

Political Polytheism

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Introduction

As the second millennium comes to a close the issue of civil government has once again become a matter of serious debate among Christians. The reasons for this increased interest are manifold. One reason is the rise of the theonomy or Christian Reconstruction movement in the 1970's. The writings of R. J. Rushdoony, Gary North, Greg Bahnsen and others have impacted the small Reformed conservative denominations. Concurrent with the rise of the theonomic movement has been the rise of the "Christian Right." The rise of secular humanism as the dominant worldview among modern nations and the terrifying effects this worldview change have had upon culture and society have awakened many evangelicals from their pietistic slumber. That many believers are finally fed up with what is going on in society and are willing to do something about it is commendable. However, the fact that conservative Christians are involved in a type of spiritual-political and cultural warfare raises some important questions. What exactly is the ultimate goal that Christians are fighting for? Are they attempting to turn the clock back to 1952,¹ or 1789? If Christians become the majority in society should they establish an explicitly Christian state or should they keep the current system and just remove some of the more repulsive abuses (e.g., abortion, homosexuality, pornography, etc.)? Should Christians focus on implementing the moral principles of the second table of the law while ignoring the first table?

The vast majority of evangelicals are basically in favor of keeping the current system of religious pluralism while eliminating some of the disgusting by-products of secular humanism. They regard the U.S. Constitution as practically on a par with Scripture. Thus, they want to keep the founding fathers' idea of religious liberty intact, yet move society away from a 1960's

¹ An excellent description of America's general attitude toward religion and national life in the 1950's was given in 1958 by John C. Bennett. He wrote, "What are we to say about this national acknowledgment of God which because of our religious pluralism cannot have more content than a vague theism? It is easy to dismiss it as insincere or as little more than a harmless anachronism or to see special irony in the fact that the words, 'In God we trust,' appear on our coins, and that the word 'God' appears so frequently in political perorations. The association of this theism with current popular forms of religious reassurance and especially with the current desire for religious sanctions for the American way of life has caused many theologians and religious leaders to criticize it very sharply. The soundest criticism is that in practice we often find ourselves engaged in the ritual of a third faith—not Christianity or Judaism. As Will Herberg says, we have an American religion which may begin as a common denominator of our historic faiths but which becomes in practice a substitute faith. This American faith is often nationalistic and it can become chauvinistic, though, for the most part, we have escaped that. It lacks emphasis upon the transcendent judgment of God. It is often a folk-religion with some Christian overtones. The association of the current revival of religious interest with the justification of America as against atheistic Communism, and the fact that this religious interest coincides with great emphasis on social conformity and on material prosperity increase the religious distortion that is involved. So enhanced are our national self-righteousness in relation to the world and our national complacency in relation to ourselves" (*Christians and the State* [New York, NY: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1958], pp. 6-7). Jesus spoke strong words that apply against any national, vague, ecumenical sort of theism, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 10:32-33). "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Mt. 12:30).

counter culture paradigm back toward a Lawrence Welk paradigm. They want the political realm to remain basically secular yet with a strong influence from the second table of the law. They want a nation that is *vaguely* Christian. When it comes to the first table of the law, the civil magistrate should not favor orthodox Christianity over Buddhism, Hinduism, Animism, Romanism, Satanism, Mormonism, and so on. This concept of religious pluralism has rightly been called “political polytheism.”² According to this view the State should remain neutral with regard to religion. It should never favor one religious group or creed above another. It should seek to the best of its ability to balance all the conflicting viewpoints. It should teach tolerance toward all religions and all worldviews. After all, isn’t that what America is all about?

The purpose of this essay will be to prove that the dominant evangelical position is both irrational and unbiblical. Professing Christians do not have the biblical option of giving Jesus Christ lip service as King of kings and Lord of lords while at the same time refusing to apply His most foundational laws toward the civil government. National repentance and reformation must involve all Ten Commandments. To think that God will bless a nation that punishes homosexuals yet countenances idolatry and Sabbath desecration is a gross delusion. To think that a lasting reformation of society can occur on the shifting sand of a vague notion of old-fashioned family values is absurd. To think that America can be a Christian nation without explicitly acknowledging Christ as King over all kings and Lord over all lords in the constitution, legislatures and courts is ludicrous.

The Bible teaches that every nation has a moral obligation to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ and His law. An examination of God’s law, the prophets, the Psalms and the New Testament will prove that political polytheism is immoral. It is an idea that Christians must reject.

The First Commandment Applies to all Men and all Nations

The commandment that precedes all other commandments foundationally is the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3; Dt. 5:7). The God of Israel is the only God. He alone is the source of created reality, meaning and ethics. His declared will is absolutely binding on all men and all nations for all time. The God who exists demands absolute loyalty, allegiance and obedience. All men and nations live and function in a universe, not a multiverse. “God’s order is absolute and absolutely binding on men and nations.”³ To argue that a nation can be a Christian nation while permitting the open worship and propagation of false religions is a repudiation of the first commandment. There is only one God-Jehovah. To permit the open worship of Baal, Marduk, Amon-Re, Krishna, etc. is to strike at the very root of God’s law order for society. The Bible does not teach that God is one among many gods, or, even first among gods, but the only God. The first commandment was given into a world full of polytheism and idolatry. “A fundamental purpose of the Mosaic polity was the abolition of idolatrous worship, and the substitution in its place, and the maintenance, of true religion in the world.”⁴

Most Christians would object to the statement that religious pluralism is an explicit rejection of the first commandment. They would argue that first table commandments were given to the covenant people and do not necessarily apply to heathen nations. It is true that the Ten

² Greg Bahnsen in Gary Scott ed., *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1989), p. 30.

³ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977 [1973]), p. 17.

⁴ E. C. Wines, *The Hebrew Republic* (Uxbridge, MA: American Presbyterian Press, 1980), p. 65.

Commandments were given to Israel after their deliverance from Egypt. However, there is abundant evidence that God requires all nations to follow all His moral precepts—especially the first commandment.

In Deuteronomy 4:5-8 it says that Israel was to be an example to the pagan nations around them. If Israel was obedient to God’s law, the surrounding nations would acknowledge the wisdom of Israel, Israel’s close relationship to Jehovah, and the superiority of God’s law. The Israelites were to be salt and light to the surrounding nations. They were to showcase God’s law to pagan cultures and societies through obedience. Israel was to serve as a paradigm of covenant faithfulness to the one true God. The purpose of all this was not just so the heathen nations would see certain social benefits of the second table of the law but that the superiority of the *Lawgiver* would be clearly set forth. To argue that heathen nations would acknowledge the justness and superiority of Jehovah’s law and the blessedness of Israel’s close relationship to Jehovah while still rejecting Jehovah and serving idols is absurd. Although the spiritual transformation of pagan nations would have to wait until the coming of Jesus Christ (because of Israel’s apostasy and Satan’s deceptive power over the nations) the message of Deuteronomy 4:5-8 cannot be ignored. Pagan nations should acknowledge and obey the one true God—Jehovah.

Not only is political polytheism a rejection of the first commandment in the political and judicial life of a nation, but it also is an explicit denial of the moral-civil case laws set up to protect a God-honoring nation. In Deuteronomy 13:1-18, false prophets, seducers to idolatry, and cities given over to idolatry are all condemned to death. “It should be noted that Deuteronomy 13:5-18 does not call for the death penalty for unbelief or heresy. It condemns false prophets (vv. 1-5) who seek to lead the people, with signs and wonders, into idolatry. It does condemn individuals who secretly try to start a movement into idolatry (vv. 6-11). It does condemn cities which establish another religion and subvert the law-order of the nation (vv. 13-18), and this condemnation must be enforced by man to turn away the judgment of God (vs. 17).”⁵ A nation that becomes an explicitly Christian nation, that covenants with God and adopts His law-order cannot permit the open, systematic subversion of that law order. It cannot permit treason toward Jehovah. When religious leaders in a Christian nation apostatize they must remain silent or perish. If a city is given over to a false religion or a cult (e.g., Mormonism) that city should be proceeded against according to the law.

In a Christian nation people are not forced to go to church or to believe in Christ, but, the open practice of idolatry is forbidden. It is a capital offense (Dt. 17:2-7). The Bible never accepts the modern concept of neutrality toward religion for the simple reason that neutrality is impossible. A Christian nation which allows public idolatry and blasphemy is on the road toward social suicide and judgment. “To assume that men are free to worship or not to worship without radical consequences for society is to negate the very meaning of biblical faith. The life of a society is its religion, and if that religion be false, then the society is headed for death.”⁶ Many naive believers in the past accepted neutrality in the political realm. They placed their faith in the constitution and in religious pluralism while apostates and unbelievers captured the major institutions in society. The humanists who came into power did everything they could to push Christians into an intellectual ghetto. The humanists implicitly recognized what most Christians did not—that religious neutrality is a myth.

⁵ R. J. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

The first commandment is the foundation of all subsequent moral and civil law.⁷ The second table of the law cannot be consistently upheld apart from the first commandment. When a person is told that theft, rape, homosexuality, adultery and murder are wrong he needs to be told *why* such activities are immoral. A society that says that a man, or a court, or a legislature has decided to outlaw certain activities for the greater good of the community without any recognition of God the creator and lawgiver has made *man* the god of that society. The implicit message behind this humanistic view of law is that law is arbitrary and that all men are really a law unto themselves. This viewpoint leads logically to the attitude which says, “Do whatever you want, just don’t get caught, and, if you get caught try to lie your way out of the situation.” Any society not founded upon the first commandment will eventually decay and be destroyed by God. All laws flow from a religious foundation or worldview, thus “every state or social order is a religious establishment.”⁸ The consistent Christian says that we must have the triune God of Scripture as our starting point for knowledge, meaning and ethics. No other god but Jehovah. The humanist and many professing Christians say that is not fair to other religious faiths; therefore, we must start with man as “the source of all true reason and morality.”⁹ The religious pluralists have denounced the first commandment and sided with the humanists against biblical Christianity. “The pluralist’s approach transgresses the first commandment by countenancing and deferring to different ultimate authorities (gods) in the area of public policy. Instead of exclusively submitting to Jehovah’s law with fear, and openly following God’s enthroned Son, the pluralist attempts the impossible task of honoring more than one master in civil legislation (Mt. 6:24)—a kind of ‘political polytheism.’” The humanist says, “You shall have no other gods beside me” and astonishingly most professing Christians in principle agree.

God Condemns Political Polytheism Even in Heathen Nations

The most common objection to what has been said above is that the first commandment and other first-table laws were only for the Jewish nation. The Jews had a special relationship with Jehovah. They had a theocracy and were in covenant with God. Thus, these laws do not apply to Christian nations today but only apply to the visible church, God’s spiritual nation. God does not expect or require heathen nations to outlaw and suppress idolatry. To this objection we ask one simple question. If pluralism is the norm for all nations except Israel then why did God judge heathen nations for idolatry? The severe judgments that God meted out on the heathen nations for idolatry presuppose that God expects *every* nation to obey the first commandment in civil, social and cultural affairs. The following examples should make this point obvious.

