

The ordinance of government

Is there a divine objective?

Romans chapter 13, the first nine verses would now be a familiar passage to most of us if not all of us. Bro Douglas has shown the importance and boundaries of civil human government even as bad as Nero as ruler rather than to permit general anarchy. The apostle Paul in a profound message at Athens and which comes down to us today said, "The God who made the universe and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in shrines made by humans, and he isn't served by humans as if he needed anything. He gives everyone life, breath, and everything they have. From one man he has made every nation of humanity to live all over the earth. He has given them the seasons of the year and the boundaries within which to live. He has done this so that they would look for God, somehow reach for him, and find him. In fact, he is never far from any one of us. (Act 17:24-27 GW). In this passage we have put before us God's purpose in the creation and distribution of races and nations. In the creation it was His purpose that the earth be inhabited by beings whose existence should be **a blessing to themselves and to one another, and an honor to their Creator**

The question which can be asked is what is the true object of the ordinance of government?

Most people would say that there must be some purpose or object to it since they believe that whatever God allows must have a wise purpose. Does the bible reveal it? What would be the important elements or character of a government for the divine purpose to be manifested or fulfilled?

As we continue I therefore want to bring for your consideration a few passages of the divine thoughts.

"For the kingdom is Jehovah's, and he ruleth among the nations. (Psa 22:28 Darby). The word says he rules among the nations?

The inspired prophet wrote, "This sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the decision by the word of the holy ones: that the living may know that the Most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. (Dan 4:17 Darby). What kind of God is this?

You are familiar with Romans 13 v 3 and 4. Inspiration writes, "**Rulers are God's servants, and they are to serve their time as His apprentices. It is for their good that they faithfully follow the plain "Thus saith the Lord," keeping the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment. They are to exercise their powers without partiality and without hypocrisy, refusing to be bought or sold, scorning all bribes, and standing in moral independence and dignity before God. They are not to connive at one act of dishonesty or injustice. They are not to do a base, unjust action themselves, nor to sustain others in acts of oppression.(RH Oct. I, 1895).**"

Solomon writes, "The LORD controls rulers, just as he determines the course of rivers. (Pro 21:1 CEV). Another translation says, "The king's heart is like streams of water. Both are under the LORD'S control. He turns them in any direction he chooses. (Pro 21:1 GW). The obvious question arises, does God arbitrary dictate in the national affairs of nations? What would your answer be?

Let's take another divine thought. "Wisdom and knowledge and wise suggestions are of no use against the Lord. The horse is made ready for the day of war, but power to overcome is from the Lord. (Pro 21:30-31 BBE

No matter how much you know or what plans you make, you can't defeat the LORD. Even if your army has horses ready for battle, the LORD will always win. (Pro 21:30-31 CEV). What a thought! The question is why?

This word says, "The LORD is fair in all his ways and faithful in everything he does. (Psa 145:17 GW). Indeed if you are always fair and faithful then you must always be right and right cannot be defeated.

You are the one who gives victory to kings. You saved your servant David from the sword of his enemy. (Psa 144:10 ERV)

"The power exercised by every ruler on the earth is Heaven-imparted; and upon his use of the power thus bestowed, his success depends. To each the word of the divine Watcher is, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." Isaiah 45:5. {Ed 174.2}

The leaders of the nations have come together with the people of the God of Abraham. All the rulers of the world belong to God. He is over them all! (Psa 47:9 ERV). Again I ask do these passages suggest that God somehow interfere with or arbitrarily dictate the interplay of human interaction and human occurrences? I can hear many say no while some maybe unsure.

Deut. 4 v 6. "The safety of society, and the progress of reform, depend upon a clear definition and recognition of fundamental truth. The principles of God's law must be kept before the people as everlasting and inexorable as the character of God himself. Law is defined as a rule of action. Civil law represents the supreme power of the State, regulating the actions of men, and restricting them from doing wrong under penalty of punishment. The good of society and the safety of man require that the law be respected. All enlightened law is founded on the law of Jehovah, given on Mount Sinai.... {ST, October 17, 1878 }

The prophet Ezekiel in a vision is given an understanding for our benefit of how God's purpose is accomplished.

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. (Eze 1:1 ASV)

And I looked, and, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with a fire infolding itself, and a brightness round about it, and out of the midst thereof as it were glowing metal, out of the midst of the fire. (Eze 1:4 ASV) And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings thus. (Eze 1:8 ASV) And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; they turned not when they went. (Eze 1:12 ASV) And there appeared in the cherubim the form of a man's hand under their wings. (Eze 10:8 ASV)

"In His law God has made known the principles that underlie all true prosperity, both of nations and of individuals."(PK, 500).

As the wheel like complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations, He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of the earth. {Ed 178.1} Yes another question arises in your mind.

