

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTAL WELFARE AS PRESCRIBED BY THE HEBREW AND CHRISTIAN BIBLE?

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Washington D.C.- After a long week full of debating and voting, there was a rare occurrence: party politics were put aside and genuine conversation flowed regarding the importance of the Bible in American government and culture. Unsurprisingly, several members on the more liberal side of the aisle were none too happy that this discussion was occurring in the rotunda joining the two chambers of Congress. How did this philosophy session begin? Political argument between House Majority Leader PGF (S- AC-2) and Representative Greylat (R-LN) over the biblical view and morality of government welfare systems. Both Congressmen toed their party's line with the conservative Greylat saying that private charity is more moral than governmental charity, while the socialist PGF took the view that governmental welfare is prescribed by Jesus of Nazareth and his Disciples.

So who is correct? As a conservative Christian, I agree with the Representative from the State of Lincoln. With a single comment, Rep. Greylat all but ended the debate when he cited the work of the Talmud and Maimonides by listing from least to greatest forms of charity:

1. Giving begrudgingly
2. Giving less than you should, but giving it cheerfully.
3. Giving after being asked
4. Giving before being asked
5. Giving when you do not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows your identity
6. Giving when you know the recipient's identity, but the recipient does not know your identity

7. Giving when neither party knows the other's identity
8. Enabling the recipient to become self-reliant

Congressman Greylat pointed out that government welfare falls with number 3 because taxpayers are “asked” to give to programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid through FICA taxes. However, when a private person donates to an organization such as Goodwill or The Salvation Army, falls under number 7. If we as a society wanted to do the most good, wouldn't we want to get as high up this list as possible?

If we assume that Greylat is correct, what should we do with the arguments of Rep. PGF? Obviously PGF is coming from a place of compassion and wanting to do the right thing, but as the common saying goes, “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.” Throughout this nation's history, private companies have far outpaced the federal government in providing quality construction projects that are built quickly and come in under budget. Let's look at the government subsidized Trans Continental Railroad and the privately funded Great Northern Railway as an example. In the contract for the Union Pacific Railway, government contractors were paid by the mile, leading to the railroad unnecessarily weaving throughout the Great Plains. To contrast, the Great Northern Railway was built straight so that costs were kept to a minimum. In the area of welfare and charity, the programs that the government runs are mired in bureaucracy and administrative costs. Private charitable organizations have a fraction of the budget of government programs and are able to make a direct impact in the lives of billions of people. If we as a nation are looking to better the lives of those most in need in our nation, we need to look towards our own charitable giving and not towards how much of our taxes goes to federal programs.