

CP Ideas vs. Pro-Life LP Ideas

by John Cobin, Ph.D. for *The Times Examiner*
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On the right wing of the political spectrum, two parties stand out as parties of principle: the Constitution Party (CP) and the Libertarian Party (LP). I have been outspoken as a pro-life libertarian (see the Libertarians for Life web page at <http://www.L4L.org>). While I have many libertarian friends, I must admit that my alignment with a broader spectrum of libertarians makes me a bit uneasy since I do not share the lifestyle or choices common among libertarians. It seems to me that many libertarians, while they agree with me on constitutional and freedom issues, are (unlike me) social leftists who have merely come to embrace free markets. Conversely, I find Constitution Party members to be quite amenable, and I have become good friends with many of them—even though their views (at a few points) regarding personal freedom and limited government are lacking. Nonetheless, regardless of where I choose to make my friends, there is a good reason why I remain aligned *politically* with the Libertarian Party: they are the purer champions of liberty.

There are important differences between the Libertarian Party and the Constitution Party. However, let me emphasize that there are relatively *few* differences between the two if one is pro-life. In fact, the principles of each party are so close at times that I can fairly easily vote for the Constitution Party candidate in a race when the Libertarian Party candidate is (1) truly wayward or out of sync with the nonaggression principle or (2) is “pro-choice”. I voted for Patrick Tyndall over Rebekah Sutherland since I thought that his views on handling the “immigration problem”, though lacking, topped her views.

The bottom line is that I am not a Christian Reconstructionist or a theonomist. I do not want or expect the United States government to uphold the judicial laws of Old Testament Israel—even as a guiding principle. Anyone who holds to the liberty of conscience view of the state and public policy will tend to be a pro-life libertarian rather than constitutionalist (in the political party sense of the word). I do not believe the state should or will uphold any part of God’s law. I believe that the Bible sets forth the state as part of a *competing* kingdom run by Satan, which is not transformable under the dominion mandate (cf. Genesis 1:29). As I discuss in *Bible and Government: Public Policy from a Christian Perspective*, I hold out little hope for the state to ever make a positive change in society. Having said that, I do see room for governance in carrying out certain rules that make living more efficient, including mutual defense against predators. But in a pluralist society, absent theocracy, the use of natural law *a la* Jefferson (and the inalienable rights he championed) provides the only justification for using the power of government to protect these rights—thus championing the libertarian view of limited government.

I recently had an opportunity to read through the Constitution Party’s platform on their web page: http://www.constitutionparty.com/party_platform.php. My overall impression is that this document is very libertarian! I agree with over 90% of it. However, from the very beginning, philosophical disparities are manifested concerning the nature of the state. For instance, the platform says, “Public respect and esteem toward public officials has fallen to a shameful level.” This is true. But the platform seems to lament this fact as if things could be different. For my part, I am not surprised since I *expect* nothing different from the state as it is part of the kingdom of Satan. The shameful behavior of political agents merely confirms my view. God said that He empowers the “basest” of men to rule (Daniel 4:17) and that the “throne of iniquity...devises evil by law” (Psalm 94:20). Scripture indicates that (without exception) the kings of the earth have been (and will be) arrayed against the Lord and His Christ (Psalm 2:2, Revelation 19:19).

The platform’s illicit drug section is lacking for the same reason that the immigration and pornography sections are lacking. It proposes that expensive legislation/bureaucracies be used to stop consensual acts. While the platform says that it wants to ensure that rights are not violated in doing so, I think such an expectation is a pipe-dream. Any such policies will lead to wasteful inefficiencies, loss of individual rights, and bigger, permanent government. It also will wreak havoc in other countries where farmers seek to gain by America’s artificially inflated prices for illegal drugs.

While I think that a gambling addiction is immoral, just as drug and pornography addictions are, I differ with the platform’s desire to entrust the state with improving societal morality. In contrast to the

platform's lambasting of state-run gambling enterprises, I actually prefer lotteries over other forms of taxation because lotteries are voluntary. A lottery is similar to a cigarette or alcohol "sin" or "stupid" tax, and (like them) it is completely avoidable. Given that coercive taxation exists, I prefer that as much taxation as possible be converted to voluntary taxes like lotteries. It is one of the only kinds of taxes I know of that people rush to voluntarily pay.

Former judge Roy Moore, who is specifically defended in the platform, mistakenly mixes the roles of church and state—creating an egregious, despicable form of civil religion. Sorry Roy, but the first four commandments are *not* the realm of the church and the last six the realm of the state. Again, I am not a theonomist. I do not want the state enforcing any of God's law. For instance, considering the Tenth Commandment, I do not want a "covetousness police force" established. I want only enough government to protect us from predators. Local rules will allow us enough leeway to regulate the kind of society we want to live it. I am willing to give liberty to gays so long as they will leave me alone too. Accordingly, I want no "sexual sin police force" either. The state has never been the friend of the church and the last thing I want to do is give the state such massive power over morality. Any such proposal is likely to backfire since it is based on a faulty, unscriptural view of the state.

I have a few other miscellaneous disagreements with the platform as well. First, I think it should go further on the issue of gun freedom and protection by noting that the main reason why gun rights must be protected is so that we can defend ourselves against a tyrannical state. Second, I like legal immigrants. They are good for the country. I oppose any moratorium on legal immigration, such as the one proposed in the platform. Third, while I appreciate the platform's effort, the Social Security section is too weak. Gradualism is always a failure. We need to ditch Social Security now or at the very least privatize it now. Fourth, the pornography section is likewise lame because it looks to the state, which is almost always wayward, to actually do something good. Again, no thanks. I'll take my chances against smaller bands of rogues and thugs over the state's centralized criminal actions and power. Fifth, the platform's section supporting tariffs is very lame. Tariffs do little to help most Americans. In the past, tariffs have been means for monopolies to garner profits at the expense of the middle class. (Abolishing tariffs is one of those rare policies that 100% of economists agree on.) As much as I appreciate the Constitution, it is not an inerrant document: both tariffs and the establishment of a state-run post office are two glaring examples of error.

The rest of the platform document is, more or less, wonderful. No surprise then that us pro-life Libertarians think so highly of Constitution Party folk. And the issues I have raised are precisely the things that should be debated by the right. No one's perspective is immune from the effects of sin, and well-meaning Christians have legitimate differences. Indeed, there are four sincere Christian views of public policy. I believe that those who hold to a theonomic view and some (who are not pragmatists) that hold to a divine right view will tend to embrace the Constitution Party, while those who hold a liberty of conscience view will tend to embrace the pro-life wing of the Libertarian Party. Thankfully, constitution-alists and pro-life libertarians are able to dialog. In 1776, the theological forefathers of each party fought side-by-side in America's War for Independence. And compared to the mutual differences we have with Republicans and Democrats, the differences between us are minor.

By the way, anyone can read my many "peculiar" pro-life libertarian (and "Jeffersonian radical") views in the *Times Examiner* each week. And all of my past articles can be found online at <http://www.policyofliberty.net/papers.php>. If the four Christian views of public policy are of interest to you, try the quiz at the bottom of www.policyofliberty.net to find out which view suits you.