won, Part 1: The Low Moral Ground," 14/11/2011.

The Christian Vision of Government (V)

By Andrew McColl, 12/6/2012

How can I bear the load and burden of you and your strife? Choose wise and discerning and experienced men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads. You answered me and said, 'The thing which you have said to do is good.' So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and appointed them heads over you, leaders of thousands and of hundreds, of fifties and of tens, and officers for your tribes (Deut.1:12-15).

The Bible teaches decentralisation-always. The consistent mark of atheistic, totalitarian governments historically, is that they can't abide the common people taking the responsibility and authority for their lives, and their problems. Their attitude is, "We'll run your life for you. We know what's best, and we can really help, in so many ways." They consistently have this perverse view, from the days of the debauched Caesars who promised bread and circuses, till now.

So, if we Christians are to going to be consistent, we'd better learn what this Biblical decentralisation business really means. It means that we begin at the beginning, at God's Word, and start to take responsibility for the things God commanded us to be responsible for. We stop expecting governments to do for us what God in His Word commands us to do.

The threat to liberty of central authority is too great. Even with God's agent Moses as the supreme civil judge, Jethro warned that Israel would suffer. Moses possessed too much authority. Better to decentralize State authority to untrained judges than to concentrate authority in one man. Such centralized authority will undermine freedom, reduce complexity, reduce the division of labor, and cut short the multiplication of wealth. Men will stand in long lines seeking justice rather than getting on with living.¹³

Are Education, Health and Welfare personal, family and Church issues? Yes. According to the Bible, do they require some government assistance, or intervention? No. But because we Christians haven't been thinking according to scripture now for a long time, these issues have gotten right away from us. We have failed to obey God's commands.

As Ron Paul indicated in 2007,

Parental control of child rearing, especially education, is one of the bulwarks of liberty. No nation can remain free when the state has greater influence over the knowledge and values transmitted to children than the family...The best way to improve education is to return control to the parents who know best what their children need.¹⁴

¹³ North, G., "Inheritance and Dominion," 1999, Ch.3.

¹⁴ Ron Paul, US Senator and Republican Presidential candidate, 2008, 2012.

But Christians have not really believed this. Here's an example. Some bureaucrat from the government (State or Federal) comes up and waves a fistful of cash in front of the Christian family or the Christian school, and says, "You can have all this! Just sign here."

The normal Christian procedure is to say, "Great! Thanks for that. That will be really helpful." So we stick out our grasping hands, take all that is offered to us, and sign on the dotted line. But a year or so later, we can't figure out why tax rates have shot up, or government debt has gone through the roof.

"What's happened?" we say. "I used to have so much more money after the tax man had been and gone. But now..."

Think of this. In 1901, income tax in Australia was... non-existent. You got paid for work, and it ALL came home with you. Government had to make do on very little, and it did. Families were taking a lot more responsibility for their own, and people tended to behave themselves a lot more responsibly.

Did men get drunk at the pub, and fall over on the way home, and did men and women sleep around? Of course they did, but much less compared to today. The level of personal and family responsibility in society was far greater.

Hear what Francis Schaffer said in 1976:

To whatever degree a society allows the teaching of the Bible to bring forth its natural conclusions, it is able to have form and freedom in society and government.¹⁵

So what am I saying? *Any society that has permitted family and church responsibilities to be progressively handed over to government, and embraces a tax rate over 10%, is a society that has lost its way.* And a society that has lost its way is one where it's most important institution (the Church), has been consistently failing in its duty to point the way, and we had better change-fast.

Everywhere there arises before our eyes the spectre of a society where security, if it is attained at all, will be attained at the expense of freedom, where the security that is attained will be security of fed beasts in a stable, and where all the high aspirations of humanity will have been crushed by an all-powerful State.¹⁶

Conclusion:

Freedom of every kind requires decentralisation, through personal responsibility. It requires that we pick up the load of Education, Health and Welfare, ourselves. And when we get our chance to vote at an election, we vote for those candidates who believe in this.

