

Changing the Politicians' Thinking

by Robert P. Jr Dugan

Christians can change a society by educating and electing, and by influencing lawmakers through various methods of communication.

Scripture: Genesis 1:26, Leviticus 25:10, Psalm 33:12, Proverbs 6:16, Proverbs 29:18, Hosea 4:6, Amos 5:24, John 8:32, 1 Timothy 5:8

Topics: "Christian Politics", "Social Justice"

Description

Robert P. Jr Dugan preaches about the importance of evangelicals engaging in politics to influence society positively by being both salt and light. He emphasizes the need for evangelicals to commit to a new level of civic awareness, educating themselves on crucial issues and influencing lawmakers through personal contact, single-interest groups, and broader agendas. Dugan highlights the significance of evangelicals promoting Judeo-Christian values in education and legislation, protecting religious liberty, preserving the traditional family, and advocating for justice for all, including the protection of life as sacred.

Transcript

"Applause, mingled with boos and hisses, is about all the average voter is willing to contribute to public life."¹ If that statement is anywhere near reality, then evangelicals have a marvelous opportunity -- but they must be above average politically.

The Bible and history teach us that there are two ways by which Christians can change a society. When they fulfill their function as light, their nation can be reformed through the political processes of educating and electing.

During the fundamentalist/modernist controversy of the early twentieth century, fundamentalists became almost totally occupied with their role as light, while theological liberals majored almost exclusively on their responsibility to be salt. With Carl F.H. Henry's pivotal 1947 book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* as a catalyst, evangelicalism's growing involvement in social and political concerns marked a distinction from fundamentalism.

Today, evangelical Christianity realizes that to be fully biblical, it must function as both salt and light. The twin goals of transforming and reforming are as essential as the two wings on an eagle, as necessary as two oars on a

rowboat. The evangelizing/equipping and educating/electing functions are as indispensable as the two blades on a pair of scissors.

Hundreds of books have been written to motivate evangelicals to do evangelism and to equip the church's converts to be mature and responsible followers of Jesus Christ. What follows in this chapter and in the next should provide down-to-earth assistance to those who want to reshape society through the political process.

Evangelicals must set out two objectives. Their short-range goal must be to change the politicians' thinking. That is first done through educating themselves, and then persuasively educating their elected officials. Their long-range goal must be to change the politicians themselves, when voting records reveal an unwillingness to change. The latter involves elections, and is the subject of the following chapter.

For the ideas presented here to work, evangelicals must commit themselves to a new level of civic awareness. The Old Testament prophet Hosea lamented the word of the Lord which warned, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge."² Too many Christians are blank slates when it comes to the crucial issues of religious liberty and national morality. At the least, they may have adjusted to being informed only after the fact.

Even then, no one helps to channel their concerns so that they actually influence lawmakers.

To remedy their political innocence, evangelicals must become readers. A twice-weekly newspaper cannot be substituted for a major city daily newspaper, the Wall Street Journal, or even USA Today. The latter is often criticized as the "fast food" newspaper, but it includes (albeit with short articles) broad coverage of the White House and Congress, stuff that many papers omit. People magazine is no substitute for a newsweekly. Knowledgeable citizens will read at least one of these magazines: Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, or World.

And books. The conventional wisdom is that 10 percent of the people read 90 percent of the books. Those people are the leaders. That's why I suggest that one component of a successful church youth program should be to encourage the youth to become serious readers. In a 1990 survey, the Educational Testing Service concluded that only 40 percent of young Americans could read well enough to grasp the meaning of a typical newspaper column. If evangelicals are going to influence the nation, their high school generation must become a major segment of that intelligent minority.

On the Madison Building of the Library of Congress, these words of our fourth president are inscribed:

Knowledge shall forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which only knowledge gives.

Evangelical zeal, accompanied by knowledge rather than mere emotion, will lead Christians to influence their lawmakers in one or more of these ways: through single-interest groups, through groups with broader agendas, and through personal contact.

Pro-life, anti-pornography, or tax limitation groups are typical single-issue organizations. While they are often exceedingly effective, I offer one caution. Members must not assume that their one issue is the be-all and end-all of political involvement. They must keep their eyes open.

Other groups with a broader range of interests include environmental, teachers, chamber of commerce, farm bureau, and religious organizations -- as well as political parties. In local areas, groups may spring up with indeterminate names such as "Citizens for Better Government," whose purpose will need to be researched. It may be some readers of this book should initiate a citizen's group, given a local problem and a group of concerned friends or neighbors.

