

Bill Muehlenberg's commentary on issues of the day...

# Christians and the Election

The Federal election is now just three weeks away. Sadly at this point there are still plenty of believers who have no idea which way they will vote. Not everyone closely follows politics of course, but all believers are called to dual citizenship: one in this world, and one in God's kingdom.

Thus we have an obligation to be good citizens of each realm. Our responsibility as earthly citizens must be taken seriously, and we need to have a basic understanding of what are some of the main policies and platforms of the various political parties.

To help believers in this process, the Christian Values Checklist has just been released. It is one page chart highlighting where seven political parties stand on 23 different policy issues. It helps believers see at a glance how the parties view certain key issues.

As I have stated many times before, Christians will differ on all sorts of issues, politics included. No one party or policy is the epitome of God's heart and purposes. But some parties and policies may be closer to biblical ideals than others. Thus we need to carefully and prayerfully consider where our votes will be going.

This chart is by no means perfect. Indeed, every time we release one of these, plenty of critics emerge seeking to shoot it all down. Indeed, such armchair critics appear to be a dime a dozen. I guess it is always going to be easier to just criticise someone else instead of actually doing all the hard work oneself.

The truth is, this checklist has been worked on very carefully and thoroughly by a team of knowledgeable and dedicated workers. Hundreds of man hours go into this document, with detailed checks on every single question against every single party. And every one of these seven parties have existed for many decades now (except FF), so they all have their past voting records, position papers, policy statements and so on available in the public arena.

We seek to be as careful and accurate as possible in what we present in these checklists. But still the criticisms continue, usually having to do with what is on (or not on) the list. It tends to be the religious left who most complain. They want to argue that this is just some right-wing hit list.

Several responses can be given here. First, we make no apologies for stressing certain issues which we consider to be quite crucial and vitally biblical. Thus issues such as the sanctity of life or the importance of marriage and family will always get a good run on these lists, since they are obviously so close to God's heart.

If critics think these are just "right-wing" agenda items, then they must be reading a different Bible from what I am reading. Indeed, maybe their God is different from mine. Such absolutely vital issues are certainly on the heart of God, and we will never compromise on them, just to please some of these armchair critics.

Moreover, it is not our intention to cover every political issue there is. Far from it. Indeed, as you can see, we try to keep this checklist all on just one page. If we tried to cover everything we would have a small booklet at least, which most people would not read. Thus we try to cover some key Christian issues, especially those which are so often ignored by the mainstream media, or even the parties themselves.

And some issues are clear cut, such as the sanctity of life, or the importance of marriage and family. Thus it is pretty straight forward to ask a question about such issues, and seek to assess where the parties stand on them. For example, does a party believe that marriage is exclusively between a man and a woman, or does it not?

But other issues are far from clear cut. What exactly does the Bible tell us about global warming for example? The truth is, it does not say a thing about it. There are of course general principles about being good stewards of God's creation (and we do include that on our checklist), but there are huge disagreements as to the reality, causes and cures of climate change even amongst the scientific community.

Christians too are deeply divided on this. So it would be silly to pretend that there is Christian unanimity on this topic, or

that there is simply just one clear biblical answer on complex and technical issues such as climate change. Thus it is hard to come up with clear and precise questions which would somehow unequivocally present the biblical stance on this.

The same with other hot potato issues. Some ask why refugee policy is not on this list. The same answer as just given above applies here. Are there broad principles in Scripture about the treatment of refugees? Absolutely. Most have to do with ancient Israel of course, and circumstances today are in many ways radically different, so applying these principles in contemporary Australia is no easy task.

Indeed, there are all sorts of other issues that first have to be dealt with. How modern nations deal with the related issues of immigration, refugee policy, asylum seekers, queue jumpers, and so on, is complex, difficult and multifaceted, and there certainly is no one simple Christian answer on all this, and it is unwise and unbiblical to pretend there is.

Indeed, I had one critic write in recently saying Jesus and his family were asylum seekers. Sorry, but they were of course nothing of the sort, and it is quite silly to suggest they were. Not only is there no one clear biblical take on these modern issues, but political parties themselves have all sorts of differing responses to it all as well.

Thus these sorts of questions, as important as they may be, have not appeared in this current checklist. Also, there are other Christian groups presenting similar sorts of assessments of where the parties stand on certain issues. This one is not the only one, and we certainly do not claim that it is the best there is, or can be.

And it is certainly not a “how-to-vote” guide. It simply presents where seven parties stand on various vital topics, and it is then up to each believer, after studying the parties and their positions, to diligently and prayerfully seek the Lord’s will as to how their votes might best be maximised.