And if we don't?

¹⁵ Francis Schaffer, "How Shall We Then Live?" 1976.

¹⁶ J. Gresham Machen, quoted in Gary Demar, "God and Government," Vol.3, 2001, p.92.

History teaches us that we will continue to lose whatever freedoms we still retain, as government demands more money from us and power over us, to do its bungling, inefficient and overpriced work, most of which we could and should do ourselves. Ultimately, people always get the government they deserve.

The Christian Vision of Government (VI)

By Andrew McColl, 19/6/2012

The paternal state not only feeds its children, but nurtures, educates, comforts, and disciplines them, providing all they need for their security. This appears to be a mildly insulting way to treat adults, but it is really a great crime because it transforms the state from being a gift of God, given to protect us against violence, into an idol. . . . The paternalism of the state is that of the bad parent who wants his children dependent on him forever. That is an evil impulse. The good parent prepares his children for independence, trains them to make responsible decisions, knows that he harms them by not helping them to break loose. The paternal state thrives on dependency. When the dependents free themselves, it loses power. It is, therefore, parasitic on the very persons whom it turns into parasites.¹⁷

The scripture never gives government the right or responsibility to redistribute wealth by means of taxation. Government is obliged to protect all members of society from criminals, including the poor. Victims of crime are entitled to restitution from the perpetrators of the crimes, and the laws of restitution are clearly laid out in scripture. Exodus 20 gives us the Ten Commandments: a skeletal outline of God's justice, while chapters 21-23 cover amongst other things, God's laws of restitution. It was these laws that King David alluded to hundreds of years later (in II Sam.12:5-6), when he was confronted by the prophet Nathan for his adultery and murder.

The poor are never to be favoured against the rich, or the rich against the poor. Why? There are poor criminals and rich criminals. "You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbour fairly" (Lev.19:15).

The Bible turns modern notions of social justice on their head. "Social justice" today means higher tax rates for those on higher incomes. But this notion merely translates to the modern politics of envy, and isn't found in the Bible. Charging higher tax rates for people earning higher rates of pay, is a way of penalising people who work harder. This is unjust. Under a flat percentage rate tax system, those who earn more, DO pay more tax.

"Caring for the poor" by means of ensuring they have an automatic right to receive monies from the government via the tax system, is totally alien to scripture. According to the Bible, caring for the poor is a personal, family and church responsibility. The only government obligation towards the poor Biblically, is to ensure they receive just treatment like everyone else in the courts of law.

But there's more. Payments for women to have babies are especially immoral. Why? The State usurps the role of the family, as though the State is the provider for each new couple. Furthermore, if girls and women are paid to have babies regardless of their

¹⁷ Herbert Schlossberg, "Idols for Destruction," 1983.

marital state, we effectively subsidise immorality. We successfully produce a generation of bastards and wonder how it happened.

Do we change the anti-discrimination laws for this reason? No. We should get rid of the anti-discrimination laws, and stop paying girls and women to have babies.

Furthermore, minimum pay rates require that employers pay a certain rate to their employees. Let's say that the legislated minimum rate for a coffee shop employee is \$22/hour. But what if the employer determines that he cannot afford this rate, but can afford \$20/hour? Minimum pay rates (which are supposed to protect low paid workers from exploitation) prevent individual bargaining, which is at the heart of a free society. The consequence is that the coffee shop employer won't offer the employment. The employee might prefer \$22/hour, but \$20/hour sure beats starving.

Poor people need income through opportunities to work. Thus it is essential that good governments make it easier to employ people, by removing rigid and unnecessary constraints on employers that only discourage taking on more staff. This includes unfair dismissal laws and payroll tax.