Ecclesiastes 1 vs. 6-7 Amos 5 v 8 and 9 v 6 gives the divine thoughts. Now Inspiration writes, "The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds. Only in harmony with

Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. To transgress His law, *physical, mental, or moral*, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin. ED. 99.

The history of nations that one after another have occupied their allotted time and place, unconsciously witnessing to the truth of which they themselves knew not the meaning, speaks to us. To every nation and to every individual of today God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being measured by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes. {Ed I78.2}

While the nations rejected God's principles, and in this rejection wrought their own ruin, it was still manifest that the divine, overruling purpose was working through all their movements. {Ed I77.1} This lesson is taught in a wonderful symbolic representation given to the prophet Ezekiel during his exile in the land of the Chaldeans. But the symbols presented to him revealed a power above that of earthly rulers. {Ed I77.2} God has given some understanding of the divine purpose for national government as revealed to king Nebuchadnezzar in his second dream in Daniel chapter four

Remember "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." 2 Samuel 23:3, 4. Indeed under a government like that it would be a joy to live.

"In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the true object of government is beautifully represented by the great tree "whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation."Manuscript 29, I895.

An illustration of this truth is found in the history of ancient Babylon. To Nebuchadnezzar the king the true object of national government was represented under the figure of a great tree, whose height "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 meat for all;" under its shadow the beasts of the field dwelt, and among its branches the birds of the air had their habitation. Daniel 4:11, 12. **This representation shows the character of a government that fulfills God's purpose--a government that protects and upbuilds the nation.**

Let us consider Dan 4:5-12.

I had a dream that made me afraid. I was lying on my bed, and I saw pictures and visions in my mind. These things made me very afraid. So I gave an order that all the wise men of Babylon be brought to me to tell me what my dream meant. When the men of magic and the Chaldeans came, I told them about the dream, but they could not tell me what it meant. Finally, Daniel came to me. (I gave Daniel the name, Belshazzar, to honor my god. The spirit of the holy gods is in him.) I told him about my dream. I said, "Belshazzar, you are the most important of all the men of magic. I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you. I know there is no secret that is too hard for you to understand. This was what I dreamed. Tell me what it means. These are the visions I saw while I was lying in my bed: I looked, and there in front of me was a tree standing in the middle of the earth. The tree was very tall. The tree grew large and strong. The top of the tree touched the sky. It could be seen from anywhere on earth. The leaves of the tree were beautiful. It had much good fruit on it. And on the tree was plenty of food for everyone. The wild animals found shelter under the tree, and the birds lived in its branches. Every animal ate from the tree." (Dan 4:5-12 ERV)

This passage reveals the true objective of government. Note a few things about it.

- (a) A tree in the midst of the earth; and the height thereof was great.
- (b) The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven,
- (c) The leaves thereof were fair and the fruit thereof much, and in it was food for all:
- (d) The beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the birds of the heavens dwelt in the branches thereof,
- (e) And all flesh was fed from it.

Daniel said to the king. You saw a tree in your dream. The tree grew large and strong. Its top touched the sky, and it could be seen from all over the earth. Its leaves were beautiful, and it had plenty of fruit. The fruit gave plenty of food for everyone. It was a home for the wild animals, and its branches were nesting places for the birds. You saw that tree. King, you are that tree! You have become great and powerful. You are like the tall tree that touched the sky--your power reaches to the far parts of the earth. (Dan 4:20-22 ERV)

Under King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon was the richest and most powerful kingdom on the earth. Its riches and splendor have been faintly portrayed by Inspiration. But it did not fulfil God's purpose; and when his time had come, this kingdom of pride and power, ruled by men of the highest intellect, was broken, shattered, helpless. Christ has declared, "Without me ye can do nothing." **The illustrious statesmen of Babylon did not regard themselves as dependent on God.** They thought that they had created all their grandeur and exaltation. But **when God spoke**, they were as the grass that withereth, and the flower of the grass that fadeth away. The word and will of God alone endure forever. {YI, September 29, 1903 par. 4}

Instead of being a protector of men, Babylon became a proud and cruel oppressor. The words of Inspiration picturing the cruelty and greed of rulers in Israel reveal **the secret of Babylon's fall** and of the fall of many another kingdom since the world began: "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them." Ezekiel 34:3, 4. {Ed I76.I}

It must have been fulfilling its purpose at the outset. Had it continued it would have remained strong. But it turned from God's purpose and hence its ruin.

And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion [is] an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom [is] from generation to generation:

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works [are] truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. Dan:4 34-37

God's purpose that the greatest kingdom in the world should show forth His praise was now fulfilled. This public proclamation, in which Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the mercy and goodness and authority of God, was the last act of his life recorded in sacred history." (PK, 521)

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