At a White House briefing for religious leaders from

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around the country, Doug Wead, formerly President Bush's liaison to religious groups, warned that newcomers who wanted to influence the White House might, by trial and error, make a limited impact here or there. Instead, however, he recommended that they consider working through "the evangelical lobby" already in place in the capital. Several groups knew the ropes, he said, and could much more effectively help to channel their input.

Wead then listed just three groups, in this order: The National Association of Evangelicals, involved by far the longest and working on the broadest range of issues; Concerned Women for America, with a membership much larger than that of the National Organization for Women; and Focus on the Family's Family Research Council, the very effective and highly professional "new kid" on the block.

Whenever and however individuals channel their political energies, it will always be crucial for evangelicals to develop personal contact with those whom they have elected. There are two reasons for that. First, such contact is probably the most effective way of persuading, especially when reinforced by others feeling the same way. Members of Congress find the positions of most groups predictable, but letters on one issue from fifty voters in their district get their attention.

Second, and equally important, the church is clearly off the hook with respect to charges of improper religious influence when its individual members are the ones participating in the political process. When churches encourage individual involvement rather than institutional involvement in politics, nobody can properly criticize them -- not constitutional lawyers, not hostile humanists, not super-critical media. Furthermore, the church does not become politicized.

For such an approach to work, all that is necessary is agreement on the part of the church's leadership and a decision to provide some reliable, non-partisan, and relevant source of information to the members.³ Individuals then respond to items of special interest and the church in

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no way controls their input into the political decision-making. This is not merely a beautiful theory. It works. When members of Congress receive such grassroots communications, they will not realize an orchestrated campaign is behind it. If they did, they would sharply discount the importance of the mail.

Five common mistakes in contacting government are these: approaching an irrelevant official, at an inappropriate time, with inaccurate information, using an inferior method, with an ill-advised idea.

Irrelevant officials are those who can afford to overlook your opinions because they don't represent you. If you live in Illinois, a member of Congress from California could not care less about your views. Get in touch with the two senators from your state or the one representative from the district where you live. As a voter, you will be deciding whether to retain or reject them in future elections. That's why they must pay attention to your views. There are just a few exceptions to this rule, such as a senator who is running for president, or the Speaker of the House, who must be concerned with his party's overall image.

The most inappropriate time is after the fact, subsequent to the final vote. Too soon can also be a problem. Newspapers will give a sense of when members' time is consumed with certain major issues. It might be well to postpone writing about your concern until leadership begins to talk about taking it up, although sometimes voters need to urge, early on, that an item be included in the agenda.

Inaccurate information is most unfortunate. How would you like to be an evangelical Congressman mistakenly charged with voting to support pornography? It happened to a friend. How would you like to be the Federal Communications Commission, receiving over 25 million petitions in response to a phone rumor that atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair is trying to remove all religious broadcasting from the air? That also happened, starting in the '70s, and it hasn't stopped yet.

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Inferior methods of communication include group letters and/or petitions, pre-printed postcards, and form letters. They are perceived as resulting from organized efforts and have less impact. I can imagine one person at her kitchen table, with different colored pens and imaginative writing styles, signing twenty-five different names. One personally written letter is equivalent to the whole stack.

Ill-advised ideas are easy to envision. One angry constituent wrote a senator to ask that daylight savings time be rescinded, because the extra hour of sunlight was scorching his lawn. Some apparently serious ideas may sound good -- until thought through. A bill to outlaw the portrayal of violence on television, once actually proposed, seemed worthy enough until it was pointed out that such a law would not only prohibit the showing of gratuitous violence, but also World War II newsreel footage or a dramatization of the crucifixion of Christ.

Those who wish to be effective in writing to the members of Congress, the president, their governor, their state legislators, and others, will follow several tested guidelines:

- Be correct. Errors of name, etiquette, or spelling will diminish the impact of any letter. The proper forms for letters to Congress or the president are found in a footnote at the end of this chapter.⁴
- Be courteous. An honest element of appreciation at the beginning sets an excellent tone. Never threaten. Avoid harshness, anger, sarcasm, or a condescending tone. Don't become a nuisance as a regular "pen pal."
- Be clear. If letterhead is not used, provide a return address and a legible signature. Business or professional letterhead may impress, although care must be taken so that a businessman from New York City, for example, makes clear that he has written to a congressman from Connecticut because he resides there. Refer to a specific bill by name and number. State clearly what you want, whether asking him to cosponsor a bill, request a hearing, or vote a certain way.

