



The Laws of a Nation should Mirror the Law and Justice of God

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” –Psalm 19:7

“The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” -Psalm 19:8

Let us now examine the redemptive or mediatorial work of the law. When speaking of the redemptive work of the law, I do *not* mean that we are redeemed by the law. Men can only find redemption through Christ alone through faith in Him alone based upon His substitutionary, propitiatory work at Calvary on the cross.

What is meant by the redemptive work of the law is that the law plays a part in the redemptive process of man. We know this is so from the Scriptures. Galatians 3:24 for example, plainly states: “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ.” The moral law of God shows men they are sinners in need of Jesus for their Savior. This is the way in which the law of God plays a role in the redemptive process of man.

Romans 7:7-13 concurs with this:

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, *I would not have known sin except through the law.* For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” 8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. 9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. 12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. 13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it

might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, *so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.*

Again, the law of God shows men they have sinned and are in need of a Savior. The law was given “that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19-20). Hence, the law of God plays a critical role in the redemptive process of man – and that is what is meant regarding the redemptive work of the law.

Not only does the law of God play an important part regarding the very salvation of men’s souls in what the Church declares to men, but also through the realms of family government and civil government. *Both of these realms are to also inform those under their respective jurisdictions when God’s law has been violated.*

Family government and civil government are to mirror the law and justice of God. They are to mirror the law and justice of God in their rule. For example, we do this when we teach our children not to steal. We correct and punish them if they do steal. Thus, we are teaching them the law and justice of God. And so it is with the civil government. Those under their jurisdiction are told not to steal. They are punished if they do steal. In this way, civil government is mirroring the law and justice of God.

This too shows men they have violated God’s law and are in need of redemption (which is found in Christ alone). Who is the law for? I Tim.1:9-10 states:

Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

The law is for lawbreakers. If family and civil government agree with the law and justice of God, it reinforces to those under their jurisdiction that they do in fact stand guilty before God when they transgress His law and Word; that they are condemned and in need of redemption. If family government or civil government corrupt their rule, however, and begin to teach things *contrary* to God’s law and justice, they have an adverse effect upon those under their jurisdiction. They distort the law and justice of God when they declare good to be evil and evil to be good. Thus, they make it harder for those under their jurisdiction to be instructed in seeing their guilt before God.

The point is that good law which affirms or mirrors the law and justice of God helps men to see their need for Christ. Bad law that contravenes and spurns the law and justice of God assists men in ignoring and/or justifying their sin. Hence, the laws of a nation go to the very salvation of men’s souls.

Now Pietism¹ – which teaches that Christianity should be a purely private matter and that God’s law has no place in the governance of nations - always tells us that we are wasting our time when it comes to being involved in seeing that good laws are established in our nation. They mock it as mere “moralizing.” They say we should just be involved in trying to save men’s souls – we should just preach the gospel. But what Pietism fails to understand is that good law – that which mirrors the law and justice of God - helps men see where they are wrong, where they have sinned against God, where they do need to repent.

This is not an either/or dilemma. The Church should call men to repentance and tell people about Jesus, *and* we should also be involved in talking to the magistrates and people of our nation about the importance of good, just law. It is not an either/or – we should do both. We address both the personal and the public.

Scholar and historian, Steven Ozment, rightly points out that the Protestant reformers understood that “Reform that existed only in pamphlets and sermons, and not also in law and institutions, would remain a private affair, confined to all intents and purposes within the minds of preachers and pamphleteers.”²

The pastors of Magdeburg spoke of the important role the laws of a nation play in the redemptive process of men in their Magdeburg Confession of 1550. The pastors wrote:

Just as the Church is an ordinance of God, in which God wants there to be an order of teachers and of learners, so also politics and economy³ are truly ordinances of God, in which He likewise wants there to be an order of superiors and an order of inferiors who are ruled by laws and precepts that agree with reason and are not at variance with the Word, and obey them, not only because of wrath or fear of the punishment which threatens from their rulers, but also because of conscience, that is, fear of the wrath and judgment of God.

For God has armed these His ordinances and powers with fear of both wrath and punishment, divine and human, and they both hold their respective power. And He has distinguished one power from another in His Word, so that He has attributed to each of them its own object and task, and likewise

¹ Pietism was funded and promoted by government authorities including Frederick in Prussia during the 18th century in order to remove Christianity from the public square and relegate it a mere private matter. To learn more about Pietism, read the following three articles. Matthew Trehwella: [The Destructive Influence of Pietism in American Society](#). (Mercy Seat Church. Web.) And, [A Brief History of Pietism and Statist Rulers](#). (Mercy Seat Church. Web.) And, Richard V. Pierard, *Why Did Protestants Welcome Hitler? Fides et Historia* 10/2 (Spring 1978): 8–29. Also listen to the sermon, [God DOESN'T Just Expect Sinners to Act Like Sinners](#).

² Steven Ozment, *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992) 23.

