

Some Ways in Which the Bible is Liberal

The Bible is liberal. That's a statement that would make most any modern political commentator cringe. I will show you that if the Bible's laws were implemented in today's society some modern laws (certainly not all) would actually have to be liberalized to conform to the Bible. Secular people claim that the Bible is an ancient book that spoke only to an ancient society. On the contrary however, scholars of all faiths will have to admit that the Bible had a great deal to do with the shaping of modern societal values. Everything from the sanctity of life to the value of the individual was revealed in the Bible first and foremost. Even our seven day week and our precious weekends with time off from work are a direct descendant of the Bible's Sabbath laws. First let's define the word: "liberal." "Liberal" has many shades of meaning but for our purposes we will focus on the fact that liberal means "generous" or "bountiful." God's will which is embodied in God's law is generous and bountiful towards humankind. God's laws, when truly understood, are the foundation of compassion and freedom. The Bible says "It was for freedom that Christ set us free" (Gal. 5:1 NASB). Certain detractors have tried to draw a parallel between the law of Moses (Bible) and the code of Hammurabi (Pagan). Any attempt to harmonize these two law codes breaks down when it is pointed out that the law of Moses has many stipulations to protect the poor while the ancient Babylonian code of Hammurabi has very few. The biblical laws are much more humane. The law of Moses is replete with commands to show mercy to the poor and orphans. Under the law of Moses the rich and influential are restrained from absolute oppression of the poor. Under biblical law the poor have access to the courts. Judges are specifically commanded to be impartial. A poor person with a strong case must prevail over a rich person with a weak case.

A few years ago the TV show "West Wing" mocked the very idea of biblical law being in any way applied to our society. The show mentioned the dietary (kosher) laws and other ceremonial laws and poked fun at them. A plain reading of the Bible, however, shows that the dietary and ceremonial laws mentioned in the show were limited in scope, applying only to ancient Israel in the time period of the Old Testament. West Wing's alarm was unjustified. Here are several areas where present US law would have to liberalize to conform to biblical law. The minimum age for military service in the US is 18 years (17 year olds can be signed in by a parent). The Bible's minimum age for military service is 20. In the US it takes only one witness to convict a criminal. The Bible commands that there must be two or more witnesses to convict. The Bible also commands that a newly married man must get a one year exemption from military service. US law contains no such exemption. Also under biblical law if a soldier is overly fearful of combat he simply has to say so and he is excused. US law provides no such exemption and even obtaining conscientious objector status is a complex process. The above examples show that the Bible is surprisingly liberal in some respects. Even in those areas where the Bible is not liberal by modern standards its laws restrain evil for the betterment of humankind. The Ten Commandments and other aspects of biblical law are reflected in existing American law. We as Americans, indeed all western countries, owe a debt of gratitude to the God of the Bible. God's wisdom and God's laws are the foundation of western civilization.

About the Author

Bill Nugent has written many articles on Christianity, philosophy and science. He has also written books that give Bible based teaching on sanctification and that caution against the error of legalism. His books are available at his website <http://www.gracelawandsonship.com>.

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