

## [How Should The Christian Vote? \[1\]](#)

by: [Curvin Wenger](#) [2]

It is that time again, election year. The media is bombarding us with any tidbit of interesting information they can get their hands on. Recently, for example, one of the candidates suddenly stumbled, then abruptly departed the public event they were attending. This spawned all sorts of media discussion about many numerous details in an effort to not miss anything. There were videos of the stumble. There was discussion about what “the stumble meant”. Some folks tried to use the misstep to question whether this individual was in good enough health to be the country’s next leader. The opposing side even published an updated medical report for their candidate, verifying that he was in excellent health.

And so it goes. Any little misstep or any possible misuse of words is examined and re-examined for any potential clue regarding a myriad of possibilities. For some of us, perhaps we choose to not read the daily newspaper or maybe we are endeavoring to live our lives separated from the world. However, it has been my observation and experience that even for those who are leading a sheltered life, there still seems to be an awareness about issues that are current in politics, especially regarding matters which have the potential to cause a negative impact on our lives as Christians.

### **My Childhood Memories**

As I reflect back on my childhood, when I attended a conservative Christian school, I recall that we were quite sheltered from the national news. But, somehow it became known that there was a woman running for the Democratic party as a vice-presidential candidate. I remember there was concern and even something more akin to fear that seemed to settle on our hearts. “What would the future hold if a woman was elected as vice-president?” was the thought that troubled some of our immature minds.

I can also remember other major events that happened during my growing-up years, which even though we were leading quite sheltered lives, still mysteriously became known within a very short time after they occurred. I remember the day President Ronald Reagan was shot. I remember the day terrorists flew jets into the World Trade Center’s twin towers. I remember the day the U.S. invaded Iraq for the first time. Somehow, when major events take place which are perceived to have a potential to be life-changing for us, the news seems to travel “lightning fast”.

### **Conservative vs. Liberal**

Where does this leave us, God-fearing, Bible-believing Christians, as we find ourselves in the midst of another election year? Some of the potential outcomes may prompt our hearts to tremble. Should we do as the more mainstream “Christians” would promote—get involved with politics and try to persuade as many as possible to vote for the most “Christian” friendly candidate? Should we be responsible citizens and vote, as some would say, “for the lesser of the two evils”, since neither one is exactly “made to order”?

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What will happen if a liberal is elected as the next president? What about a candidate who freely encourages those in the audience to rough up or beat up anyone who dares to publicly disagree with his presented message? How might he respond toward Christians who might not conscientiously agree with his ideas and agenda? What will the outcome be if this country would move even further to the left, or develop even more liberal views on issues such as LGBT rights and minority entitlement? What will the final end be if the person elected continues to advance the federal government overreach on a whole host of issues—medical care, privacy rights, religious freedoms, etc.? What will happen if the “wrong” person gets elected as president and appoints more liberal judges to the Supreme Court and to the Federal bench? What will happen if more “religious rights” are taken away from this country?

I agree this all seems to be troubling—at least I tend to be tempted to worry about the future at times, as I suppose is normal for most of us. So again I ask, “What would God have us do?” I believe there are a number of Scriptures that come into play here. But first let us consider some practical questions and observations. Should we get involved politically and vote, to ensure that the “right” candidate gets elected? Or maybe the more important question is, “Does God expect us to vote, so we are doing our part to guarantee that His ‘chosen’ candidate ends up in the White House?”

### Working with God or Against Him

If our thoughts are going down these lines, then let us ask some more compelling questions. If we would vote and then someone other than the one we voted for gets elected, does that mean we did not have a clear voice from God about which one was His chosen? Another question could be asked: “What happens if two ‘Christians’ vote, after they spend time seeking God’s will regarding whom they should vote for, and then they each vote for a different candidate; which one is actually voting for God’s ‘chosen’?”

