



Christian Citizenship

"You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world" (Mt. 5:13-16). One way to be salty and let our light shine is by being good citizens on earth. Our vocation as citizens of both the secular kingdom and God's kingdom gives us the responsibility to proclaim God's Word and care for our neighbors. We are called to engage the "public square" with our message of Christ's mercy for all. Please pray for God's will to be done... in Jesus' name.

King George & the U.S. Constitution

Many Christians may think that challenges for the United States of America were very different in early America than they are now. Looking closely, we learn that is not the case. We do well to remember not only why the Constitution was written, but why it was worded so meticulously. When Americans won their independence, they wanted to make sure the King's abusive behavior would not be repeated. The framers wanted the U.S. Constitution to create limits, checks and balances so the President could never act like a tyrannical king. Here are a few examples of what King George was doing, and how Americans responded. Do you see any similarities to present day?

1. The King prevented passage of laws which the people wanted and needed. Declaration: *"He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good."* **Constitution:** The President must enforce the laws passed by Congress. If he believes a law is harmful to the United States he may veto it, but Congress can force it into law by a two-thirds majority vote. (See Article III, Section 3; Article I, Section 7, Clause 2.)

10. The King added bureaucrats without benefit to the public. Declaration: *"He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance."* **Constitution:** This charge was in regard to new bureaucrats sent to enforce trade law. Only Congress may regulate international trade. The President may not add bureaucrats without congressional approval. Congress has power to choose which of his nominations should require congressional approval. (See Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3; Article 11, Section 2.)

12. The King made the military superior to civil

authority. Declaration: *"He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power."* **Constitution:** The military is kept under civilian control with the President (a civilian) as its Commander in Chief. Only Congress may establish, fund, make rules and regulate the armed forces. (See Article II, Section 2, Clause 1; Article VI, Clause 2; Section 8, Clauses 12-16.)

17. The King created new taxes without the colonists' consent. Declaration: *"For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent."* **Constitution:** The President has no power to tax the people. Only Congress has power to tax. (See Article I, Section 8, Clause 1.)

18. The King deprived the colonists of trial by jury. Declaration: *"For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury."* **Constitution:** Defendants in criminal cases must be tried by an impartial jury. (See Article III, Section 2, Clause 3; Amendment VI.)

21. The King rescinded century-old royal charters, destroyed local law. Declaration: *"For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments."* **Constitution:** The President has no power to destroy the supreme law of the land, namely the Constitution, or state laws. (See Article VI, Clause 2; Article IV.)

22. The King assumed all legislative power without consent. Declaration: *"For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever."* **Constitution:** The President has no power to make law, violate separation of powers, destroy state sovereignty, or violate local state law. (See Article I, II, III, IV.)

23. The King refused to defend the colonies from attack. Declaration: *"He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us."* **Constitution:** The U.S. government guarantees to every state in the union protection from invasion and domestic violence. (See Article IV, Section 4.)

24. The King committed open assault against the Americans. Declaration:

"He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people." **Constitution:** The President may not levy war against the states, help their enemies, or give aid and comfort to enemies of the United States, nor may he deprive any citizen of life, liberty or property without due process of law. (See Article III, Section 3, Clause 1; Amendment V.) [Excerpted from *How to Read The Constitution & The Declaration of Independence* by Paul B. Skousen.]

What can we do? Together with your children, read the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Order the helpful paperback book, *How To Read the Constitution & Declaration of Independence* by Paul B. Skousen. (Skousen includes "Test Yourself" sections for individual or group use.) Learn how you can determine if something is a state or federal issue. Know the First Amendment which includes freedom of religion, speech and press, assembly, and the right to bear arms. Be especially alert to this fact: The Framers worried that Congress would force a national religion on the people or prevent them from freely practicing their religion of choice; therefore, the First Amendment forces Congress to mind its own business. Bear in mind: "Freedom is the people's power to exercise their unalienable rights and to control and change their government."

Please pray to be a Christian who participates in the public square of his country and stands against tyranny ... in Jesus' name.

The Christian in Two Kingdoms

Martin Luther taught the doctrine of two kingdoms. God restrains the wicked through the temporal or earthly kingdom but produces righteous people through the work of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual or eternal kingdom. Temporal government uses the sword of the fist and a rod of wood, said Luther, but the power of the spiritual kingdom is the Sword of the Spirit and the rod of the preacher which strikes consciences alone.

The government and its institutions, said Luther, have no power over the soul and, for this reason, the church is not maintained by civil power. However, Luther believed that governmental authority comes from God and is put in place to preserve human life against destructive forces. For man's sake, God established rules and laws which are to be carried out through civil

order. The state is divinely instructed and mandated by God to preserve people from chaos and anarchy.

Luther and other reformers helped change the view of man in relationship to the state. They saw God as sovereign and the Church as the people of God free from control of emperors. Luther believed that men and women have direct access to God and don't need to go through any earthly mediator. This *priesthood of all believers* provided the philosophical foundation for political and social change.

God's Word led Luther to see that all people are created in the image of God and given intrinsic dignity [Genesis 1:26; Hebrews 2:7]. All people—rich or poor, black or white—are equal in God's sight [Proverbs 22:2; Matthew 20:25-28; Acts 17:26]. Luther also recognized that all men, women, and children are fallen, sinful creatures in need of saving, divine grace [Romans 5:12, 18-19].

Luther considered it folly to want to rule a nation with the Gospel. That would be like a shepherd trying to keep within the same stable sheep, wolves, lions, eagles, and similar animals. The sheep would indeed keep the peace, but their life would soon be cut off! But, said Luther, civil power is not to usurp the power of the church. No governmental institution, he said, has the right to preach, to forgive sins, to examine or even reject doctrine, or to regulate church ordinances. Civil power can only punish sins; it cannot remove them. Because our rights come from the Creator, Luther believed that the state's powers are not absolute. Instead, the job of the state is to create an environment in which family, church, and state are enabled to fulfill their unique and separate God-given responsibilities.

What can we do? Consider that Luther and other reformers were shapers of two world-changing ideas: *sphere sovereignty* (or limited government) and *rule of law* (which balances man's intrinsic dignity from God with his sinful nature which demands restraint). Believe that you have vocations or callings through which you can affect society, i.e. mother, father, grandparent, neighbor, teacher, student, employer, employee, doctor, nurse. Trust that your vocations are proper channels for demonstrating brotherly love and justice, resisting idleness, calling out corrupt behavior, and living the Christian faith that affects society and culture.

Please pray to live for Christ... in Jesus' name.