As to some other concerns about so-called “social justice” issues, I have written about this on a number of occasions. See here for example:

<http://www.billmuehlenberg.com/2008/11/06/christian-political-involvement/>

<http://www.billmuehlenberg.com/2007/09/13/religion-and-the-political-spectrum/>

<http://www.billmuehlenberg.com/2006/10/17/faith-and-politics-part-2/>

And I will soon write on this again. The simple truth is, the religious left does not have a monopoly on such issues. All sides of politics grapple with these kinds of issues, and it is a question of which set of policies can best render just and fair outcomes in various areas – economic and otherwise.

So stay tuned for future articles to explore these concerns more fully. In the meantime, I offer to you the 2010 Christian Values Checklist. As noted, it is far from perfect, but it is one honest attempt made by a number of sincere Christian leaders to help us all be better stewards of our electoral privileges and responsibilities.

(Please note, there is also an eight-page supporting document which backs up and documents our assessments of each party on each question. See the link to this below.)

[http://www.christianvalues.org.au/check\\_list.html](http://www.christianvalues.org.au/check_list.html)

[http://www.saltshakers.org.au/images/stories/attachments/Supporting\\_statements\\_-\\_2010\\_federal\\_Christian\\_Values\\_Checklist.pdf](http://www.saltshakers.org.au/images/stories/attachments/Supporting_statements_-_2010_federal_Christian_Values_Checklist.pdf)

[1247 words]

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1. [David Alston](#) 29.7.10 / 5pm

Bill,  
  
Thanks.  
This is good work.  
  
David Alston

2. [Matt Vinay](#) 29.7.10 / 6pm

Thanks for the Checklist.  
  
Sadly some political parties have fairly predictably poor values, and of course this is reflected in the checklist.  
  
I think I'm now fairly clear who I'll be voting for (though I had pretty much made up my mind already).  
  
Matt Vinay

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## About



**Bill Muehlenberg**

We live in an age where we see evidence of cultural decline, the erosion of values, the decline of civility, the denial of truth and the elevation of unreason. Many people are asking, “Where is our culture heading?”

This website is devoted to exploring the major cultural, social and political issues of the day. It offers reflection and commentary drawing upon the wealth of wisdom found in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

It offers reflective and incisive commentary on a wide range of issues, helping to sort through the maze of competing opinions, worldviews, ideologies and value systems. It will discuss critically and soberly where our culture is heading.

*Happy reading!*



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## Sections

- [Apologetics](#) (268)
  - [Theodicy](#) (12)
- [Article Reviews](#) (527)
- [Book Reviews](#) (320)
- [Christianity](#) (616)
  - [Notable Christians](#) (6)

- [Persecution](#) (78)
- [Culture Wars](#) (336)
- [Economics](#) (62)
- [Education](#) (40)
- [Ethics](#) (472)
  - [Abortion](#) (92)
  - [Bioethics](#) (82)
  - [Drugs](#) (16)
  - [Euthanasia](#) (14)
  - [Homosexuality](#) (181)
  - [Pornography](#) (20)
  - [Sex Education](#) (16)
  - [Sexuality](#) (66)
- [Europe](#) (29)
- [Family](#) (266)
  - [Childcare](#) (16)
  - [Children and Young People](#) (91)
  - [Divorce](#) (19)
  - [Feminism](#) (43)
  - [Marriage](#) (68)
- [Health and Medical Issues](#) (46)
- [History](#) (36)
- [Interfaith Dialogue](#) (25)
- [International Relations](#) (104)
- [Islam](#) (144)
- [Israel and the Middle East](#) (24)
- [Law and Legal Issues](#) (98)
- [Literature, the Arts, and Entertainment](#) (31)
- [Marxism, Communism, Socialism](#) (20)
- [Media](#) (80)
- [Miscellany](#) (11)
- [New Age Movement](#) (11)
- [People](#) (37)
- [Philosophy](#) (53)
- [Political Correctness](#) (148)
- [Politics](#) (187)
- [Popular Culture](#) (35)
- [Population Issues](#) (27)
- [Postmodernism](#) (8)
- [Science and the Environment](#) (105)
- [Sermons and Devotionals](#) (85)
- [Social Issues](#) (261)
- [Terrorism](#) (80)
- [The Church](#) (171)
  - [The Emergent Church](#) (14)
- [Theology](#) (202)
  - [Difficult Bible Passages](#) (2)
- [War and Peace](#) (30)
- [Worldviews](#) (148)

