

Government's relationship with Christianity

1 Timothy 2:1-2

While waiting to begin

1. How should government relate to the church?
2. And to other religions and ideas?
3. Why?

Introduction

- **Acknowledgement / resources**
 - David Thomas, Christ Church Romford
 - James Baird, *King of Kings: a reformed guide to Christian government*
- **Last week:** where does government come FROM? = instituted BY GOD
This week: what is the state /government FOR?

Westminster Confession 23.1, "God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil authorities to be, under him, over the people for his own glory and the public good. For this purpose he has armed them with the power of the sword for the defense and encouragement of those who are good, and for the punishment of those who do evil."

1. Government exists to promote the public good

Promote = to actively encourage, support and advance

Public Good = that which leads to human flourishing and happiness among a society of people as they live together in community

- 1 Timothy 2:1, "... that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way."
- Romans 13:4, "... for he is God's servant for your good."

"The civil magistrate is the minister of God for that which is *good* (Romans 13:4). And we may not tone down the import of the term 'good' in this instance. Paul provides us with a virtual definition of the good we derive from the civil authority 'that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness & gravity' (1 Timothy 2:2). The good the magistrate promotes is that which subserves the interest of piety," John Murray – 1965

"I often hear it said, "Do not bring religion into politics." That is precisely where it ought to be brought and set there in the face of all men as on a candlestick." Charles Spurgeon - 1881

4. Promoting Christianity means promoting & protecting the church

1 Timothy 2:1-2, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way"

Isaiah 49:23, "Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers."

= not doing the church's job... BUT helping the church to flourish

5. Promoting Christianity means governing by the Law of the Lord

= 10 commandments (Exodus 20) = love God, love neighbour

WCF 19.4, "To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require."

Conclusion: why bother?!?

➔ Prayer... lamentation... repentance... action

2. The public good is founded on religion

“public welfare” = “beginning at religion” = the view of “all nations” John Calvin

e.g. ancient Greece and Rome

e.g. the religion of OUR government and state

3. All governments must promote Christianity as the true religion

Explanation:

Biblical evidence:

- **False religion destroys a society** – e.g. Romans 1:18-32
- **Everything good is built on Christian foundations** – e.g. Prov. 14:34

We're made in God's image...
and God is loving, the creator, a builder, an artist...
THEREFORE →...

“All that is wonderful about society sits on the foundation of Christianity” Glen Scrivenor, *The air that we breathe*

- **Israel's kings: did they promote true religion?**

The standard = 1 Samuel 23:3-4, “... When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them light the morning light...”

Hezekiah – 2 Kings 18:5-6, “He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord.”

Solomon – 1 Kings 11:6, “Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done.”

Israel's kings - 2 Kings 17:12-17, “... they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, ‘You shall not do this.’... They despised his statutes... they abandoned all the commandments of the Lord their God... And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings...”

- **Gentile kings**

Psalm 2:11, “serve the Lord with fear... Kiss the Son...”

Jonah 3:7-9, King of Nineveh

Daniel 3:29, Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 6:25-27, Darius

Ezra 1:2-3, Cyrus

- **NT: the State is the servant of God (Romans 13:4)**

Matthew 22:20-22, Revelation 13:1-9

This is what the Reformed church down the ages has always believed:

“All have confessed that no government can be happily established unless piety is the first concern.” John Calvin – 1559

“Protestants teach unanimously that it is incumbent on kings to find out, receive, embrace and promote the truth of the gospel, and the worship of God appointed therein, confirming, protecting, & defending it, by their regal power & authority.” John Owen - 1664