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- Be concise. A letter should deal with only one subject because it will be directed to a legislative assistant specializing in that issue. A second or third subject might be lost in office routing. An ideal letter will be one page long.
- Be convincing. Using your own words (staff will spot identical typed or handwritten copies of a "sample" letter suggested in a church bulletin), express yourself persuasively on why you feel strongly for or against your subject. In the process, you might even give a senator an argument she can use to win over colleagues or constituents.
- Be constructive. A writer who suggests how a bill could be amended to make it acceptable provides a great service to an officeholder. Ask for a reply, to be sure that your letter gets proper attention. If a congressman votes according to your wishes, a thank you note is always appropriate.

Telephone calls to your senators or representative need not be long distance. Senators will have several offices in their state, and a congressman will have one or more depending on the size of his district. The phone is especially useful when time is of the essence -- for example, when there is a vote the next day. Calls will be tabulated and reported, but letters allow explanations rather than just yea or nay opinions. Generally, calls from strangers are not overly productive, so that the phone is a better tool when a member or staffer knows the caller.

Visits with members of Congress are sometimes possible in their Washington offices, by advance appointment. Many of the suggestions above concerning letter writing should be adapted for a visit, e.g., instead of one page, you may be limited to ten minutes. Visits in your state or district are much more likely. Almost any citizen who wants to do so can meet his senators and representatives within the next six months. Read their mailings about town meetings or watch the papers for where they will speak. Go. Ask questions. Form a personal impression of them. You can become part of the small percentage of Americans who actually change the thinking of their elected officials.

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For the sake of completeness, let me add that minds can also be changed by persuasive letters to the editor and guest columns in local papers and by wisdom which makes itself heard amid the banal chit-chat of radio talk shows.

Some of you may be thinking, but do contacts with members of Congress make any difference? The answer is Yes, according to 219 top congressional staff members surveyed by the Washingtonian magazine in 1983. The factors most influencing the decisions of the lawmakers were, in order of priority: 1) a member's political philosophy; 2) constituent opinion; 3) office mail; 4) the White House; 5) party leaders; 6) the press back home; 7) Washington lobbies; and 8) the national media.⁵

In May 1983, I testified before a Senate committee concerning President Reagan's constitutional amendment regarding prayer in schools. In an unusual move, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) called me back to the microphone later that afternoon. He wanted to clarify the position of other parts of the religious community. He concluded by asking me to plead with Christians to write him and their senators, who "need to know" public sentiment on the matter of school prayer.

My evangelical brothers and sisters occasionally cause heartburn -- sometimes by their use of the Bible in the political arena, and other times by their attitudes in exerting pressure. Too often I have watched a

Christian wave his Bible in the air at a committee hearing, and embarrassingly call for a legislative body to enforce it. Where the Bible is concerned, the wisdom of attorney-theologian John Warwick Montgomery commends itself:

Believers should strive to legislate all those socially valuable moral teachings of Scripture whose value can be meaningfully argued for in a pluralistic society. In such areas (e.g., right-to-life, equal pay for equal work, etc.) evangelicals must not engage in "Christian crusades," implying that it's "Christians vs. pagans," but should offer arguments on scientific, social, and ethical grounds potentially meaningful to

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the non-Christian. Even if unbelievers are not convinced, they can see that Christians are making their case on grounds which they themselves must confess to be legitimate in a pluralistic society. Then, even though believers vote en bloc and pass the legislation, the non-Christian has no right to claim that an alien religion is being imposed on him.⁶

Evangelicals must not lose their distinct Christian witness as they operate in the political realm. Former Ohio State football coach Woody Hayes, an advocate of four-yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust ground control football, used to defend his style of play by observing, "When you put a football into the air three things can happen, and two of them aren't good."

Well, when you put evangelicals into the political game, three things can happen, and two of them aren't good either. Those evangelicals can lose, or they can win, or they can win the battle while losing their testimony. In the 1984 struggle over a Christian school in Nebraska, many so-called Christians hassled state legislators with repeated telephone calls from midnight to the wee hours of the morning. That same year, far too many other alleged Christians phoned Capitol Hill with the message that their senator was going to hell if he didn't vote for equal access. Not only was that message unkind, it's unbiblical. It would be better for such persons to stay away from politics than to cast a shadow on the name of Christ.

