

The Role of the Religious Institution in National Obedience to Our Creator and Implications for the Statesman

We are addressing the issue “How could a nation experience God’s blessings promised to the nation that is obedient to Him?” God has promised:

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people (Proverbs 14:34).

We recognize that the Religious Institution must play the leading role in achieving this goal. My intention is for Statesmen to clearly understand the role that the Religious Institution is designed by our Creator to play in building a society receiving God’s abundant blessings.

This Religious Institution universally is named “ecclesia” in the Greek of the New Testament of the Bible, God’s handbook, and is commonly translated “Church”. Our Creator defines the responsibility of the *ecclesia* as “of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Knowing that God is One and that He is unchanging, we know He has an arm within every culture, perhaps by a different name, intended to serve as His “pillar and foundation of the truth”. The requirements for the “ecclesia” are clearly laid out and define the role our Creator intends for the Religious Institution in our nations.

The Religious Institution plays a critical role in society on such a journey because we as human beings have difficulty in understanding and approaching our God who cannot be easily comprehended using our five senses with which we approach the seen world. The Religious Institution has the essential responsibility to impart knowledge of the character of our Creator and His expectations for us from His revealed instructions to us in the Bible.

This knowledge of God is necessary for the intimate friendship with God which must support obedience to God. Within that essential body of knowledge is the truth that God created mankind to enjoy friendship with Him, which is foundational to enjoying His full blessings. This friendship includes a quality of life that satisfies every need of the human heart. Jesus said:

I came that they have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

The author of the book of John within God’s instruction manual, the Bible, includes this insight:

... these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name (John 20:31).

“By believing, you may have life in His name.” It is only through believing that we can have life. And we know that it is intended that every member of our society should have this life.

Hence, God has built within us a hunger for Himself – a hunger for God that we need to embrace and that we must encourage our fellow sojourners to embrace as well. The French mathematician Blaise Pascal summarized it:

There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing, but only by God the Creator made known through Jesus Christ.

It is this hunger that the religious leadership must encourage for every member and to ensure is met within every member of society. Those serving in the Religious Institution must ensure this teaching to every member of society. No one should be overlooked. We should be an encourager to everyone to seek a relationship with God for themselves. Jesus emphasized our need with this teaching:

What man among you, who has 100 sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the 99 in the open field and go after the lost one until he finds it? (Luke 15:4)

This requires teaching, modeling, persuading – making every conceivable effort so that every member in society may participate in and embrace the righteousness of God that will be a blessing for our nations. Furthermore, there must be a continual spiritual re-invigoration in the life of each member of society. This is not simply a once-in-a-lifetime spiritual invigoration, but must happen every day. God describes the process this way:

If...My people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

This is made all the more relevant by the fact that, in my understanding, there is not a single nation in the world where the Religious Institution is fulfilling the clear mandate God has given the 'ecclesia'. As such, every nation and every people is missing out on the wonderful blessings God has promised to those who would obey Him and live in partnership with Him. Hence, we must begin by repenting and embracing the truth from our Creator.

Then we must continually allow our lives to experience this invigoration. This must happen on an ongoing basis. Through knowledge of God through studying His Word the Bible, He has given us the tools to fulfill this righteousness. It is literally Jesus living through us. God described it:

... He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son... (Romans 8:29).

Our Creator intended that our societies be made up of those who have embraced the character of Jesus Christ through His essential help. The Religious Institution must teach each member the practical aspects of loving and obeying God and overcoming our selfish aspirations that interfere with this:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:19-20).

We must be continually reminded to apply the truth:

If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13).

As a result of this relationship with God and His living through us, He elaborated on the qualities that would result in our lives:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

These nine characteristics are the result of allowing God to have His reign in our lives.

When Jesus was asked by religious leaders “What is the greatest commandment from God?”, He answered:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands (Matthew 23: 37-40).

This summarizes what our Creator expects of us. Notice that, as a result of loving God, we will be able to love ourselves as a special creation of our God, and, furthermore, we will be able to love others with whom our lives interact. The impact upon society is clear. Our person-to-person interactions will automatically reflect this reality.

It is not enough that we have knowledge about God. It must become intimate knowledge of God that is the basis for friendship with Him. It is essential that this friendship with our Creator serve as the basis for our obedience.

More than teaching obedience to God, the Religious Institution must model this obedience to God. The religious leadership must put aside any personal ambition for importance and pour themselves out in service to the people as servants, recognizing that they will receive eternal rewards for their earthly sacrifice. Those in leadership must view their roles as shepherds, nurturing the sheep as their primary responsibility. Leaders must be less concerned about their own importance within the religious community or within society than in serving. The issue was made clear to me one time when I was discussing this with a Foreign Minister. He described “If I were to walk into a gathering of religious leaders and you were to ask someone, ‘Who is the politician in the group?’, they would point to everyone else but me.” The religious leaders must recognize their need to selflessly serve their Master and the sheep for whom they have been given responsibility. Then and only then will they hear God’s commendation:

Well done, good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:21).

The end result is that we will learn to obey the One who is our best friend: Almighty God. As we take each step of obedience, it becomes clearer and clearer that we have done the correct thing and that we have strengthened our friendship with God, whose friendship is our richest treasure for all eternity. As this friendship and obedience is embraced throughout all of society, it will include those who are in Religious Institution, but also Family and Government. As this becomes prevalent throughout the nation, the nation will experience our Creator’s promise:

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people (Proverbs 14:34).

What is the Responsibility of leaders within Government?

1. As members of potentially all three institutions (Family, Religious, Government), we must lead the way in obeying our Creator in everything we do.
2. As Government decision-makers, we must avoid impeding the essential work of the Religious Institution, either through law passed or actions taken.
3. We must set an example for servanthood that will hopefully be contagious to everyone in every area of society.