

The Heart and Soul of a Christian Political Party

Frederick Philip Grove was one of the few Canadian novelists to win national recognition in the first half of the 20th century. Toward the end of his unhappy life, he wrote, "The Canadian public is ignorant, cowardly and snobbish; it is mortally afraid of ideas, and considers the discussion of first principles as a betrayal of bad manners."

Grove's opinion of Canadians was not flattering. Canadians may be cautious, but not unwilling to discuss first principles, if they are carefully presented. The very existence of the Christian Heritage Party is a case in point. Though it did not win any seats in the last federal election, it did get a hearing and did attract a good percentage of the votes in a number of ridings.

In the midst of a party system organized according to purely pragmatic secular motives, a Christian party based on principles will make an impact. A Christian party can be one of the signposts of God's Kingdom. It is one of the organizational forms available for evangelical activity. A Christian party can never be an end in itself, and it never should be. It is a service organization, a communal activity based on the shared faith in Jesus Christ and the inerrant Scriptures. As such it must resist the temptation to identify its program with the Gospel. Programs should be painstakingly and constantly evaluated in the light of Scripture and history.

Humility is a Christian virtue. A Christian party should dare to say, "We don't have all the answers." In our complex world no one has all the answers! A Christian party should dare to swim against the stream of Canadian political life. Not opinion polls, but well thought-out principles should support its policies.

A Christian party takes to heart the Lord's command to love. It is an answer to all who surrender politics to powerful pressure groups, ignoring the weak and the needy in society. A Christian party does more than preserving traditional values; it does more than opposing abortion, euthanasia and homosexuality. The love commandment imposes upon the Christian the duty to participate in politics. When a Christian doesn't care about political involvement, he is not showing love for his neighbor. A Christian loves justice, grieves over suffering, hates unrighteousness; if this is so, how can he not be involved in politics? A Christian party seeks to develop a normative understanding of what public justice ought to be like.

Dr. James W. Skillen, Executive Director of the Association for Public Justice and the APJ Education Fund, says about the purpose of Christian activity: "The aim of our political responsibility is not to reorganize the world once and for all, but to minister to all our neighbors in a political way, demonstrating that God's justice brings peace, well-being, happiness and fulfillment."

Making a Choice

How can we serve our fellow man? What can we do to make our country a better place to live in, while we are waiting for Christ's return? Will the Lord find us faithful when He returns?

A Christian party shuns triumphalism. A Christian boasts in the Lord, not in himself or in his abilities. A Christian party must be willing to recognize the possibility of failure. Mistakes will be made. If a Christian is not willing to risk failure, he shouldn't be in politics. A Baptist ethics professor William M. Pinson correctly noted,

Almost every vote, almost every action in the world of politics is an action that involves some wrong, a lesser of two evils ... The Christian, though he is concerned and tries the best he can, is free, because he is not saved by doing the right. He is saved by living in faith. So if you are going to sin, sin for good. Throw yourself into an arena of life in which you are not going to know for sure that you are right. Prayerfully, thoughtfully, determinedly, honestly you throw yourself into it; and if you are wrong, there is confession and repentance and forgiveness and another try. The Christian is free to fail! That sets you free for politics.

So the question is not, "Should we confess Christ in the political arena?" The question is, "How should a Christian be involved?" I have made my choice. I will support the CHP, not because it has all the answers or a perfect political platform. I support it because it attempts to wrestle with scriptural principles.

Our choices always stand under the scrutiny of God's Word. His Word is both our guide and final judge. Dr. Joel Nederhood cautions,

"We as Christians must make sure that our plans for political action, our ideas of political effectiveness and political results, are based four-square on whether or not we are people of the Book, whether or not we are people who have bound our lives one hundred percent to that special revelation that God has given us. For it is by that Word that our actions are judged."

Our Christian faith does not stop at the front entrance of a parliament building. It must be taken inside. How you work with your faith is your choice. I have made mine.

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