The Australian system of conciliation and arbitration (which imposes needless constraints on employers and employees) needs to be thrown out, to make way for individual or collective bargaining in each workplace. The present system is centralised, expensive and utterly inflexible. And let's face it: every workplace is different, and it is always far superior that employers and employees (who have the greatest interest in achieving a successful outcome) can make their own arrangements for pay and conditions, without some centralised, imposed system being laid on them from on high.

Does this mean that there won't be oppression? Of course not. There are evil employers, and evil employees; I've seen both. But a contract gives employers and employees a document to protect themselves in a court of law.

Conclusion:

Davy Crockett was reputed to have said:

A government big enough to supply you with everything you need, is a government big enough to take away everything that you have...

The West's present economic difficulties attest to the truth of Crockett's statement. It is high time that Christians recognised the mess we have inherited as a legacy of anti-Christ, Messianic government, socialism, social welfare, and deficit spending. They are a poor substitute for a Biblical and thus a free society, where we have low tax rates, small government and freedom, along with lots of opportunities to work and invest.

But what do you want?

The Christian Vision of Government (VII)

By Andrew McColl, 26/6/2012

The fundamental issue that divides mankind is ethics (Gary North).

Conservative (or Coalition) governments in Australia's Federal government have exhibited some important characteristics. In the sixty years since 1952, the Coalition has been in government three times, for a total of 38 years: 1952-1972 (they came to power in 1949), 1975-1983 and 1996-2007.

William McMahon (the last Coalition Prime Minister in the initial long term) had been elected first to Parliament in 1949, and had served in a succession of ministries before becoming Prime Minister in 1971. Malcolm Fraser became Prime Minister in 1975, to lose government in 1983, and John Howard went right through from 1996-2007. These Prime Ministers' average ages when they lost office, was 61.

Why did these supposedly conservative governments lose office? A number of issues can be legitimately put forward here, including personal and economic ones. But I want to draw attention specifically, to one.

These three Prime Ministers identified with conservative politics. They would (to different degrees) have loosely identified with freedom for the individual, fiscal restraint, small government and low tax rates. That's good.

But I suspect that by the end, they had each gone as far as they could. They no longer possessed the passion for conservative national reform; perhaps McMahon and Fraser never had it anyway. For all three, their only solution at the end (in my opinion) was hanging onto power, which didn't work for them or their party, and rarely works anyway.

What then must true conservatives possess? A foundational ideology, that has little to do with gaining or retaining power; it has to be independent of power itself. This ideology becomes a foundational motivator, which presses a genuine conservative to reject political compromises that betray his beliefs.

This explains the relative success of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. They each understood and embraced an ideology of conservatism, and they were both able to articulate it to their nation. This successful articulation brought vision, hope and confidence in the community, in the concept of smaller government, less bureaucracy and greater freedom for the individual.

Consider this recent statement from the Christian economist, Gary North:

The Biblical concept of oppression is the misuse of civil law to deprive others of what should be lawfully theirs...Nowhere in the Bible do we see a call for the civil government to impose a system of wealth distribution from rich people in general to poor people in general. That would be a form of

*oppression: the use of the ballot box by the majority to extract wealth from the minority. This is exactly what the Bible prohibits. People are not to oppress the poor by means of illegitimate legislation. No group is to misuse the civil law in order to extract wealth from another group.*¹⁸

This shows why a Christian vision of government is critical for the conservative. It gives him an ethical basis for reform, beginning with himself, the family, society and the institution of government itself. The former British Prime Minister William Gladstone, understood this. Writing near the end of the nineteenth century, he said that

We live at a time when there is a disposition to think that the Government ought to do this and that and that the Government ought to do everything. There are things which the Government ought to do, I have no doubt. In former periods the Government have neglected much, and possibly even now they neglect something; but there is a danger on the other side. If the Government takes into its hands that which the man ought to do for himself it will inflict upon him greater mischiefs than all the benefits he will have received or all the advantages that would accrue from them.

