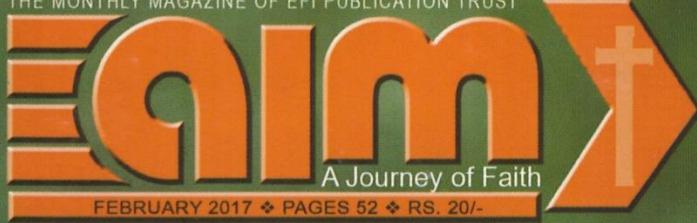


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Extravagant
Love!



**God's love
for us is
unfathomable**

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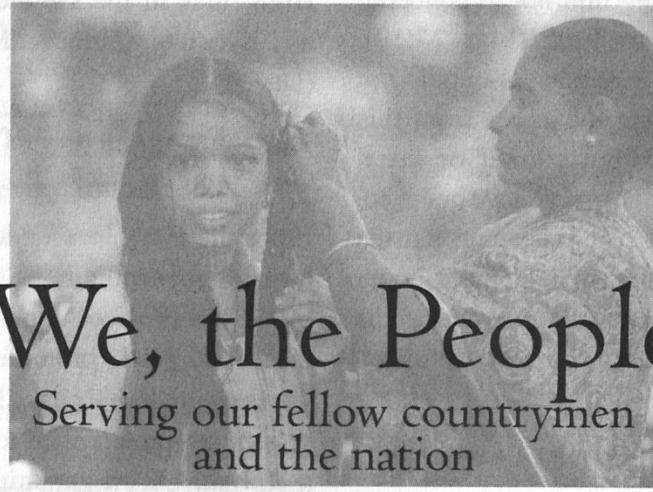
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which does not necessarily represent the view of Evangelical Fellowship of India.***



We, the People

Serving our fellow countrymen
and the nation

Anand David

It is not uncommon to see poor boys and girls selling Christmas party caps and masks, during winter, at traffic signals in Delhi. The fun aspects of religion have swiftly pervaded the streets, but the message behind Christ's birth hasn't. Should we bother? We Christians are content in our own comfort zones, with hardly any time to look outside the windows of the church. Do we have a role at all in governance – global or local?

Do we just pray a line for the country and naively endorse a healthy separation of the Church and the State? These are basic questions of faith life. When Pilate asked Jesus, 'Are you the King of the Jews?', He answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (Jn. 18:36). Jesus taught, 'No man can

serve two masters' (Mat. 6:24). Jesus was critical of rulers who were corrupt. But what did He mean, when He said, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's?' (Mk. 12:17).

Jesus' prime message was, 'repent for the Kingdom of heaven is near.' However, in order to reach heaven, there are earthly duties towards one's neighbour, that He taught, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mk. 12:31) and 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven' (Mat. 5:44-45). It is also interesting to note that there were a few in the corridors of power who were supportive of Jesus, like Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household

manager (Lk. 8:3) and Prefect Pilate's wife, who sent a message to her husband asking him not to condemn Jesus Christ to death (Mat. 27:19). Being Christ's followers entails not only distancing ourselves from this sinful world, but sooner or later, defending the gospel that we believed, in front of rulers, and engaging with the world, as children of light, proclaiming and demonstrating the liberating truths of the Bible and contribute towards a better social order.

The Origin of Human Government:

God made Adam and Eve stewards of the Garden of Eden, which foreshadows governance. After their disobedience too, God commanded Adam to cultivate the ground from which he was made, and rule over His creation found on earth. (See Gen. 1:28)

Human governance was operational in some form during the times of Noah, as Jesus observed that in the last days too, the state of affairs will be found similar. (See Lk. 17:26-27) The great deluge in the days of Noah was due to society's rebellion against God-given natural laws that human heart was meant to resonate with. When that order was violated, human conscience was violated alike, and crime and social anarchy took over. From theocracy, Israel moved to Monarchy with the divine selection of

King Saul. Still, Daniel asserted before King Nebuchadnezzar that 'the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.' (Dan. 4:25)

The Functions of Human Government:

From the Bible, we understand that human government was instituted by God to protect the people, punish the evildoer and promote peace and welfare for liveability. The Roman government intervened to save Paul, a Roman by citizenship, from his enraged accusers in Jerusalem (See Acts 21:27-27).