In Deuteronomy 18 we are told that God drove the heathen nations out of their lands because He hated their false religions. “When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who

⁷ The positive formulation of the first commandment is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Rushdoony writes, “Deuteronomy 6:5 is cited by Christ as ‘the first and greatest commandment’ (Mt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 10:27), i.e., as the essential and basic principle of the law. The premise of this commandment is however, Deuteronomy 6:4: ‘Here, O Israel, The LORD our God is one LORD.’ The Christian affirmation of this is the declaration, ‘We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity.’ It is the faith in the unity of the Godhead as opposed to the belief in ‘gods many and lords many.’ The consequences for law of the fact are total: it means *one God, one law.*” (*The Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 16-17).

⁸ R. J. Rushdoony, *Christianity and the State* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1986), p. 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*

practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, *and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you*” (Dt. 18:9-12). “These foreign offices and practices, which were an *abomination to the Lord*, were to be forbidden in Israel precisely because they were part of the reason for God’s judgment of the Canaanites, which would be seen in their ejection from the land. If the Israelites adopted similar practices, they too would become liable to ejection from the land.”¹⁰ One could argue that the main concern of this passage is false forms of revelation. But, are not all false religions and cults founded upon false revelations?

In Isaiah 19 the prophet says that God will judge Egypt for its idolatry. “The burden against Egypt. Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; the idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst” (Is. 19:1). The prophet Jeremiah says that God will bring judgment upon Egypt, Pharaoh and their false gods. “The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, says, ‘Behold, I will bring punishment on Amon [a sun god] of No [ancient Thebes], and Pharaoh and Egypt, with their gods and their kings—Pharaoh and those who trust in him” (Jer. 46:25; cf. Is. 46:1). God singles out Amon the Egyptian chief deity of Thebes (No). “Amon was later merged with Re to become Amon-Re, the king of the gods and peculiarly the god of the rulers of Egypt.”¹¹ Pharaoh who lays claim to divinity is also singled out. Is it not clear that Jehovah punishes idolatry even in non-covenanted nations?

Jehovah, the only God, the Lord of the universe, hates religious pluralism. To Assyria God said, “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation.... As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved image excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols” (Is. 10:5, 10, 11)? God proclaimed judgment against Moab for idolatry. “‘Moreover,’ says the LORD, ‘I will cause to cease in Moab the one who offers sacrifices in the high places and burns incense to his gods’” (Jer. 48:35). Jehovah also crushed the idols of Babylon. “Declare among the nations, proclaim, and set up a standard; proclaim, and do not conceal it, say, ‘Babylon is taken, Bel is shamed. Merodach [or Marduk, a Babylonian god] is broken in pieces; her idols are humiliated, her images are broken in pieces.... A drought is against her waters, and they will be dried up. For it is the land of carved images and they are insane with their idols’” (Jer. 50:1, 2, 38). “Everyone is dull-hearted, without knowledge, every metalsmith is put to shame by the carved image; for his molded image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are futile, a work of errors; in the time of their punishment they shall perish.... Therefore behold, the days are coming that I will bring judgment on the carved images of Babylon; her whole land shall be ashamed, and all her slain shall fall in her midst.... ‘Therefore, behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will bring judgment on her carved images, and throughout all her land the wounded shall groan’” (Jer. 51:17, 18, 47, 52). If God so hated the idolatry of the Assyrians, Moabites, Egyptians, Babylonians and the inhabitants of Canaan that He poured out His wrath upon them, why should He exempt the inhabitants of America, Canada, or Great Britain, etc., for their idolatries? Political polytheism was a common

¹⁰ P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 261. Another passage which reveals God’s attitude toward pagan religions is Deuteronomy 20:17-18: “But you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you, lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.”

¹¹ A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 694.

practice in ancient nations—a practice condemned by God. There is no evidence in the New Testament that God has had a change of mind regarding idolatry.

The Prophets Foretold of a Time When Kings and Nations Would Serve Christ and Help His Church

Many Christians have a defeatist attitude when it comes to the progress of the gospel and the spiritual state of the nations. This attitude, however, is not warranted. God has promised a time when kings will serve Christ and aid His church. Isaiah prophesied, “Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers; they shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth and lick the dust of your feet” (49:23). Does Jehovah promise a wonderful future of religious pluralism where the church has an equal status with Satanists, Buddhists, Hindus, etc.? No, not at all. God speaks of a time when kings and nations forsake their idolatry and serve Jesus Christ alone. M’Crie writes, “These promises [Is. 49:23, 60:10, 12, 16] secure unto the church the public countenance of kings and kingdoms as such. *Kings shall be her nursing-fathers; nations and kingdoms shall serve her.* The authority and means competent unto them as such shall be employed on the side of the church, and for the advancement of the true religion; whereas they had formerly been employed against her, and for the support of a false religion. To limit the sense of the words to that common protection which is given to all subjects, and to any society, is to explain away the promises of God.... It is equally unreasonable to confine the meaning to the private or personal conduct of rulers, and of their subjects. This would never suggest itself to any who, in reading the passage, had not formed the notion that the church cannot be benefitted by civil power. It offers violence to the plain meaning of the words. It does not accord with the context, which speaks of the public state of the church, and those means which tend to advance its interests in this view.”¹² This passage clearly teaches that a time will come when biblical Christianity will be the established religion of nations. Kings will suppress idolatry and support Christianity.

These promises cannot be squeezed into the pluralistic paradigm. Civil authorities are to use their power for the welfare of the Church. This was the common, standard Protestant interpretation.¹³ Calvin wrote, “He compares ‘kings’ to hired men who bring up the children of

¹² Thomas M’Crie, *Statement of the Difference Between the Profession of the Reformed Church of Scotland, as Adopted by Seceders, and the Profession Contained in the New Testimony and Other Acts, Lately Adopted by the General Associate Synod, etc.* (Edinburgh: C. F. Lyon, 1871), pp. 137-138.

¹³ The English reformer Cramer wrote, “Worldly dominion should tend to this, viz., to seek the best advantage of the Church of God, and maintain its protection. Otherwise, if God were not concerned about His Church, kings, and princes would be of no use on earth” (in Carl Nagelsback, *Langes Commentary on The Holy Scriptures* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960 (1877)], Vol. 6, p. 541). Matthew Poole wrote, “Kings and queens shall have a sincere affection and tender regard unto thee and thy children, which was in some sort fulfilled by Cyrus, Ahasuerus, and some few others of the Persian kings or queens, but much more truly and fully by those many kings and emperors of the Gentile world, which after Christ’s time did both themselves embrace the true religion, and also set it up in their several dominions” (*A Commentary on the Holy Bible* [Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962 (1700)], Vol. 2, pp. 439-440). John Gill said that this passage refers, “literally of the kings and queens of the earth; and is thought to have had its fulfillment, at least in part, in Cyrus, Ahasuerus, Esther, and others; but more so in Christian kings and queens, as Constantine and Helena, Theodosius and Placilla, and others; and will have a far greater accomplishment in the latter day glory; see Isa lx. 3, 11, 16: *they shall bow down toward thee with their faces toward the earth*; which expresses the great veneration and respect these great personages shall have for the church of God, and their entire submission and subjection to the Gospel of Christ, and the ordinances of it, and to the laws and discipline of his house; for they shall now become members of the Christian church, and be entirely under the

others, and ‘queens’ to ‘nurses’, who give out their labor for hire. Why so? Because ‘kings’ and ‘queens’ shall supply everything that is necessary for nourishing the offspring of the Church. Having formerly driven out Christ from their dominions, they shall henceforth acknowledge him to be the supreme King, and shall render to him all honour, obedience, and worship.”¹⁴ Calvin said that civil magistrates have a duty to use their riches “to raise up and maintain the Church of Christ, so as to be her guardians and defenders.”¹⁵ The civil magistrate must protect the church by “removing superstitions and putting an end to all wicked idolatry...[by] advancing the Kingdom of Christ and maintain[ing] purity of doctrine, about purging scandals and cleaning from the filth that corrupts piety and impairs the luster of the divine majesty.”¹⁶ Calvin recognized that a restoration of the church was needed before a reformation of the state: “we ought to hope for a restoration of the Church, and such a conversion of kings that they shew themselves to be ‘nursing-fathers’ and protectors of believers, and shall bravely defend the doctrine of the Word.”¹⁷ Calvin did not believe in Erastianism. He knew, however that if a magistrate is not for Christ then he is against Him (Mt. 12:30).

What does the passage mean when it says that kings shall be “foster fathers”? The Hebrew word used (*ómnâ*) has been translated as “foster fathers” (NKJV, JB, NEV, RSV, NIV), “nursing-fathers” (KJV, ASV, YLT)¹⁸, “guardians” (NASB) and “shall tend” (NTHSMT).¹⁹ “This noun speaks of Esther’s having been sustained (strengthened and guided) by Mordecai as a child (Est. 2:20).”²⁰ It can mean to nurture, sustain, bring up or support. In 2 Kings 10:1, 5, the same word is used to describe the *rearing* of Ahab’s sons. It is used to describe a tutor, guardian or attendant. In Numbers 11:12 it is used to describe supporting or carrying a child with an arm.²¹ E. J. Young wrote, “The *foster fathers* (lit. *supporters*) are said to be *kings*, and those who give suck to her are princesses (i.e., women of royal station, *queens*). Thus, the language advances. Even the highest and most powerful rulers of the heathen nations will reverence the Church and devote to her all their wealth and power. Like the two verbs in the preceding verse,

government of it, as to religious things; see Rev. iii. 9” (*Exposition of the Old Testament* [Streamwood, IL: Primitive Baptist Library, 1970 (1810)], Vol. V, p. 292). Matthew Henry wrote, “The Christian Church, after a long captivity, was happy in some such kings and queens as Constantine and his mother Helena, and afterwards Theodosius, and others, who nursed the church with all possible care and tenderness. Whenever the scepter of government is put into the hand of religious princes, then this promise is fulfilled. The church in this world is in an infant state, and it is in the power of princes and magistrates to do it a great deal of service” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* [McLean, VA: MacDonald Pub. Co., n. d. (1712)], Vol. IV, p. 281). Patrick Fairbairn wrote, “When Isaiah makes a promise to the church, of kings being her nursing-fathers, and queens her nursing-mothers, of the forces of the Gentiles coming to her, and kings ministering to her (chap. xlix. 23, lx. 10, 11)—with many more of like kind. Such passages plainly imply, that while the struggle was still pending between the cause of Christ and the powers of the world, while the people of God were still in need of help for the conflict in which they had to engage, different nations with their rulers, would successively give in their adherence, and contribute their aid to the final result” (*Prophecy* [Grand Rapids, MI: Guardian Press, 1976 (1865)], p. 286).

¹⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), Vol. 4, p. 39.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 40.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 40.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 41.

¹⁸ *Young’s Literal Translation*.

¹⁹ “The Prophets” from *A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1982).

²⁰ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), Vol. 1, p. 52.

