

Engaging with authorities in the world

Introduction

This is a response to a question (one of many) regarding complaining to or demanding answers from governments about anti-Christian laws. I decided to expand this into an informal paper giving my views on the matter. I will not look intensively into the theology of this or analyse all the issues; this is merely my counsel.

I have detailed papers on the Christian and politics where I have also looked at these issues, such as: 'POLITICS: How should Christians react?', 'Austerity Politics', 'Why Christians MUST See Through Political Lies', plus various specific issues, such as; 'Exiting the EU'.

My friend,

Your question relates to a certain paradox. That is, a) we shouldn't be involved in political activism to change the world, that is not our remit; and b) as responsible citizens we can and should draw our MPs (or any other authority in view) attention to areas where they are breaking God's law and damaging God's people.

Being political

I have made the case, quite strongly, in previous papers that it is not the job of Christians to seek to change the world. We are not 'world changers', as the Charismatic song goes. We are people changers, fishers of men. We cannot change the world, even if we wanted to; but our task from God is not social liberation – it is preaching the Gospel and building the church.

Under the remit of loving our neighbours we can do all sorts of good works to those around us and can seek to make the life of local people better. This is righteousness in action. But we cannot change the course of the world, which is heading into deeper and deeper iniquity.

Then there is the issue of God's sovereign control of the nations and the world as a whole. He has ordained that man's sin should come to fulness in the end times and that deceit should fill the earth, culminating in a demonic world government committed to evil and destroying the church.

How can we, as mere men, hope to change the world to be more righteous when God has decreed that it will become more sinful; indeed, that it will be united in iniquity. Our very crusading to make the world more righteous would then be actively working against the will of God. As in all things, our first job is to understand God's will and then order our lives accordingly.

Not only that, all the campaigns, crusades, protesting, activism and even rebellions that the so-called church has got involved with in the last century has only led to a worsening of theology, damage to the churches, heretical teachings and distraught, disappointed people. Just look at the result of Liberation Theology for a start where leaders confused the Gospel with Communism. The late 19th century Christian Socialists fared little better.

Thus I have explained that I am opposed to all sorts of political activism for Christians. I see no point in Christians protesting, going on marches, starting campaigns, organising petitions and so on in order to change government policy in some worldly issue. For example, Gay marriage is wrong but it is here to stay under God's long suffering. There is zero point wasting time trying to get this reversed when there are more important things to do.

Furthermore, God has told us to be submitted to the authorities in power. If the government legalises sin it is wrong and will have to give an account before God on the Day of Judgment. It is not my job to try to get such laws overturned to try to make Britain a more Christian nation. It was never a Christian nation in the first place, even though it was a nation far more concerned with Christian principles than today.

We are not social warriors; we are preachers of the Gospel and witnesses to Christ.

Sadly some people get so transfixed in fighting stupid political battles that they end up doing no good in their lives and wasting time that could have gained them rewards for service to God. I once had contact with a certain ministry where the writer did almost nothing other than bang on about homosexuality. Everything he did came down to that one issue. This will do people no good.

Being prophetic

Having said all that, there is a place for sounding your voice to represent God in testimony. This is entirely different.

You have rights as a citizen and you should exercise this responsibility to draw attention to the truth in a passive, respectful manner.

Thus, if you feel constrained by God to do so, you may write to your local MP to ask questions about an issue, draw his attention to facts or complain about changes to policies. You have every right, before God, to draw him over the coals for entertaining issues that God hates. Who knows, you could be part of bringing such a person to the Lord.

This is being prophetic. Many OT prophets laid their lives on the line to go to the king's court and rail against injustice, oppression of the poor, dishonour of God, and various other sins. Some of them ended up in prison, or even tortured and dead. However, denunciation of civil evil is a prophetic job.

The focus of this activity is not political change in the country but a testimony to the truth. Your job in drawing attention of your MP to issues is to testify to God's law. In the last day this will leave such people without excuse when they are condemned. God expects you to be a witness to the truth and to direct people in power to see what truth is affected by their policies.

You see the difference is between political activity in the world, which is pointless and not our sphere of influence, and testimony to the truth to represent heaven to men on earth.

Thus I have written to my MP about three times about general issues that I believe to be wrong. One of them (about proposed austerity measures) was 9 pages long with full documentation. He telephoned me to discuss it. [In hindsight, everything I affirmed was proved right and everything he said in defence was proved wrong.] Don't expect any success; your job is to be a witness.

But what about threats to the church by new laws?

So what? Consider yourself fortunate indeed that you are not in a country where simply saying that you are a Christian would lead to your death. Many of your brethren are in this situation right now.

We should expect that in a deteriorating society, new laws will come into place that attack the church and individual Christians. This will get worse not better. Our job is not to fight this downgrade of society that God has not only ordained but has warned us will occur.

You may write to your MP explaining the truth behind the issues involved, but you do not protest, start an agitation, begin campaigning, initiate a petition and gather a protest march. You do not waste time trying to change the world – even if it is trying to save your church.

We submit to world authorities and do not rebel. Thus when evil legislation arises we suffer it. The apostles did not waste time trying to get Nero to change his insane views about Christians being a threat to the imperial empire. They just got on by preaching the Gospel and getting martyred. The blood of the saints speaks far more loudly than protesting for civil rights.

Neighbourliness

As well as complaining to MPs there is nothing wrong with complaining to lower authorities where you can do some good. These would include: doctors, hospital managers, local councillors, managing directors and so on. By drawing their attention to the truth of this or that local issue, you may even get things changed for your locality, which would be an act of love for your neighbours. This isn't about changing the world, or changing laws, or changing the drift of your country; it is about being a good neighbour.

For example, I complained on behalf of my neighbours regarding a certain issue where the local housing association was effectively doing something illegal and raising our service charge fees. It took three years of letter writing but I got the practice stopped and the protocols completely re-organised so that my neighbours were either spared the costs entirely or their costs were much reduced. This was an act of love for my neighbours who were not equipped to do this sort of thing.

This is not changing the world; it is simply applying the law to a local situation to help people. Paul applied the law by appealing to Caesar for trial as a Roman citizen, a privilege that even some Roman commanders did not have by birth (Acts 22:28).

Conclusion

I trust that I have answered your question. Yes, you can write to your MP (or any other authority) to witness to the truth, warn him of offending God or to make him do the right thing personally. But you must not waste your time and effort trying to change the world for the better through political activism. This world is not our home.

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