

Letter to Nereyda VI

Practical Politics and Theological Principle

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier (www.thefaithkit.org)
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Letter to Nereyda VI

Practical Politics and Theological Principle

Dear Nereyda,

Let me begin by saying that your question was entirely fair. When political questions come up—especially those that involve programs that help the poor or others dependent on the government—it is entirely fair that you ask me what I think society should do.

I told you that I was uncomfortable with a simple yes or no answer, and that my actual answer would take some explaining, so here it is!

No doubt, the faith we share says very clearly that we are here in this world to love one another and help one another, and this means everybody, especially those who most need help. Doing this is how we build the eternal world that all of us will share.

The issue, especially when we are talking about good works that will involve large amounts of money and the making of many, many rules is this: What is the best way to help the poor, help the elderly, get people a fair wage, etc.

Faith wants good work to come from freedom—people choosing to sacrifice some of their money and liberty for the sake of others. But faith does *not* want people's choices—when, for example, they vote—to take freedom away from other people—who, for example, will be taxed—in order to pay for *my* idea of what everybody needs.

Faith makes a priority of freedom because freedom is a pre-requisite of truly human life, and because human nature does not do well when freedom is not respected. In more explicitly faithful terms, I would say this: The purpose of life on earth is that we participate in our own creation; we do this by growing in love; and sacrifice is not love unless we choose it. In more explicitly practical terms, I would say this: Over the long run, the proliferation of “rights” and free stuff does not work. Instead it corrupts people, and leads to greater and greater dependency and need for bureaucracy.

Having said all this, let us deal with the reality of the present. Thanks to centuries under the influence of faith, society feels the obligation to do something about lots of needy people living in a rich country. More recently in history, because of faith's failure to inspire people to live well, work together, and make sacrifices, working through the civil government—which enforces its will—has been the only effective way to do something. Moreover, because faith is still not inspiring people most people to live well, work together, and make sacrifices, declaring an immediate end to many things the civil government is now doing will do much more harm to society than insisting on the principle “freedom now!” will help society. I am not in favor of that! But, as we continue to work to make the world a better place, we need to be able to say a “qualified” yes to certain things with the understanding that as we go forward we are looking for solutions that will more and more respect freedom. This means that the civil government should be less and less the place we go to ease our conscience.

So, with regard to your original question: Yes, that program should be continued—but not forever. And I really wish we could do something about the wrong idea that the civil government should be the educator of first resort. Then we would have a truly effective way of building a wholesome and holy world.

I hope you now understand why I didn't want to give you a simple yes or no.

Dear reader,

If, perhaps, you might like to read the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth letters to Nereyda, just go to the Christian Materialism menu of www.thefaithkit.org/panorama2.