²¹ See *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1979 [1857]), p. 539.

foster fathers and *those who give thee suck* express the tender love with which the nations cherish Zion and her sons.”²²

Isaiah 49:23 is an important passage regarding the role of the state in a Christian nation. This passage however has been basically ignored by the modern theonomy movement. The likely reason for this is that this passage appears to give the civil government a role too active in religious affairs for many theonomists. Theonomists for the most part restrict the magistrate’s role to the punishment of evil doers. One can understand why theonomists have avoided this passage when one sees how it was used in the past. Calvin says in his commentary on this passage, “Undoubtedly, while kings bestow careful attention on these things, they at the same time supply the pastors and ministers of the Word with all that is necessary for food and maintenance, provide for the poor and guard the Church against the disgrace of pauperism; erect schools, and appoint salaries for the teachers and board for the students; build poorhouses and hospitals, and make every other arrangement that belongs to the protection and defense of the Church.”²³ Calvin appears to argue for a type of Christian-welfare-statism. However, he does not say where all of the money will come from to pay for these state benefits. The Puritans and early Presbyterians were totally in favor of establishing State Christian schools. Rushdoony dismisses all such thinking in his *Institutes*, “The heavily classical learning of medieval and Reformation scholars often led them astray. A verse sometimes cited as evidence of the parental role of the state is Isaiah 49:23. But this verse refers to the remnant of Israel, who shall be restored to Jerusalem and reestablished as a state under the protection of other states, who shall be as ‘nursing fathers.’ The reference is to the reestablishment of the Hebrew commonwealth under Nehemiah, with the protection of the Medo-Persian Empire. The imagery has nothing to do with a parental role for the state and everything to do with the superior protecting role of a great empire for a small civil order which is reconstituting.”²⁴

Although Rushdoony’s desire to avoid the civil magistrate’s active role in welfare programs, church funding and public schools is understandable, there is no need to restrict Isaiah 49:23 to Old Testament Israel.²⁵ As noted, the vast majority of commentators believe it also applies to the New Covenant church; and, even if it did refer only to national Israel it still could be extended to the New Covenant era by way of application. The word *ómnâ* translated *foster fathers* does not necessarily imply a Christian welfare state. Calvin and the puritans in their exegesis of Isaiah 49:23 have ignored the strict parameters in God’s law which place schooling in the hands of the parents, not the state; and charity in the hands of families, individuals and the church, not the civil magistrate. There is simply no way that a state can pay for all the programs

²² Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), Vol. 3, p. 291.

²³ John Calvin, Vol. 4, pp. 40-41.

²⁴ R. J. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 198.

²⁵ A reading of Isaiah 49:23 within its context clearly refers to something more than what occurred under kings Cyrus and Darius. Verse 22 indicates many nations, not just Medo-Persia. Cyrus received a direct revelation from God directing him to rebuild the temple (2 Chr. 36:23; Ez. 1:2) yet it is doubtful that he truly believed in Jehovah and bowed down to the one true God. He was a polytheist like Darius. Darius funded the temple from revenues collected from conquered peoples (“at the king’s expense”—Ezra 6:8). He warned political powers in his empire to stay away from Israel (Ezra 6:6), and, threatened anyone who disobeyed his edict with the death penalty (Ezra 6:11). Yet, Darius was a rank polytheist who did the same for many other religions. “He had a special interest in restoring specific cults in his empire and contributed to their restoration liberally. We know of these activities from the West among the Greeks, and even in Egypt (e.g., the cult of Neith)... [Darius wanted] to make sure he was in the favor of every god in his empire” (F. Charles Fenshane, *The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah* [Grand Rapids, MI: 1982], pp. 89-90). Thus, commentators are fully justified in seeing the literal fulfillment of Isaiah 49:23 in Christian kings serving Christian nations.

enumerated by Calvin without taxing the populace. Taxation without divine authorization is theft.²⁶ Furthermore, Romans 13:1-6 limits the state to punishing evildoers and praising those who do well. Praise cannot be extended into welfare checks and socialized medicine. Calvin, the Puritans and early Presbyterians were sometimes led astray by vague medieval notions regarding natural law. However, if a state came upon great wealth through the spoils of a just war it could donate funds to church planting, printing, missionary endeavors, etc. The state's job is not to collect tithes for the church by coercing its citizens. Given the biblical teaching regarding the role of civil magistrate the words *foster fathers* should be interpreted in the sense that the civil magistrate is the guardian, the protector of the church. The state is to have an active role in suppressing idolatry, damnable heresies and blasphemy; punishing blatant Sabbath desecrators, etc.

There are many prophetic passages which teach the establishment of Christianity among the nations. Psalm 72:11-12 says that "all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him." In Isaiah 56:6 we are told that the Gentiles will keep the Sabbath. Isaiah says that Gentiles will embrace the Gospel. "Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isa. 60:3). Kings shall minister to the church (v. 10) and the wealth of the Gentiles will flow into it (v. 11). Young writes, "Some have applied the fulfillment of the prophecy to the work of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes Longimanus, but their actions were only a prelude to the real fulfillment in Jesus Christ and the preaching of the Gospel unto the Gentiles (cf. Ac. 15:15ff., where the rebuilding of David's booth is equated with the outcalling of the Gentiles). The prophecy is not speaking of the literal rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, but of the building up of God's kingdom through the inclusion of Gentiles therein. Calvin well remarks that when kings serve Zion they do not lose their status as kings, but on the contrary are then enabled to carry out their proper function so as to glorify God and to manifest righteousness in their reigns. Happy is that nation whose ruler looks not to man for the solution of his problems but walks in the light of the Lord."²⁷ The Bible says that "the nation which will not serve you shall perish and those nations shall be utterly ruined" (Isa. 60:12). The church "shall drink the milk of the Gentiles, and shall milk the breast of kings" (v. 16). John Owen writes, "Kingdoms are said to serve the church: and how can a kingdom, *as* a kingdom, serve the church, but as putting forth *its power* and strength in *her* behalf? What God hath promised, kings, magistrates, rulers, nations shall do, that is their duty to do."²⁸ This (as noted above) does not mean a form of Christian socialism or welfare statism but that the state strictly follows the principles enunciated in *both* tables of the law and the moral case laws. Right after it says that the church will milk the breast of kings it says, "I will make your officers peace, and your magistrate's righteousness. Violence

²⁶ "Since the government produces no goods, it can distribute only what it takes from others. When an election, or in some countries a coup, changes the identity of plunderers and plundered, yesterday's injustice becomes today's justice. In a redistributive society, the law is a thief" (Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction* [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983], p. 118). Note, that the Israelites rebuilt the temple with voluntary tithes (Ezra 1:6; 2:68-69) and from money from the king's treasury (Ezra 6:8). The money given by Darius was not taken from a tax on the people of God but from his own private stash "Let the cost be paid at the king's expense" (Ezra 6:8). This was from tribute money from other conquered nations that belonged to the king and could be used in any way he pleased. The heathen tyrant Darius can not be used as a proof for "Christian" socialism unless one wants to argue that a state should conquer other nations to get money for Christian projects. Although God used a pagan dictator to help His people that does not mean that God approved of Darius' method of collecting funds. The Old Testament poll or head tax clearly would *not* produce sufficient funds for any type of Christian socialism. Charity and schooling were left to the family and the church.

²⁷ E. J. Young, *Isaiah*, Vol. 3, p. 450.

²⁸ John Owen quoted in Thomas M'Crie, p. 139.

shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction in your borders” (Isa. 60:17-18).

In Psalm 2 the resurrected Christ is promised dominion over the nations. Kings and judges are to be instructed by Christ; they are to “serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling” (Ps. 2:11).²⁹ If kings, civil magistrates and judges are to sit humbly at the feet of Christ and learn His laws, serve Him with fear and rejoice at His majesty; can one then conclude that serving Christ involves upholding arbitrary humanistic law? Does fearing the Lord involve permitting the open practice of idolatry and blasphemy? Do civil magistrates and judges tremble before the Son by allowing the open practice of homosexuality? “We cannot escape the clear biblical truth that each and every earthly ruler stands under the divinely established moral obligation to ‘serve Jehovah with fear [and] kiss the Son’ (vv. 11-12). Serving the Lord with fear unquestionably means obeying His commandments (cf. Josh. 22:5; Ps. 119:124-126; Dt. 10:12-13). Doing homage to ‘the Son’ in the form of a kiss was an ancient ritual by which the authority of a leader was acknowledged (e.g., 1 Sam. 10:1).”³⁰ The idea common even in Reformed circles that the civil magistrate is only obligated to uphold the *second table* while ignoring the first is totally contradicted by Scripture. Magistrates do not honor the Son by committing and permitting polytheism.

The Godly Kings of Judah Serve as Examples to Christian Magistrates

Many Christians regard the Old Testament nation of Israel as an example for the church but not for non-Israelite states, and certainly not for the modern nations. After all, wasn’t Israel a theocracy? Didn’t Israel have a special covenant relationship to Jehovah? Shouldn’t modern nations be religiously pluralistic? Isn’t the *open* practice of one’s religion a fundamental human right? Although it is true that Israel was a theocracy and had a special covenant relationship to God there is abundant scriptural evidence that the law system in Israel was to serve as a paradigm, a model for all nations.³¹ This was noted in our examination of Deuteronomy 4:5-8. If

²⁹ Psalm 47 also refers to Christ as the mediatorial king who subdues the nations: “Oh, clap you hands, all you peoples [i.e., both Jews and Gentiles]! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For, the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth. He will subdue the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet. He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah. God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet [this refers to Christ’s ascension]. Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding. God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne. The princes of the people have gathered together....” Psalm 102 says, “So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD, and all kings of the earth Your glory...When the peoples are gathered, and the kingdoms to serve the LORD” (vss. 15, 22). References could be multiplied on this point.

³⁰ Greg Bahnsen, in Gary Scott Smith ed., *God and Politics*, p. 30.

³¹ “What, then, was the true province of the theocracy? What were its leading objectives? These objectives, as I conceive, without excluding others, were chiefly two. One was to teach mankind the true science of civil government. It corresponds with the goodness of God in other respects, that he should make a special revelation on this subject. I hold it to have been an important part of the legislation of the Most High, as the lawgiver of Israel, to show how civil authority among men should be created, and how it should be administered, so as best to promote the welfare and happiness of a nation; and also how the relations between rulers and ruled should be adjusted and regulated. But another object of the theocratic feature of the Hebrew government, and the leading one undoubtedly, was the overthrow and extirpation of idolatry. The design was, first, to effect a separation between the Israelites and their idolatrous neighbors, and, secondly to make idolatry a crime against the state, that so it might be punishable by the civil law, without a violation of civil liberty. A fundamental purpose of the Mosaic polity was the abolition of idolatrous worship, and the substitution in its place, and the maintenance, of a true religion in the world. The only

Israel's law system served as a model for the heathen nations during the old covenant era, then it also serves as a model for nations today. Furthermore the great commission (Mt. 28:18-20) implies that whole nations will submit to Christ and become explicitly Christian nations. The goal of the great commission is that whole nations will be disciplined, whole nations will make a covenant with Jesus Christ. This means that the behavior of the Old Testament kings does serve as an example of how Christian magistrates should or should not behave. What was most pleasing to God? Kings who permitted freedom to openly practice heathen religions—who permitted open religious pluralism—or, kings who suppressed the open practice of false religions? A brief examination of some of the kings in Israel and Judah will prove that God hates religious pluralism.