I find it a point of interest that Australian political conservatives today hearken back to the Howard years with a great fondness, implying his era is one they would like to return to. Why? Was it his relative political success they are fond of, or his ideology? And if it's both, don't they possess a genuine ideology in their own heart, to carry onto the next government?

But there's more. Does having a distinct ideological base justify conservatives dumping their policies on an unsuspecting electorate, when in power? No.

Everyone should learn from Queensland's experience of 2009-2012. What was that?

In 2009 the Bligh Labor government was re-elected, with a reduced majority. Only weeks afterwards, we were told that the government would now have sell off billions of dollars worth of State government assets, largely because of budgetary difficulties it was wrestling with. Even unions publicly protested against the government, and the electorate thought, "Why wasn't this revealed to us, BEFORE the election?"

So, come March 2012, the electorate got its chance to pass judgment, and it did. The Labor Party is reduced from 54 seats in Parliament, to 7. The electoral lesson for all governments?

Don't dump major surprises on an electorate after an election, that had clearly been pre-planned.

Thus conservatives not only need to master a genuinely conservative (and in my view, a Christian) ideology: they need to be able to communicate it and persuade the community of its legitimacy and viability, BEFORE the people are called upon to vote. "The consent of the governed" is a wholesome and legitimate aspect of good government, for any group of people.

¹⁸ Gary North, "Confidence and Dominion," 2012, p.16.

No doubt, there are phases in all of this; it's little by little. A full-blown Christian society and government may be generations in the making. But every long journey begins with a few small steps.

Are you ready to begin?

The Christian Vision of Government (VIII)

By Andrew McColl, 3/7/2012

The state has substituted itself for the family. It provides old age pensions and old age medical services, just as sons have done for millennia. It also pays for the education of children, and it has made school attendance compulsory. To pay for all this, the state has drastically increased taxes. So, sons now pay the state rather than their own parents. The inheritance-disinheritance system has become impersonal and statist. This way, politicians get credit for helping people supposedly in need, bureaucrats receive high salaries for administering the program, and ethical considerations relating to family inheritance are abandoned.¹⁹

I attended a small country State School for my primary years in central-west NSW, finishing Year 6 in 1966. Every day at school, milk would be delivered for the students in half pint (300 ml) glass bottles, packed in heavy steel crates. The milk commonly came in an unflavoured form, but sometimes it would be chocolate or banana flavoured, and of course the demand for it would be greater then, if the students bothered to check. Most didn't. Sometimes these milk crates would be left in the sun and the milk would warm up, and no one wanted to drink it.

Probably over half of the milk wasn't drunk. Away from refrigeration, it would quickly spoil. I never saw it taken away, but next day fresh milk would arrive, for the process to be repeated.

What was happening? Some bright spark in the State government had an especially bright idea: providing free milk daily for school children would be good for them. I guess it was all about calcium. So, a huge bureaucratic operation had to set up and executed daily, to ensure that presumably tens of thousands of milk bottles were delivered each day to State schools, for them to be ignored by most of the children, and often left in the sun to spoil. (Maybe it was three days a week; I can't remember.)

Who paid? Why, the taxpayer of course. This is what we still do today, and think nothing of it. We make government responsible for education, health and welfare, and wonder why taxes are so high.

So much of what government does at a State and Federal level turns into an absolute dog's breakfast, matched only by the amount of money wasted.

Government costs so much because people have to be employed to do the tasks that families were responsible for, one hundred years and fifty ago. Families can home-educate their children for under a thousand dollars a year each per year, but when a government department takes responsibility, it will cost the taxpayer thirteen thousand dollars, and the outcome will be worse. Bureaucrats sitting in an air-conditioned high-rise building in a capital city cost a lot of money; their building alone is a major expense for the tax-payer.

¹⁹ Gary North, "Wisdom and Dominion," 2012, p.227.

And now, with the web and opportunities like www.khanacademy.com (a free Maths curriculum), and www.robinsoncurriculum.com (available for \$250, once per family), paying \$13,000 per child per year sounds not just astronomical, but ridiculous.

