

## God and Caesar, liberty and Sunday laws – An important review

There are a few for whom a review of this subject matter have become necessary and important so that faith will be the experience and not presumption. Hence this study at this time will attempt to accomplish such for those so as not to leave anyone adrift of a clear perception of these matters. It is important to have a clear perception of a matter even if you do not agree instead of opposing a subject matter that you do not have a clear perception of.

### The two powers

Jesus in his instruction mentioned two powers and separated them, Caesar (civil government) and God. And Jesus said unto them, **Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.** And they marvelled greatly at him. (Mar 12:17 ASV)

They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, **Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.** (Mat 22:21 ASV). Hence these powers are not one and the same but different and separate.

The apostle Paul by the inspiration of God wrote, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but from God: the powers that are, are ordained by God. Whoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

(Rom 13:1-2 Webster)

"Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Rom 13:7 ASV). He expands on the words of Jesus and gives more details for easy understanding.

Following is a concise summary that can be considered the sphere of national or civil government. The duty of the state (government) is to protect liberty of conscience.

It should according to Romans 13 restrain crime and law breakers

It should provide the human needs of its citizens e.g. water, food and shelter. . (Dan 4:10-12 ASV)

Providing equal justice and protection to all its citizens

It should also seek to make the country a place for as healthy habitation as is possible by providing the necessary infrastructure, facilities and opportunities. Babylon was the glory of kingdoms.

By Civil law the power of the State, must regulate the actions of men, and restricting them from doing wrong under penalty of punishment.

Every civil law has the power of the sword back of it. If it is right to make law, then it is right to enforce it. In denying the church the power of the sword, Jesus therefore forbade the church to ask the state for laws enforcing beliefs and observances. Paul understood this when he said, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." 2 Corinthians 10:4. *The Watchman*, May 1, 1906

Daniel chapter 4 summarizes what I have listed above concerning the purpose and God's object in the ordinance of government. "Thus were the visions of my head upon my bed: I saw, and, behold, a tree in the midst of the earth; and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto

heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was food for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the birds of the heavens dwelt in the branches thereof, and all flesh was fed from it. (Dan 4:10-12 ASV) The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was food for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the birds of the heavens had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. (Dan 4:20-22 ASV)

The arbitrary power of civil government is necessary to compel citizens who will not be righteous, to restrain evil and sustain some level of civility in society that peace and quietude may exist among the inhabitants. This is necessary in God's plan of salvation that the true power of the church the power of divine love manifest in and through the visible church, to preach the everlasting gospel to win back mankind to God and to lead to righteous lives. Romans 13.

Civil government should not

Seek or attempt to regulate or enforce religious services or observances by civil law

Not to support or sustain others in acts of oppression

Should not support any religion or no religion

### **Our relation to the state/civil power**

The Apostle Peter explain our relation to Caesar/civil powers, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well" [I Peter 2:13, 14].

"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" [vss. 15, 16].

"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" [I Peter 2:17].

### **The domain of God**

And then there is the domain of God. Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. (Joh 18:36 ASV)

And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Mat 16:18-19 ASV)

As I stated earlier there are two powers named by Jesus in the passages quoted above especially Matthew and Mark. Hence these two powers are and must be entirely separate. Why? One is the power of arbitrary force and the other is the power of divine love manifested through the members of his kingdom on earth. Then saith Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. (Mat 26:52 ASV) Making it clear to Peter and us that the truth cannot be defended by the sword.

Examples of the domain of God and faith which is out of bounds for Caesar (national/civil government).

### **Liberty of conscience and worship – Duty to God only.**

And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made. (Gen 2:2-3 ASV) Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may have rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the sojourner, may be refreshed. (Exo 23:12 ASV)

Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand. (Rom 14:4 ASV) One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. (Rom 14:5 ASV) So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Rom 14:12 ASV).

In the time of A T Jones there was a constant pushing for Sunday law hence he argued thus, “Therefore, by the word of God, all this campaign that covers the whole land, yes, covers all Christendom, that is seeking for law, more and more law, to compel the observance of a day, whether it be Sunday or any other day—even if it were the day that God has appointed—is a direct invasion of the province of God and of the realm of faith and conscience; and must be repudiated by every Christian; by everyone who would respect the sovereignty of God and the freedom of faith and conscience—in a word, by every soul who would regard religious liberty.” A T Jones. Religious liberty P: 3.

Dan 3, 6 Rev 13 are examples of the civil power going beyond its limit of authority.

And God was pleased with the effort of the king to show Him reverence, and to make the royal confession of allegiance as widespread as was the Babylonian realm. {PK 510.3}

It was right for the king to make public confession, and to seek to exalt the God of heaven above all other gods; but in endeavoring to force his subjects to make a similar confession of faith and to show similar reverence, **Nebuchadnezzar was exceeding his right as a temporal sovereign**. He had no more right, either civil or moral, to threaten men with death for not worshipping God, than he had to make the decree consigning to the flames all who refused to worship the golden image. God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve. {PK 510.4}

Dan 1 was a choice between the true God and king Nebuchadnezzar’s god. Much deeper than food and health.