Unfortunately, I have watched too many Christians in politics display anger, animosity, and even outright hatred toward their political "enemies." How could they be unaware of Jesus' command to "Love your enemies"? Did they with malice aforethought ignore it? Or could they think he excluded political foes from his command?

Not only is it right to treat all political leaders Christianly, but pragmatically, it works in the long run. Bitterness is counter-productive in dealing with elected officials, from the president down to city council or school board members.

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I think of one memorable illustration of this in Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the aggressive atheist who played a significant role in removing devotional Bible reading from America's schools in 1963. One day I received a last-minute request from Cable News Network to appear on a national call-in show to debate Mrs. O'Hair about prayer in schools. By "coincidence" I met Bill Murray, O'Hair's son, at the airport. At that time he had come far enough to believe in God; later he would clearly become a Christian.

When I arrived at the CNN studios I was introduced to Mrs. O'Hair. She treated me like dirt. As we moved onto the set, she sneered, "I'm going to destroy you out here."

Waiting for the show to start, I prayed silently. My only request was that God would help me to be Christ-like in my responses. I felt sure that after the program viewers would recall my attitudes more than my arguments. What I hadn't considered was that they would remember O'hair's attitudes more than her arguments, too.

The moderator, Sandy, allowed Madalyn to begin. She warmed up by referring to me as a member of the National Association of Religious Nuts. I listened as she flailed wildly at me and took coarse verbal swings at Christians everywhere. When my turn came, she butted in before I completed a single sentence and kept it up throughout the program. The names she used on the air were worse than anything I've ever been called, but she really vented her spleen when we went off the air for a commercial.

Viewers took note. The first bunch of callers directed considerable sympathy toward me. During the half-time break, I asked Sandy for the lead when we returned, since madalyn had dominated the first half.

"Sandy," I said when we began again, "I am in the unusual position of being able to bring personal greetings to Mrs. O'Hair from her son Bill, whom I met a little over three hours ago at Washington's National Airport. Our

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viewers might be fascinated to know why Bill Murray came to the capital tonight. Tomorrow afternoon he hopes to testify before a House Judiciary subcommittee about prayer in schools. He wants to help undo the terrible wrong done when he was used by his mother, as a boy of fourteen, in a suit to remove prayer and Bible reading from schools."

Madalyn was apoplectic. "He knows where the money is," she sputtered. "He's on the religious gravy train and he'll be tithing the proceeds to the atheists." The studio audience seemed unconvinced.

Before it was over, Sandy got on her high horse and berated O'Hair for several minutes, accusing her of attacking me undeservedly, lacking the manners to give me the courtesy I had shown her, and committing several other misdemeanors. It was hard to keep a smile off my face.

Leaving the studio, I offered my hand and a polite, "Good night, Mrs. O'Hair." Turning on her heel, she spat, "It was not." Viewers saw that night the difference between the fruit of atheism and the fruit of the Spirit.⁷ I make no reference whatever to physical appearance when I say that Madalyn Murray O'Hair is the ugliest person I have ever met. It drives her crazy when Christians suggest it, but we should pray for her.

What do evangelicals want?

Over the years, I have sometimes spoken on the subject, "What do evangelicals really want in politics?" Listeners are sometimes disarmed on discovering that evangelicals are not guilty of the recurring charge that they have no political agenda beyond a couple of personal morality issues. On a broad range of issues, evangelicals have been and will continue to influence politicians' thinking.

On our agenda are six social values principles. Rooted as they are in biblical truth, most evangelicals will unashamedly subscribe to them. Still, it is important to acknowledge that sincere believers may differ on how these principles may be realized, when it comes to specific policy prescriptions.

For example, let's assume that nearly all evangelicals concur that lifting the United States' national debt to a ceiling approaching \$3.5 trillion is a moral evil, and that biblical justice requires government to live more responsibly and within its means. Failure to take steps to bring federal budgets into balance is thus irresponsible, unfairly burdening the next generations of Americans to pay interest on this generation's overspending. But by what policy prescription shall we begin to discipline ourselves? Shall we take the medicine of higher taxes? Of significantly reduced spending? Or a combination of increased revenues and spending cuts? Evangelicals will be found holding and vigorously defending each of these options.

Preeminence of Religious Liberty

Religious liberty is the first liberty in the Bill of Rights. That is fitting and proper for a God-given right, and so it is at the top of an evangelical agenda. If religious liberty can be restricted, reduced, or rescinded, then our basic right to protest government action is diminished.