The single most exciting thing you encounter in government is competence, because it's so rare. Senator Daniel P. Moynihan.

The more we ask government to do for us, the more bureaucrats and other government employees have to be employed to administer the programs. Thus, our nation resembles what George Orwell described in *Animal Farm*:

Somehow it seemed as though the farm had grown richer without making the animals themselves any richer – except, of course, for the pigs and the dogs.

Ironically, we also work less hours, and have more leisure time. We could have done it ourselves, but we didn't. Thus there is a high cost for personal, family and church irresponsibility. These costs hurt, and it's good that it hurts. Why? Because that way, we learn that it is better to be responsible. When people in their folly think, "We'll let the government do it all," the cost of this decision turns out to be astronomical.

Why is this?

*there can never be a benevolent intervention by the government unless that intervention is grounded in the law of God.*²⁰

Taking responsibility is a Christian attitude. It means our time, our assets, our inconvenience and sometimes our suffering: the very things that characterised Jesus Christ's ministry on the earth, as the Saviour of the world. Our predicament today is about 3% the fault of government, and 97% the people who put them there, who deceive themselves into thinking that having government picking up all these extra tasks will be a good arrangement for all concerned.

*God's requirement is government from the bottom up in terms of His law. It begins with the self-government of the Christian man, with the family as a government, the church, the school, a person's vocation, society and its various voluntary groups and agencies, and finally, civil government, one government among many.*²¹

You want change?

Well, do something about it. Take more responsibility for yourself, for your family, in your church and in your community. And at elections, don't vote for the candidates who make the grandest promises about what the government will be able to do for you. Vote for those who promise little, but who want to cut bureaucracy, red-tape, the cost of government and taxation, and who want to increase individual freedom. That's where the real future lies.

Conclusion:

Freedoms for individuals, are really opportunities for individuals, families and churches to take

²⁰ Ian Hodge, "The Evangelical Influence and the Rise of the Welfare State," 27/5/2012.

²¹ R. J. Rushdoony, "Deuteronomy," 2008, p.9.

more responsibility for themselves, and others. Vote for these things, and you just might see some change. Before long, we might even have something approaching a Christian vision of government.

But this is the sticky part: are you ready to act?

The Christian Vision of Government (IX)

By Andrew McColl, 10/7/2012

Government that is big enough to give you everything you want is more likely to simply take everything you've got. U.S. President Ronald Reagan, 1985.

History shows us a lot of evil men in places of power. From the Pharaoh of Exodus, who commanded his people to throw Hebrew baby boys into the Nile (Ex.1:22), through to the Herod of Jesus' day who also murdered baby boys (Mat.2:16-18), to Genghis Khan, right through to the worst tyrants of the twentieth century: Stalin, Hitler, Mao. And these six are only some of the more spectacular ones; there have been hundreds of political leaders in history who were killers, but circumstances prevented them from getting into the ranks of the most infamous. "Like a roaring lion and a rushing bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people" (Prov.28:15).

Why is this? The Christian person must begin with this Biblical truth: original sin has been in the human heart since Adam and Eve rebelled in the Garden. This means that people are born with an inherent propensity to sin and rebellion against God. That's a piece of pretty grim news, and nothing can change this, other than the grace of God which has been manifested in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that "the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (I Jn.3:8a). Only Jesus Christ can truly change the human heart. The Bible encourages us that "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away, behold, new things have come" (II Cor.5:17).

This should point us to something: when the knowledge of God is systematically removed from the hearts of men and women, human affairs will get ugly. As Chesterton wrote, when men stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing; they believe in anything. The leaders of the French Revolution were mostly self-conscious atheists; is it any accident that their revolution quickly turned into an awful blood-bath?

