

Press Conference

On

The Role of Scripture in Nation Building

A Power-Point Presentation

By

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Proposition:

God is the originator of the modern nation state, and it is He who established the moral, legal and spiritual principles for accountable government, the rule of law, law and order and justice.

I. The modern nation state originated with God.

A. He created nation states and set their boundaries:

Deut. 32:8

“When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel” (NASB-Update cp. Gen. 11:8).

Acts 17:26

“And He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation” (NASU).

I. This is the reason why the Most High claims sovereignty over all nations:

“...the kingdom is the LORD'S, And He rules over the nations” (Ps 22:28 NASU).

So then, men have been given earthly power only in a subsidiary sense—they themselves are accountable to God and must operate within the confines of divine law.

We read in Romans 13:1-2:

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves” (NASU).

Dominion truly resides with God, and He “bestows it on whomever He wishes” (Dan. 4:25).

How is the nation state to be organized?

A Nation of Law

B. God proposes a well ordered society governed with just and good laws. Through primarily the nation of Israel, He established eternal benchmarks for good governance. Yahweh would rule the nations by His laws!

Moses said to the Israelites:

⁵ “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. ⁶ “So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' ⁷ “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? ⁸ “Or 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 NASU).

I. Here, God is described as the Law-giver, the consummate legislator. And His laws reflect His righteous nature and love of justice and mercy.

Although the content of biblical law often coincided with other laws of the ancient Near East, it is important to point out that, in many significant respects, biblical law was in a unique class of its own. Whereas most law systems of the time consisted of *case laws* (judicial rulings), which were cold, harsh and capricious, the laws of the Bible, though firm, point to a God who personally cares about human beings and seeks a loving relationship with them.

In God, the legislator has a flawless model and must, in imitation of Him, enact laws to uphold righteousness, ensure equity and defend the vulnerable.

Out of His boundless love for all His children, He enshrined in His law the twin principles of 'equality before the law' and 'the rule of law' so that justice will be administered to all without fear or favour.

In Lev. 24:22 we read:

"Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the LORD your God" (KJV).

In Lev. 19:15, we are told:

"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 neighbor fairly" (NASU).

The Prophet Isaiah rightly celebrates the King of the universe who combines all three arms of government in His perfect Self:

"The LORD is our Judge,
The LORD is our Lawgiver,
The LORD is our King;
He will save us" (Isa. 33:22 NASU).

In saving us by His own grace, He utilizes all three governmental offices of His kingdom. If this is true of God's spiritual Kingdom, how much more our nation which is still said to be at the 'developing' stage?

An efficient government, a level-headed and God-fearing legislature and a bold and impartial judiciary are critical factors in rescuing our nation from the economic doldrums and setting us on the path to greatness and prosperity.

2. The main Law which God gave to the Israelites, regulating their spiritual, moral and public life, are the Ten Commandments—a body of laws which has since gained universal acclaim!

a) *The expanded code of the Ten Commandment Law, which set out the various regulations and statutes for the day-to-day running of the state and adjudication of cases, is known as the Judicial (or Civil) Law of Moses. (See Deut. 4:13-14). Under this broad code, fell the penal code, that is, Criminal Law, meant to punish law-breakers.*

National Commission for Civic Education Biblical

So that the people would not ignorantly break the Law, God commanded that the Law be read publicly to the people periodically, so that they might know godly fear as well as their rights and obligations under the law (Deut. 31:10-13).

Today, the promulgation of national laws is a standard practice worldwide, although among the civilizations of the ancient Near East, this was peculiar to only Israel.

The work of the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) began in biblical times in the land of Israel!

In the 9th century B.C., King Jehoshaphat dispatched a team of civic educators throughout Judah:

“Then in the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah;⁸ and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah and Tobadonijah, the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests⁹ They taught in Judah, *having* the book of the law of the LORD with them; and they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught among the people” (2 Chron. 17:7-9 NASU).

