

# The Harvester



*Preparing Souls  
To Serve The Lord!*



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## Do You Understand the Christian's Relationship to the Civil State?

Brian R. Kenyon

Considering the present state of America's civil state, this year's lectureship theme is very timely. The 608 page lectureship book, dedicated to the founders of the Florida School of Preaching, will be a tremendous volume to possess. It deals with a wide variety of issues directly affecting the Christian's relationship to the civil state. This does not just include his or her relationship with civil government, but also with the culture that often accompanies a government, and in many cases is even brought about by a government and its policies. Christians are "in the world" but are not to be "of the world." Jesus prayed for the apostles, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (Jn. 17:15-16, NKJ). Paul told the Corinthians, when speaking of withdrawing fellowship, that they could not withdraw from worldly sinners, "since then you would need to go out of the world" (1 Cor. 5:10 but see also Eph. 5:3-11).

Every Christian lives in a civil state, though, of course, some states are more civil than others. The lessons delivered in this lectureship and in the book will be help in navigating through this world. One of the great challenges was to make sure the lessons dealt with principles, not so much personalities. Too many times, subjects like this lose some relevancy decades later. For example, civil state lessons in the past that focused on communism, were needed then, but now collect dust. This lectureship book has met the challenge of perpetual relevance because, for the most part, its chapters deal with eternal principles that will apply to any civil state in any culture! Contact the office today to obtain your copy of the book!

Below are some excerpts that will give *Harvester* readers a taste of the book's substance. Hopefully, this will whet each reader's appetite to study further the Christian's relationship to his or her civil state.

In the first lesson, "The Purpose and Function of Civil Government," Steve Atnip states, concerning the relationship of



Gordon Methvin (who served on the board of directors, 1978-2009) symbolically gives the van keys to Jackie Stearsman (who worked with FSOP, late 1970s-2013, serving as director, 1992-2009). The van was purchased in June 1997 and has made trips for over twenty years! As a side note, the van is nearing the end of its reliability. We will be looking into getting another one soon. If you are able to help with this expense, please send your contributions earmarked "van fund." We thank you for supporting us since 1969! May the Lord continue blessing the training of Gospel preachers!

Romans 12 and 13:

The reader of this letter should note the usage of words common to both Romans 12:17-21 and Romans 13:1-7. The saint in Romans 12 is dealing with situations in which evildoers are inflicting harm upon Christians (Rom. 12:17, 21). That same word for evil is used in Romans 13:3-4. Further, the saint in Romans 12 is dealing with avenging wrongs, and God assures the evildoer that He will repay the vengeance owed to evildoers because of what they have done against the saints. The same word for avenging is found in Romans 13:4, where Paul pointedly states concerning government that “he is the minister of God to you for good ... a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” The word for “avenge” in Romans 12:19 is from the same word as “revenger” in Romans 13:4. The first is a verb, the second is its noun form. The connection between these verses is powerful. God has promised not only the vengeance owed to actions of those who are evil toward Christians, but he has also shown that one very powerful force he will use against such evildoers is civil government, which God himself has given authority, force, and maintenance to be his avenging power. Note carefully also that Paul states government does this “for you.” Government was meant to punish the wrongs “for you.” It is not wrong for Christians to call upon government to do the very thing for which God set it up. Paul himself used the alarming force of Rome’s government to save himself from evildoers in Acts 23:12-35.

Some writers addressed the false notion that moral issues are

political issues. Sheila Butt, who served in the Tennessee General Assembly since 2010, in “Christian Involvement with Politics” (for ladies class), wrote:

In this discussion, it is imperative to understand that the word of God and the truth of a risen Savior can only be taught and practiced openly in political freedom. However, there are other things legislated in American culture that actually have Biblical directive and are not political to God. Laziness and slothfulness are not political issues with God. Two men or two women getting married are not political issues with God. Lying, theft, fraud, adultery, drunkenness, and fornication are not political issues with God. Benevolence is not a political issue with God. Abortion is not a political issue with God. However, some have now made them political issues and since that is the case, if Christians stand for truth, they will be considered political by many people. Jesus’ kingdom was not political. It was not even of this world! However, the rulers in the first century made it political and even crucified him for political reasons. Christians cannot control what man makes (or calls) political. They can control whether they will take a stand for God and his word, even if they are accused of being too political.

