

The Role of The Church in Civil Government

Origen (c. 203-250 A.D.)

And as we – by our prayers – vanquish all the demons that stir up war, and lead to the violation of oaths, and disturb the peace, we in this service are much more helpful to the kings than those who go into the field to fight for them. And we do take our part in public affairs, when along with righteous prayers we practice self-denying disciplines and meditations, which teach us to despise pleasures, and not to be led astray by them. And none fight better for the king [and his role of preserving justice] than we do. We do not indeed fight under him, although he demands it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army of piety by offering our prayers to God.

It is not for the purpose of escaping public duties that Christians decline public offices, but that they may reserve themselves for a holier and more necessary service in the Church of God – for the salvation of men.

...
Celsus also urges us to “take office in the government of the country, if that is required for the maintenance of the laws and the support of religion.” But we recognize in each state the existence of another national organization founded by the Word of God, and we exhort those who are mighty in word and of blameless life to rule over Churches. We reject those who are ambitious of ruling; but we choose those who, through excess of modesty, are not easily induced to take a public charge in the Church of God. And those who rule over us well are under the constraining influence of the great King, whom we believe to be the Son of God, the Word. And if those who govern in the Church, and are called rulers of the divine nation – that is, the

Church – rule well, they rule in accordance with the divine commands, and never suffer themselves to be led astray by worldly policy. And it is not for the purpose of escaping public duties that Christians decline public offices, but that they may reserve themselves for a holier and more necessary service in the Church of God – for the salvation of men. And this service is at once necessary and right. They take charge of all – of those that are within, that they may day by day lead better lives, and of those that are without, that they may come to abound in holy words and in deeds of piety – in order that, while thus worshipping God truly, and training up as many as they can in the same way, they may be filled with the word of God and the law of God, and thus be united with the Supreme God through his Son the Word, who embodies Wisdom, Truth, and Righteousness, and who unites to God all those who are resolved to conform their lives in all things to the law of God.

www.resist2004.com

"Yours is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory"

- from *Against Celsus* BOOK VIII, Chap. 73, 75.

Excerpted from *Water, Faith and Wood: Stories of the Early Church's Witness for Today.*

Doulos Christou Press, 2003.