

Loving Father, bless their home wherever it may be through the years to defend it from evil. May it be a home where Christ is known and loved as its head. May his love cast out all fear and his cross bring reconciliation and forgiveness.

Supply A-- and B-- with their need and grant them a generous heart and a welcoming spirit. What we ask for these Thy children Our Father we ask for each family represented here. May those who took vows to each other in the past renew those vows this day and find them strengthened.

So lead us through this life we pray that when we have fully served Thee in our generation we may be received into the presence of Thy Glory and be numbered with those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, even Jesus Christ Our Lord who has taught Thy family upon earth to pray together,
OUR FATHER -----.

A HYMN IS SUNG

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ Our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always.

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THE PLACE OF CAESAR IN WORSHIP

Whenever the Church or individual churchmen endeavour publicly to evaluate, in the light of Christian teaching, the policies and actions of governments, local councils, financial institutions, the business world, trade unions, or the forces of law and order, those who take exception to their conclusions are often heard to protest that the Church and its spokesmen should stick to 'religion' and stop meddling in other people's affairs. The cry of 'trespasser' is raised, and it is not hard to understand why. Authorities, corporate bodies and individuals possess alike the tendency to stake out for themselves territory over which they believe they may claim sole jurisdiction. They will struggle to gain possession of and to defend what they regard as being exclusively their own. They may sometimes be willing to recognise circumstances in which others have a legitimate interest in their affairs, but they will normally take steps to ensure that such an interest is never allowed to expand to the point at which they have ceased to be masters in their own house. This does not mean that they will never recognise or even defend the autonomy of others. On the contrary, they may well fight at considerable expense to preserve freedoms other than their own, but they are generally unlikely to sustain what may have commenced as an act of genuine altruism if it is felt to be subverting their own autonomy.

If individuals or groups are doing or saying, within the privacy of their own sphere, things which others regard as harmless, they will almost certainly be left in peace. This fact bears directly upon the relationship between Church and state. As long as the Church is content to remain within the confines of an other-worldly pietism, it is unlikely, in the so-called free countries at least, to find itself in opposition to the state. Likewise, if an authoritarian regime is not militantly anti-christian, the Church will remain relatively unmolested as long as it confines itself to what the state understands to be the sphere of the 'sacred' or 'spiritual'. In either circumstance Christianity is likely to be viewed from the outside as being a harmless pursuit which may sometimes even divert the energies of the populace away from sensitive concerns which, if pursued with vigour, could lead to the de-stabilization of society.

Exposed here are the roots of the widespread and fundamentally non-christian dualistic distinction between 'sacred' and 'secular', 'spiritual' and 'temporal'. The Christian Faith, grounded in the Incarnation, acknowledges a Saviour whose redeeming activity embraces the whole created order. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth ..." (John 1, 14)

The devastating implications of this fact are disturbing for Church and state alike; for Church because the indwelling Christ seeks, through his people, to maintain his costly and comprehensive identification with the whole of human life; for state because it is brought face to face with a Sovereign Lord who, as King of kings and Lord of lords, claims for himself the ultimate authority over all that is popularly identified as 'secular' or 'temporal'. The priest and Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan were, we may legitimately infer, men so anxious both to fulfil their sacerdotal functions and to avoid ritual contamination from what might possibly be a corpse, that they had become insensitive to human need. These men were operating within a false dualism which led them to rationalize away their God-given moral obligation. It suits a complacent Church unwilling to grasp the painful nettle of universal neighbourly love to keep alive a false dichotomy between 'sacred' and secular'. An unconscious conspiracy can develop between a Church not wishing to be too bothered and a state which is happy not to have a socially militant pressure-group breathing down its neck.

The words of Jesus, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12, 17), are sometimes cited both by Church and state in defence of the need to preserve an absolute dichotomy between the 'spiritual' and the 'temporal'. But this interpretation of an isolated saying is totally inconsistent with what we read elsewhere. Arraigned before Pilate, Jesus was asked, "Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" to which he replied, "You would have no power over me

unless it had been given you from above ..." (John 19, 10-11) The things of God are given to God by no one, but the things of Caesar are entirely the gift of God; he holds these in trust, and is answerable to God for his stewardship of them. We should understand very clearly that Caesar derives none of his authority from the Church. Nor is he ever answerable to the Church for the manner in which he exercises his authority. This would be to ignore the teaching of Romans 13 that the authorities are the ministers and servants of God.

