

# *The Importance of the Church (I)*

By Andrew McColl, 13/10/2010

*Oh that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would quickly subdue their enemies and turn My hand against their adversaries. Those who hate the Lord would pretend obedience to Him, and their time of punishment would be forever. But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you (Ps.81:13-16).*

*When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices (Prov.11:10).*

God views the Church as the most important institution in the community, and the world. His intention is, that *“the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places”* (Eph.3:10).

We are seeing an important outworking of this at present, in the work of the 11-term U.S. Republican Senator, Ron Paul. Paul is a Christian, who has become increasingly aware over many years that the Federal Reserve Banking system, is a corrupt, self-serving cartel for the big banks, and the government. He has written an important book called *“End the Fed,”* which is now getting increasing publicity in the media. If the Fed (which was established in 1913) is ultimately abolished, it will be a huge step in favour of Biblical, free-market economics in the U.S., and the world.

Now some would probably argue, *“aren’t souls more important?”* Of course they are. But the Bible has application to all of life. If it doesn’t, it has no relevance to this life. Whilst on the cross, Jesus promised the thief next to Him, *“Today you shall be with Me in Paradise”* (Luke 23:43). But as the eldest son of his Mother, and Joseph apparently being dead, Jesus directed the apostle John to take care of Mary, so that John took her into his household (Jn.19:26-27).

The practical affairs of life are all part of God’s calling for each of us, and they are not secondary. Furthermore, there is not one part of our life experience that is not to be subject to God’s commands. The God Who included in the Ten Commandments a prohibition on stealing, shows us that private property is to be protected from seizure. That’s about as practical as you can get.

The Bible instructs us about justice and righteousness, property-rights, money, marriage, sex, taxation, the care of the poor and widows, the dangers stemming from the abuse of power, and a host of other issues vital for the healthy function of society. But when the church has backed away from these subjects (supposedly in pursuit of the *“more spiritual”* issues), it has unwittingly exposed itself to all manner of evil beliefs and practices, and the world has suffered too. The twentieth century witnessed to that.

The decline of the Church has meant the decline of society. The two are always closely related. There will never be a great society, without a vibrant, obedient Church *in* that society, providing the leavening influence of the kingdom of God. Whilst Ron Paul is critically involved in the exposure of corrupt practices within U.S. banking and government spheres, God wants all of His people contributing to the well-being of our communities in different ways.

What has God called you to? This is an opportunity for you to be of service to Him and to others. History shows that *power flows to those that take responsibility.* Your place of service is an opportunity for you to show (directly or indirectly), the importance of godly people and the Church in the community. Whatever it is, may you be fruitful and diligent in that calling, knowing that our *“toil is not in vain in the Lord”* (I Cor.15:58).

There are rewards in the kingdom of God.

## *The Importance of the Church (II)*

By Andrew McColl, 26/10/2010.

*And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa.2:3).*

After His ministry to us as our Saviour in dying for us and being raised again, Jesus next most important ministry was as a teacher. When He was arrested, Jesus said to the crowd, "every day I was with you in the temple, teaching..." (Mk.14:49). On one occasion when He taught in the synagogue, the crowd "...were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mk.1:22).

The teaching ministry of the Church is possibly its most vital. Jesus in the Great Commission had commanded us to "make disciples...baptise... and teach" (Mat.28:19-20). Paul described himself as being "appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher" (II Tim.1:11). Barnabas and Paul "for an entire year met with the church and taught considerable numbers" (Acts 11:26). Of Apollos, the Bible says that "he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus" (Acts 18:25).

This indicates that our minds are of great importance in our service to God. As Jeremy Larson has commented, "Christians can develop an understanding of Christ's epistemological sovereignty by recognising that sin has corrupted every part of them, including their intellect."<sup>1</sup>

Man must submit to God, in the obtaining and utilisation of knowledge. All Christian education should not begin with the teacher, or even the student: it must begin with God. Jesus' command to "come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mat.11:28), has a significant epistemological component.

Man has never been consigned to a lonely, onerous pursuit of self-knowledge. Rather, he lives in the presence of the Creator of all things, who has provided His Word to us, so that human knowledge can be utterly dependent upon the original self-knowledge and consequent revelation of God to man.<sup>2</sup>

The redemption of the human heart and life through Jesus Christ, mean demonstrative change for the better. What and how we think is of great significance. "Having people who understand what it means to truly serve God in their fields of work requires that they be educated on how to make God central in life."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Larson, 'Milton's View of Education: A Mirror of Reformed Educational Philosophy,' in "Faith for all of Life," September/October 2010, p.13.

<sup>2</sup> Van Til, quoted in Rousas Rushdoony, "Salvation and Godly Rule," 1983, p.177.

<sup>3</sup> Larson, *ibid.*

This is why the teaching ministry of the Church is so important. Yes, it begins with believers, but must spill over to the world of the unbeliever too. They will be impacted by the teaching ministry of the Church in the community.

Why should we do this? The Bible answers this question for us: "...so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph.3:10).

It has been the writers and teachers of the Church, such as Augustine, Wycliffe, Calvin, Luther and others that have been the most influential, way beyond their lifetime. Calvin's teaching on resistance to unlawful authority (called interposition) had an indirect but significant impact on John Knox in relation to Scotland, and those responsible for the American War of Independence. What is evident is that

*books build civilisations; a civilisation is not the product of material factors, it is a product of the ideas that thinkers and teachers of the past wrote down. Ideas motivate the thinking and inform the practice of builders of civilisations; those builders are seldom the generators of the ideas they use.*<sup>4</sup>

Conclusion:

The promise of God to believers is that "all your sons will be taught of the Lord; and the well-being of your sons will be great" (Isa.54:13). Jesus promised His disciples that "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn.8:32). Thus "Christians need a practical understanding that they are commanded to transform culture."<sup>5</sup> The implications of this are almost unlimited.