The lack of sound spiritual teaching, coupled with lack of civic education, had led to insecurity in the land during the reign of the previous king, Asa. There was a breakdown of law and order—being a direct result of the people’s ignorance of the law and the absence of godly discipline:

"For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law.

⁵ "In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands” (2 Chron. 15:3 & 5 NASU).

The less people know about the law, and hence their rights and obligations under the law, the more they are inclined to commit acts of lawlessness resulting in turmoil and public disorder.

But “righteousness exalts a nation” (Prov. 14:34).

And that was evident in the aftermath of King Jehoshaphat's religious and civic reforms. The LORD blessed his kingdom with peace and prosperity (2 Chron. 17:10-13).

That should tell us that the fortunes of a country is also closely tied to the kind of leadership it has. That is an element of nation building the Almighty attaches great importance to.

Appoint a Ruler God will Choose

C. God is not oblivious of the importance of a central political authority vested with the power of the state. It's a must. Or there will be no centre to hold the nation together or keep it stable.

Although God was the (invisible) King of Israel all through the time of Moses right up to the time of the Prophet Samuel, God foresaw that it was only a matter of time before the Israelites demanded to have a human king like the rest of the nations (Deut. 17:14; see also 1 Sam. 8:5-7, 19-22; 12:1).

In preparation for such a time, God made a provision in His law which spelt out: (i) How the nation should go about choosing a king to rule over them; (ii) How the selected king must conduct his private and public life.

He laid down the following rules:

- Appoint a king whom God will choose (Deut. 17:15a; see 1 Sam. 9:15-16 & 11:15).

(Since dominion is of God, and it's He who grants men power to exercise rule, it's only proper that He's involved in the process of choosing national leaders. His guidance is badly needed in appointing the right kind of people into leadership positions).

- The king to be appointed must be of unquestionable citizenship—a fellow Israelite (Deut. 17:15b).
- A foreigner should not be appointed (Deut. 17:15c).

(It's a self-evident truth that a foreigner cannot be fully trusted to act in the best interests of the nation. He has divided loyalties and may be tempted to work against the national interest in a time of crisis).

- The king must not have too many horses but set a good example of modesty for his people, so that they do not develop a taste for the goodies of Egypt from where the chariots are imported. The nation must be taught not to rely on Egypt, the former slave master, ever again (Deut. 17:16).
- Secondly, the king must not have too many wives lest they lead him astray. Neither must he seek to accumulate wealth—silver and gold (Deut. 17:17).

(The last two points speak most powerfully and appropriately to the contemporary African political situation. If only our leaders had modest tastes and did not spend state resources acquiring luxuries from our former colonial masters! If only they had imbued us with the spirit of self-reliance and enterprise! What a great continent Africa would have been! What a creative force this would have unleashed!

But alas! We are undone! Our iniquities—the greed and corruption of our leaders—have withheld good things from us [Jer. 5:25].

The Lord knows all too well the temptations of high office. But against the wise counsel of the Most High, many of our public office holders, in their lust for material possessions, shamelessly use their positions for personal aggrandizement and wealth acquisition.

It's time our leaders paid heed to the word of God—which takes us to the next point in the guidelines for the selection of national leaders).

- The king must keep a copy of the law by his side and read it that it might influence both his spiritual and political conduct. By so doing, he will not look down on the people but uphold the law to prolong his rule and make it a memorable one (Deut. 17:18-20).

(That is to say, the ruler must not be a law to himself. He must obey the law himself—the constitution of the land.

In this sense, the Bible advocates constitutional, not absolute, monarchy—an accountable leadership chosen through democratic means. And all will go well with his reign, and he will be well spoken of long after his tenure, so much so that his posterity will come to bask in the glory).

Who casts the last decisive vote?