What, then, is the role of the Church vis-à-vis the state? The Church's calling is a prophetic one, firstly, to remind the authorities that they are appointed God's servants for the good of those under them (Romans 13, 4); secondly, to interpret to the authorities, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the will of God. This is not to say that the Church should set itself up as an authority superior to the state. If the voice of God has resounded with clarity through the prophetic witness of the Church, but if the state has paid no heed to that voice, then the Church qua Church may neither overturn nor assume the functions of state. It is the authorities who bear the sword. (Romans 13, 4) While not called to practice politics in a governmental capacity, the Church is called, in God's name, to address those who do. It is not for the Church to take the place of Caesar, although in their capacity as ordinary citizens Christian people may legitimately undertake responsibilities in the area of politics and government, provided they permit themselves at all times to be controlled by the mind of Christ. Even in a revolutionary situation individual Christians may feel compelled to align themselves with their fellow human beings against an oppressor or aggressor who has prostituted his authority from God by making himself a terror to bad conduct rather than good (Romans 13, 3), but have too the Christian must embody the mind of Christ, even if this brings him into conflict with his own revolutionary colleagues. To employ Romans 13 in defence of a totally quietistic role for the Christian in the face of rampant evil is to commit the sin of the priest and the Levite. The fact remains, however, that there are things given by God to the state which never have, and never shall, be given to the Church. To say this is not to blunder into the dualistic trap we have identified above. It is simply to acknowledge that the One Sovereign God has assigned to Church and state alike their own distinctive roles, and that it is to God alone that each is answerable. The question of dualism only arises when the sovereignty of God is acknowledged by Church, by state, or by both in collusion to belong solely within an area comprising less than the whole created order.

The Church, in fulfilling its God-given obligations towards the state, functions as prophet. It reminds the state of the fact that all authority derives from God, and it encourages the state towards the fulfilment of God's will. The teaching of Romans 13 is reinforced in the First Epistle of Peter; "Be subject for

the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right." (2, 13 - 14) A proper understanding of the catholicity of the Church should lead to the exclusion from its worship and witness of anything savouring of a crude and triumphalistic nationalism which would exalt one people over another as especially favoured by God. Nevertheless, Christians are exhorted to pay "respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due." (Romans 13, 7) Christian worship is, in essence, the participation, through the Holy Spirit, in the heavenly ministry of Christ our High Priest. Yet we do not, and cannot, cease in our worship to be citizens of the state, and our obligation to be subject to, to respect, and to honour those set in authority over us by God may legitimately find expression in our worship, provided the primacy of God over all is clearly emphasised.

The relationship between Church and state as it is reflected in worship requires careful examination in these four contexts; the singing of the National Anthem; the displaying of national flags; the observance of Remembrance Day and the positioning of war memorials; and the conducting of national or civic services. Because it is not possible to treat of these matters in isolation from one another, the discussion of each will expose basic principles which must be allowed to govern this whole field.

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

It would be a surrender to the false dualism we have identified above if, through the desire to preserve the worship of the Church from being tainted by anything 'secular' or 'profane', the claims of sovereign or state upon their subjects were to go unrecognised. If, however, a service is concluded with an intrusive and unqualified act of homage to sovereign or state, then whatever the good intentions of those responsible, this can readily appear to eclipse everything that has gone before it. Every service should have a clear focal point which gathers together all the various strands of worship and fuses these into a Christocentric unity, so that if the participants are asked to state in one sentence the object of their words and actions, they can truly reply, 'Our worship is, from start to finish, directed to Christ.' But the introduction of an act of homage right at the end of the service can, if it is not clearly intended to be an integral component of the people's response to God, present the worshippers with a second and rival focal point which obscures the comprehensive Lordship of Christ.

In the First Epistle of Timothy there is guidance as to the appropriate means by which our obligations to sovereign and state may be acknowledged in worship: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions,

that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way." (2, 1-2) The appropriate way for Christians to respect and honour sovereign or state in worship is through the ministry of prayer. It is interesting to note that the British National Anthem, together with other national hymns, is set in the intercessory section of the Third Edition of the Church Hymnary. Unlike the anthems of many other countries, it is couched in the form of prayer and as such is entirely suitable for inclusion in worship. The heavenly intercessions of Christ surely encompass "kings and all who are in high positions," and therefore it is right that his intercessions should be mirrored in ours. It is unthinkable, however, that the most ardent of Scottish patriots could argue on Christian grounds for the use in worship of 'Flower of Scotland', 'Scots wha hae', or 'Scotland the Brave', should any of these be adopted as the National Anthem of an independent Scotland! 'God save the Queen' is not sung in Church purely because it happens to be the British National Anthem. It is admissable only because it is in accord with the theological and liturgical principles which should govern Christian worship. But it must be retrieved from its unhappy position as an occasional patriotic appendage to worship, and given an appropriate (indeed, and enhanced) position within the liturgy. This will encourage people to integrate their thinking on Church and state, thus avoiding the disastrous dualism which, in exalting sovereign and state as powers alongside Christ, denies him his rightful place as King of kings and Lord of Lords. The National Anthem, including the vital qualificatory second verse, should be sung on suitable special occasions, but placed as closely as possible to the spoken prayers of intercession. The worship as a whole should conclude with a hymn of praise or dedication to Christ, under whose feet God has put all things. (Ephesians 1, 22)