Now let us look at it another way, if we pray and seek God’s will for His “chosen” candidate, and then we vote accordingly, but someone else ends up being elected, does that not leave us with one of several concluding possibilities? (1) We really do not understand how to clearly hear God’s “voice”. Or (2) Satan ended up getting the upper hand this time and God is really not in charge, “yet”. Or (3), here is the worst and final possibility, we were actually working against God, since the Bible says that God sets up [elected officials] who He will and takes down who He will. (Daniel 4:32)

Here some may say they do not pray about God’s elect, but rather just use logical reasoning and vote for the one they think is the most qualified. Hopefully as we continue on through this article we will see that the very “act” of voting by Christians is a violation of principle based upon who we are — dual-citizens with our primary loyalty being to another country.

### Two-Kingdom Principle

I would like to propose possibly a very extreme thought for some of you, depending upon your up-bringing, your church affiliation, or your Biblical worldview. In the Gospels, Jesus talks about His disciples not fighting because His Kingdom is not of this world. The unspoken message here is that Jesus’ disciples are a part of another kingdom, which is why they would not fight for this earthly kingdom. (John 18:36)

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This is a very clear departure from the normal response of God's people which is visibly shown all the way through the Old Testament. Here Jesus is saying that His people would not participate in certain methods that are normal for the society, because they are a part of a different society. They are to see themselves as "strangers and pilgrims" and function in that manner (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11). Or to put it into a paraphrase of Jesus' words in His High Priestly prayer, Christ's followers should be in the world, but not of it (John 17:15-16).

Another point to consider is the teaching of Paul in Romans chapter 13, where we are told that the elected leaders of this world's society are actually "God's ministers", put in place to do His will in bringing order to the society and to keep the peace, both internally and externally. It is clear that the elected leaders of this world's societies are expected by God to "bear not the sword in vain", in order to keep the peace and to punish the evil doer. Without a clear understanding of the two-kingdom principle, there is cause for a lot of confusion regarding the believer's place and responsibility within the society and their relation to the government of that society.

## Rebellious Christians

Another issue that also comes up in the midst of this prevailing confusion is that of living in a manner of being anti- this world or, more often, being anti- government or anti- elected officials. This anti- behavior usually comes out of the difficulty of understanding how believers should be "in the world, but not of it". These individuals have a tendency of not wanting to err on the side of being of the world, so they instead focus on being against and then many end up becoming anti- the world. While the Scriptures would teach the concept of being separated from the world and separated unto God, this in no way gives excuse for believers to develop a rebellious lifestyle towards the elected officials. Actually, if believers respond in this manner against the government of the society in which they are living, God says they are, in reality, working against Him (see Romans 13:1-2). Finally, as we look at this issue, Jesus himself clearly taught that He expects His followers to pay whatever taxes that the host country has established, because that physical currency is actually the currency of that earthly kingdom—"render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:15-22).

## A Christian Nation

A Christian is literally one who follows Christ. A believer usually is referred to as one who believes in Jesus as revealed in the New Testament. Ever since Constantine, Emperor of Rome, claimed to have become a Christian and then tried to draw the church and the state together as one, there has been ensuing confusion on this issue. From time to time throughout the ages (both in history past and more recently) there have been elected officials who have made a public profession of their faith as a Christian. Their confusion as to what exactly defines a true Christian has allowed for them to use this verbal profession to achieve and promote political means or agendas.

When someone claims to be a Christian, many would feel that it is wrong to question that claim. No longer do people remember that Jesus said "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). In their misguided and confused thinking, they hold up certain evidences which they claim prove that God is working on their behalf. There have been numerous glory stories told about God's divine intervention on the modern-day battlefield. There has been story after story shared as testimony about the hand of God overruling in certain policy

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changes that were just about to take place which would have had significant negative repercussions.

There have been books and magazine articles written detailing many of these different life stories. In fact, after hearing about the proclaimed faith of one of the past presidents, a Christian brother was heard to say, “this man is our brother because he ‘believes’ in Jesus.” With all this apparent evidence and public display of proclaimed faith, what are believers supposed to think and how should they respond? According to Romans 13, God is with these elected officials and is actually working through them and will, yes, even at times intervene through events that seem miraculous indeed.