Now notice this! The people were to appoint the leader God would choose. Democracy is not alien to the Bible. The people had a say in the choice of their leader. They could not reject God's choice, but they had a constitutional obligation to confirm it. So it happened with King Saul and King David (1 Sam. 9:15-16 & 11:15; 1 Sam. 16:12-13; 2 Sam. 2:4; 5:3-5). The same could be said of Jephthah who was more or less directly elected by the people unopposed (Judges 11:5, 11).

An unmistakable hint of democracy is seen in the *representative government* the Prophet Jeremiah foresaw the Jews setting up on their return from their nearly 1900-year dispersion among the nations:

“Their NOBLES SHALL BE FROM AMONG THEM, And their GOVERNOR SHALL COME FROM THEIR MIDST; Then I will cause him to draw near, And he shall approach Me ...” (Jer. 30:21 NKJV Emphasis mine).

Give “nobles” and “governor” the modern equivalent terms *MPs* and *Prime Minister*, and the description fits *PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY*—as presently practised in Israel, the UK and elsewhere in the world.

Again, the terminology might be modern, but the idea of casting ballots (a form of voting) to choose a person out of a number of people for an office or task or simply to decide on a matter is not a new idea. It is an old idea. It derives from the drawing of lots (see Acts 1:23-26; Lev. 16:8-10; Neh. 11:1), and it was seen as a mechanism for peacefully resolving the contention between parties at strife, as stated in Prov. 18:18:

“Casting lots causes contentions to cease, and keeps the mighty apart” (NKJV).

As the main decider in who wins or loses a political contest, voting, like the lot, helps in no small way to peacefully resolve what would otherwise be nasty power struggles among competing parties.

Even so, the sovereign will of God is not set aside in the process. He is the unseen hand who casts the last decisive vote, as brought to our attention in Prov. 16:33:

“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD” (NASU).

The LORD is the ruler over the nations. It is who “changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan. 2:21 KJV). May His will prevail in our impending general elections! Only let us be careful to choose our leaders His way.

The Biblical Criteria for Choosing National Leaders

Exodus chapter 18 outlines an additional set of guidelines which is set to have a transformational impact on our voting habits if only we will follow them. It sets out a core set of qualifications to look for in voting for candidates for political office, helping us to re-examine our motivations for voting the way we vote. This will go a long way to make us more discerning, informed voters thereby curing the tendency for many of us to vote along tribal lines or because of a candidate’s good looks or height among other petty considerations.

The guidelines of Exodus 18 came in the form of advice from Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, at a time Israel was transitioning into a nation state. On seeing the heavy workload on Moses, as he judged the Israelites from morning till evening, Jethro advised him to “select out of all the people **able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain**; and you shall place *these* over them *as* leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.”²² “Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear *the burden* with you” (Ex. 18:21-22 NASU).

The guidelines can be divided into two main categories:

The *first part* (containing the very first qualification) has to do with **competence**. “Choose able men”—people who have what it takes to serve the office; people who have the ability to deliver. These have the requisite knowledge, expertise, track record and experience to get the job done. No case of square pegs in round holes!

The *second part* of the qualifications bears on the moral and spiritual character of the prospective office holder. Chief among them is the fear of God—upon which hang all the rest!

The fear of God is said to be “the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10; Prov. 1:7). In other words, true wisdom starts with godly fear, and it goes on to shape the overall moral life of an individual. Thus the God-fearing person will in all likelihood be:

- A “person of truth”, an honest fellow. He will not easily speak falsehood or deal deceitfully with the public. It will be out of character for him to do so. Instead, he will strive to fulfill all his promises, and if he fails in any of them, he will, in all humility, apologize.
- He will also “hate dishonest gain” because the motivation—greed—will simply not be there! In effect, he will be incorruptible, and the apparition of corruption will be hounded out of the corridors of power; it will suffer a mortal wound in public life, and corruption scandals will no longer hit the headlines with a vengeance!