A study of First and Second Kings shows that godly civil magistrates are very concerned about promoting true religion in the land. This is done by enforcing the first table commandments and their case laws against idolatry or false religions. King Asa is praised by the Holy Spirit for his tough stance against false religions in Judah. "Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David. And he banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. Also, he removed Maachah his grandmother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image and burned it by the Brook Kidron" (1 Kgs. 15:11-13). King Jehu of Israel was not a godly king. However, he was blessed by God for what he did to the prophets, priests, and servants of Baal. "Now it happened, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, 'Go in and kill them; let no one come out!' And they killed them with the edge of the sword; then the guards and the officers threw them out, and went into the inner room of the temple of Baal. And they brought the sacred pillars out of the temple of Baal and burned them. Then they broke down the sacred pillar of Baal, and tore down the temple of Baal and made it a refuse dump to this day. Thus, Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel" (2 Kgs. 10:25-28).

Under the godly leadership of the priest Jehoiada the wicked government of Athaliah was overthrown and replaced by Jehoash. "Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD, the king, and the people, that they should be the LORD's people, and also between the king and the people. And all the people of the land went to the temple of Baal, and tore it down. They thoroughly broke in pieces its altars and images, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars" (2 Kgs. 11:17-18). Did God think that the actions of Jehoash and Jehoiada were unfair or harsh? On the contrary the Bible says, "Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him" (2 Kgs. 12:2). There is also godly Hezekiah of whom the Bible says, "He did what was right in the sight of the LORD" (2 Kgs. 18:3). "He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went" (2 Kgs. 18:4-7). Hezekiah did all that he could to remove false religion and worship from Judah. He also steadfastly refused to make alliances with the heathen as his father had (2 Kgs. 16:7), and also Asa (1 Kgs. 15:18-19).

agency, adequate to the production of this result, as far as wisdom can see, was the very institution of the Hebrew theocracy" (E. C. Vines, *The Hebrew Republic*, p. 65).

Another great revival of true religion occurred under king Josiah. After the book of the law was found in the temple and read to the king, the king and the people covenanted with the LORD. “And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.... He executed all the priests of the high places who were there on the altars, and burned men’s bones on them.... Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD” (2 Kgs. 23:4-5, 20, 24). Josiah is commended above all other kings (2 Kgs. 23:25) because he turned to the Lord with his whole heart. He exterminated the outward gross idolatry, the sycretistic priests, the mediums and so on. Josiah (not Bob Dole, or Ronald Reagan) is the type of king set forth as precisely what a Christian nation should strive for. Matthew Poole writes, “*Like unto him there was no king before him*, to wit, for his diligent study in God’s law, and his exact care, and unwearied industry, and fervent zeal, in rooting out of idolaters, and all kinds and appearances of idolatry, not only in Judah, but in Israel also; and in the establishment of the true religion in all his dominions, and in the conforming of his own life, and his people’s too, (as far as he could), to the holy law of God.”³²

One of the primary lessons from the book of Kings is that righteous civil magistrates uphold true religion by enforcing the penal sanctions against idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery, astrology, etc.; that is, all false religions which by nature enrage Jehovah and defy His law order. Contrary to Christian socialists and certain paleopresbyterians,³³ one does not observe these Old Testament godly kings establishing public schools, hospitals, welfare programs, orphanages, and so on. In accordance with the law and Romans 13:1-6, the righteous kings wield the sword against the wicked and praise the righteous. They execute and banish those who openly practice false religions; they obliterate all idols and the remnants of idolatry; and they completely destroy all idolatrous temples. These kings recognized that a Christian nation that permits the open violation of the first commandment has committed spiritual adultery and has violated the covenant. Any nation that claims to have a commitment to Jesus Christ and His law must publicly covenant with Him. “Without a covenant, there is no law; a covenant requires law.”³⁴ That is why “every renewal of the covenant was a renewal of the law of the covenant. This was

³² Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1962 [1685]), Vol. I, p. 770.

³³ Paleopresbyterians refer (generally speaking) to certain Presbyterian conservatives who uncritically regard everything done during the period of the Second Reformation period in Scotland as scriptural. They argue that since John Calvin, John Knox and the Scottish church believed in a public school system, etc. it must be biblical. They also argue that since theonomists disagree with Calvin, Knox and the Second Reformation on some issues as to the limited role of the state, theonomy must be wrong. Although the modern theonomy movement has a very poor record on the issues of worship, ecclesiology and the keeping of the Sabbath, its stance regarding the roles of the family, church and state in education and charity are exegetically sound. The only passages which could be used to support the paleopresbyterian position on public schools would be Isaiah 49:23 and Isaiah 60:16. However, given the fact that clearer portions of Scripture must be used to interpret the less clear and what the Law, the history of Israel and the New Testament say about the state, the author must side with the theonomists on this issue (i.e., concerning public schools, state charity, etc.).

³⁴ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 676.

true of Josiah's reformation, and of every reformation in biblical history."³⁵ Any national revival of biblical Christianity requires national repentance; national repentance requires the suppression of all false religions and requires a national covenant. To fully commit to Jehovah, a nation (a moral person) must put off political polytheism and replace it with a public commitment to God and His law word.³⁶

All civil magistrates in a Christian commonwealth must submit themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Ps. 2:10-12; 20:9; 24:8-10; 47:2-3, 6-7; 84:6). They are to apply both tables of the laws and the appropriate case laws within their God-limited sphere of activity—punishing civil crimes. Godly magistrates are to do everything within their power to insure that the people within their borders are faithful to the covenant. Therefore, righteous magistrates have a duty to continually study the word of God in order to apply the moral principles therein faithfully within the civil sphere. "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel" (Dt. 17:18-20). Matthew Poole writes, "*That his heart be not lifted up*; he intimates, that the Scriptures, diligently read and studied, are a powerful and probable means to keep him humble, because they show him that, though a king, he is subject to a higher Monarch, to whom he must give an account of all his administrations, and actions, and receive from him his sentence and doom agreeable to their quality, which is sufficient to abate the pride of the haughtiest person in the world, if he duly consider it."³⁷

Summary of the Old Testament Evidence

Thus far we have noted that the first commandment, the moral case laws, God's judgment upon heathen nations for idolatry and divination, the promises and predictions of the Old Testament and the examples of the godly kings of Judah all lead to the conclusion that the civil magistrate has a moral obligation to support biblical Christianity within his realm. In fact, the prophecies imply that a time is coming when many Gentile nations will establish Christianity as the religion of the land. M'Crie writes, "God addresses the nations in a collective capacity, reproves them for their idolatry, and calls them to his worship, Isaiah xxxiv. 1, xli. 1. 21-29. He proposes Christ, as his anointed servant, to them, chap. xlii. 1, declares that he has given him the nations for his inheritance, and that he shall inherit them all, Psal. ii. 8, Isa. lii. 15, lv. 5. Christ addresses himself not only to individuals, but to whole islands, Isa. xlix. 1; nations join themselves to him, own and worship him, Isa. ii. 2, Mic. iv. 1.2, Zech. ii. 11, viii. 20-22, bless

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Most modern Christian political reform movements act as if Christians can pick and choose which laws should be applied to modern society. The first table laws which obviously are the most unpalatable to American ears are *a priori* ruled off limits by most Christian reform leaders. These reform movements also work and act as if we can have a Christian nation without a national public commitment to Jesus Christ. There is no question that the pluralistic Baptist paradigm for culture has had and continues to have a strong influence on America's conservative Christian political leaders. Once, Christians understand that natural law theory alone cannot be a basis for Christian civilization and that God's law is covenantal, they will be left with the only biblical alternative: a society modeled after God's law and public national covenanting.

³⁷ Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 371.

themselves, and glory in him, Jer. iv. 2; all nations and dominions serve him, Dan. vii. 14. 27; they consecrate all things in them, and employ them in his service, Isa. lx. 6-12, Zech. xiv. 20, 21; he owns the nations as his, and blesses them, while he breaks in pieces and wastes others, Psal. xxxiii. 12, cxlv. 15, Isa. xix. 25, Ps. ii. 9, 12, Isa. lx. 12.”³⁸

Circumventing the Old Testament

That the Old Testament does not countenance political polytheism is easy to prove from Scripture. This fact, however, does not impress most Christians today for they simply dismiss these proofs as Old Testament teachings. They argue that the New Testament does not forbid political polytheism; in fact, they say the New Testament endorses political polytheism as the normal state of affairs until the second coming of Christ. Those old Puritans and Presbyterians were led astray by their postmillennial eschatology and their *over* dependence on the Old Testament. They also argue that in the New Covenant era the civil magistrate’s power is restricted to the second table of the law.

With regard to these typical comments we ask the following questions. First, where in the New Testament are the responsibilities of civil magistrates annulled or altered? Second, where in the New Testament does God endorse political polytheism? Third, where in the New Testament does God restrict the civil magistrate’s power to the second table? Fourth, how can a person who claims to be Reformed dismiss the Old Testament teaching on the civil magistrate and demand a proof exclusively from the New Testament without becoming a dispensationalist? If Reformed persons are going to dismiss the Old Testament teaching on the civil magistrate simply because it is an Old Testament teaching, then how shall they defend infant baptism, Sabbath keeping, covenanting and covenant theology? Why not be consistent and join a dispensational, pietistic, Baptist church? “Many otherwise intelligent Christians with preconceived opinions of this whole matter, influenced largely by popular but false views as to the proper relation of nations to Christ and His religion, take the secular position, which is nothing more or less than atheism in political garb. This political anti-Christ is one of the most potent agencies for evil that the devil has yet devised.”³⁹

Those who want to dismiss the civil magistrate’s responsibility to uphold the first table of the law must also explain how laws that are moral, that are based on God’s nature and character, can be set aside by God. Idolatry, theft, false witness, adultery, and so on are *always* wrong because they are ethical absolutes. They are inconsistent with God’s nature. Can God forbid murder and child sacrifice in one era and then allow them in another? Absolutely not, for they are not ceremonial or positive laws. Therefore, God can no more countenance the practice of idolatry than he can approve of bestiality, homosexuality or murder. The only consistent manner in which a person could argue that first table laws have been set aside by God is to argue that all biblical laws are purely positive or arbitrary. Such a view, however, is clearly outside the pale of Christian orthodoxy.

There are some people of premillennial and amillennial persuasion who argue that since the church in the new covenant era will always be a tiny remnant among the nations, God desires, and Christians should work for, political pluralism in each nation. Although it is certainly true that Christians fare much better under a “pluralistic” system than under a

³⁸ Thomas M’Crie, *Statement of the Difference etc.*, pp. 140-141.

³⁹ Richard C. Wylie, *Christ’s Government of the Nations*, in William Einwechter ed, *The Christian Statesman*. Vol. 140, No. 4, p. 12.

communistic or Islamic dictatorship, that does not mean that God accepts pluralism as the ideal. Stealing a candy bar is less offensive than triple homicide, but that does not make theft acceptable to God. Furthermore, even if premillennialism or amillennialism were true, God's decretive will does not disallow His preceptive will. Even if in God's plan there was never to be a Christian nation, that does not mean that political polytheism is acceptable to Jehovah. God's will regarding the civil magistrate's responsibility to suppress the open practice of idolatry, witchcraft and all heathen religions is clear. It should be the ultimate political goal of all Christians.

