



## Grace and Government

There are many issues where we must balance Grace and Government. Though they seem to conflict and even contradict each other, they must be balanced. As true science and the Bible can be harmonized, Grace and Government can be harmonized.

Both Grace and Government are of God. Paul said in Romans 13:1, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God,” (KJV). God instituted Government for the sake of society, just as he instituted marriage between a man and a woman, just as He instituted the church to be the Body of Christ in that local community. GOD, GRACE, AND GOVERNMENT GO together.

But there are decisions we make about Grace and Government that are complicated. We want to make those decisions from a Biblical Worldview. Here are some examples.

If we take the Great Commission seriously, we will get the Gospel to every human being by whatever means possible. We will gladly use multiple languages here or abroad to share the Gospel. On the other hand, the story of Babel (Genesis 11) clearly teaches

that multiple languages are an obstacle in Government. Paul said in I Corinthians 14:8, “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (KJV). On the battlefield, everyone needs to be on the same page and using one language for commands. Under Grace, we are multi-lingual, but Government needs a primary language.

Under Grace, we are to turn the other cheek and return good for evil. But Government must protect and defend its citizens. Does a Christian go to war for his Government? (We have a son, Kaleb, who as a Second Lieutenant, will be deployed to the Middle East with the 155th in June.)

I have visited on many occasions the home of one of my heroes and my father’s hero—Sergeant York. He started out as a conscientious objector from “Jimtown,” Tennessee. On leave from the Army, he went home and with a Bible and an American history book, he went up on a mountain, and like Moses, came down with a decision. He went to the European front

and became the most decorated soldier of WWI. Under Grace, he had gotten “converted” just before the war, but under Government he “converted” a bunch of Germans single-handedly. After the war he married “Gracie.”

Under Grace, we should be compassionate to refugees and immigrants. Even Malachi 3:5 (KJV) says we should not “turn aside the stranger from his right.” But we are a nation of laws. A Government such as ours cannot embrace “open borders.” We must enforce the laws that exist and protect our national identity. Under Grace, or on a mission trip overseas, we leave “nationalism” at home, but in Government we pursue “exceptionalism” with no apology to anyone.

In Government, we must protect Second Amendment rights—or only the Government and the bad guys will have guns. The American Revolution would not have succeeded if the colonies had had the same “gun control” laws that exist in many states. We don’t need tyranny or anarchy. Grace says to Peter—put up your sword—but Govern-

ment allows us the freedom to protect ourselves. Churches and ministries are struggling to balance Grace and Government.

When we vote in Government, we are not calling a pastor. We are electing a public official. Therein lies a big difference many Baptists need to recognize. We want good men and women in Government, but when you need brain surgery, you want the best doctors available, not the best man or minister. Grace is spiritual—Government is practical.

In Government, we must be tolerant of laws we dislike. But under Grace, we do not condone judicial or legislative positions that violate our Biblical Worldview.

Jesus expressed a proper tension between Grace and Government. In Matthew 22:21 (KJV), he said, “...Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” We balance Grace and Government.

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## Texas Baptist board removes CBF giving channel

### DALLAS (BP and local reports)

— The decision by the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) to stop forwarding churches’ contributions to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) because of the breakaway group’s recent change in policy regarding the hiring of LGBT employees reflects a commitment to the biblical view of marriage, say the convention’s president and executive director.

“I am very grateful for the consistent, steady way in which the BGCT has held to God’s Word,” said BGCT President Danny Reeves, pastor of First Church, Corsicana, according to a news release from the convention. “We lovingly say to all people the truth that marriage is to be between one man and one woman.”

The BGCT Executive Board adopted a recommendation Feb. 20 to “remove CBF as a giving option from the BGCT gift remittance form and to encourage churches to send their CBF gifts directly to the CBF national office,” according to Texas’ Baptist Standard news journal.

The move came less than two weeks after the CBF Governing Board voted to replace its former prohibition of hiring homosexual and transgender employees with a policy that opened



**CBF DROPPED** — Dennis Young (at podium), chairman of the Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas in Dallas and pastor of Missouri City Church in Missouri City, presides over a Feb. 20 meeting at which the board voted to stop forwarding funds from churches to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. (BP photo courtesy of BGCT)

some positions to “Christians who identify as LGBT.”

Initially, the BGCT responded Feb. 12 with a statement reaffirming the convention’s belief that “the Bible teaches that any sexual relationship outside the bounds of a marriage between a man and woman is sin.”

The BGCT Executive Board’s subsequent decision to stop for-

warding gifts to the CBF received only one negative vote and was not accompanied by any discussion during the board’s general session, the Standard reported.

BGCT executive director David Hardage said following the vote, “Texas Baptists have consistently held to biblical truth on marriage and human sexuality while at the same time lov-

ing and caring for everyone,” according to the BGCT release.

Previously, the BGCT enabled each church to designate the percentage of its gifts that would be used for BGCT missions and ministries and the percentage for one of three worldwide partners: the Southern Baptist Convention, BGCT Worldwide, or the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The BGCT recommends that congregations designate 79% of their cooperative gifts for BGCT ministries and 21% for a worldwide partner, but the 79-21 split is not mandatory.

The CBF now will be removed from among the convention’s worldwide partners.

The CBF was founded in 1991 as a fellowship of churches that objected to the ideology and methods of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Conservative Resurgence.

In 2017, 349 churches in cooperation with the BGCT gave approximately \$1.1 million to the CBF through Texas Baptist channels — \$776,981 as a cooperative giving option and \$315,862 to CBF Global Missions, the Standard reported.

CBF executive coordinator Suzii Paynter, former director of the BGCT Christian Life Commission, said the Execu-

tive Board’s decision “is deeply disappointing for how it changes the cooperative method by which Texas Baptist churches support CBF,” according to a CBF news release.

At least two other SBC partner conventions forward churches’ contributions to CBF: the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV) and the District of Columbia Baptist Convention (DCBC). The BGAV’s Executive Board is scheduled to meet Feb. 26.

According to a Feb. 20 action of the SBC Executive Committee, the SBC will “no longer recognize the DCBC as a Baptist body authorized to receive and disburse Cooperative Program and other SBC contributions” if the DC convention does not secure by May 20 “the removal of any churches from its fellowship that have demonstrated a faith or practice affirming, approving or endorsing homosexual behavior.”

The BGCT is one of two state conventions in Texas that partner with the SBC. The other Texas convention, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, does not forward gifts from churches to the CBF.

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board does not forward gifts to the CBF.