³ By “politics” the pastors mean the civil sphere. By “economy” they mean not only economic life, but social life more broadly considered, especially the family.

to each its own method of punishment. And although He does not desire the powers to be mixed up with each other, nonetheless He desires them to help each other in turn, so that in the end they all may agree, and that everything in its own place and way principally may promote the true knowledge of God and His Glory *and their eternal salvation*, or, when it does not attain this ultimate goal, may at least bring about a secondary sort of well-being, that men may live peacefully, uprightly, *kai ouk akarpoi*⁴ in this civil manner of life.⁵

Notice that the pastors speak of three of the four governments God has established – church government, civil government, and family government. The pastors call them “ordinances.” “Politics” refers to civil government. “Economy” refers to family government. Notice that they say God “desires them [these three governments or ordinances] to help each other in turn, so that in the end they all may agree, and that everything in its own place and way principally may promote the true knowledge of God and His glory *and their [individuals] eternal salvation.*”

Good law that affirms or mirrors the law and justice of God helps men to see their need for Christ. Bad law that contravenes and spurns the law and justice of God helps men to justify their sin. Again, the laws of a nation can impact the very salvation of men’s souls.

Good law is good both for the individual when it comes to their salvation, and for the governance and protection of society. Notice the pastors went on to say, “or, when it does not attain this ultimate goal, may at least bring about a secondary sort of well-being, that men may live peacefully, uprightly, *kai ouk akarpoi* in this civil manner of life.” The “*ultimate goal*” of the law as expressed through all three of these governments – church, civil, and family – is the salvation of men’s souls, instructing men they are sinners in need of Christ. If the “ultimate goal” is not realized in an individual life, however, the law still serves to provide good governance and protection to those within society.

The magistrate’s legislative action dramatically impacts those under his jurisdiction – whether for good or for bad – and impacts men, both temporally and eternally.

For example, before abortion was legalized in America, babies were still aborted (just as, though we currently have laws against burglary, homes are still broken into). But after abortion was decriminalized, the number of abortions in this nation rose exponentially. Because the magistrate, who possesses authority from God (and whose authority is recognized by the people) has made law stating it is *okay* to kill

⁴ not unfruitful

⁵ Matthew Colvin, trans., *The Magdeburg Confession* (1550) (North Charleston, SC: Createspace Publishing, 2012) 72.

one's son or daughter in the womb, many people therefore rationalize *it is okay* to kill their son and daughter in the womb.

Now, if the magistrate was to do right in the sight of God and criminalize the murder of the preborn in accordance with the law and justice of God, there would be two results. First, those involved in abortion would more readily see their guilt before God and therefore more readily see their need for Christ, and second, the preborn would be protected from a brutal, heinous death, and far fewer would die.

This is what I mean when I say that good law is good both for the individual when it comes to their salvation – and it is good for the governance and protection of those within society.

Now, if one tries to help pass laws against abortion, the Pietist immediately objects, saying, “That is an utter waste of time - women are not saved by not having abortions, but by hearing the Gospel. We should just preach the Gospel.” Though what the Pietist says sounds “spiritual,” in reality their position works against men coming to know Christ (not to mention the proliferation of lawlessness it promotes in society).

First, the law of God should be honored among men, and one way it is honored is that it is reflected in the laws of a nation. Second, the preborn should be protected from murder and an unjust death. And third, people who are involved in abortion are more apt to see their guilt (and therefore their need for Christ) if the laws of the nation *do* reflect the law and justice of God.

These truths do not contradict what the Pietist is trying to accomplish – seeing men won to Christ. The two positions are not opposed to each other. It is actually the hope of both positions – to see men won to Christ. The Pietist simply misunderstands that his position actually hinders precisely what he hopes to accomplish.

It is important to understand that the Gospel is never heard in isolation. It is always heard against the background of the cultural milieu in which one lives. If one lives in a culture or nation where good laws prevail that mirror the law and justice of God, one can more readily understand the claims of the Gospel than in a culture or nation where the laws contradict the law and justice of God.

Another prime example of this is homosexuality. Prior to the decriminalization of homosexuality, people more readily recognized it as wrong and evil. Homosexuals would hide their behavior for it was criminal and shameful.

Now, even Bible-believing churches and Christians (especially younger Christians) question whether it is really a sin. They clearly do not see it for the abhorrent thing God condemns it as in His law and Word.

So then, what the magistrate legislates dramatically impacts those under his jurisdiction – whether for good or for bad.

If the laws of our nation criminalized sodomy, there would be far fewer people involved in it (just as far fewer babies would die if abortion were re-criminalized). Those who did get involved in these defining issues of our day would more readily see their guilt before God and their need for Christ.

We need to remember that the governing authorities are “God’s ministers.”⁶ The authority they possess was delegated to them from God.⁷ Their rule is not autonomous. They are to govern according to His rule.

The law and justice of the magistrate are to mirror the law and justice of God. This can affect the very salvation of men’s souls. When the law and justice of the magistrate mirror the law and justice of God, men are able to more readily see God’s justice and their guilt before Him for violating His law (just as a parent with a child in family government). When the magistrates rebel and make law contrary to God’s law, it hinders people from clearly seeing their sin and guilt, and hence, their need for Christ.

“When law and morality contradict each other, the citizen has the cruel alternative of either losing his moral sense or losing respect for the law.”
-Frederic Bastiat, *The Law*, 1847⁸

This discourse is written by Pastor Matthew Trehwella and is found as an appendix in a book he authored entitled *The Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates: A Proper Resistance to Tyranny and A Repudiation of Unlimited Obedience to Civil Government*. DefyTyrants.com
MercySeat.net

⁶ Romans 13:4; 2 Chronicles 19:1-7

⁷ Romans 13:1

⁸ Frederic Bastiat, *The Law*, (Hudson, NY: Foundation for Economic Education, 1847/2007) 7.