

National Church Establishments.

(The National Church Way as God's Way 3—According to Christ and the Apostles)

The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. (Ps. 110:2)

Question.—*What do Christ and His apostles say concerning the Gentiles and national churches?*

Answer.—As the prophets of the Old Testament, so Jesus Christ Himself after them, when He was upon earth, foretold the coming of national churches under the Gospel to succeed the Jewish church in their most excellent church privileges, Matt. 21:43:

First, By the kingdom of God, and its being taken from the Jewish nation and given to another, it must be understood not only of the Gospel, but of the privilege of being the only people and church of God, as prophesied by Moses Deut. 32:21. Now this place indicates that God would take nations of the Gentiles into covenant with Himself, and thereby make them His people and churches, as the Jewish nation and church was, which should anger them, Rom. 11:11-14. For at that time, they were the only national church and people of God, enjoying the honors and privileges of being the church of God, Hos. 1:10. Thus, the apostle expounds these words of Moses of the conversion of the Gentiles, Rom. 10:19.

Again, Christ says the kingdom shall be given to a *nation* (ἔθνεϊ), Matt. 21:43. This term does not merely connote particular congregations in nations, much less a few congregations of grown persons without their infants, Matt. 4:15; Isa. 9:1. The promise must be made as large as the threat, if the nation of the Jews was to be unchurched, parents and children, Hos. 1:9; then the promise is of whole nations of Gentiles becoming church members in their room and stead, Rom. 9:26. It is to this purpose, and in conformity with the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets, as well as Christ's own prediction, by the authority of the Father, that He commands His disciples to disciple and baptize all nations, Matt. 28:19, 20.

Second, When we consider the use of baptism, which is the ordinance of God, to initiate persons into the Christian church, 1 Cor. 12:13; it follows that Christ's intention in commissioning the apostles was to make whole nations (though by degrees) church members, parents and children, as the Jewish nation was, Gen. 17:7; and, by consequence, to make them national churches as the Jewish nation was, Deut. 4:7, 8; 1 Chron. 17:21, 22. So, the prophet Isaiah foretells both parents and children together comprehended in the same national churches of the New Testament, Isa. 65:23, 24. Indeed, this place the apostle expounds of the conversion of the Gentiles and their being brought into the church, Rom. 10:20.

Again, more plainly this relation is held forth by Isaiah, Isa. 49:22. As if to put out of all doubt the place of infants in the visible Christian church, and its

conformity to that of the Jewish church, Christ affirms that they are fit subjects for this kingdom that is to be given to another nation, Mark 10:14-16. This blessing is a church privilege only proper to church members, Num. 6:22-27. Thus, the Savior confirms their place and relation to Himself elsewhere, Matt. 18:5.

Question.—*Wherein does the morality of this national church way appear under the New Testament?*

Answer.—The morality appears in that of the example of the nation of Israel which served as our example in all things which were neither ceremonially limited or peculiarly Jewish, 1 Cor. 10:1-11. Now:

First, The first commandment requires Israel, as a nation, to choose, acknowledge and avow the true LORD God to be their God and no other, Ex. 20:3. This law, as it respects Israel as a nation *per se*, respects all nations as nations *per se*, Isa. 65:1; for although not every nation had a discovery of the Lord by a voice from heaven, Deut. 4:12; yet, God did not leave Himself without witness amongst all nations for this end, Acts 14:16, 17.

Second, The second commandment enjoined Israel, again as a nation, to keep pure and entire the religious worship of this true God, Ex. 20:4-6. God's ordinances and institutions are a trust committed to a nation which requires those committed to the keeping of this trust, Deut. 17:14-20. This command to flee from idolatry was not peculiar to the Jews, Job 31:26-28; and, now under the New Testament has been advanced with apostolic vigor, Acts 17:29-31.

Third, The third commandment required Israel, in its national capacity, to maintain the integrity of the name of the LORD, Ex. 20:7. In this command lies that moral duty of oaths and vows by which Israel was instructed to enter into covenant with Him, Deut. 10:20. This, too, being moral, and not peculiar to the Jews or their worship, places an obligation upon the Gentiles nations to do the same, Isa. 19:18, 21.