The living God is ready to help us wean ourselves off corruption and other vices in our public life, but a lot also depends on us individually and collectively. We must apply His word in exercising our franchise in this year’s elections and in subsequent ones.

We already apply some key aspects of it in our national political life. Take decentralization and devolution (where some responsibility or authority is delegated to an official of a lower rank), and it was present in Jethro’s advice to Moses: set the capable, upright leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. (See Deut. 1:15).

Similarly, we also observe the biblical principle of ‘the separation of powers’. In God’s instructions to the king, we see that, the king is only to keep a copy of the written law (or constitution), but he is not supposed to make laws or judge disputes between citizens.

That is the work of the Judges. Without them, the project of nation building will be incomplete and injustice will reign supreme.

“The Judgment is God’s”

- D. The state must set up competent courts which must dispense justice righteously, fairly and speedily in the fear of God.
- I. In going about their work, judges must acknowledge that, first, God is the supreme and ultimate Judge and that they stand in His place and administer justice on His behalf.

King Jehoshaphat charged the judges he appointed in his time to administer justice in Judah:

"Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD who is with you when you render judgment.⁷ "Now then let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have NO PART in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe" (2 Chron. 19:6-7 NASU).

The seat of justice is a sacred place and is not to be used for ungodly ends. In the words of Moses, which he spoke to the first judges he appointed for Israel, “the judgment is God’s” (Deut. 1:16-17), and it’s only His will which must be done in the seat of justice.

In Psalm 82, He calls judges “elohim” (Hebrew for ‘gods’ or ‘mighty ones’) because He wants them to emulate Him—His passion for justice, righteousness and fairness—in delivering justice without fear or favour. And they could well do it if only they give heed to the word of God. As Christ points out in John 10:34-35, He called judges “gods” in the old time because the word of God had come to them—to edify, transform and inculcate in them the wisdom and values of the Almighty God.

2. The court is to be manned by qualified people familiar with judicial procedure; a court of competent jurisdiction, not a kangaroo court. God through Moses saw to it that this was indeed the case in Israel:

¹⁵ "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.

¹⁶ "Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear *the cases* between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him" (Deut. 1:15-16 NASU).

The need for judicial competence logically calls for the formation of a tier of courts from the lower to the higher courts to which more difficult cases will be referred for adjudication. The modern appellate court evolved from the biblical tiered court system established in the days of Moses (Deut. 17:8-13; 2 Chron. 19:10-11).

Once a competent court has been established, godly fear and due process must guide its proceedings and decisions. In practical terms, this means close adherence to the rules of natural justice and sound legal principles, key among which include the following. That:

- The court must not execute judgment through perverted testimony (Ex. 23:2).
- The court must not kill anybody on the unreliable testimony of a witness or on circumstantial evidence (Ex. 23:7).
- The court must deal impartially with all manner of persons, the high and the low (Lev. 19:15).
- The court must not accept testimony unless both parties are present (Ex. 23:1).
- The court must not admit the testimony of a lone witness (Deut. 19:15).
- Anybody who has evidence must testify in court (Lev. 5:1).
- No witness must testify falsely (Ex. 20:13).
- The offence of perjury (lying under oath) is punishable (Deut. 19:16-19).
- The offence of Contempt of Court is punishable (Deut. 17:11-13).
- Judges are not to be cursed (Ex. 22:28).
- Judges must not accept bribes to subvert the cause of justice (Ex. 23:8; see also Prov. 17:23; Isa. 1:23; Amos 5:12).
- Judges must stay sober; a drunken judge perverts judgment (Prov. 31:4-5).
- A judge must not exceed the legal limit of punishment prescribed for a given crime (Deut. 25:1-2).
- The court must not pity the murderer at the trial (Deut. 19:11-13).
- The courts must practise 'redemptive justice'—and deliver the poor and the vulnerable (Ps 82:3-4; Isa. 1:17; Deut. 24:17).