But this is where the confusion comes in. If God is using them and working through them, does this not mean that we as the church should also be involved in the government, through counsel, participation, and voting? Some of our more mainstream evangelical friends would surely think so. They do not understand the two-kingdom principle, therefore it is difficult for them to realize that God is working through the elected officials and yet He would expect His people to function as dual citizens, with their primary loyalty being to Jesus’ kingdom which is “not of this world”.

### Dual Citizenship

This kingdom that Jesus is talking about has its own king, its own government, its own elected officials (the church & its leaders), its own citizens (believers), its own constitution & laws (God’s Word—New Testament), its own currency (treasures & rewards), its own language, and its own agenda (living holy lives). And yet, just like an individual could be a dual citizen of Canada and the USA or of the USA and Mexico, if the time were ever to come that the two countries in question would be at odds with one another or worse yet if they would go to war with each other, that individual with dual citizenship would need to decide to which country he is going to be loyal. He would need to choose the one over the other.

In like manner when we understand the two-kingdom principle of the New Testament, we treat it the same as a dual-citizenship situation. We see that while we are “in the world, but not of it” we therefore are actually citizens of both a physical and a spiritual kingdom at the same time. We also realize that we will either be primarily loyal to this earthly kingdom or we will be loyal to the heavenly kingdom. Since God tells us that “whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4), we understand that it is impossible to be ultimately loyal to both. We also see that our choice of loyalty will, in the end, affect our eternal reward and destiny.

### Ambassadors to a Foreign Country

The perspective of being ambassadors is a concept that is perhaps even more true to the clear teaching, emphasis, and example of the Scriptures on this matter. In Ephesians 6:20, Paul understood the primary focus and function of his life was to be an ambassador of the Gospel, during a time period that he was experiencing hardship placed upon him by the elected officials of his day—officials who were elected to be governing over the society in which he was residing.

Additionally, in 2 Corinthians 5:20, as Paul is detailing the outworking of the Gospel message

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going forth to a world of need, he refers to believers as being “ambassadors for Christ”. This is where we as believers enter into the picture. It is clearly stated in the context of the teachings found in God’s Word that His will is for all people to be reconciled to Himself and that Biblical plan is to be shared with the world by His people as they are acting as ambassadors.

Now ambassadors are clearly citizens of their home country even when they are sent to a foreign country to reside there and function as a representative for their home country. Then, for the duration of their stay in the host country, they are allowed to live there. They can go shopping for their everyday needs. They can go about their normal lives in whatever manner they desire, so long as they are not violating the prescribed normal functions of their host country.

On the flip side, they do not have citizens’ rights. They do not take part in the politics of their host country, nor do they try to tell their host country how they should govern, or it most certainly would be seen as being a conflict of interest. But there will, at times, be the need for discussions about how their home country would feel about certain situations in the host country, but never in a lobbying manner.

Another key point that we also should keep in focus here is that, as a representative to their host country for their home country, an ambassador must at all times, live his life consistently according to the wishes of his home country. If it would become known that he is not being true to the goals and values of his home country then he would very soon lose the respect of both his home country and his host country. Thus there is an absolute necessity for him to walk circumspectly and carefully in his everyday life.

This gives us a very beautiful picture about how the New Testament would teach us as believers to function as though we are “in the world but not of it”. This would also explain how we are to see ourselves as “strangers and pilgrims” while we are living in our host country. We also clearly see that we are to be representatives for God and the Gospel message while we are going about our daily lives and rubbing shoulders with the citizens of this earthly kingdom. The point is well taken that as ambassadors, we really have no rights of the host country while we are living here. As we look at this issue through these Biblical lenses, I trust the many different points of confusion are being cleared up, one by one.

## Historical Examples

There are many examples showing the Anabaptist church, of one persuasion or another, getting involved with the government and politics of their time period. Looking back at where they were standing on convictions and practiced beliefs, we can understand perhaps why so many of these groups and individuals crossed that line. For many of them, they had slowly been taking the road of compromise for years, for decades, and some even for several generations.