"Proclaim liberty throughout the land,"⁸ is inscribed on the historic Liberty Bell in Philadelphia's Constitution Hall. For Christians, the ultimate importance of such freedom lies in Jesus' words, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."⁹ Without religious liberty, men and women can be deprived of the eternally important opportunity to consider the claims of Jesus Christ.

Government must not infringe upon religious freedom by entangling itself in the affairs of America's churches, synagogues, and religious schools. When I first came to Washington, evangelicals were troubled about the threat of H.R. 41. Introduced in the prior Congress out of concern for financial abuses among religious groups, it would have required churches and Christian organizations to report their contributors to the government. Fortunately, no such proposal is a threat today. The bill was shelved, partly because the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability was developed to allow evangelicals to

police themselves. No other segment of the religious community has a like organization.

Thomas Jefferson said it best: "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." Thus, evangelicals must sometimes even join in friend-of-the-court briefs (re: unpopular religious groups, or form broad and otherwise unlikely coalitions to defend religious liberty). In the summer of 1990, we did not hesitate to build a coalition including such divergent groups as the ACLU, Christian Legal Society, People for the American Way, and NAE, to develop and support the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, designed to overcome a drastic decision of the Supreme Court. In *Oregon v. Smith*, the court all but nullified the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment as a defense for religious groups. Religious liberty had been jeopardized.

Profession of Public Faith in God

On April 30, 1789, George Washington placed his hand on an open Bible on the balcony of Federal Hall in New York City and repeated the oath of office prescribed in the Constitution.

Then, after pausing briefly, Washington electrified the hushed crowd by adding his own words: "I swear, so help me God." A murmur spread through the crowd and the inaugural party. This was not part of the oath of office, although the precedent set by Washington has been followed by every president since. Then Washington bent over and kissed the Bible. Another murmur. Judge Livingston turned to the

thousands below and cried out: "Long live George Washington, President of the United States!" The people cheered, church bells rang, and cannons fired.¹⁰

Simply put, America historically has acknowledged God's existence and his sovereignty. Evangelicals are grateful for that, believing that "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."¹¹ In the dark days of the Civil War, President Lincoln designated a day in April 1863 as a national day of prayer. Here is the opening statement of his proclamation:

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Whereas the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation; and whereas it is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope, that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures, and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.¹²

On July 11, 1955, Congress passed a bill to place the inscription "In God We Trust" on all currency and coins. On July 3 the following year, President Eisenhower signed into law a bill making "In God We Trust" the United States' national motto.

Evangelicals believe that national recognition of "the God who is there," to use Francis Schaeffer's memorable phrase, is essential for the blessing of the Lord of history. That acknowledgement is symbolized in the military chaplaincy, national days of prayer, and such a specific resolution as Congress' declaring 1983 to be "The Year of the Bible."

Protection of Life as Sacred

Statistically, the most dangerous place to be in America is in a mother's womb. Abortion, not many years ago regarded as contradictory to a doctor's commitment to save life, is the most commonly performed surgical procedure today. Evangelicals are more nearly unanimous in opposing this surpassing moral evil of abortion on demand than on any other, and rightly so.

Human beings are the culmination of creation, made "in the image of God,"¹³ and thus able to enjoy fellowship with God. Note that "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him," among

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which are "hands that shed innocent blood."¹⁴ The fact that evangelical conviction on this practice is religiously based does not matter. In American politics, the source of an idea makes no difference whatever. It may arise from religion, a brainstorm, or a television docudrama. The legitimacy of the idea is established through reasoned debate and rests on its content.

Many politicians voting 'pro-choice' claim they are "personally opposed" to abortion. But how can one find a practice immoral and not be publicly opposed to it? Would anyone respect a late twentieth century argument that "I'm personally opposed to slavery, but I feel I should not force my views on others"? To the contention that "a woman has the right to control her own body," we answer, "Once you are pregnant,

we're talking about two bodies." Americans love the freedom to choose, so pro-abortionists hammer on the theme of a woman's right of choice. Fine, but nobody I know boasts of being pro-choice on racial discrimination. Then why is it considered legitimate to take the life of a yet-to-be-born child?

