

Political Principles of the Covenanters

The Authority of the Lord Jesus Christ

Civil government is an ordinance of God. Man by creation is a political being, to whom government is natural and necessary. As no particular form of government is prescribed in the Word of God, any form, if adequate, is proper; yet always with the proviso that it shall duly acknowledge the authority of God, and conduct its affairs so as to conserve the rights of men.

Sovereignty belongs to Almighty God alone, who has committed all authority to his Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the duty, therefore, of every nation, in setting up its government, to acknowledge the authority of Christ, and to enter into covenant with Him as its King and Saviour.

I Chron. 28:7-9; Psalm 2:6-9; Psalm 33:12; Matt. 28:18; Rom. 13:1-2.

Obedience to Law

Civil magistrates are the ministers of God to men for good. Subjection to civil authority, therefore, as long as such subjection is in accord with the law of God, should be cheerfully rendered as a matter of conscience. But no government which deprives men of civil or religious liberty, or interferes unjustly with private ownership, or plays fast and loose with human life, or proposes to force men to do violence to the spirit and precepts of the Christian religion, can rightfully claim the sanction of God, or consider itself to be his minister. In so far, at least, it forfeits its right to act as the agent of God.

Rom. 13:1-5; I Tim. 2:1-2; Titus 3:1; Acts 4:19, 5-29; Psalm 50:16-18.

Subjection to Un-Christian Governments

It is the duty of Christians who reside within the bounds of such nations as do not make a fitting acknowledgment of divine authority to live in submission to the existing government, provided that in doing so they are careful to regulate their conduct according to the Scriptures, and to preserve a conscience void of offense toward God and man. It is also the duty of Christians, for the sake of peace and order, to conform to the common regulations of society in things indifferent or morally commendable.

It is lawful for Christians residing in nations in which the light of the gospel has not been generally diffused, to continue in submission to such authority as may exist over them, agreeably to the light of nature, which, where revelation does not exist, is the only standard of civil duty. In such cases the infidelity of the ruler cannot make void the just authority conferred upon him by the constitution.

Jer. 29:4-7; Jonah 3:7-10; Matt. 22:21; Rom. 2:14; I Peter 2:12-17.

Church and State Separate, But Should Co-operate

Church and State are two distinct and separate institutions. The Christian religion should be the religion of both. Any departure from the spirit, the ethics, the teachings and the ideals of Jesus Christ on the part of either is freighted with disaster for humankind. Each has its own sphere, and its own functions to perform. Neither has a right to invade the territory of the other. The source of guidance for both is the Word of God. Where their duties coincide, as for example in the suppression of profanity, they should co-operate; yet always in such a way as not to mar their integrity as separate institutions; or to transcend the limits appropriate to their distinctive domains in the infliction of penalties. They are both under Christ, and should seek, separately and conjointly, to do his will "in earth as it is in heaven."

Deut. 17:18-20; II Chron. 26:16-18; Psalm 72:7-9; Rom. 13:4; I Cor. 5:4-5; Col. 1:18.

Political Loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ

Nations come into being under the providential control of God. He holds them to strict accountability according to the same moral standards which he has ordained for individuals. In every nation there is a constant conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. If the spirit of Christ is in control of the national life, it will register its ideals in the law, and will appear in the administration of the government. If the powers of this world have the ascendancy, then the opposite outcome will make itself manifest. In this conflict neutrality is impossible. Whoever or whatever is not with Christ is against Him. Consequently every citizen must of necessity give his supreme allegiance either to Christ and His kingdom or to Satan and his. If he is a Christian and the government is under the dominance of the kingdom of God, and hence is Christian, he can swear allegiance to Christ and the government in one and the same act. But if he is a Christian and the government is under the dominance of the kingdom of this world, and hence is not Christian, unqualified allegiance to Christ will require the withholding of his unqualified allegiance to the government. He will have to separate from the government at the point where the government separates from Christ. The only position consistent for the Christian is the position of dissent from any constitution or form of civil government which refuses or neglects to own allegiance to Jesus Christ, the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Acts 17:26-27,31; Jer. 18:5-10;25:31; Matt. 12:30; Luke 19:14,30; Acts 4:19; 5:20; Psalm 9:5,8,17; Heb. 11:24-27; Rev. 12:9-11.

The Value of Faithful Protest

Virtuous persons, who in their private capacity are endeavoring to further the true end of civil government, the **maintenance of peace and quietness in all godliness and honesty**, although they dissent from the constitution or form of civil government in the nation where they reside, have a right to protection in their lives, liberties and property; since they not only pay taxes, obey the laws and in cases of emergency serve in the de-

fense of their country, but by their consistent loyalty to Jesus Christ in dissenting from that which dishonors Him are contributing also, by a personal sacrifice, to the nation's highest welfare. To dissent from a present inferior form of government with a view to lifting it to a higher level, and clothing it with an added majesty, and insuring its perpetuity, and making it an irresistible power for good in the world, is not disloyalty; and no government which weighs this attitude judiciously in the light of Scripture and of history will be disposed to regard those who maintain it as other than its best citizens and most dependable friends.

Psalm 33:4-5; 10:12; Matt. 5:13-14; Prov. 14:34; 27:6 Isa. 32:17; Jer. 1:5; Gen. 18:32.

Political Sacrifice for Political Service

Christians, in addition to their duty to testify against civic unrighteousness and national evils, and to strive in the use of commendable means for the reformation of the body politic, are also under moral obligation to relinquish all such privileges of citizenship as may tend to neutralize their testimony to the regal rights and claims of Christ.

Neh. 9:26-30; Mark 13:9; Jer. 29:7; II Tim. 1:8; Heb. 11:24-26; I Peter 2:15-17; 4:15-16.

In addition to the foregoing principles the Reformed Presbyterian (Covenant) Church stands firmly for total abstinence and prohibition, Christian education and the Bible in the public schools, legislation protecting the Lord's Day, the sacredness of marriage and against easy divorce laws, believes in equal racial rights and the same moral standards for all races for men and women and for individuals and nations, opposes war (though not pacifist) and favors arbitration and conciliation, and opposes organized secrecy.

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