The New Testament Concurs With the Old Testament Teaching Regarding the Civil Magistrate

One of the greatest Evangelical misconceptions is that New Testament teaching regarding the civil magistrate contradicts the Old Testament teaching. The basic idea is that Christ's kingdom is spiritual, an inward matter of the heart, therefore, Christians should focus on personal evangelism and leave politics to the Canaanites. Although it is true that Christ's kingdom is spiritual and that Christ rules from heaven and not from earth, the New Testament teaches that Christ's dominion extends far beyond the visible church. In fact, the New Testament passages which discuss Christ in His exaltation teach the same truths regarding Christ's kingship and its implication for the nations as the Old Testament prophecies.

The great commission says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt. 28:18-20). Because of what Christ accomplished as the divine-human mediator by His life, death and resurrection, every nation has been definitively set apart or sanctified by Him. By the preaching of the gospel, the sacraments and the teaching of the whole counsel of God all the nations are to be brought into obedience to the Son. Daniel the prophet foretold these things, "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13-14). "[B]y defeating on His cross the power of sin and death, Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, defeated the power of the prince of darkness in the very world he had corrupted and captured. Now this world could be reconquered, and the glory of God manifested in every area of life and thought."⁴⁰ Christ has bound the strong man [Satan] and is progressively plundering his house (cf. Mt. 12:28-29). The theanthropic Christ is "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Rev. 11:15). "The Kingdom of Christ now begins the process of encompassing and enveloping all kingdoms of the world. The earth will be regenerated."⁴¹ If Christ is the king over kings and has authority over all kings and nations, then obviously all rulers have a moral obligation to submit to His authority. They must "kiss the Son" (Ps. 2:12).

⁴⁰ R. J. Rushdoony, *Christianity and the State* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1986), p. 72.

⁴¹ David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 288.

The apostle Paul teaches the same doctrine in his epistles. Paul said that Christ “must reign till He has put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). Charles Hodge writes, “He must reign until the purpose for which he was invested with the universal dominion is accomplished. As in Ps. 110 it is said to the Messiah, ‘Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.’... Christ is to put down all rule, authority and power, v. 24, and he reigns until he has accomplished that work.... By subduing however, is not meant destroying or banishing out of existence. The passage does not teach Christ is to reign until all evil is banished from the universe. Satan is said to be subdued, when deprived of his power to injure the people of God. And evil in like manner is subdued when it is restrained within the limits of the kingdom of darkness.”⁴² To the Philippians Paul wrote, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11). Matthew Henry says, “The whole creation must be in subjection to him...every nation and language should publicly own the universal empire of the exalted Redeemer.”⁴³

To the Ephesians Paul wrote, “He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:20-22). William Symington says of verse 22, “Does not the apostle Paul speak of God having put all things under the feet of Christ, and ‘given him to be Head over all things to the church?’ Mark the language. It is not only ‘Head over *all* things;’ but ‘Head over all things *to the Church.*’ It is for the sake of the Church that he is invested with universal regal authority: in other words, the *end* of Christ’s universal Mediatorial dominion is the *good of the Church*. Thus far, all is clear and undeniable. But *the nations* are among the ‘all things,’ over which Christ is appointed ‘Head’. It follows then, that Christ is appointed *Head over the nations for the good of the Church*. If so, there must be some way in which the nations are capable of subserving the interests of the Church. Is it possible, then, to conceive that it is not the duty of the nations to promote, by every means in their power, the good of the church? Is it conceivable that nations are not under obligations to advance the very end for which they are placed in subjection to Christ?”⁴⁴

The Old Testament messianic prophecies (e.g., Ps. 2, 47, 110; Isa. 9:6-7, etc.) and the New Testament passages which discuss the result of Christ’s exaltation are in complete harmony. All civil magistrates have a moral duty to submit to and publicly serve Jesus Christ. “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Ac.

⁴² Charles Hodge, *I and II Corinthians* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974 [1857, 58]), p. 331.

⁴³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Pub. Co., n. d.), Vol. 6, p. 733.

⁴⁴ William Symington, *Messiah The Prince* (Edmonton, AB: Stillwater Revival Books, 1990 [1884]), p. 266. Charles Hodge writes of verse 22: “Christ is not only exalted above all creatures, but he has dominion over them; all are placed in absolute subjection to him...all beings save God alone are made subject to man in the person of Jesus Christ, the Lord of lords, and King of kings” (*Ephesians* [Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1964 (1856)], p. 51.). John Gill writes, “And this headship of Christ is the gift of God; and it is an honourable gift to him as Mediator; it is a glorifying of him and a giving him in all things pre-eminence; and it is a free-grace gift to the church, and a very special, valuable, and excellent one, and of infinite benefit and advantage to it; and which is expressed in his being head *over all things* to it; to overrule all things for its good; to communicate all good things to it; and to perform all the good offices of an head for it” (*Exposition of the New Testament*, Vol. 9, p. 68.).

17:30). Rulers must “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Lk. 3:8). Paul said, “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Do civil rulers bring forth fruits of repentance by permitting and protecting abortion, homosexual bath houses and temples of idolatry? Do civil magistrates glorify God by giving tax exempt status to Satanists, animists, and cults who are doing everything in their power to oppose Christ’s Church? The Bible says that Christ is the “ruler over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5); that He is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn. 14:6); the only way to God the Father (Ac. 4:12). Since these things are true and must be believed by all Christians, it is unscriptural and irrational for believers to argue that the only true religion should be considered by the state as no different than all the religions devised by Satan and his minions. Paul said that Christians are to pray, “for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of our God and Savior” (1 Tim. 2:2-3). Note, that Christians not only pray that magistrates promote “a quiet, peaceable life” but one “in all godliness and reverence [or honesty].” “Rulers are not in their official capacity, to be indifferent to *godliness* any more than *honesty*; both are to be countenanced and promoted by them, Ezra vi. 8-10.”⁴⁵

It is very unfortunate that Evangelicals and even many Reformed Christians have neglected the biblical emphasis on the present kingship of Christ. The leaven of dispensationalism and pluralism has reached not only deeply into fundamentalist, Evangelical and charismatic churches but has also affected the conservative Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. Fundamentalists often urge sinners to receive Christ as savior while presenting Christ’s lordship as optional. The Dispensationalist teaches that Satan is the king of the earth—the devil controls this present world. “He overlooks the obvious fact that the only three passages of Scripture which denominates Satan ‘the prince of this world’ assert that Christ by His death defeated Satan as prince of the world. With a view to His impending death Jesus said: ‘Now shall the prince of this world be cast out’ [Jn. 12:31]; ‘the prince of his world cometh, and hath nothing in me’ [Jn. 14:30]; ‘the prince of this world is judged’ [Jn. 16:11].”⁴⁶ Paul said that Jesus has a name above every name (Phil. 2:9). John said that Satan was bound by Christ, “so that he should deceive the nations no more ‘till the thousand years were finished’” (cf. Rev. 20:1-3). Jesus is conquering the nations by the word of God. “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron” (Rev. 19:15). It is important that Christians acknowledge and emphasize the mediatorial kingship of Christ over the nations for it is the only antidote to statism. Kuiper wrote, “The neglect of the present totalitarian rule of Christ is regrettable for more reasons than one. One extremely weighty reason is that this teaching of Holy Writ constitutes a potent argument against state totalitarianism. Those who slight this scriptural doctrine are discarding a compelling argument against the totalitarian state. The rule of Christ is totalitarian. That truth leaves no room for totalitarian rule by men. When men seek to exercise totalitarian rule, they arrogate to themselves that which belongs to Christ alone. A totalitarian state cannot but collide head-on with the kingdom of Christ. In a word, state totalitarianism is a manifestation of antichrist. There are many antichrists in the world, but none bolder than this.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Thomas M’Crie, *Statement of the Difference, etc.*, p. 143.

⁴⁶ R. B. Kuiper, “The Word of God Versus the Totalitarian State,” *The Westminster Theological Journal XI* (Nov., 1948) in Gary North ed., *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction, Symposium on Politics*, (Summer, 1978), p. 170.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Romans 13:1-7

A portion of Scripture which is crucial in understanding the proper role of the civil magistrates and the obligation of subjects is Romans 13:1-7. Since the purpose of this study is to prove that religious pluralism or political polytheism is immoral and that Christian nations have a duty to uphold both tables of the law, only a part of this passage will be considered. Paul wrote, “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor” (Rom. 13:1-7).

The primary purpose of this passage is to teach Christians the proper relationship and behavior they are to have toward the civil government. (One must keep in mind that when this portion of Scripture was written the Jews were widely known as being rebellious toward outside authority. At that time there were many Jewish terrorists and revolutionaries functioning within Judea.) As Paul gives reasons why everyone is required to be subject to the governing authorities, he gives important information about the civil government itself. He teaches its role or purpose and defines its limits.

Paul gives three main reasons why every person is to live in subjection to the civil authorities. First, civil magistrates “derive their origin, right and power from God.... The civil magistrate is not only the means decreed in God’s providence for the punishment of evildoers but God’s instituted, authorized, and prescribed instrument for the maintenance of order and the punishment of criminals who violate that order.”⁴⁸ Second, civil magistrates are a terror⁴⁹ to evil works. Third, the civil authorities are God’s ministers or servants. As God’s ministers they execute God’s wrath upon those who practice evil. The civil magistrate does good by using the sword to punish civil crimes.

There are a number of statements within this portion of Scripture which directly relate to the issue of the civil magistrate’s responsibility to suppress the open practice and propagation of false religions. First, the civil magistrate receives his authority directly from God. “*Exousia* is a delegated power, power that is given to a person or group of persons by another. Paul uses it in Romans 13 because he wants to make explicit that the authority of the governing powers is from God.”⁵⁰ Since civil magistrates receive their authority from God, they are responsible to submit

⁴⁸ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), part 2, pp. 148-149.

⁴⁹ “A terror (phobos). This meaning in Isaiah 8:13 does not approve all that rulers do, but he is speaking generally of the ideal before rulers” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI, n. d. [1931]), Vol. IV, p. 407).