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David Hester, in his lesson on the “Separation of Church and State,” wrote:

Abortion is just one example of many issues that factor into the political process. When the warning is sounded concerning politicians who are pro-abortion, there will be those who will become very upset about injecting politics into the church. During the 1984 presidential election, this author and his dad were visiting their local barber, who was a member of the church. Politics eventually made its way into the conversation. The barber was a “Yellow Dog ...,” and could not fathom ever casting his vote for a ... (in part, because he thought that the ... was responsible for the Great Depression). When the respective positions concerning abortion were pointed out to the brother, emphasizing the pro-abortion stance of Walter Mondale versus the pro-life stance of Ronald Reagan, the barber (who had been a member of the Lord’s church for many years) said, “Well, you know, I think that life doesn’t begin until the baby takes his first breath outside of the mother.” Unreal! In order to defend his candidate and his party, he took an anti-biblical view of life.

Caleb Colley, in his lesson “Counter-Cultural Character,” part of Monday’s forum geared toward young people, cautioned church leaders:

Even if a church refrains from overtly sanctioning sinful sexual expression [e.g., homosexuality], the church’s leadership may gradually shy away from condemning immorality when the immorality becomes more widely accepted in the culture. This will have the inevitable result that future church members will struggle to understand and appreciate God’s law—much less defend it. Recall the warning of the apostle Paul: “Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them” (Rom. 1:32, ESV). Again, “Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them” (Eph. 5:11).

Bill Davis, a twenty year veteran of the USAF, in his “Christianity and Patriotism,” wrote:

The father of our country [George Washington, in his 1796 “Farewell Address”] insisted that the two fundamental pillars on which the Republic is poised are the Christian religion and the moral principles that are derived therefrom. These, he said, are the great pillars of human happiness and the firmest props incumbent on citizens. Anyone who does anything to undermine Christianity is no friend of the Republic! He or she is certainly no patriot!

If George Washington were alive today to witness the widespread assault on the Christian religion in

government, schools, and public life, he would undoubtedly be aghast, and incredulous that so many would pretend to be good citizens and loyal Americans, while actively pursuing a course that will surely hasten the demise of the Republic.

A series of lessons on the Christian’s relationship to the civil state would not be complete without a few lessons on “social issues.” While these topics generally are potentially controversial, spiritually mature Christians should be able to rationally discuss them.

Melvin Otey, in “The Bible and Social Issues,” lets us know that these issues are nothing new:

While some may tend to think that current times and circumstances are especially riddled with social problems, the dynamic of living as Christians in a culture saturated with social issues is not historically unique or unprecedented. Undoubtedly, there was a wide assortment of intra-communal problems in Noah’s day because the Bible testifies, “And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5, ASV). While some modern challenges may be different in some ways, and some may, in fact, be more acute, the basic issues we face today are nearly as old as humanity.

Melvin goes on to discuss violence, oppression, sexual perversion, broken homes, and drug/alcohol use.

Sidney Moore, in “When Involvement with Social Issues Goes Too Far,” gives this warning:

[B]ecause social movements address many issues that are relevant to Christianity—religious liberty, abortion, marriage equality, civil rights, women’s rights, etc.—involvement with such may give one a “form of godliness.” However, it is a dangerous practice for the church to be moved by every undertaking specialized in tugging at the heartstrings. Many organizations and not-for profits aspire to heal the world by every means, except by the Gospel! I would call this the Gibeonite approach of garnering religious approval and support while denying the “power” of God (Josh. 9 cf. 2 Tim. 3:5). For the Christian and/or Christian ministry that is not sincere about preaching the Gospel to every creature, involvement with rectifying social issues could become a fruitless effort.

As these few excerpts testify, this lectureship book will be a valuable addition to any Christian’s library! It digs deep into subjects that are often neglected! May God give Christians wisdom as they relate to the civil states under which they serve Him. To God be the glory!

# Florida School of Preaching



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Monday	__ 8:30-12:00	General Epistles (249)	Bauer	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Wisdom Literature (248)	Richardson	3
Tuesday	__ 8:30-12:00	Gospel of John (227)	Wheeler	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Minor Prophets (246)	Wheeler	3
Wednesday	__ 8:30-12:00	1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (238)	Patterson	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Greek II (223)	Kenyon	3
Thursday	__ 8:30-12:00	Ethics (285)	Stearnsman	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Prison Epistles (136)	Brownlow-Dindy	3
Friday	__ 8:30-12:00	Church History: Restoration (242)	Daugherty	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Eschatology (276)	Kemp	3
<b>Extension Classes</b>				
Thursday	__ 6:00-8:30	Sermon on the Mount (280) (Tenth Street church of Christ, Apopka)	Kenyon	2.5
	__ 6:00-8:30	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (215) (Orange Street church of Christ, Auburndale)	Bauer	2.5
	__ 7:00-9:30	1 and 2 Corinthians (135) (Wesconnett church of Christ, Jacksonville)	Atnip	2.5