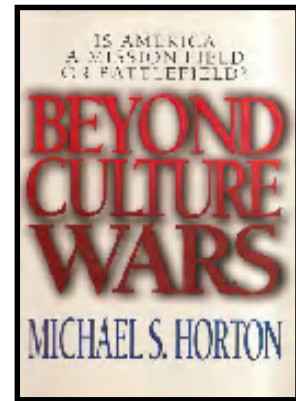


In God's Name

BEYOND CULTURE WARS BY MICHAEL S. HORTON

The “abuse of God’s name” is the condition cited by Michael Horton in this chapter; a condition that arises out of the church and its theology. Turning to the Old Testament and the relationship between God and Israel, the author points out that Jeremiah cautioned against and condemned “false prophets” of the day. These false teachings led to ‘abuse of God’s name” among the abuses of the time. The source of this view and practices was the church – failure to trust on the Cornerstone of Christ...and to live in the faith and knowledge of the word.

A danger or trap lies in blending nationalism and Christianity. Citing several examples of where this practice rendered bad consequences, Mr. Horton warns that attempts or effort to place every matter on the mantle of Christianity is a dangerous proposition. Where political views are rationalized on the basis of Christian doctrine, the people can be (or have become) confused – even to the degree of their own salvation or spiritual condition.



Some questions or conditions that should be assigned to the choices of politics and society are:

1. Make sure that the cause or view is theological, not political: for example,
 - Human life derives its dignity, not from the importance attached to it by the law or by the judges”, but from the significance that God attaches to it, since human beings were created in his image.
2. Make sure that the cause is a universal absolute and not a relative application:
 - God’s name is surely not misused when we call for the protection of human life in all of its phases, but when one claims the divine blessing of one party, or one set of policies, or even claims God’s favor on behalf of a nation as a whole, he is taking liberties with God’s name.
3. Make sure you distinguish between the church’s calling to proclaim the Law and the Gospel (revealed in Scripture) and the state’s calling to enforce civil justice, based on natural revelation.
 - This does not mean that we do not preach them (Ten Commandments) and call all men to repentance by the preaching of the Law, but it does mean that we cannot really enforce the them (upon society).

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4. Make sure the natural law is your common ground. “Natural law” is the common grace supplied to all of humankind; it is the basis by which people (even pagans) “can set up just societies.” Romans chapter 1 speaks of this natural law or common grace: *since the beginning of time, God’s invisible qualities and divine nature have been clearly seen being understood from what has been made.* This natural law is the common ground for all humankind – and is the beginning of God’s salvation process through Christ. Mr. Horton writes:

Our defense of the unborn ought to be made on the same basis as our defense of civil liberties for everyone in the country: equity, which can be argued on the basis of natural law, without requiring people to first accept the Bible’s authority.

Michael believes that the church is perceived (by society) as being an “instrument of ideology” and, along with every other special interest group, is engaged in a “will to power”. He urges believers:

The church must realize that it still has an obligation to expose unbelief and immorality as a matter of ultimate consequence and therefore more serious than politics.

The church does not have the power of the state, but it has “the sword of God – namely, His Word.” This word must be the basis for each believer’s life style and hope; it must be the light that directs the person’s path. Society or culture can be influenced in *The Way* when the individual is committed to God’s Word.

In the light is the clear vision of who we are...and are not; the light reveals the sins of our heart and takes us toward restoration in Christ through repentance. Michael tells us:

Repentance is always my duty, always a burden and a joy which I must carry, not a weight of judgment which I may place on someone else.

Be mindful of the scripture from Chronicles; *if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray...and turn from their wicked ways.* Humility is the best antidote for self-righteousness and the continuing condition of the church to sway from its purpose and mission and the true “counterculture” of the culture.