I have heard different folks lift up the German Mennonites of the 1930’s and 1940’s as an example for us to consider. There are stories of Mennonite men who served in Hitler’s army and fought on the battlefield. There are numerous letters examined which purportedly were sent by Mennonites directly to Hitler sharing their appreciation and cooperation with his government and policies. And there is also an infamous photo on the internet showing young ladies wearing some type of head gear (who folks claim were Mennonite), who were

supposedly attending a Hitler rally.

Typically, these circumstances are shared somewhat hesitantly because it seems to be a blight on the history of the Mennonites and Anabaptists. But they really are not a relevant example of Anabaptist history, for a number of reasons. (1) The German Mennonites did not come out of the majority of Anabaptists who had long since settled in the New World in order to continue living out their two-kingdom concept; rather they were descendants of the remnants that had remained behind in Europe after the majority of Anabaptists had departed. (2) The Mennonites who were living in America had not come out of the group that was still living in Europe during the 1900's, rather their ancestors had all emigrated one to two hundred years earlier. (3) These two groups were not fellowshiping back and forth, neither were they in any manner influencing each other. Therefore, the Mennonites in Germany were in NO way a reflection on the Mennonites or the Anabaptists as a whole, but rather they ended up as they did due to their own unique beliefs and practices.

During the second and third generation of the Anabaptist movements in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and even in England, the persecution had been so intense regarding the key issue of the separation of church and state, that any individual or group which still held to this concept was forced to move on to other lands in order to survive physically. Anyone who stayed behind was able to do so only by going quiet and no longer living out this principle or, in other words, starting to compromise on truth in order to escape persecution. Therefore, the two-kingdom principle had died out in Europe many years before. These groups that were still left in Europe would have been Mennonites in name only, in regards to some of the clear Biblical doctrines their forefathers had died for all those many years before.

Other examples that could be examined would be the Mennonites in Russia, the Mennonites that moved to Paraguay or Mexico, etc. Again, these groups really are not good examples because most of them had also adopted a lifestyle of compromise in order to survive. One clear example of this would be the Mennonites in Russia. When they and the leaders of Russia met to discuss the possibility of them moving to that country, one of the stipulations was that they could come if they agreed to not proselytize the natives. In other words, they could come to live there and enjoy religious freedom if they would agree to never evangelize their neighbors with the Gospel.

While there may have been some unique situations throughout this time-period in history, in which these facts may not have been true, according to all the church history which I have read, this was the general overall reality—compromise on doctrine in order to have religious freedom.

## Conscience in Crisis

One real-life situation which would come much closer home and could be an example for us to carefully consider would be the pacifist groups of colonial America. Many different peace groups had moved to this country, especially to the colony of Pennsylvania, in order to have freedom of religion. These groups were able to enjoy this privilege primarily because the Quakers (who were peace loving), had been instrumental in getting the colony of Pennsylvania established as a haven of rest for those who had suffered persecution for their faith in other countries.

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These groups which had moved to America usually settled together in certain localized areas. Therefore, in the beginning it was almost as if each group did not have the problem of being in the world. Rather, in their local society or area, it was only the church—there was no one else for miles around. Others who would be considered of the world would have settled in some other localized area. So it seemed logical for the church groups to establish some of their own elected officials, in order to keep things organized and to settle civil disputes in their midst. Thus, due to this and other reasons, as we read through the history of early colonial Pennsylvania we see that there were Mennonite sheriffs, judges, and other elected officials.

Another aspect that came into play here was the fact that since the Quakers (who were against the use of force) had been the ones who developed Pennsylvania, they naturally organized themselves into the assembly or the legislature which had oversight of the whole colony in all civil matters. This was enjoyed and appreciated by the numerous different groups that were peace loving. Thus, when elections were held to elect officials for each successive term, the different Anabaptist groups would go out in force to ensure that the next group of elected officials would be partial to their views.

