

CWRm

GREG ALBRECHT



“Does God Give Ultimate Authority to Human Leaders?”

Question: I have heard people say that they feel the leader of their nation has the God-given right to take military action without having any human question them. This seems to extend ultimate authority to human leaders, in the name of “the Bible says so.” What do you say?

Answer: When it comes to extending ultimate authority without question, people who religiously attend a brick-and-mortar building on a regular basis may be even more likely to blindly follow a charismatic leader. The tendency to radically place faith in human leadership, whether in the religious or secular world, is historically aligned with religious devotion.

We in the West have been especially focused on the radical, militaristic terror supported by some who spend a great deal of time in mosques, listening to religious authorities.

In the world of nominal Christianity, it might be easy to assume that the major reason millions of people have stopped attending a congregation (in this century) is because of militaristic “alt-right” messages from pastors and religious leaders.

But messages of hatred and the condemnation of others draw people like flies, whether the leader is an “alt-right” so-called Christian pastor, an extremist so-called Muslim imam, or a “my way or the highway” far-left activist.

One may rightly recoil at the incongruity of using a church, mosque or temple to proclaim an aggressive and polarizing political view, but the reasons for the tsunami-like exodus of Christian churches run much deeper and deserve more attention than simple political pronouncements.

According to one sociologist, there are as many people in the U.S. who identify as Christian but do not attend a brick-and-mortar

church as those who do—a fact well worth further consideration.

Yes, some do “use” the Bible to justify and permit them to hate and to commit crimes of violence and warfare against those who don’t agree with them. Many within Christendom interpret Old Testament directives, attributed to God, to identify their nation with the Israel of the Old Testament—a huge error in interpreting the Bible. More alarming than that, they completely misunderstand who God truly is.

And there are those who “use” (twist) New Testament passages (especially Romans 13) to justify war. Hence, the so-called “just war” theories. Martin Luther went even further when he wrote of “the Divine Right of Kings,” closer to your concern about granting ultimate authority to a human political leader. In essence, using the Bible, Luther argued that kings and monarchs derive their power from God, and are therefore virtually unaccountable to any other earthly power or governing body.

Sadly, many within Christendom have been led down the garden path when they are taught by their churches or denominations that Christ’s mandate for peace is directed at churches but not states.

The truth is that only Jesus Christ is the King of kings. It is not within the purview of Christ-followers to enforce what they believe to be the kingdom of God over others. Jesus is not anyone’s “trump card” to be used to justify tyranny.

As Christ-followers, we may—indeed we must—be a voice that reminds the state that Jesus reigns as Prince of Peace so that our message might serve the peacemaking voice of Jesus. As ambassadors of the King of the kingdom, in the end, we must obey God rather than man. □

See also Greg Albrecht’s article, “One Nation Under God?” in the June, 2018 issue of CWRm.