And that is exactly the reason why justice must not only be dispensed righteously but also speedily—the whole wellbeing and future of a person might depend on it, like the widow in Luke 18 whom the ungodly judge would not give her justice until he couldn't stand her pestering!

3. Justice must not be inaccessible. The courts must be closer to the people in their various communities. The concept of 'Justice for all' is biblical:

Deut. 16:18-20

¹⁸ "You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

¹⁹ " You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. ²⁰ "Justice, *and only* justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you (Deut. 16:18-20 NASU).

The great reformist king, Jehoshaphat, did the same during his reign:

⁵ “He appointed judges in the land in **all** the fortified cities of Judah, city by city.

⁸ “In Jerusalem also Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests, and some of the heads of the fathers' *households* of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD and to judge disputes among the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 19:5, 8 NASU).

Justice delayed is justice denied. That is something God is keenly aware of. So then, it devolves on the government of the day to empower the Judicial Service to open more courts in the districts and towns so that justice will truly be made accessible to all citizens at minimal cost.

Officers of the Peace are Ministers of God

E. Under the court system, the Israelites were to appoint “officers” who would work alongside the judges in the administration of justice (Deut. 16:18; 2 Chron. 19:11_b).

These were officers who were mainly charged with the maintenance of law and order. They bring into focus the work of the law enforcement agencies. The roots of the Police service lie here, although it was more formally established in the 800s AD.

Like the Police Force of today, these officers of the court were an integral part of the Criminal Justice System (see 1 Chron. 26:29-32).

Our police officers belong to a time-honoured institution sanctified in scripture. Of all the governmental agencies, they are the face of the law and exercise in more demonstrable ways the power of the state to apprehend and punish lawbreakers.

In modern times, the police serve more under the executive arm of government. And they are the ones to whom the Lord especially makes reference in Romans 13 that they “bear not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (v. 6 KJV).

For the good services they render us—maintaining the peace and keeping criminals at bay—God says, believers ought to honour their tax obligations so that the state can pay them (vv. 6-8).

Lawyers can look to a Greater Legal Luminary in Heaven!

F. Just as the police play a vital role in the administration of justice, so do lawyers. Although they are hardly mentioned in the Old Testament scriptures, they did operate in New Testament times and actually represented clients in the court of law (Acts 24:1-6; Tit. 3:13).

The legal profession is a noble profession which parallels the present intercessory work of Christ in the Supreme Court of heaven:

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin [get into trouble with the law]. And if anyone sins [or breaks the law, 1 Jn 3:4], we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1 NASU).

Jesus Christ our Advocate with the Father is righteous. It follows that an advocate must be irreproachable in his private life and ethical in his professional conduct. Righteousness is the yardstick.

“The LORD is a Man of War”

G. Another critical component of the state without which no country can survive and thrive is the military.

Indeed, no state can even begin to exist without the military. This explains why in ancient times virtually all kings were warriors who organized their own armies and led them in war.

The same was true of Israel. The nation secured its hard-won freedom from Egyptian slavery by war when they were viciously attacked by Amalek from the rear. Moses immediately instructed Joshua to organize an army to fight Amalek, while he stood on top of the hill with the upraised “rod of God” in his hand. Under the banner of “Yahweh-nissi”, Israel defeated Amalek, and the LORD swore there and then that He would have “war with Amalek from generation to generation” (Ex. 17:8-16; Deut. 25:17-19).

It’s a decree of heaven!

As long as evil exists in the form of the use of violence to oppress, terrorize and to destabilize, the military will remain a force for good. The peace of heaven itself was preserved by military means when Michael, the archangel, led an army of holy angels to fight and crush Lucifer (Satan) and his band of insurgent angels who had rebelled against God (Rev. 12:7-9; Isa. 14:12-15).

If so, how could anyone dream of a state without a standing army?

So that Israel would be militarily prepared for the battles ahead of them as they travelled through hostile territory on their way to the Promised Land, the LORD ordered a count of all the able-bodied men of Israel (from 20 years upward) who were eligible for military service (Num. 1).

