

National Church Establishments.

(The National Church—The Magistrate's Power *Circa Sacra* 1)

For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. (1 Tim. 2:2)

Question.—*What are the duties of the magistrate under the New Testament?*

Answer.—As God has committed to magistrates the duty of keeping the public peace, Eccl. 8:2-5 ; so, too, we are to seek our peace in the peace of the nation in which we reside, Jer. 29:7. Magistrates are to achieve this peace in a twofold way:

First, By seeing that all men live honestly through the upholding of the second table of the law of God, Rom. 13:9. In this, men seek to maintain a conscience void of offense toward men, Acts 24:16.

Second, By taking care that men live godly, or in accordance with the first table of the law, Ex. 20:10.

Question.—*Wherein does it appear that the Lord has committed to magistrates the care of religion?*

Answer.—If Christians are to pray for kings that they might lead peaceable lives in godliness, then the magistrates stand under a command to that end, Ps. 72:1. Now, to those to whom ends are committed, all things necessary to achieving those ends are also allowed by command, Acts 17:2.

Second, The examples of the magistrates under the Old Testament, especially those heathen kings, whose care for the welfare of the church was blessed by God's people of old, Ezra 7:27. The hand of God was upon them, not in a typical but a moral way, to guide them to seek the good of the church, Neh. 2:8. The hearts of all kings *as kings* are held by God's hand, Prov. 21:1; Ezra 6:22; because their power stands not *in grace* but *in nature*, even the nature of the office, Rom. 13:1. Nonetheless, only a Christian magistrate possesses the qualifications necessary to the right carrying out of this duty, Heb. 12:14.

Third, The Gospel promises of the Old Testament concerning what magistrates should be under the New, Isa. 49:23. Even calling kings ministers, Isa. 60:10. Also warning those who will serve and predicting that they who would serve, or minister, would do so to the beautifying of the house of God in their respective nations, Isa. 60:12, 13. To this, we may add the exhortation to kings as kings to join themselves to Messiah with the kiss of peace, Ps. 2:10-12; adding that they must open their gates to Christ, Ps. 24:7-10.

Fourth, Because Jesus Christ as Mediator has the kingdom and power over all things for the good of the church, Eph. 1:22. Therefore, those under Him must be

subservient to Him and the ends for which He appoints all lawful use of power, Prov. 8:15, 16.

Fifth, The fourth commandment, which is addressed to magistrates, Deut. 5:14; so it was enforced by Nehemiah, Neh. 13:15-22. But, if the time of worship belongs to the care of magistrates, then the worship itself must fall under his inspection, Ps. 122:9.

Sixth, The flourishing of religion being the greatest security and safety of the commonwealth, magistrates must take care about the maintenance of the true religion, Ezra 7:23-26. The danger being great when true religion falls into disuse, it respects the magistrate, by reason of his office, to take order that religion be established in the nation, 2 Chron. 15:3-8.

Question.—*What are magistrates prohibited from doing in matters of religion?*

Answer.—Because the danger is great that magistrates take upon themselves too much in matters of religion, even entering into matters *in sacris*, 2 Chron. 26:18-21; the following things should be noted:

First, Magistrates are not to do that which is good in their own eyes, but are to be guided by the revealed will of God, Deut. 17:18-20. He ought not to give preference to matters of state over matters of religion, 2 Chron. 7:14.

Second, They are not to give themselves over to follow the dictates of other men, 1 Kings 12:6-14; but they are to stand upon their duty as declared by the Word of God, Ps. 2:1-3, 10.

Third, They are not to compel any to a profession of the true religion, Ps. 110:3; though they may compel them to seek the Lord God, 2 Chron. 15:12, 13. It is one thing to make men attend the means of grace and another to make them believe the truth—God alone is the lord of conscience, Rom. 14:4.

Fourth, Neither may the magistrate deprive the church of any of the privileges Christ has purchased by His blood, Acts 5:29. In civil matters, when reason requires, he may deprive men of their privileges, Ps. 82:3; 1 Pet. 2:17; but in matters of religion he must leave that which is indifferent as it is—*indifferent*, Gal. 2:4, 5.

Fifth, The magistrate must not deny that indulgence, toleration or latitude to all the people of the Lord due to weakness, whether of judgment or conversation, which Christ would have all His people exercise one toward another, Eph. 4:2, 32.