Evil rulers have a particular religious disposition, but there's more: they are generally influenced by a culture indifferent or hostile to God. Not only were Stalin, Hitler Darwinian atheists, the national cultures they grew up in had already turned from Christianity, and were impacted by the heresies of nihilism (Russia) and Higher Criticism (Germany). The Church in both countries was weak, doctrinally confused, compromised and ineffective in terms of national influence.

Was that a recipe for disaster? Of course. Could we repeat the experience? We already are. Think of 100,000 babies "legally" aborted every year in Australia, funded by the taxpayer through Medicare. If ever there was a case of "the blood of the innocent," this is one.

Remarkable, isn't it? It's like what happened in Pharaoh and Herod's day, all over again, with one exception: this time, the community acquiesces.

Do we require changes in leadership? Of course. But if there is to be lasting, godly national change, it has to go much deeper than merely national leadership. As Isaiah said of Judah and Jerusalem in his era, “the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts and raw wounds” (Isa.1:5a-6).

Australia (and the rest of the world) requires much more than change at the top. We have to hope and pray for national spiritual transformation, beginning at the grass roots, working upwards. When Jonah went and preached in Nineveh, this is what took place. “Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them” (Jonah 3:5).

When people are disappointed with their national leaders, they have to do more than merely change the leadership team. People must ask, “Why were these people elected? Do their beliefs go to the heart of the community?” The fact is that evil leaders (especially in democratic countries) are chosen by people LIKE THEM.

So, we have none to blame but ourselves for the state of the nation. Or to put it differently, the state of the nation is a national problem, not limited to a few people presently in power.

Israel’s decline under Saul was preceded by the corruption and failure of the priesthood under Eli. The best cure for poor national leadership in an authoritative and effective Church.

Change will come; it must come ultimately, though there may be some pain before we get there. The promise of the Lord to Israel was, “then I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning; after that you will be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city” (Isa.1:26).

But if meaningful change really is to come, it has to begin with us, for “it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God...” (I Pet.4:17).

The Christian Vision of Government (X)

By Andrew McColl, 17/7/2012

The Israelites had experienced firsthand the institutional effects of a social order governed by a law-order different from the Bible's. They had been enslaved. The God who had released them from bondage announced at Sinai His standards of righteousness - not just private righteousness but social and institutional righteousness. Thus, the God of liberation is simultaneously the law-giver. The close association of Biblical law and human freedom is grounded in the very character of God.²²

The Christian vision of government must begin and end with the Bible. Every other vision of government inevitably finishes up in either anarchy or tyranny.

So where could we begin? When Israel was about to enter the promised land, (a picture of the Church entering into the world after the resurrection of Jesus Christ), God spoke to Joshua. Amongst other things He said:

...be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go (Joshua 1:7).

Any person who thinks they can legitimately govern people without reference to the scriptures, is a fool, and is courting disaster. Of course, many people have tried and will continue to do so, but that is not our concern: what must WE do?

Jesus Christ, who the Bible says is "...the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev.1:5), made His position in relation to His Heavenly Father abundantly clear, when He declared that "...I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (Jn.8:29b).

So, godly governments must start with the scriptures. But more than that, governments must find out what God requires of them. We soon discover that

what you find in the law of God is never any endorsement that the human condition can be resolved or ameliorated by any process other than God's graciousness in bringing a people unto Himself who will then conform themselves to His law-word.²³

This has obvious implications. People mustn't approach God's law as though it were merely some arcane, academic subject. God's law (like God Himself) must be approached with faith and obedience. Speaking of Jesus Christ, the Bible tells us that "...the government will rest on His shoulders..." (Isa.9:6). He is the Lord of the whole earth; thus He requires that His law be obeyed.

²² Gary North, "The Sinai Strategy," 1986, p.19.

²³ Ian Hodge, "The Evangelical Influence and the Rise of the Welfare State," www.biblicallandmarks.com, 27/5/2012.