Americans are living with contradiction about abortion. In one poll, 60 percent said that a woman should have the right to choose an abortion, while 70 percent said the unborn should be protected. Thirty-seven percent answered yes to both questions. The fact is that the majority of Americans oppose the majority of abortions -- those done because birth control failed (about half), because a potential birth would be inconvenient, or for sex selection.

The sanctity of life is not just a birth issue. Evangelicals will never accept euthanasia (so-called "mercy killing"), but there will be legitimate debate about artificially extending the process of dying and about a clear definition of when death occurs. The nation must reverse the situation where decisions are made with an ambiguous "quality of life" standard, rather than "sanctity of life" as a clear and compelling one.

It took decades for this nation to conclude that slavery was evil. However long it takes to convince the United

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States that abortion is evil, evangelicals will stay in the battle.

Provision of Justice for All

Evangelicals wholeheartedly conclude their pledge of allegiance to the flag with ". . . and justice for all." That reflects perfectly the character of the Creator, who reveals himself as a just God and who has said, "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"¹⁵ Charles Colson points out that the biblical word "justice" is misunderstood if we think only of its secular definition: getting one's due. Rather, the word means "righteousness," as in the parallel clauses in Amos. He writes that our call to justice is "to bring the Lord's righteousness to individuals and the structures of society."¹⁶

Justice to the poor? One of the tragedies of American life is the development of a potentially permanent underclass in our large cities -- poorly educated, attracted to crime, and living at public expense. Aid to Families with Dependent Children welfare, tragically, spurs the break-down of the family, discourages marriage, and rewards out-of-wedlock childbearing. Babies keep having babies. It is not easy to change such policies, but it must be done. The poor must be empowered to escape dependence, but as George Barnard Shaw once said, "A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul."

Reaction to injustice can produce an equally unacceptable reverse injustice, as in a case involving the Virginia Employment Commission. It rigged civil service test percentiles entirely on the basis of race, to give certain racial minorities a huge advantage over other test-takers.¹⁷ What ever happened to justice for all?

In 1988, one of every four American children was living with one parent. About \$18.6 billion in child support payments should have changed hands, but only \$4.6 billion was paid.¹⁸ Justice demands that absentee fathers keep their commitments.

Justice demands many things: That the criminal justice

system be reformed to reflect biblical values;¹⁹ that the guilty not so often be free while the innocent are terrified; that victims not be ignored when justice is served; that AIDS not be made a politically protected disease; that parents, through tax credits or vouchers, be able to educate their children in the school of their choice, whether public or private, rather than being economically forced to send them to a government monopoly school which undercuts their values; that taxes be increased significantly on alcoholic beverages and cigarettes, since their use costs society far more than even the highest current revenue proposals would return; and that our young be protected from child abuse. There is no end to such a list of concerns, if all are to receive justice.

Preservation of the Traditional Family

Evangelicals must not capitulate to the sinister agenda of social engineers who, given vaguely written legislation, would assume functions that families should fulfill -- indeed, functions assigned to the family by God. Above all, government policies must not usurp parental authority and responsibility for the decisions of minor children as, for example, in allowing abortion without parental consent. The biblical assignment is clear: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."²⁰

Historically, the family has been the cornerstone of American society. This fundamental building block has been composed of a married man and woman who have transmitted moral values to their children -- not any conglomeration sharing a kitchen for more than three months. Promiscuity was recognized as a threat to family life, and evangelicals and millions of others regard it so to this day. Thus, there is a terrible sense of foreboding as pornography has become a widespread plague, and as homosexuals blatantly flaunt their lifestyles and seek to have their relationships and practices legitimized by government.

Shifting tax policies have penalized families severely. In 1960, 59.9 percent of federal revenues came from individuals and families, with corporations providing 23.2 percent. By 1985, the business share had shrunk to 8.5 percent, while revenue from families and individuals had ballooned to 80.7 percent. To put it another way, in 1948 the average family of four paid just 2 percent of its total income in federal taxes; by the late '80s, that same family was turning over 24 percent of its income to the federal government.

Child care legislation advanced by Congress in the 101st Congress was seriously flawed because it discriminated against a full range of parental choice, whether against religious day care services or against families where one parent forgoes income from the marketplace to rear children at home.

A large bundle of policies will be found under the umbrella of "pro-family" issues. Evangelicals will be found fighting for those policies for years to come.

