Church History

An Biblical Perspective on the Church and the State

1. How should biblical Christians relate to the government?
   1. They should…
      1. Respect leaders—I Peter 2.17
      2. Pray for leaders— I Timothy 2.1-2
      3. Obey the government—Romans 13.1
      4. Pay taxes—Matthew 22:15-22
   2. They should not…
      1. Compromise their beliefs or values—“We ought to obey God rather than men”
      2. Fight
         1. Christians are to be like Christ and love all people, including our enemies
         2. Christians are to live by the golden rule
         3. Christians are to forgive and return good for evil
         4. Christians believe that life is sacred and that only God has the right to take life
         5. Christians follow Christ’s example of service and sacrifice rather than demanding rights and privileges for themselves
      3. Engage in the political process (holding office, lobbying, voting, campaigning)
         1. Self-promotion
         2. Commitment to self-interest
         3. Coercion
         4. Conflict and division with those of opposing political views
2. How should Christians contribute to society? (What is the alternative to both political involvement and withdrawal from society?)
   1. Work for the good of all people
   2. Be a law-abiding, tax-paying citizen
   3. Live a life of service every day
   4. Mobilize as a church community to address needs and problems in the community
   5. Organize and participate in civic events that contribute to the well-being of the community
   6. Actively seek to help those in need—whether the homeless, victims of natural disasters, or other
   7. Be willing to take risks and suffer to show Christ’s love
   8. Share the message of Christ’s transforming power—this addresses man’s most basic need
3. Beliefs undergirding the Christian’s relationship to the state
   1. Jesus Christ is the supreme authority in every area of life for the Christian. Allegiance and obedience to any other authority must always take second place.
   2. The government’s authority is legitimate and must be respected and obeyed by Christians in everything that does not violate the commands and example of Christ
   3. Christians are citizens of God’s kingdom—that citizenship provides their primary identity as well as their primary responsibility
      1. Christians have a closer kinship with other believers around the world than with an unbelieving citizen of the same country
      2. In working for the good of God’s kingdom, Christians seek to help and bless all people—those in their own country as well as those in other countries
   4. Christians witness to the world of Christ’s love and truth by modeling Jesus’ life
   5. Biblical passages
      1. Mt 5:43-45 - Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.
      2. Romans 12:17-21 - Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

* + 1. Romans 13:1 - Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.
    2. John 18:36 - Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.
    3. Eph 1:20-23 - Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.
    4. 1 Peter 2:19-21  But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **21**For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.
    5. 2 Cor. 5:20 - Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.