People cannot have a “take it or leave it” approach to God’s law, because God is not indifferent to our law choices. In fact, the Bible teaches (Lev.26 & Deut.28) we can expect blessing or cursing, dependent on our obedience to His law. Rushdoony taught that

*The foundations of all law are in essence religious and theological: they are questions of ultimacy and moral necessity. Law without faith is an impossibility. Every law order is a moral and a theological order, a structuring of society in terms of a fundamental faith.*²⁴

Conclusion:

The Church and Christians in general, have a task of re-discovery to engage in. We must go digging, and re-discover (as Josiah did some 2700 years ago), the relevance of God’s law to godly, Christian government. And having re-discovered God’s law, we then have to embrace it for what it really is: an aspect of the His covenant based in the blood of Jesus Christ, by which we as individuals and as whole nations can be reconciled with God, see our sins forgiven, and receive His blessing on a national and international basis.

He who rules over men righteously, who rules in the fear of God, is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springs out of the earth, through sunshine after rain (II Sam.23:3a-4).

This is one of the greatest challenges facing Christians who aspire to government leadership. At the end of the day, godly government has to be based in God’s law.

Are we ready for such a radical concept?

²⁴ Rousas Rushdoony, “Roots of Reconstruction,” 1991, p.893-4.

The Christian Vision of Government (XI)

By Andrew McColl, 7/8/2012

It should be the ideal for every system of civil law to remove all positive sanctions by the State and impose only those negative sanctions authorized by biblical law. The State is to impose negative sanctions only: punishing public evil. It is not a wealth-creator; it is a wealth-redistributor. It is not safe to entrust to the State the power of making one man rich at the expense of another. It is also not moral.²⁵

What is it that makes God's government different to governments of today? God's government only provided negative sanctions against law-breakers. It provided no positive sanctions.

When Israel was in rebellion against God in Samuel's day, God warned them through Samuel what would be the consequences of their rebellion, and their foolish choice of a king. He would be a taker (see I Samuel 8). Today, in order to supposedly give so much to the community in Education, Health and Welfare (and many other programs), civil governments have to confiscate through taxation.

In doing so they violate God's law, and they show they are presiding over a nation which is cursed of God. Why? The tax rate is 10% or more. Civil governments believe they are more important and deserve more, than God. God only requires a tithe-10%.

The responsibility of government according to the Bible, is judgment. It is to protect the innocent, and punish law-breakers. This meant either fines imposed on criminals for restitution for the victims of crime, or their capital punishment.

When Jethro saw how hard-pressed Moses was he told him to delegate, so that the nation of Israel would have justice. Moses did this, and those he chose "judged the people at all times..." (Ex.18:26).

But these men didn't distribute money or gold. They simply dealt with breaches of law, rendering judgment. No doubt they were to do this using the Ten Commandments, which were given to Moses soon after.

Romans 13 explains this in the New Testament. People are commanded to "do good" (v. 3). Civil government (according to the Bible) only has a protective role, as "a minister of God to do you good" (v.4). Taxes are to be paid (v.7), but there is no mention of government writing out cheques, or paying people; no positive sanctions from government.

All of the other responsibilities in the community are to be taken up by individuals, families, churches and the free market. They are not to be assumed by government.

²⁵ Gary North, "Inheritance and Dominion," 1999, ch.54.

Saul's promises in 1,050 BC to his followers that he would give them so much, were predicated on one thing: confiscation from the community (I Sam.22:6-7), and this is where we are today. Governments all over the world have spent beyond their means as they have tried to be "providers." (We are preparing for an economic catastrophe similar to the Great Depression, because of this very fact.)

Only the church can point out this error, and lead the way out of this awful mess.

Conclusion:

When the community has expectations of what government can do beyond what the Bible directs, it ultimately leads to disaster. Education, health and welfare are not responsibilities of civil government. The sooner we get this message and act on it, the sooner the nations of the world will be godly, free and prosperous.

And the church must lead the way.