Promotion of Judeo-Christian Values in Education and Legislation

Columnist William Raspberry put his finger on the problem:

Almost too late, there seems to be developing a consensus that we'd better get busy teaching our children moral values . . . somebody ought to be teaching our children right from wrong -- building their character.²¹

The Wall Street Journal reported that, in a 1990 survey, 84 percent of public school parents want moral values taught in school, while most teachers shy away from that assignment. Educational horror stories like the following seem incredible. A high schooler returning a lost bank bag with thousands of dollars in it is mocked by classmates as a fool. After discussion, his teacher refuses to say whether the honest student did the right thing or not, rationalizing, "I have no right to push my moral values on the students." But education cannot be value-neutral. In this instance, neutrality supports immorality by refusing to condemn dishonesty.

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We are losing our moral consensus as a nation, and that will ultimately cause the Republic to crumble. The Bible states: "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint."²² I have seen no more accurate description of American society today. Fewer and fewer possess knowledge of biblical teaching or embrace its individual and national standards.

Is it likely that we can restore Judeo-Christian values to education? Long-time congressman and then governor of Minnesota Al Quie once told me of his frustration on this score. His blue-ribbon governor's committee was assigned the task of devising a way to teach values in Minnesota's public school system. The committee sought to draw up a list of commonly accepted values that could be taught without reference to religion. When Quie suggested the word "fidelity" for the list, his own committee turned their governor down. Why? The word "sounded too religious." Imagine rejecting a strong value like fidelity, a word pertinent to keeping contracts or marriage vows! The incident symbolizes the titanic struggle over values in our society.

Right and wrong are being stood on their heads. Homosexuality is celebrated as virtuous because it is a radical expression of human freedom. The ACLU battles to prohibit chastity's being recommended in a sex education curriculum because it is a religious teaching. Members of Congress only slap the wrist of a fellow member guilty of flagrant immorality and illegal actions, and voters continue to return to office a representative who was censured for seducing an under-age House page.

America's traditional values are essential to make democracy and a free economy succeed. Yet, those values are often hard to come by in Congress, the White House, governors' mansions, and state legislatures. Evangelicals have their short-range assignment cut out for them -- to change their politicians' thinking.

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Notes

1. Richard Cizik, ed., *The High Cost of Indifference* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1984), 94. [BACK]
2. Hosea 4:6. [BACK]
3. The National Association of Evangelicals has for more than a dozen years published a four-page monthly newsletter, *NAE Washington Insight*. In recent years, a shorter, bulletin insert-sized church edition of *Insight* has been available for bulk distribution through church bulletins or mailings. Write NAE Office of Public Affairs, 1023 15th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005 for information. [BACK]

4. To write the president: The President, The White House, Washington, DC 20500, Dear Mr. President. To write a senator: The Hon. (Name), United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510, Dear Senator (Name). To write a congressperson: The Hon. (Name), House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515, Dear (Mr., Ms., or Mrs.) (Name). The best close is Sincerely yours. Note that street addresses, building names, and room numbers are unnecessary. [BACK]
5. Cizik, 95. [BACK]
6. John W. Montgomery, "The Limits of Christian Influence," Current Religious Thought Column in Christianity Today, 23 January 1981, 60. [BACK]
7. Galatians 5:19-23. [BACK]
8. Leviticus 25:10. [BACK]
9. John 8:32. [BACK]
10. Forest D. Montgomery, One Nation Under God (Wheaton, Ill.: NAE, 1986), 19. [BACK]
11. Psalm 33:12. [BACK]
12. Benjamin Weiss, God in American History, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), 92. [BACK]
13. Genesis 1:26f. [BACK]
14. Proverbs 6:16f. [BACK]
15. Amos 5:24. [BACK]
16. Charles W. Colson, "Putting Justice Together Again," Justice Report, Winter 1990. [BACK]
17. Robert Holland, "Racial Rigged Job Test Scores," Washington Times, 7 June 1990, F1. [BACK]
18. Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta, "Parents Who Skip Town," Washington Post, 20 May 1990. [BACK]

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19. Justice Fellowship, an affiliate of Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship, seeks "to restore balance to the criminal justice system by focusing on reforms which address the needs of victims." While JF believes that society must be protected from violent offenders, it argues that "non-dangerous offenders should be sentenced to restitution and community service programs rather than prison." JF's address: Justice Fellowship, P.O. Box 17181, Washington, DC 20041-0181. [BACK]
20. 1 Timothy 5:8. [BACK]
21. William Raspberry, "Family Stories," Washington Post, 29 July 1990. [BACK]
22. Proverbs 29:18. [BACK]

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