

Tyrants Are Not Ministers of God

**What the Bible Teaches about
Civil Disobedience, Romans
13, and Quarantine**

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Tyrants Are Not Ministers of God: What the Bible Teaches about Civil Disobedience, Romans 13, and Quarantine

INTRODUCTION: THE GOSPEL CANNOT BE DIVORCED FROM THE POLITICAL SPHERE

It is commonplace for some Christian organizations and denominations (e.g., some pastors in the Acts 29 Network) to religiously and pietistically¹ assert, “Politics is not a gospel issue; we will not be involved in or divided over politics!” (By “politics” I am referring to the entire sphere of civil government.) But, is this true? Consider the following historical example.

In his outstanding expose of how Fascism (what Mussolini called “corporatism”) took over Germany—including the churches—under Adolph Hitler, Edwin Lutzer reports that church leaders taught that as long as they could preach the gospel Germany was safe.² We know how that turned out! It wasn’t long till pastors were forbidden to include any controversial matters in their sermons, since “the church service was for the proclamation of the pure gospel, and for that alone.”³ Regrettably, Luther’s two-kingdoms theology abdicated all areas of life and culture that were not part of

¹ Robert E. Fugate, “A Summary of the Crucial Errors of Pietism,” <http://www.lordofthenations.com/free-downloads>.

² Erwin W. Lutzer, *Hitler’s Cross* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1995), 110.

³ Erwin W. Lutzer, *Hitler’s Cross*, 130.

God's "spiritual"⁴ kingdom to the "secular" realm, a realm in which the Bible had no place, a realm ruled by man's autonomous reason. The state controlled education.⁵ Romans 13:1–2 was often quoted to manipulate Christians into absolute obedience to the state.⁶ In that theological climate, history tells us that the vast majority of Protestant pastors and Roman Catholic priests supported Adolph Hitler and the National Socialist Party.⁷ Swastikas adorned most

⁴ After surveying Paul's use of the word πνευματικός in his letters (*God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 28–32), Gordon D. Fee concludes that πνευματικός never means "spiritual" (32). Fee explains that the problem with the English word "spiritual" is that it "is almost always understood over against an antonym of some kind, in a way that the word "Spirit" is not (667). The translation "spiritual" is misleading, since most contemporary uses of the English word "spiritual" — such as "religious," "nonmaterial" "(a meaning absolutely foreign to Paul," "mystical," or, even worse, "the interior life of the believer" — inevitably incorporate elements of Greek philosophical thought (32). "It is extremely doubtful whether Paul would have thought of the blessings associated with the Spirit [Eph 1:3] as being over against such 'material blessings'" (667). Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida define πνευματικός as "pertaining to being derived from or being about the Spirit" (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* [L-N], 2nd ed., 2 vols. [New York: NY: United Bible Societies, 1989], §12.21). "The adjective [πνευματικός] does not primarily point to a contrast with what is material (e.g., Dt 28:1–14), secular, or worldly" (Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999], 95).

⁵ Erwin W. Lutzer, *Hitler's Cross*, 115f. William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), 248–249ff.

⁶ Erwin W. Lutzer, *Hitler's Cross*, 111. We will look in depth at Romans 13:1–7 in the second part of this book. See also the heading, "Reformed vs. Lutheran views of the state," in part one.

⁷ Erwin W. Lutzer, *Hitler's Cross*, 12. The exceptions were Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and, to some degree, the

churches.⁸ Incredibly, “Thousands of pastors joined the SS troops in swearing personal allegiance to him [i.e., Hitler].”⁹ Obviously, a pietistic, “spiritual” gospel can be deceptive and deadly! Lutzer warns, “Whether in Nazi Germany or America today, believers cannot choose to remain silent under the guise of preaching the gospel. . . . Our very right to preach the gospel will be in jeopardy if we are not prepared to submit to the lordship of Christ in all spheres.”¹⁰ In light of the seriousness of the issues, let’s make a Biblical critique of the assertion, “Politics is not a gospel issue.”

The gospel and the Great Commission

Let’s begin by asking the question, What gospel did the Lord Jesus Christ preach and instruct His church to preach? The obvious answer is the “gospel of the kingdom” (Mt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk 1:14). In fact, Christ declared that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Mt 24:14).

What is the meaning of the “gospel of the kingdom?” The “gospel of the kingdom” is the good news that the prophetically-promised, eschatological reign of God¹¹ has already broken into human history in the divine person of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹² And what is the

Confessing Church in Germany (although see p. 134), which formulated the Barmen Confession in 1934. However, since the Lutheran Church was financed through the state, it was “impractical” to break completely away from the state (135).

