

NEWS AND UPDATES: WEST MICHIGAN CHAPTER OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR COMMUNITY BIBLICAL GOVERNANCE

February 2013 Edition

Desperately Needed Today: A “City upon a Hill”

Governor John Winthrop, in the early days of establishing the Massachusetts Bay Colony, used the term “city upon a hill” to capture the mission of the fledgling settlement. A decade before the Pilgrims had established such a “city” with little more than 100 settlers down the Massachusetts coast. The success which the Pilgrims enjoyed by God’s grace inspired the founders of Massachusetts Bay Colony to start their colony. And the example of both of these settlements had a far reaching impact in many parts of America, Britain, and beyond for many years afterwards.

Today we face a crisis in the USA, as in so many nations. Biblical Christianity has essentially been thrown overboard by national leaders, and principles of government which led to the success of early American colonies like Plymouth Colony and Massachusetts Bay Colony have been discarded. Indeed, increasingly it appears the USA is led by foreign interests hostile to the well being of Americans, much less interested in pleasing God in their governance. In light of these circumstances, reformed Christian Americans need to start at a very basic level, not so unlike the challenge faced by the Pilgrims when they first came to America. At this point in time, there is arguably not so much as one professedly Christian community in all of America dedicated to governing according to Biblical principles. Given the current situation, practically speaking it is premature to imagine a likely solution will come from civil leaders at the national level or even at the state level, though of course we should continue to pray for them. It is the better part of wisdom to focus our efforts at this point on seeking one “city upon a hill” that can be modeled by others. With God’s blessing, if one town shows how sound Biblical principles of governance work, other towns may follow.

So with this local focus, the Reformation Party has been channeling its efforts into two projects: the Campaign for Community Biblical Governance and the New Plymouth Project. The Campaign for Community Biblical Governance is petitioning currently existing local townships to “kiss the Son” in their governance. Examples of this here in West Michigan include lobbying the Blendon Township Board and the Georgetown Township Board (see articles below). The New Plymouth Project, on the other hand, is seeking to encourage reformed Christians to form explicitly reformed Christian communities, essentially from scratch. While as of yet reformed Christians in the USA seem not to have done this, Hasidic Jews have successfully formed communities according to their religious tenets as we documented in the January 2013 edition. (Kiryas Joel and Kaser, New York are testimonies of this.) Such reformed Christian communities could then serve as models for others to follow.

Let's put these two concepts together in the specific context of West Michigan, to consider some possibilities here. There are in West Michigan perhaps in excess of 800 or 1000 NRC members and attendees (which, it should be noted, is well in excess of the number of Pilgrims that started Plymouth settlement). If only a handful of these members and attendees started a NRC "village" (analogous to the way Kaser, NY is a village of a certain Hasidic sect) in a place like Blendon Township, such a community could begin to serve as a model of a community governed according to reformed Biblical Christian principles. Furthermore, in a place like Blendon Township with a relatively small population, such a community of people may be able by God's grace to exert significant influence on moving Blendon Township itself in the direction of more explicitly Biblical Christian government. And there could be many practical advantages to being part of such a community, without having to make the major move that the Pilgrims made when they started Plymouth settlement.

May God give us the vision and the will by his grace to take up the baton bequeathed to us by our Pilgrim and Puritan forefathers to work for that "city upon a hill" to the glory of Jesus Christ.

Report on Meeting with the Township Supervisor of Blendon Township on 2/14/13

I am thankful to have been able personally to meet with the Township Supervisor, at his invitation. He asked what I think he and the Township Board should do. I told him that as a starting point it is important that the Township Board publicly purpose to follow the Lord Jesus Christ by God's grace according to the Bible. He agreed and expressed a willingness to spearhead a resolution of the Township Board to the following effect: "we proclaim and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord of Blendon Township, looking to Him as Savior from the transgressions committed by the people of the Township, and resolving by God's grace to follow Him in gratitude in accordance with Biblical principles." In addition, the Township Supervisor asked me to speak to the church leaders of various area reformed churches with the message of the Campaign for Community Biblical Governance, and he offered to provide me with introduction letters to do so. (Professedly reformed Christian churches are a significant feature of Blendon Township.) He recognizes he needs the support of these churches as he seeks to lead in a Biblical Christian direction.

We discussed how there is no such thing as religiously neutral civil government, but that every government, like every individual, is headed in some religious direction. I quoted the following verse: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." I pointed out how one step at a time, including prohibiting prayer in public school, teaching of evolution, prohibiting laws against homosexuality, mandatory legalized abortion, etc., the federal government has shown it is not religiously neutral. He agreed with me, and lamented what has been happening.

We discussed how in the Bible godly civil magistrates led in the reformation, such as with Nineveh's ruler during the time of Jonah, King David in Israel, and King Hezekiah of Judah. The Township Supervisor agreed, and indicated he wants to follow their example. I noted how in America's early history such was the case, as for example with governors John Winthrop and William Bradford.

We discussed the challenges of leading in this way in the context of a hostile federal government and divided Christianity. Regarding the former, I pointed out how we should seek to follow the precept "be ye ... wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Regarding the latter, I suggested we move forward where we can reach consensus as to what the Bible teaches, and where we are in disagreement we hold off and discuss the differences with an open Bible until consensus is obtained. I pointed out that this is essentially how secular humanists have been doing it for years, as they too are not in agreement about everything.

In summary, I think we had a profitable meeting which I hope God will bless. But at the end of the day, if God does not bless these endeavors, nothing will come of them.

Excerpts from a Speech Delivered to Georgetown Township Board in January 2013

"Thank you for your continued willingness to hear the petitions of this chapter of the Campaign for Community Biblical Governance... It is critical that we understand the implications of what we read in this account of Jonah... note how the king and nobles of the city of Nineveh led the repentance and reformation there, and God showed his commendation of this leadership...Just as parents in a family must lead the family in accordance with sound Biblical principles, so the civil magistrates in a town ... some ways at this point we recommend the Georgetown Township Board kiss the Son in its governance: 1. Prayer and fasting by the Board for God's mercy upon us, beseeching His forgiveness of us of our many transgressions as a people, and beseeching His wisdom in how to lead in accordance with Biblical principles in Georgetown Township...5. Stopping the skating operation on the Lord's Day at the Georgetown Township skating rink. The Township directly owns and controls the skating rink. It is not proper that it is operating as a skating rink on the Lord's Day..."

This Newsletter is produced by the West Michigan Chapter of the Campaign for Community Biblical Governance. The Campaign for Community Biblical Governance is sponsored by the Reformation Party (www.ReformationParty.org) in an effort to promote Biblical reformation at the local level.

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