NATIONAL FLAGS

Under what circumstances is it appropriate for national flags to be put on permanent display within the place of worship? We must recognise the fact that not all ceremonial furnishings to be found in churches are, in the strict sense, essential to the full and adequate celebration of Christian worship. But those which are essential (pulpit, holy table, font and lectern) should clearly and unambiguously direct the worshippers towards the true Object of worship. They are placed where everyone can see them, and the contemplation of their significance is intended to assist the worshipper towards the recognition of Christ as he comes into the midst of his people through Word and Sacrament.

There are, however, churches where the national flag is given a permanent and prominent position in full view of all the worshippers. It may be so placed that, in terms of balance and symmetry, it is as important a component of the chancel layout as the essential liturgical furnishings. It may even be hung in such a way that, both literally and symbolically, it overshadows pulpit,

holy table, font or lectern, or functions as the dominant aesthetic focal point of the whole chancel area. There are two great dangers here. Firstly, the worshippers may be encouraged to regard the state as a power in its own right, existing independently of God and making a parallel and unsubordinated claim upon their loyalty and obedience. This is to intrude the disastrous dualism we have identified above. Secondly, there are those for whom the service of 'Queen and Country' is totally synonymous with the service of God. On this view God is regarded as being little more than simply the genius of the state, and the recognition of the catholicity of the Church (necessarily a dominant theme of true worship) is supplanted by a jingoistic nationalism. The presence of a national flag in church can, under carefully controlled conditions, remind the worshippers that their duty to the state is a component of their response to God, but it should not be placed in such an obtrusive position that its presence is liable to be totally misunderstood.

We should add a few words about the role of colours in parades of uniformed organisations. It is the custom sometimes for the National Anthem to be sung after the flags have been returned, and for all other colours to be lowered in deference to the national flag. Coming right at the end of the service as this inevitably must, it compounds whatever dualism is already inherent in the situation. Youth organisations should never be encouraged to play down or make light of their duty to 'Queen and Country', but the supreme reason for their being on church parade is that they should view that duty in the greater light of their overall responsibility to God. A related problem concerns the location of the stand or other receptacle into which the colours are placed for the duration of the service. In some churches the colours are displayed directly in front of the holy table in such a way that it is no longer fully visible to the congregation. As the permanent reminder of Christ's living Presence it should never be so obscured.

REMEMBRANCE DAY AND WAR MEMORIALS

After World War I, November 11, Armistice Day was set aside to commemorate the fallen. In Britain it was, from 1946, transferred to the nearest Sunday and re-named Remembrance Day. From 1956 it has been fixed as the second Sunday in November. For the strict pacifist this cannot be anything other than a most awkward occasion, no more so than if he happens to be a minister of the Gospel. But the great majority of ministers and worshippers in the major denominations are not pacifists, and for these there need be no objection in principle to the religious element built into the observance right from the start. But this said, we must question seriously the wisdom of the Remembrance Day observance having been, in many congregations, fused with the main diet of public worship.

One of the most famous and poignant war paintings appeared in 1914. Entitled 'The Great Sacrifice', its very name highlights the massive confusion in many people's thinking where the relationship between Christianity and warfare is concerned. It depicts a fallen soldier reposing peacefully upon the parapet of a trench. Beside him hangs the crucified Christ. The right hand of the soldier is resting upon the Saviour's feet, while Christ gazes down upon him in warmth and loving sympathy. Whose, we must ask, is the 'Great Sacrifice'? The only possible answer is: Christ's and the soldier's. The death of a soldier in active combat - his bayonet lies brightly gleaming to his left - is in effect portrayed by the artist as an extension of the Crucifixion. Superficially, of course, we are right in saying that Christ and the soldier has each sacrificed his life for the sake of others, but at this point any resemblance between the two abruptly ends. On the one hand, Christ went willingly to Calvary with no other object than himself to die. The soldier, on the other hand, went unwillingly to the trenches under strict orders to kill as many of the enemy as he could and desperately hoping, if possible, to save his own skin in the process. Christ, as he hung upon the cross, was a spotless victim, bearing in himself the sins of the world, and making atonement by his death so that men and women, in union with him, might be reconciled to God and to one another. All the deaths in battle since the dawn of human history could not together make atonement even for one single sin, let alone one solitary sinner. For all their apparent similarity, the deaths of Christ and of those who perish in war are of an entirely different order from one another. This is not in any way to belittle or despise the gallant sacrifice made by the fallen. We must never forget the terrible cost paid by those who selflessly suffered death and mutilation in the struggle against tyranny and oppression. But it is surely an outrage, even a blasphemy, to suggest that the sacrifice of a soldier in active combat is of the same species as the sacrifice of Christ. Is this not to jettison the true meaning of Christ's death and to substitute in its place a shallow, subjective, and purely exemplary understanding of the cross?