It’s undeniable that the physical defence of the state against internal and external attacks rests heavily on the shoulders of the military, both in a strategic sense and when it comes to actual combat. Like the Police Force, they are not only a deterrent to evil but also fight it.

They fulfil a heavenly calling framed in a question God poses to them by the mouth of the Psalmist:

“Who will stand up for Me against evildoers? Who will take his stand for Me against those who do wickedness?” (Ps 94:16 NASU).

It is a challenge to our Police and Military Forces. At this time in our nation’s political calendar when we are fast approaching election day (on 7th December, 2016), they need to take their stand in all battle-readiness against those who plan to foment trouble or disrupt the electoral process, imperiling the stability of the state. We only plead that they don’t descend to the level of the miscreants and engage in excesses which might dent their professional image and integrity.

As John the Baptist thundered in the wilderness preaching “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” a group of soldiers came by and asked him, “what shall we do?” He answered them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:14 NKJV; see also Deut. 20).

Let those godly words of professional advice guide our noble men and women of the military as they go about their duties, and the peace and favour of God will be upon them.

In many passages of the scriptures, God characterizes Himself as “a mighty warrior” who fights for His people (Ex. 15:3; Deut. 9:1-3; Jer. 20:11). But He makes it clear He only wages war in the interest of righteousness as He will surely do at the end of time (Rev. 19:11-16; 17:14)..

We ask the same of our military officers. Carry on with your military duties but only in the interests of freedom and justice in the national interest.

God channelled His Word through the Media

H. Experts describe the media as “the fourth estate of the realm” (i.e. the fourth arm of government) given the crucial role it plays in keeping the citizenry informed, while holding the government accountable for its actions and inactions.

It is a work which resonates with God. The Almighty believes in the right of the people to be informed. That is why in giving the Law He Himself descended on Mount Sinai and promulgated it Himself in the hearing of the people as they stood gathered at the foot of the mountain (Ex. 19 & 20).

Afterwards, He put it in permanent form, inscribed on tablets of stone written with His own finger (Ex. 31:18). From this original, the ruler was to make a copy for himself for his own guidance and edification, while periodic public readings were to be made from it for the education of the masses.

In Ps 68:11 God inspired the Psalmist to write:

“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it” (Ps 68:11 KJV).

In the light of the reach of modern telecommunications, media practitioners could well qualify as the “great company of publishers” who through a wide array of media platforms and outlets disseminate information to mass audiences across the face of the earth. Like the movement of the sun across the skies, “their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:18; Ps 19:3-6 NASU).

While it would be anachronistic to say that the mass media existed in Bible times, there is no dispute that God is interested in having His word published far and wide—even to the ends of the world (Matt. 24:14; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

And His Spirit foresaw the birth of the modern telecommunications technology, in so far as He foretold by the mouth of the Prophet Daniel that, in the end times, “knowledge will increase” (Dan. 12:4). That prophesied knowledge explosion has since produced technological breakthroughs which have brought into being the modern mass media as we know it.

Does God have ground rules on communication?

While God, by His posture, would be in support of a media which is free from official censorship and control, He nevertheless believes in and teaches responsible communication—something which the ethics of media practice enjoin.

The Most High knows the power of words. He Himself is a communicator par excellence. The rich tapestry of scriptural language remains a glowing tribute to His unsurpassed literary prowess!

Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (NASU).

Words can inspire, educate and encourage, but at the same time words can provoke, kill the human spirit and incite violence. (See Prov. 10:11; Jam. 3:6). The difference lies in diction— one’s choice of words.

If so, it goes without saying that our media practitioners need to be circumspect in their reportage, especially at this politically tense electioneering period, in order not to incite the wrong kind of passions.