Peter declared that rulers are 'sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers (1 Pet. 2:13, 14). Paul admonishes us to pray for human leaders 'that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence (1 Tim. 2:1, 2). Anarchies or communal conflicts result when the government shirks its responsibilities or when one group of people (suppose, the elite) believe that the government is for them and not for others.

A government can also be 'hijacked' by a group of corrupt insiders – a case of too much power with too few hands. Government can fail the people, when it does not deliver justice and welfare to all the sections of the population, who honour the constitution.

A Christian's Responsibility towards the Government:

A good Christian can't be a bad citizen, as the Bible exhorts us to submit to the government, pay taxes and pray for our leaders. Paul admonishes us saying, 'let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God' (Rom. 13:1)

The Bible exhorts, 'as a matter of conscience ... you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour.' (Rom. 13:6-7).

A Christian's responsibility is to serve as salt and light in this world. A praying Christian certainly contributes to the development of the nation. Good Christians down the ages have always contributed to good governance and a better social order. When we neglect our duties as citizens, our personal testimony or the collective witness of the church will lack credibility. The gospel will hardly have any appeal in the eyes the government or the public (save the fun elements of religion, taken as the gospel of convenience).

A government can forget the welfare of its people, and turn rebellious to God's

natural justice. In such circumstances, the believers are called to obey God rather than inhuman leaders. When a government requires a Christian to act contrary to the clear teachings and requirements of God's Word, then a Christian has to choose abiding by the divine law than the human (inhuman) law. It requires compassion and courage.

The Egyptian Pharaoh commanded two Hebrew midwives to kill all male Jewish babies. But the Bible says the midwives disobeyed Pharaoh and 'feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.' The Bible goes on to say "God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them" (Ex 1:20-21).

When Peter was commanded by local authorities to stop preaching Christ, he replied, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). With God-given wisdom, we can be solution providers to the problems that plague the nation. Furthermore, when we engage fervently with a decadent society with the liberating truths of the Bible, we enable people to see the foundations on which a family, society

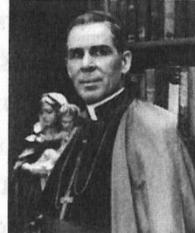
and the nation can thrive. Hymn writer of 'Onward Christian Soldiers' S. Baring Gould wrote: *Like a mighty army / Moves the church of God; Brothers, we are treading / where the saints have trod; We are not divided; all one body we, One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.*

King Solomon observes, 'Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. A servant who deals wisely has the king's favour, but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully' (Prov. 14:34-35). God sent Moses to Pharaoh to save His people from bondage. God sent Esther to King Ahasuerus to save the Jews. Paul defended his faith before King Agrippa, Governor Festus, Governor Felix, Commander Claudius Lysias and Herod's palace guards, and had friends who were civic authorities,

like Erastus, the Chamberlain of the city of Corinth, and 'all God's people who belonged to Caesar's household.' (Phil. 4:22)

We, who bear His Image, follow His Kingdom when we faithfully share and defend the gospel, and also 'render to Caesar' when we render our best service to our fellow countrymen and the nation, with His enabling grace. As followers of Christ, and responsible citizens, let us continue to be a positive influence in high places for good governance.

Anand David manages a bilateral aid program in a diplomatic mission in Delhi. In his free time, he volunteers to preach, write, counsel and pray. His Blog is: www.voiceofhelp.in



"It takes three to make love, not two: you, your spouse, and God. Without God people only succeed in bringing out the worst in one another. Lovers who have nothing else to do but love each other soon find there is nothing else. Without a central loyalty life is unfinished."

—Fulton J. Sheen,