This all seemed to be going along smoothly until the storm clouds of war started to appear on the horizon, first the French and Indian War and then the Revolutionary War. There was a strong push, by those who were of the world (both within Pennsylvania and from surrounding colonies) for Pennsylvania to develop its own militia in order to carry its own weight in defending against the rising wave of unrest. The Quakers held on to their elected positions tenaciously and tried everything in their power to appease the opposition, even by finally agreeing to enact policies that required the peace groups to pay fines in order to allow them to remain exempt from participating in the raising of a militia for their society.

As time moved on, this concerted effort by the peace groups, to force their views onto an unregenerate society, kept developing into more and more public unrest. Eventually this unrest grew to such outrage in the society that they voted the Quakers out of office and elected officials who were in favor of developing a militia. Once these officials had become the majority, they enacted laws which forbade anyone from being elected in the future who opposed using force in order to keep the peace.

This period of time, with its major upheaval for the peace groups in America, has been referred to as a time of “The Conscience in Crisis”. Prior to this series of events there had not been much clear teaching on the two-kingdom principle among the Anabaptists. Also, there had not been much teaching on the differences between pacifism and nonresistance; in fact, these two terms would have probably been understood to mean the same thing during that time period. The churches were very ill-prepared indeed, to sort their way through this quagmire of ensuing confusion. Many believers lost their way spiritually and ended up leaving the church, especially among the youth and younger Christians.

Thus ended this involuntary experiment of trying to have a “Christian” government. From this we can discover that while a country may try to function according to Old Testament principles, there is absolutely no way for there to be a New Testament Christian nation on this earth. In fact, that term (Christian nation) is actually an oxymoron, meaning that by definition they are two terms which are diametrically opposed to each other and can never be put together without destroying the meaning and function of one or the other.

### Conclusion

Now we come to some concluding thoughts on these matters. In Romans 13, we are told that the rulers are “ministers” of God to carry out His justice on evil. Jesus tells us that we are to “pay unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” and “unto God the things that are God’s”. Timothy tells us that we should make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life (1 Timothy 2:2).

We see that God is not only telling us that He is in control of every event that unfolds around us and around the world, but that He is also concerned that we should be able to continue to serve Him. He is so concerned about us in this whole matter that He tells us specifically what we are to do—pray. He wants to help us live for Him in the midst of any worldly society, even though it may be governed by ungodly individuals.

How should we then vote? Should we vote Republican or Democrat? Should we vote conservative or liberal? Should we even care or should we stay completely out of the political scenario? I believe the Scriptures teach us to be concerned about politics and the government of our host country, but not through active involvement. God clearly defines how we should interact. We should pray, pay our taxes, obey the enacted policies in all possible ways, respond humbly and with respect when we need to “obey God rather than man”, and ultimately realize that God will “set up who He will and take down who He will.”

I believe we should vote on our knees. I believe that we should operate as ambassadors, while we endeavor to be “in this world but not of it.” I believe we should be representatives to our host country for our home country. I believe we should think and behave like the dual-citizens which we are, in all reality. Ultimately, I believe we should stop and consider how far-reaching the two-kingdom concept is and carefully live our lives consistently in tune with God’s Word in every area, both privately and publicly.

May God help each one of us to find His will and way as we endeavor to humbly and firmly stand for Truth according to His Word. Let us not compromise in the face of the many challenging pressures we face from the worldly society in which we are living. Let us be ambassadors of real answers to the multitude of confusing issues which the society of our host country struggles with, on a regular basis. Let each of us always remember that we are not, primarily, citizens of any worldly kingdom but rather, as children of God, we are citizens, first of all, of His heavenly kingdom.

May we all intercede with our Sovereign heavenly Father, that we may “lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. May God bless each one.

### Resources Used for this Article

- Twas Seeding Time - John L Ruth
- Conscience in Crisis - Richard K MacMaster, Samuel L Horst, Robert F Ulle
- The Earth is the Lord’s - John L Ruth
- Various biographies about William Penn and other individuals from that time period.
- Various history books, articles, and documentaries on: Pennsylvania, Colonial America, World War I, World War II

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