Yes, the Church is an imperfect institution, made up of millions of imperfect people doing an imperfect job. That does not sound impressive, but that is the truth, and that is God's glorious plan for His people.

The teaching ministry of the Church and of its individual believers is a vital role. Will you play your role in this?

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<sup>4</sup> Bojidar Marinov, 'The New Missionary,' in "Faith for all of Life" (see above), p.19.

<sup>5</sup> Larson, p.14.

## *The Importance of the Church (III)*

By Andrew McColl, 27/10/2010

*It is hard for you to kick against the goads (Acts 26:14).*

Every Christian when he enters the kingdom of God, should make it a part of his task in life, to understand what are the God-ordained structures, and work with them. What are these?

The family, the Church and the State. The symbols of authority for these institutions in scripture are the rod (Prov.22:15), keys (Mat.16:18-19) and the sword (Ro.13:1-5).

People are born and raised in families. That is God's plan. Babies cannot survive long without a lot of loving care, and by far the best place for that, is the family. So, the first institution for us to recognise, is the family.

To recognise something as fundamental as the family means to make room for it in society; it means that the family must receive legislative protection. Marriage between a man and a woman must be protected by the law in every land.

It is significant that the Seventh Commandment (Ex.20:7) is a prohibition against adultery, and adultery under Biblical law is potentially punishable by death. Any society that does not offer the family this protection, is saying that the traditional family is irrelevant and should be replaced. All attacks on the family, including incest, homosexuality, and violence of a child against a parent, can be punishable by death under Biblical law. That tells us something of the value God places on the integrity of the family.

It is also significant that socialists since Plato have been hostile to the family, and have sought to subvert it, control it and destroy it. That way the institution that they really believe and have faith in (the State), can have total sway. This was one of the goals of Labor Senator, Lionel Murphy. Himself a divorced man, he introduced the Family Law Act which introduced "no-fault" divorce to Australian law in 1975. This meant that couples could divorce easily, and that the innocent spouse would probably receive only half of the family assets.

This introduced a significant legislative and structural change. Previously the innocent, aggrieved spouse was entitled to the "lion's share" of family assets after a divorce. It means that not only is divorce now easy to obtain, but it provides a de facto subsidy for irresponsibility and adultery; cheat on your spouse, and get half of the proceeds. That partially explains why Australian couples divorce so readily today, and why it is so common for couples to merely live together. So, a Christian reconstruction of society will mean changing this law.

So, the family is a fundamental God-ordained structure. But as important as it is, the family was not created to be an autonomous, independent institution. It is to find its true place and identity in the Church. Why? Because with the coming of Jesus Christ, a significant change has come. We have a new institution in the affairs of men. Jesus said, *"I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail overpower it"* (Mat.16:18).

There is a God-ordained authority structure now, that was not present in the days of the patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not have apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors

and teachers, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph.4:12).

In the context of the local church, this means there will be officers present (pastors, elders, deacons), who have responsibility for the leadership and welfare of the church. This lifts some of the responsibility off parents and families. The Bible commands us to “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you” (Heb.13:17).

A godly father will thus understand he is still to be a man of authority and responsibility in his family, but always in submission to his lawful church leadership. If he is wise, he will give his children a mechanism for appeal to his church elders regarding his decisions and attitudes, so that he cannot be labelled as a tyrant or abuser, and misuse his authority.

Thus,

*Jesus did not identify the family as the central institution in society. <sup>6</sup>The family cannot be made...a substitute for the institutional church. <sup>7</sup> Christianity teaches that the Church is the central institution in history, not the family. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, any attempt to strengthen the family without strengthening the institutional church is self-defeating for Christians. <sup>9</sup>*

The third institution God has ordained, is the state. Thus we have in Australia, a national and State constitutions, and these are of Biblical origin (see Ex.18:14-26; Deut.17:14-20; I Sam.10:24). We have Parliaments, elections and courts of law, and the law is made by the Parliaments.

The Bible speaks of the necessity for us to be “in subjection to the governing authorities” (Ro.13:1). Christians are to be law abiding people, in submission to the law of the land. Christianity is not anarchy. We are to despise and reject lawlessness, violence and violent revolution as a means of gaining power.

Legitimate change requires the use of legitimate means. We are to uphold the law of the land, and seek to use peaceful, legitimate means to bring about change in the community. Christians must ensure they have Biblical justification before they break the law.<sup>10</sup>

### Conclusion:

*God's law provides the legal framework for a free market social order and undermines the theory of socialism.<sup>11</sup>*

It is our wisdom as believers to understand the God-ordained structures in the community. We don't want to “kick against the pricks” of God's plans for every society. *Internal integrity leads to external integration.*

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<sup>6</sup> Gary North, “Baptised Patriarchalism,” 1995, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> p.71.

<sup>8</sup> p.71.

<sup>9</sup> p.2.

<sup>10</sup> See my articles under the heading, “Fundamentals of Christian Resistance.”

<sup>11</sup> Gary North, “Inheritance and Dominion,” 1999, Preface.

Healthy individuals, healthy families and healthy churches lead to a healthy nation. We must respect and work within those structures, all the while knowing that, *where there are people, there are problems.*

But the problems of people will be with us forever. Christians are to bring the knowledge of God from scripture to bear in all that they do, so that the God-ordained structures around us are continually strengthened. Yes, that is a long-term proposition, but it is constructive and liberating, and will ultimately lead to the Christian reconstruction of society.