

71. The Separation of Church and State.

Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. *Matt. 22, 21.*

This was the authoritative decision of our Lord and Savior. According to these words the interests of the State and the interests of the Church are not the same. We have duties as citizens and duties as church-members. The claims of Caesar, that is, the civil government, must be satisfied, and what God has commanded respecting the service we owe Him is the supreme law for us. Caesar's claims have their limit; he cannot demand our all. We are to render to Caesar the things which are his in such a manner that God receives the things which are His. What are these things?

Those who are born in this country are, by reason of their birth, American citizens, entitled to all the privileges and bound to discharge all duties of a citizen. Those who by the new birth received in baptism, are initiated into the commonwealth of God's nation are, by reason of their new birth, fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God. Besides these there are, both in the State and in the Church, persons who have not in this ordinary way obtained citizenship, but have *joined* the State and the congregation.

Now, these two domains can never clash because the nature of the two is entirely different. The domain of the Church is spiritual; it rules over souls; it deals with heavenly things; its purpose is to lead people to eternal life; its only weapons are the Word of God and prayer. It promises a crown, and a glorious one, not in this world, however, but in that to come. The domain of the State, however, is merely temporal; it deals with earthly things; its purpose is to protect the bodies and temporal possessions of inhabitants of the country and therefore to make and enforce laws to that end. But any interference of the State in matters of religion is beyond its God-given province; it has no right to regulate the relations between God and man or in any way to meddle in, or interfere with, matters of the Church.

Prayer.

O Lord, grant us all Thy grace to the end that we may perform our duties both in the State and in the Church, be good citizens and faithful Christians, until we shall be translated from this world into Thy glorious kingdom in heaven, where there are pleasures forevermore. Amen.

We praise, we worship Thee, we trust,
And give Thee thanks forever,
O Father, that Thy rule is just
And wise and changes never;
Thy boundless power o'er all things reigns,
Done is whate'er Thy will ordains;
Well for us that Thou rulest!

The powers ordained by Thee
With heavenly wisdom bless;
May they Thy servants be
And rule in righteousness!
O Lord, stretch forth Thy mighty hand
And guard and bless our native land!

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