⁵⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *Roman* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), Vol. 4, p. 1644.

to God's authority. Rulers are not autonomous powers. "If all authority comes from God, then all authority is plainly under God's law-word and entirely subject to it."⁵¹

Second, the civil magistrate is to praise good behavior and punish evil doers. "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil" (vs. 3). How are rulers to determine what is good and what is evil? Where do ethical absolutes come from? How is a civil magistrate supposed to determine what is an evil act punishable only by a church court and what is an evil act that also is a crime punishable by the state? Clearly, the only standard by which a civil magistrate can rule justly is the Bible, the stand-alone infallible Word of God.⁵² Whenever the state makes laws that contradict the law of God, or ignores some of the laws in God's word such as laws against the open practice of idolatry, or makes laws that contradict God's limited role for the state (e.g., welfare programs, public schools, food stamps, etc.) then that state is in rebellion against God in those specific areas. The state's role is to provide a law-abiding atmosphere in which individuals, families, businesses and the Christian church can flourish. The civil government's job is to punish evildoers who violate those laws (as they apply to modern nations) which God has designated in His word as crimes. The state is to implement negative sanctions against criminals (biblically defined) and to protect the people within their borders from foreign invasions. "Civil government is a God-ordained monopoly of violence. Allow arbitrary and unpredictable power here, and the entire society can be placed under the bondage of oppressors—oppressors who legally wield instruments of physical punishment."⁵³ "The magistrate...is to execute, not simply God's decretive will, but God's preceptive will—and he sins should he fail to do so. No man has the right to take another man's life or carry out punishment upon another without the approval of God, and thus the autonomous use of the sword in Israel was grave iniquity.... The magistrate cannot presume to take just anybody's life at his own whim (i.e., murder), but must execute criminals and punish evildoers *as God so sanctions* these punishments—in His law."⁵⁴

Third, Paul refers to the civil magistrate as "an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (vs. 4). Does the civil magistrate mete out his own personal anger upon criminals? Are civil punishments expressions of the rulers own personal vindictiveness against evildoers? Given the fact that, in the preceding chapter (12:9), God had just prohibited the taking of personal vengeance, the wrath spoken of refers to God's wrath, not the civil magistrate's. "Thus the magistrate is the avenger in executing the judgment that accrues to the evil-doer from the

⁵¹ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 540.

⁵² Many Christians will object to this statement and argue that with the demise of national Israel the standard for civil governments is natural law not biblical law. The problems with this viewpoint are manifold. First, natural law was never intended by God to function independently of divine revelation. Even before the fall, Adam and Eve had general and special revelation. Second, natural law alone can never be a dependable standard of civil government because (a) nature is fallen; (b) nature is often ambiguous. People tempered by special revelation, such as Thomas Aquinas, used natural law in a beneficent manner, while people who reject special revelation such as the Marquis de Sade, use natural law in a sadistic manner. Third, natural law and biblical law both come from the same God—Jehovah. Therefore, they cannot contradict one another but must teach the same ethical standard. Once this is admitted (it cannot be denied on scriptural grounds) one must embrace biblical law because: (a) it is not affected by sin—it is infallible; and (b) it is perspicuous. It is both clear and detailed. The whole issue of natural law is basically a smoke screen used by those who do not want to use biblical law as their standard. The reason professing Christian scholars and pastors do not want to use biblical law is precisely because it is clear and detailed. God's word is much more difficult to twist and pervert into one's own standard of fairness than natural law.

⁵³ Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus*, (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), p. 685.

⁵⁴ Greg Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1984), p. 381.

wrath of God.”⁵⁵ God has given the civil magistrate the power of the sword to carry out His vengeance upon sins that He has designated as crimes. Since the magistrate is carrying out God’s vengeance and not his own, this means that the magistrate has a responsibility to punish *not* those activities that he personally finds offensive, but only those acts that God defines as offensive (i.e., civil crimes). Thus, the most faithful method in which a civil magistrate can serve God is to study His word to determine what God considers to be criminal behavior. Also, since the magistrate’s retribution is founded upon God’s wrath, the magistrate has responsibility to impose the Spirit-inspired penalties found in God’s word. The penalties must reflect God’s attitude toward a certain criminal act and not the magistrate’s personal attitude. When civil magistrates ignore God’s penalties for crimes such as idolatry, blasphemy, murder, sodomy, rape, adultery, etc., by either eliminating the penalty (e.g., abortion, homosexual acts, adultery) or by greatly lessening the penalty (e.g., murder, rape, kidnaping) then the ruler has substituted his own concept of justice and retribution for God’s. “Because the penal sanctions of God’s law are imperatives delivered with divine authority and approval, the follower of Christ should teach that the civil magistrate is yet under moral obligation to enforce the law of God in its social aspect.”⁵⁶

Fourth, the civil magistrate is a servant of God (*diakonos*, vs. 4; *leitourgoi*, vs. 6). The civil magistrate (whether he is a Christian or not) has a moral duty to serve God within the sphere of civil government. He is not the servant of Baal, Krishna, or Zeus but Jehovah. The more a ruler rules according to God’s word the more faithfully he fulfills his divine calling. The citizens are to be in subjection to the governing authorities and the governing authorities are to be in subjection to God. The governing authorities might declare a nation to be secular, Buddhist, Islamic, Shinto, or Hindu but that declaration does not release the civil authorities from their responsibility to rule in terms of God’s law and to submit to the King of kings, Jesus Christ. Rushdoony writes, “The state has a duty to be Christian. It must be Christian even as man, the family, the church, the school, and all things else must be Christian. To hold otherwise is to assert the death of God in the sphere of the state. Because of its failure to require that the state be Christian, because of its implicit death-of-God theology, the church has surrendered the state to apostate reason and the devil. The church has done this because it has denied the law of God. It has, in fact, implied that God is dead outside the walls of the church....”⁵⁷

Objections

The biblical case against the practice of political polytheism is overwhelming. However, the vast majority of Christians (at the present time) emphatically reject the idea of an explicitly Christian state. Since most Christian pastors, teachers and elders regard the thesis enumerated above as heretical and dangerous, an examination of the objections to the establishment of biblical Christianity is in order.

1. A common objection is that the establishment of biblical Christianity will lead to the persecution of unbelievers. This objection is used to bring to mind a type of Christian dictatorship where atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, and Moslems are rounded up in the middle of the night and shot by a “Christian” gestapo or KGB. This image is totally false for a number of reasons. First, keep in mind that a Christian civil government does not come into being through a

⁵⁵ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, part 2, p. 153.

⁵⁶ Greg Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, p. 318.

⁵⁷ R. J. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 240.

revolution or physical violence. A nation will not become Christian until the majority of the people are converted to Christ. This may be centuries in the future. Becoming a Christian nation is a bottom up not a top down affair. Rushdoony writes, “The key is regeneration, propagation of the gospel, and the conversion of men and nations to God’s law-word. Meanwhile, the existing law-order must be respected, and neighboring law-orders must be respected as far as is possible without offense to one’s own faith.”⁵⁸ Second, in a Christian state (as noted earlier) it is not illegal to be an unbeliever. One can be an atheist, animist, Hindu or anything one pleases. Personal belief and private practice are not civil crimes. It is the propagation and public practice of heathenism that is a civil crime according to biblical law (cf. Dt. 13:1-18, 17:2-7). Third, some type of state persecution or intolerance toward religious practices is unavoidable and inevitable in every nation, even in secular pluralistic states. The United States does not presently permit human sacrifice or torture in religious rites. It does not permit the use of illegal drugs in “native American” religious rituals. Religious prostitution and child molestation also are not permitted. The point is that civil law must forbid certain religious practices. How are civil magistrates to determine what is and is not permitted in their country? The only infallible, objective, absolutely moral guide for civil magistrates to decide these matters is the Bible. All civil laws are based on concepts of morality derived from religious or philosophical presuppositions. The only reason that America’s present laws are as good as they are is because of our Christian roots. Will Christians still be in favor of religious pluralism when the state legalizes homosexual marriage, polygamy, drug use in sorcery and witchcraft, ritual sex orgies, etc.? Fourth, on what basis can political polytheists condemn Christian civil magistrates for doing exactly what the Bible tells them they should do? Since the Bible cannot contradict itself, political polytheists can only condemn obedient Christian civil magistrates on the basis of a non-biblical philosophy or worldview. This is exactly what pluralists do. A Christian scholar in favor of “principled pluralism” wrote, “We cannot move directly from the text of the Bible to political theory.... The case for principled pluralism is based neither on a pietist hermeneutic nor on a proof-texting approach to Scripture.... The case for principled pluralism rests on the conviction that the order of society points responsively to an ultimate normative order beyond itself as the source and criterion of its meaning.”⁵⁹ There is no other “ultimate normative order beyond itself” except the Bible.

2. Another objection is that the establishment of biblical Christianity will lead to the state dominance of the church. The state dominance of the church is referred to as Erastianism. Under such a system the church is forced to submit to the authority of the state even in matters of doctrine, church discipline, appointment of pastors, calling and dismissing synods and so on. There is no question that during the past seventeen hundred years the state has often abused its

⁵⁸ R. J. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 113-114. “Politics is the ‘quick fix’ approach to cultural transformation. ‘The presidential election will turn the tide. A change in the Supreme Court will bring our nation back to righteousness. If we could only get more conservatives in office.’ None of this will do it. Only a long-term effort to change all facets of society will bring about significant and lasting transformation. This means changing the hearts and minds of millions of people” (Gary DeMar and Peter Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity: A Biblical Response to Dave Hunt*, [Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1988] p. 297).

⁵⁹ Gordon J. Spykman, “The Principled Pluralist Position” in *God and Politics*, pp. 78, 82, 83. “Ironically, Spykman rejects natural law, yet he also denies that Old Testament laws provide the required content of these definition-less ‘creature ordinances.’ This leaves everything conveniently open-ended. That is the heart and soul of neo-evangelicalism: intellectually and morally open-ended. T. M. Moore is correct: ‘Ultimately, Spykman exalts God’s revelation in nature above the Bible. He insists that the meaning of Scripture can only be unlocked by first understanding the meaning of God’s Word inherent in the creational norms around us.’ ‘The Christian Response to Principled Pluralism,’ *Ibid.*, p. 110” (Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism*, p. 16, footnote 46.)

power. The state dominated and helped corrupt the church. There were also times when the church went beyond its lawful role in dominating the state. But these corruptions occurred because often civil magistrates and church leaders were not aware of, or were disobedient to, the biblical teaching regarding the proper relationship between the church and the state. While the Bible does *not* teach a separation of Christianity and state, or Jesus Christ's authority and state, it does teach a separation of church and state. Christ is the King over the state as well as the church. The state is to follow Christ within its God ordained domain and the church must obey Christ within its God given sphere of duty. They are not to intrude in any way upon each other's sphere of duty. The church has a spiritual authority—the power of the keys. The state has the authority of physical coercion against criminals (biblically defined)—the power of the sword. Charles Hodge writes, “[T]he Word of God determines the limits of the magistrate's office in reference to both classes of his duties; and as, under the Old Testament, there was a form of religion with its rites and officers prescribed which the magistrate could not change, so there is under the New. But under the Old, we find with this church government the kings were required to do, and in fact did do, much for the support and reformation of religion and the punishment of idolaters; so they are now bound to act on the same principles, making the pious kings of the Old Testament their model.”⁶⁰