The Almighty Himself doesn’t just put out anything in the public domain. He weighs every word of His to see if it will have the desired, holy effect He seeks. In the words of the Psalmist, the words of the LORD have been “purified seven times” (Ps 12:6), with the result that “Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him” (Prov. 30:5 KJV).

God knows the tremendous power of words for good or for evil. Accordingly, He asks us to:

- Guard against unwholesome words and instead use words which build up; constructive words (Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6).
- Avoid slander or “tale-bearing” which in the modern context can translate as media sensationalism (Lev. 19:16; Prov. 16:28).
- Avoid vilifying the ruling class out of spite (Ex. 22:28).
- Avoid flattery (Ps 12:2-3; Job 32:21-22).
- Avoid peddling falsehood (Ex. 23:1; Lev. 19:11; Prov. 4:24; 6:16-18).
- Expose evil fearlessly and uncompromisingly (Matt. 10:26-27; Eph. 5:11-13; Luke 12:2; Prov. 26:26; Isa. 58:1).
- Publish only the truth (Zech. 8:16; 1 Pet. 3:10; Zeph. 3:13).
- Speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).
- Promote godly values and worthy causes (Philippians 4:8).

Let’s not forget the words of scripture that we will give account for every careless word we speak on the Day of Judgment. "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37 NASU).

So let’s not be rash with our words, for, as Prov. 11:11 points out, **“By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down”** (NASU).

It is a warning especially applicable to our media professionals given the tremendous capacity they possess to make their voices and views heard far and wide with instantaneous results. The power of the media to influence society is simply imponderable! Just as it can be used for negative ends, so it can be harnessed for a world of good—for the education, uplift and edification of our people.

Such are the blessings of godly communication—what God expects of our hard-working men and women of the media.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25:11 KJV)

Godly communication is a beautiful thing.

The Christian Faith and Patriotism

I. It is obvious from all that we have studied so far that God is not apolitical. On the contrary, He takes keen interest in the governance systems of the nations over which He rules as the invisible Supreme Sovereign.

But what drives His political interest? Why does He devote a significant portion of His word to teaching us the principles and practices which promote good governance?

Clearly, it's not mainly for the benefit of the authorities, but for the benefit of the governed who are in the majority. That is why He insists on the proper use of the powers of the state. He doesn't want the authorities to ride roughshod over us, the citizenry, in a display of arbitrary use of power.

At the same time, however, God wants us, the ruled, to give respect to whom respect is due and honour to whom honour is due—that is, to the civil authorities. “For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1, 7 KJV).

The good Christian is a good citizen who is supposed to submit to the institutions of state and not resist them (1 Pet. 2:13-17; Tit. 3:1-2; Rom. 13:2)—except where their decrees conflict with the will of God revealed in the scriptures. In that case, we are to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

In the area of tax payment, in particular, the word of God is insistent that Christians do not default, for it is a legitimate and reasonable demand of the state in return for the public services it provides us. “... because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom ...” (Rom. 13:6-7 NASU).

The believer is *in* this world but *not of* this world (John 17:11, 14-16). True Christians are supposed to live a separate life of holiness from the sinful life of the world. Yet we are not an island to ourselves, cocooned in our own little world outside the sphere of ordinary human existence, where we are unaffected by happenings in the larger socio-political environment. We are all in the ship of state together with our fellow citizens. The peace of the nation is our peace, so too its fall.

Therefore the state—embodied in the political leadership—needs our prayers, our spiritual advocacy:

“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:1-4 NASU).

Political stability serves the cause of the Kingdom of God. In the peace of Ghana we have our peace (Jer. 29:7).

Let the will of God rule! Let it usher in a time of national healing and renewal:

“If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14 KJV).

I conclude by quoting the last words of King David as recorded in 2 Samuel 23:1-4:

“Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,

² “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.

³ “The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, HE THAT RULETH OVER MEN MUST BE JUST, RULING IN THE FEAR OF GOD.

⁴ “And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain” (KJV). Amen!

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