A thorough reassessment of the traditional morning service on Remembrance Day is desperately needed. The true, pure, immortal self-offering of Christ is utterly unique, and must never be viewed through, or in the light of, any lesser mortal sacrifice, however noble. This is why, for example, the incorporation of a congregation's war memorial within the holy table should be regarded, in retrospect, as a most regrettable sacrilege. The principles which should govern the positioning of national flags within the church building must be applied equally to the siting of war memorials. As far as the observance of Remembrance Day is concerned, if there is no way in which it can unambiguously be incorporated within the normal worship, it would be far better for an ad hoc observance to be appointed for a different time. It is generally accepted that

for such things as weddings and funerals ad hoc services afford the only means of doing and saying all that is appropriate to the occasion. The separate observance of Remembrance Day would give far greater scope for the inclusion of things which, while not wrong in themselves, would be incongruous and intrusive if incorporated within the main diet of worship. Above all, everything possible must be done to eliminate the danger of death in battle being understood as of self-atoning or sacramental character. This false view is not only to be located on the far side of the Pelagian error. It is, in fact, downright pagan. The whole problem here is not so much what people intend, but what they imply. A great deal of fresh thought needs to be devoted to this whole issue in an increasingly violent Western World.

NATIONAL OR CIVIC SERVICES

In its prophetic role, as we have already seen, the Church is the minister of God's Word to the authorities whom he has ordained to bear rule. The old Scottish tradition of 'Kirking the Council' is thus an occasion to be preserved or, where it has lapsed, if possible revived. It is important that such services should be ecumenical in emphasis, even where they fall predominantly within the orbit of one denomination. But in a pluralistic society in which significant minorities subscribe to non-Christian religions, there is growing in some quarters an unhealthy demand both to tone down the exclusiveness which is fundamental to Christianity, and to incorporate within national or civic services liturgical elements native to other faiths. Sometimes, in deference to those of non-Christian but theistic faith, prayers will be offered which carefully omit all mention of Christ, especially the formula, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord'. But more seriously, there have been civic services, held in Christian places of worship, where religious functionaries of other persuasions have actively participated alongside Christian clergymen. Sometimes in the face of subtle pressure from the civil authorities, who will seek to use such occasions in order to encourage cohesion and racial harmony within a dangerously fragmented community, ecumenism is giving way to syncretism. While it is right and proper for Christians to believe that God is sensitive to those who approach him other than consciously through Christ (Cornelius is perhaps the supreme New Testament example here) this is no excuse for Christians to modify or water-down the God-given mode of worship which is a unique and unchangeable part of their heritage. Worship that is not offered in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is neither Christian nor suitable for the participation in of those who belong within the Christian fold. The purity of Christian worship must never be sacrificed for the sake, in the short term, of creating a climate of tolerance and understanding between peoples of different faiths. Only in Christ can a pluralistic society be bound together. The Church must never lose sight of the exclusiveness and

universality of its faith. The danger posed by well-meaning syncretism will almost certainly grow in years to come, and so the Christian Church must be united in its resolve not to surrender those things which witness to God's primal and unique self-revelation in Christ. If civil authorities refuse to participate in religious services which do not give some place to other faiths in the community, the Church must with regret withdraw from this area of cooperation with the state.

The customs and practices noted in this article have developed, as far as the British nation is concerned, over a long period characterized by political and constitutional stability within a predominantly Christian ethos. But for some time now Church and state have been approaching uncharted waters. To what extent can Britain still be described as a Christian nation? Are all the political options liable to be available to the British people through the ballot box likely to be compatible with what Christians generally understand to be the will of God? Is the Church dangerously wedded to a constitutional framework which could, democratically or violently, be swept aside? If the Church finds itself divinely impelled to make pronouncements which are anathema to the civil authorities, can it expect not to suffer persecution or the curtailment of its existing privileges?

The Church is called to worship God in and on behalf of the world. When the world presents a friendly face to the Church, the opportunity for a true partnership is opened up. But sometimes, as a result, thoughts and practices are allowed to develop which, in a less friendly context, are seen to be deflecting the worship of the Church from its true centre in Christ. Without surrendering itself to a dualism which would deny the Lordship of Christ over all, the Church must discover afresh what it means to "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

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