With Erastianism the magistrate is involved with many areas that are scripturally outside his domain. A Christian civil magistrate who obeys the Scripture does not attempt to micro-manage the church. If he does intrude upon the church's authority then he would be subject to church censure and if he is obstinate—excommunication. If *lawfully* excommunicated, the civil magistrate would be subject to impeachment, for a covenantal nation would require church membership in a Trinitarian orthodox Christian church for all judges and office holders. The civil magistrate does, however, have an authority to call general assemblies, synods and even church councils in the event of a spiritual or national crisis. Constantine (A.D. 306-337) acted properly when in the year 325 he summoned the council of Nicea to settle the Arian question. He also acted righteously when he banished Arians after the decision of the council was rendered in accordance with Scripture. During the religious and civil crises that occurred in England and Scotland during the 1640's, Parliament called into existence the Westminster Assembly (1643-1648). The result was the greatest, most biblical church standards the world has ever seen. They are still unsurpassed. Parliament did the right thing when it asked the church to deal with needed reform. George Gillespie concurs. He argues that if there is no hope “of redressing such enormities [e.g., a widespread church apostasy] in the ordinary way, by intrinsic ecclesiastical remedies; that is, by well-constituted synods, or assemblies of orthodox, holy moderate presbyters; in such an extraordinary exigence, the Christian magistrate may and ought to interpose his authority to do divers things which, in an ordinary course of government, he ought

⁶⁰ Charles Hodge, *The Relation of Church and State* in, John Robbins ed., *Against the World: The Trinity Review, 1978-1988* (Hobbs, NM: The Trinity Foundation, 1996), p. 306. Charles Hodge is against the establishment of Christianity in America. He writes, “[W]hen reasoning from the Word of God, we are not authorized to argue from the Old Testament economy because that was avowedly temporal and has been abolished, but must derive our conclusions from the New Testament.” Where are we told that the *whole* Old Testament economy was temporal? North writes, “Any principle of biblical interpretation (hermeneutic) is dangerous which argues that unless an Old Testament case law is specifically repeated in the New Testament, it is automatically annulled in New Testaments times. Anyone who argues this way is going to run into major problems. For example, bestiality is not specifically mentioned in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, it is listed as a capital crime (Lev. 18:23)... Can you carry over the Old Testament's definition of the act as criminal and yet not carry over the Old Testament penal sanction? On what hermeneutical basis?” (*Tools of Dominion*, p. 100).

not to do.”⁶¹ This is also the teaching of historic Presbyterianism. “The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.”⁶² The fact that civil magistrates have abused their religious duty in the past is no reason to forsake the concept of a godly Christian civil magistrate. We do not abandon covenant headship in Christian families because husbands have abused their authority. Nor do we abandon Christian motherhood because some mothers have abused their children. We should work to apply the word of God to all areas of life, even the civil sphere.

3. What about the passages of Scripture which are often quoted as proof texts for the idea that civil magistrates should not use their power in support of religion (e.g., Zech. 4:6; 2 Cor. 10:4; Jn. 18:36)? A brief examination of these passages will demonstrate that they are not opposed to the establishment of an explicitly Christian state.

Zechariah 4:6 says, “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” It is argued that these words teach that Christians should just engage in spiritual activities such as witnessing and prayer; and that civil power should be left to secular hands. This argument is a perversion of the meaning of this passage. The Jews who returned from Babylon had the responsibility to rebuild the temple. These Jews were discouraged because they were few in number, poorly equipped and surrounded by powerful enemies. During this time of discouragement a wonderful promise is spoken to Zerubbabel by the Lord: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit.” M’Crie writes, “although ye are destitute of might and power for this work, the success of it does not depend upon these; my Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not, he will carry on and consummate the work. But was this declaration made to Zerubbabel to cause him to drop the sceptre from his hands, and take no direction in the work, lest there should be an appearance of human authority about it?”⁶³ No, not at all. In fact verse 9 says, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands shall also finish it.” “It was by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts that the people were excited and animated to build the temple; and therefore they are said to be helped by the prophets of God, because they, as the Spirit’s mouth, spoke to their hearts, Ezra v. 2.”⁶⁴ “The success of any Christian endeavor depends on the power of God’s Spirit. Therefore, whether a person is a Christian minister, plumber, builder or civil magistrate, he should pray for God’s help and give God the glory for success. [W]hat God does

⁶¹ George Gillespie, *Aaron’s Rod Blossoming; or, The Divine Ordinance of Church Government Vindicated, etc.* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1985 [1646]), p. 82.

⁶² *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chap. XXIII, sec. III. “Today, on both sides of the Atlantic, the spiritual heirs of the Westminster Assembly affirm the radical Whig’s secular idea of universal religious toleration, an ideal that appalled every member of the Westminster Assembly, an idea affirmed only by one man in that era, Roger Williams, whose 1644 book was ordered burned by the Parliament that had called the Assembly into existence” (Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* [Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996], p. 976). However, the vast majority of modern Presbyterians emphatically reject this section of the Confession with the excuse that it teaches Erastianism. The authors of the Confession with only one or two exceptions were vehemently anti-Erastian; specially the Scottish divines and the Scottish General Assembly that adopted the Confession of Faith.

⁶³ Thomas M’Crie, *Statement of the Difference etc.*, p. 156.

⁶⁴ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Pub. Co., n. d.), Vol. 4, p. 1418.

is one thing, what men ought to do is another.”⁶⁵ We pray for our daily bread and then we must plow the field and plant the seed.

Another passage often quoted against a Christian civil magistrate is John 18:36: “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’” Many Christians wrongly assume that Christ is teaching that His kingdom will not influence or change this world. They think that Christ is telling believers to live in a pietistic ghetto. But Jesus is saying that the *origin* or *source* of His kingdom explains His unique kingship. Christ’s authority as king does not originate from earth but from heaven. Jesus proclaimed a redemptive, spiritual kingdom, a kingdom entered by being born again, by partaking in the first resurrection (cf. Jn. 3:5); a kingdom not of weapons and political might but of meek, humble service to Christ and one’s neighbor (cf. Mt. 5:5, 18:3-4, 21:5; Lu. 22:25-26). Jesus rejected all Jewish efforts to make Him a political leader or revolutionary in a physical conflict with Rome.

But, although Christ taught that His kingdom originated from heaven and was spiritual, He also taught that it would penetrate and affect the whole world (cf. Mt. 13:31-33). Christ’s glorious gospel will penetrate and sanctify men, institutes and cultures. That is why Christ commanded His disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10 KJV). Calvin writes, “By this prayer we ask, that he may remove all hindrances, and may bring all men under his dominion, and may lead them to meditate on the heavenly life. This is done partly by the preaching of the word, and partly by the secret power of the Spirit; it is his will to govern men by his word.... We therefore pray that God would exert his power, both by the Word and by the Spirit, that the whole world may willingly submit to him.”⁶⁶ Christ commanded His people to disciple all nations (Mt. 28:19). This means that God wants every nation to submit to the word of God. The church was established to extend over the whole earth the crown rights of the resurrected victorious King. Christ’s kingdom is not established or spread by bullets, bombs or revolution. But once a nation believes in Christ and submits to His kingship, it will covenant with Him to follow His laws. J. C. Ryle concurs: “The favourite theory of certain Christians that this text forbids Governments to have anything to do with religion and renders all Established Churches unlawful, is, in my judgment, baseless, preposterous, and utterly devoid of common sense.... The text declares that Christ’s kingdom did not spring from the powers of this world, and is not dependent on them; but the text does not declare that the powers of the world ought to have nothing to do with Christ’s kingdom. Christ’s kingdom can get on very well without them; but they cannot get on very well without Christ’s kingdom.... The Government that does not strive to promote true religion, has no right to expect God’s blessing.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Thomas M’Crie, *Statement of the Difference etc.*, pp. 156-157.

⁶⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), Vol. 1, p. 320.

⁶⁷ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Cambridge, England: James Clark, 1976 [1873]), p. 288. “To tell us that no Government can find out what true religion is, and that consequently a Government should regard all religions with equal indifference, is an argument only fit for an infidel. In England at any rate a belief that the Bible is true is part of the Constitution; an insult to the Bible is a punishable offense, and the testimony of an avowed atheist goes for nothing in a court of law” (*Ibid.*, p. 288). George Hutcheson writes, “Whereas private men, aspiring to a worldly kingdom, do use violence and force of arms, he had prohibited his disciples to fight in his defence in the garden. This is not to be understood as if Christ disallowed that they to whom he hath given the sword should defend his kingdom therewith; for if magistrates, even as magistrates, should be nursing parents to the church, and ought to kiss the Son, as the Scriptures do record, then certainly they may and should employ their power as magistrates for

Some Christians who oppose a Christian civil government quote 2 Corinthians 10:4 to defend their position. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.” If Paul were writing about the duty of Christian civil magistrates in this chapter our opponent’s argument would be well taken. But, it is obvious from the context that Paul is talking about the church’s responsibility. The church should never use carnal means such as *physical* coercion to convert, convince or discipline sinners. This point is obvious from verse 5 where Paul says that the churches are used to cast down *arguments*. We are to bring “every *thought* into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Spiritual ends require spiritual means. If a professing Christian put a gun to a heathen’s head and then commanded him to receive Christ, the heathen’s profession would be insincere and useless. If people are offered a thousand dollars to believe in Christ they will become hypocrites not Christians. “What the apostle was thus confident he could cast down were *imagination*s [logimos], *thoughts*, i.e., the opinions, or convictions of those who set themselves and the deductions of their own reason against the truth of God.”⁶⁸ This passage no more forbids the use of sword by a Christian magistrate to punish idolatry, than it forbids a stick to Christian parents to spank their disobedient children.

4. Wouldn’t an explicitly Christian state that upheld both tables of the law violate people’s right to liberty of conscience? The concept of liberty of conscience has often been used to argue for the religious toleration of all faiths (e.g., Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, etc.). The problem with this very broad definition of liberty of conscience is that it is contrary to Scripture. When we speak of liberty of conscience and ecclesiastical authority we mean that the church does not have the right to impose on its members doctrines, commandments or ordinances which are contrary to, or cannot be proved from, Scripture. Likewise, God has not given the state the authority to impose on its citizens anything which would cause them to disobey the word of God. God “has set the human conscience free from all obligation to believe or obey any such doctrines or commandments of men as are either contrary to or aside from the teachings of that Word.”⁶⁹

Biblical liberty of conscience does not mean that people are free to publicly blaspheme God and worship idols. If the Bible taught such a liberty of conscience it would contradict itself. In a Christian nation people are free to believe anything they please. But, the moment they publicly subvert the laws of Christ by openly preaching or practicing idolatry, they have committed acts which the Bible defines as crimes punishable by the state. M’Crie writes, “To assert the right of men to think and act as they please, without respect to the moral law, and without being responsible to God, would be atheistical. And to suppose that men, who are subjected to divine law, natural or revealed, are exempted from blame in every thing which they do agreeably to the judgment and conscience,—would be to deny a fixed rule of good and evil superior to man; would make conscience the ultimate standard of their actions and render errors and crimes, in such cases, innocent.”⁷⁰ Most Christians today are shocked and upset when murderers and rapists are set free by our courts to walk the streets. But, when people insult God and mock the Lord Jesus Christ it is considered a wonderful expression of religious liberty.

removing of idolatry and setting up the true worship of God, and for defending thereof against violence” (*The Gospel of John*, [Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985 (1657)], p. 388).

⁶⁸ Charles Hodge, *I and II Corinthians* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974 [1857-59]), p. 611.