In the new testament we also see human authority seeking to enter God’s domain with the disciples. Clearly a matter of faith and conscience, clearly pertaining to God.

“And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. (Act 4:18-20 ASV)

Ellen White wrote, "Very few, even of the foremost thinkers and moralists of the seventeenth century, had any just conception of that grand principle, (liberty of conscience, religious toleration) the outgrowth of the New

Testament, which acknowledges God as the sole judge of human faith."--Martyn., vol. 5, p. 297. G.C 293.  
And this is the spring of Christian liberty of which Jesus spoke.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (Joh 8:32 ASV)

Jesus speaks emphatically, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (Joh 8:36 ASV).  
So if the Son sets you free, you will be absolutely free. (Joh 8:36 GW). This is that Christian liberty, which  
does not induce us to live in idleness, presumption or doubtful unbelief.

Liberty is a natural or inalienable right, beyond the power of state to give or remove. It means full freedom of  
conscience for people of all faiths or no faith. It is also the right to practice any religion or no religion without  
government control and coercion. Further when liberty of conscience is recognized it prevents both religious  
control over government and political control over religion. And so in the free exercise of religion every citizen  
is free conclude, hold, practice and also change beliefs according to the dictates of conscience.

We are aware that up ahead national governments will not respect the claims and domain of God with respect  
to his kingdom on earth and Sunday laws will be legislated and so we must know what our response must be at  
every step in order to act in faith and avoid reckless or rash actions which can lead to unnecessary trials.

There are persons who believe that in the present circumstances that the civil administration of lock downs,  
curfews, health protocols, restriction of specified numbers and physical worship to some extent is a restriction  
of their liberty of conscience. And for some the last 18 months or so have provided a challenge to some of their  
understanding of and what is their duty and what the correct Christian response must be. Jesus gave this  
counsel to all his disciples, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as  
serpents, and harmless as doves. Matt 10:16. What did he intended them to understand?

Ellen White comments, "If you see that by doing certain things which you have a perfect right to do, you  
hinder the advancement of God's work, refrain from doing those things. Do nothing that will close the minds  
of others against the truth. There is a world to save, and we shall gain nothing by cutting loose from those we  
are trying to help. All things may be lawful, but all things are not expedient. {9T 215.1}

Jesus must guide, here is an interesting incident. "And there were certain Greeks among them, that came to  
worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him,  
saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. (Joh  
12:20-22 Webster)

The Greeks had heard of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Some supposed, and had circulated the report,  
that He had driven the priests and rulers from the temple, and that He was to take possession of David's  
throne, and reign as king of Israel. The Greeks longed to know the truth in regard to His mission. "We would  
see Jesus," they said. Their desire was granted. When the request was brought to Jesus, He was in that part of  
the temple from which all except Jews were excluded, but He went out to the Greeks in the outer court, and had  
a personal interview with them. {DA 622.1}. Here Jesus did his work without creating needless controversy  
with the authorities. Could he not have remained where he was and invited them there? Wisdom led him aright.

I am free to do all things; but not all things are wise. (1Co 6:12 BBE).

We are free to do all things, but there are things which it is not wise to do. We are free to do all things, but not all things are for the common good. (1Co 10:23 BBE)

“At present Sunday-keeping is not the test. The time will come when men will not only forbid Sunday work, **but they will try to force men to labor on the Sabbath, and to subscribe to Sunday observance or forfeit their freedom and their lives.** But the time for this has not yet come, for the truth must be presented more fully before the people as a witness....Mar Chapter 169.

We are not required to defy authorities. Our words, whether spoken or written, should be carefully considered, lest we place ourselves on record as uttering that which would make us appear antagonistic to law and order. We are not to say or do anything that would necessarily close up our way. We are to go forward in Christ's name, advocating the truths committed to us. *If we are forbidden by men to do this work, then we may say, as did the apostles, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."* [Acts 4:19, 20.]--"The Acts of the Apostles," pages 68, 69.

A time is coming when the law of God is, in a special sense, to be made void in our land [the United States]. The rulers of our nation will, by legislative enactments, enforce the Sunday law, and thus God's people will be brought into great peril. When our nation, in its legislative councils, shall **enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges,** enforcing Sunday observance, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land. Mar Chapter 171.

The apostle wrote, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Rom 8:35 ASV) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.(Rom 8:37-39 ASV). It is my hope that this concise review would have brought a clearer perception of this subject matter to those few who still had a challenge .

Yours in Christian liberty

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