

## Christians and politics

Although we probably get sick of them and complain about their incompetence at times, yet Christians will take an interest in what our elected members of parliament and our government are doing (or not doing). We strike a balance between becoming too comfortable with the ways of the world, as Lot did (Ge 19:1), and becoming isolationists who withdraw from the world (cf. the movement of monasticism). We are in the world but not of the world (cf John 17:14, 16). Jeremiah told the exiles in Babylon to take an interest in the affairs of their land of captivity. He wrote, "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper," (Jer. 29:7). Likewise we must also pray for the good of the land in which we live.

Christians will be interested in improving the temporal welfare of the citizens of earthly kingdoms. However, we will not think that government will ever establish a utopia on earth. The idea that government will eventually eliminate poverty, discrimination, disease, war, and perhaps one day even control the weather is a pipe dream. The nature of mankind is sinful from conception on. The LORD Himself says, "... for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth," (Gen. 8:21), and David writes for all of us when he says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," (Psalm 51:5). The Lord has told us that things will not get better on this earth during the New Testament era. Politicians may promise a heaven on earth, but that will never be. Sin will be with us until the end of time. Poverty, war, discrimination, and disease will also be with us until the end of time.

Christians certainly may get involved in politics, with the motivation being the desire to serve our fellow citizens in response to God's love for us. The Lutheran Confessions state:

*Concerning public order and secular government it is taught that all political authority, orderly government, laws, and good order in the world are created and instituted by God and that Christians may without sin exercise political authority; be princes and judges; pass sentences and administer justice according to imperial and other existing laws; punish evildoers with the sword; wage just wars; serve as soldiers; buy and sell; take required oaths; possess property; be married; etc. (AC XVI:1, 2 [German text])*

The Augsburg Confession condemned the Anabaptists of their day for forbidding the things that were mentioned. Christians rightly can serve in public office.

What does a Christian do while holding public office if he must administer a law that permits what God forbids? For example, what will a Christian judge do if a couple appears before him asking for a divorce? This must be tough on judges who are Christian, as biblically, there may be no grounds for divorce for a couple he must decide

upon. Yet the state has a no-fault approach to divorce, granting it to anyone who asks for it. The judge will have to administer the laws of the state. He may grant the divorce to the couple because the state permits it.

When discussing politics, Christians will need to be charitable toward one another. It is possible for two Christians to differ on what a government should do, and we have to be careful that we don't condemn another person's political views as unchristian simply because they don't agree with our views. As we listen to candidates running for public office, we will listen to all that they have to say. We will try to judge them by their qualifications for the office. We will look for and pray for honest public servants who will serve the public and not themselves.