⁶⁹ A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958 [1869]), p. 265. “Although civil and ecclesiastical society do not take cognizance of religion in the same manners, to the same extent, and for the same purposes, yet the general principle respecting the liberty and right of consciences affects both, and would vindicate a general toleration and license in the church as well as the state” (M’Crie, *Statement of the Difference etc.*, p. 166).

⁷⁰ Thomas M’Crie, *Statement of the Difference etc.*, p. 160.

When the state by its laws gives men the liberty to commit acts which are evil, which are defined as serious crimes by the infallible Word of God and which the Bible says must not go unpunished by the civil magistrate, then that state has rejected the authority of Jesus Christ. That state has set its own standard above God's righteous law. That nation has by implication proclaimed a liberty to publicly offend God. That nation which permits its citizens to publicly teach that Christ was not God, or that He did not rise from the dead, or that He is no different than Buddha or Krishna, or that His death on the cross is a myth, etc., has not kissed the Son. It has not acknowledged and honored Christ as king. The nation that does not submit to Jesus Christ will receive blows of judgement from the Lord of glory (Ps. 2:9-12).

5. Couldn't the idea of a state establishment of religion be used to promote false religions? Christians need to learn the fact that neutrality regarding religion is impossible even in states which claim religious neutrality. The predominate worldview of a given society will inevitably reflect itself in the arts, education, the courts, and the legislatures. When the United States was dominated by the Christian worldview the universities, public schools, courts, arts and civil magistrates were (generally speaking) friendly toward Christ and His church. Politicians and judges respected the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. People believed in the rule of law because the source of law was transcendent and absolute. But as society shifted from a biblical worldview to a secular humanistic worldview, schools, courts and rulers have increasingly become enemies of Christ and His church. Rushdoony writes, "the state as a religious establishment has progressively disestablished Christianity as its law foundation, and, while professing neutrality, has in fact established humanism as the religion of the state. When the religion of a people changes, its laws inevitably reflect that change and conform themselves to the new faith and the new morality."⁷¹

If Christians accept religious pluralism and refuse to apply the word of God to all areas of life including judicial and civil affairs, then the state *will* continue to use its power to promote false religion. Public (i.e., state) schools promote evolution, fornication, abortion, homosexuality, new age mysticism, native American animism, feminism, socialism and so on. Christians are portrayed in schools, universities, modern music, television and movies as hate mongers, idiots, bigots, unscientific and anti-intellectual fools. If the radical homosexual ideas regarding marriage, the family and employment become law, then Christians *will be* persecuted by the state. "The pluralist is unwilling to admit publicly one of the fundamental principles of the Bible: there is irreconcilable conflict in history and in all of man's institutions between God and Satan, covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers, spiritual light and spiritual darkness."⁷² If Christians think they can avoid religious and ideological warfare by relegating the Bible to "spiritual" issues and placing their trust in political polytheism, they have ignored both the Bible and history. "Political pluralism is founded on a lie, namely that *all* political issues are not at bottom, religious. Political pluralists refuse to admit that temporary religious and cultural cease-fires are not permanent peace treaties. At best, pluralism masks the escalating historical conflicts for a season."⁷³ If Christians refuse to be salt and light to culture (cf. Mt. 5:13-14) and reject the biblical teaching that the state has a responsibility to obey and enforce God's law, then they will have a state that is a nursing father to sodomites, lesbians, atheists, pornographers, perverts and criminals of every sort. *There is no neutrality!*

⁷¹ R. J. Rushdoony, *Christianity and the State*, p. 7.

⁷² Gary North, *Political Polytheism*, p. 86.

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 84.

6. There are hundreds of different expressions of Christianity (i.e., denominations). Should the civil government favor one denomination over another? Would this not lead to the persecution of Christians?⁷⁴ This question is often raised to conjure up the idea of a Christian dictatorship in which everyone who disagrees with those in power will be persecuted. This image is totally fallacious, for a Christian nation which submits to God's law can only punish those religious activities which the Bible defines as crimes. The civil law does not deal with most doctrinal issues, for these are left in the hands of ecclesiastical authorities. What the civil law does deal with are the gross, damnable religious activities that threaten the foundations of a Christian society: public idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery, cultic prostitution, blasphemy and Sabbath desecration. Symington writes, "Gross blasphemy, profane swearing, open idolatry, and desecration of the Lord's day, are legitimate objects of magistratical interference; not merely as things hurtful to the commonwealth, and offensive to a majority of the members of society, but as injurious to religion, and highly displeasing to the Almighty."⁷⁵

To assert that civil government can micro-manage doctrinal disputes between believers is to fall into the error of Erastianism. Although the civil government does *not* have the authority to punish people for holding to erroneous opinions it can covenant with the people to adopt a confession or creed as most agreeable to God's word (e.g., the Westminster Standards). It also can set oaths for office which would only permit those who are members in good standing in Reformed denominations to hold office. In a Christian commonwealth anyone who has a defective view of the triune God, the divinity or humanity of Christ, salvation, the law, etc., should not be eligible to vote or hold office. "The God of Israel said... 'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God'" (2 Sam 23:3, 4). James R. Wilson writes, "His honor must be promoted by excluding his open enemies from office. 'When the wicked beareth rule the people mourn' Prov. 29:2. Why? Because the Messiah chastises them for exalting the foes of his church, and law. To permit atheists, deists, Jews, pagans, profane men, heretics such as are the blasphemers of Messiah's Godhead, and papists, who are gross idolaters, to occupy places of honor and power, as legislators, judges, & etc. is to offer a direct insult to the holy Jesus. They do not, they will not, they cannot '*kiss the Son,*' according to the Father's command. To elevate such men is direct opposition to the King of kings."⁷⁶

A covenanted uniformity of doctrine, worship and church government founded upon God's word is biblical and desirable, but these things can only occur when the majority of a people in a nation are first convinced of the truth by the Holy Spirit, not a bayonet.⁷⁷ Christian

⁷⁴ The Protestant pattern of establishment followed in the past was to have one denomination as the established church. The established church would receive public funds (i.e., taxes collected by the state) to pay for the church run public schools. The Protestant churches that were not part of the established church would be tolerated (there are notable exceptions to this toleration) yet their members had to pay taxes to support schools and other church projects with which they may disagree theologically. This pattern often led to a resentment of the established church and a desire for total disestablishment. Disestablishment led to the implicit establishment of secular humanism in the courts, legislatures and the public schools. Modern theologians reject the whole concept of state financed education not just because it is coercive and unjust, but because the education of children is placed by God in the hands of the family not the church or state. If parents want to delegate some of the teaching tasks to the church, tutors, or private schools, then they must pay for it instead of using funds stolen by the state.

⁷⁵ William Symington, *Messiah the Prince*, p. 300.

⁷⁶ James R. Wilson, *Prince Messiah's Claims to Dominion Over All Governments: And the Disregard of His Authority by the United States, in the Federal Constitution*, A New Edition, Edited by Gordon J. Keddie (Beaver Falls, PA: Semper Reformanda, Summer, 1997), Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 81.

⁷⁷ Protestantism has fragmented since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most people who consider themselves Protestants actually reject most or all of the doctrines of the Reformation. Virtually all of the mainline "Protestant"

civil government presupposes a great revival of biblical Christianity. Such revival presupposes postmillennial eschatology. “The kingdom will not be brought in by a bureaucratic theocratic regime, but by the heart-transforming work of the Holy Spirit. We therefore disagree with them concerning the supposed necessity of defining theocracy as a top-down social transformation. If God’s kingdom rule is to be widespread in its influence in society, this transformation must be from the bottom-up: *self-government under God*. So, we do not call for a theocratic bureaucracy, either now or in the future. Such a top-down bureaucracy is not called for in the Bible, is impossible to maintain without unlawful coercion, and is not necessary to impose to bring in the kingdom.”⁷⁸

Conclusion

The Bible teaches that God hates all false religions and that the nations which permit idolatry and paganism to flourish will receive judgement. Scripture also says that all the nations of the earth have been given to Christ (the mediatorial king) as a reward for His obedience unto death. The great commission teaches that Christians should be working for the establishment of a worldwide Christian civilization. Are most Christians working to disciple whole nations? Are they teaching the kingship of Jesus Christ over all nations? Most believers are not at all concerned with these important Christian responsibilities. Why? Because they have accepted the myth that God approves political polytheism; that a state should remain neutral with regard to religion; that a state is not obligated to “kiss the Son.” Because many Christians have accepted the myth of neutrality, politically they are often found working on the side of the atheistic secular humanists. They are actually teaching and working *against* the great commission, the first commandment and Christ’s universal kingship. If Christians would only set aside their Americanized presuppositions, they would see that the testimony of Scripture is crystal clear on this point. All nations have a moral duty to submit to Jesus Christ and His law; all nations by virtue of their moral subjection to the Messiah are obligated to legally recognize, favor and support biblical Christianity.⁷⁹ Once this point is understood, Christians will work for the same goal as set by the great commission. Will it be difficult? Yes. Will it take centuries of hard work?

denominations are really temples of secular humanism. The leadership in these denominations are religious liberals who reject the infallibility of the Bible, the virgin birth, the atonement, the resurrection of Christ and so on. Spiritually and ethically Protestant liberals are Satanists. They are in the same class as cannibals (actually they are worse; liberals murder babies of both sexes, while cannibals kill adult males.). Another group often referred to as Protestants are the Evangelicals. Most Evangelicals, however, believe in a God who is not sovereign or omnipotent. They also hold to a heretical view of salvation. These are the Arminians who teach that man *allows* God to elect and regenerate people by an act of the human will. Christ made salvation possible but only those who can self-generate their own faith through an autonomous act of the will are saved. Faith is not a gift of God to dead sinners but a meritorious act. Arminianism is fundamentally more Romish than Protestant. Consistent Arminianism is a damnable heresy. There are still many Calvinist denominations which are faithful to the biblical doctrine of salvation. Christian civil government requires a country in which most people believe in biblical Christianity. This will require a great revival of Reformed Christianity (i.e., Calvinistic soteriology, the regulative principle of worship, a theonomic view of the law, postmillennialism, and the mediatorial kingship of Christ, etc.). Only after the Reformed denominations achieve a unity based on truth (not compromise) can any idea of a covenantal uniformity be achieved. The State cannot coerce men and women to accept something which they do not believe in.

⁷⁸ Gary North, *Political Polytheism*, pp. 589-590.

⁷⁹ William Symington, *Messiah the Prince*, p. 265.

Maybe.⁸⁰ But we should do nothing less than what our Lord has commanded. Has He not promised, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt. 28:20)?

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⁸⁰ “Reconstructionists generally believe they have time, lots of time, to accomplish their ends. Moreover, they are not revolutionary because they believe that Christians achieve leadership by living righteously. Dominion is by ethical service and work, not by revolution. Thus, there is no theological reason for a postmillennialist to take up arms at the drop of a hat. Biblical postmillennialists can afford to wait for God to judge ungodly regimes, bide their time and prepare to rebuild upon the ruins. Biblical postmillennialists are not pacifists, but neither are they revolutionaries” (Gary North and Gary DeMar, *Christian Reconstruction: What It Is, What It Isn't* [Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991], p. 141).