⁸ Erwin W. Lutzer, *Hitler’s Cross*, 12, 127. American flags adorn many American churches.

⁹ Erwin W. Lutzer, *Hitler’s Cross*, 18.

¹⁰ Erwin W. Lutzer, *Hitler’s Cross*, 112.

¹¹ The Messianic or mediatorial kingdom of God.

¹² The term “Christ” (Χριστός), in its first century Jewish setting, denoted the eschatological Messiah, i.e., a kingly-military deliverer to fulfill the Davidic Covenant (2 Sm 7:14) (*W. Bauer, F.W. Danker, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [BDAG], 3rd ed. [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 1091;

kingdom of God? In the New Testament, “the kingdom of God is the reign of God in Christ destroying all that is hostile to the divine rule” (1 Cor 15:23-28).¹³ Simply stated, Christ’s kingdom is His sovereign dominion, His empire.

After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus the Messiah made an incredible pronouncement in Matthew 28:18.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe [practice] all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen (Mt 28:18-20).

How much authority has been given to the Lord Jesus Christ? — “**All authority!**” When will it be given? — It “**has been given!**” (The Greek verb is in the aorist tense, indicative mood.¹⁴) The Lord Jesus is presently exercising this authority “in heaven” and where? — “**On earth!**” Commentators on Matthew’s Gospel concur and elaborate:

“Jesus is not waiting passively in heaven for his glorious arrival as judge and king but is already exercising his Lordship as God’s

William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006], 109).

¹³ “The object of the divine rule is the redemption of people and their deliverance from the powers of evil. 1 Corinthians 15:23-28 is definitive. Christ’s reign means the destruction of all hostile powers, the last of which is death. The kingdom of God is the reign of God in Christ destroying all that is hostile to the divine rule” (Rv 11:15; Mt 4:8 // Lk 4:5; Mt 12:26; Lk 11:18; 2 Cor 4:4) (George E. Ladd, “Kingdom of God, Heaven,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* [EDT₂], ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001], 658).

¹⁴ In Mt 28:18 ἔδόθη (has been given) is the aorist passive indicative of δίδωμι, indicating an action completed in the past.

plenipotentary Son. The Great Commission is thus founded on Jesus' *present* Lordship (note the 'therefore' of v. 19)."¹⁵

"In heaven and on earth" means "over the whole creation." "Jesus at his **resurrection** has been exalted and installed as **Lord of the universe**. For all of early Christianity it is true that all powers are subject to the exalted Jesus (Ro 1:4; Phil 2:9-11; Col 1:18-20; Eph 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22; Heb 1:3-4). Thus the entire world was turned upside down by the **resurrection** of Jesus . . . now raised from the dead and installed by God as ruler of the universe [refers to Ps 110:1 and Dn 7:13-14]. . . . **His kingdom will begin not with his return as World Judge** but already, in the present." . . . The **risen** Jesus **now** has all the power in the entire cosmos. . . . It is unlimited."¹⁶

"God's bestowal of universal authority or power upon Jesus echoes **Dan. 7:13-14, 18, 22, 27**. . . . Matthew's theology of the **kingdom** is found *in nuce* [in a nutshell] here. The **resurrection** has already installed Jesus as the glorious Son of Man. . . . Obedience to the mission mandate turns out to fulfill, as a by-product, the original **creation mandate** that God gave to humanity's first parents in the garden of Eden. . . . The **renewal of the world** (19:28) had begun."¹⁷

"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. ¹⁴ Then to Him [the Son of Man] 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" (Dn 7:13-14).

¹⁵ Douglas R.A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox 1993), 333 (bold added; cited approvingly by W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison Jr., *Matthew*, ICC, 3:682).

¹⁶ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 3:623f (bold added).

¹⁷ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: 2008), 689, 691 (bold added).

Jesus “is the chief executive officer of the universe, in complete control of the world . . . the **Cosmocrator**” (Eph 1:22-23; Rv 1:5; 11:15). “**All social, political, and economic power** (‘on earth’) are in **his hands**” (F.D. Bruner, 1094f). “Since Jesus is the plenipotentiary of the universe, disciples move out to say so. From now on the endtime people of God should proclaim to all nations that these nations too belong to the territory of the sovereignty of the Son of Man” (1096). “**The usual missionary terms are not employed here.** . . . To disciple means to make students of, **bring to school, educate**” (1096). “The phrase ‘all nations’ comes from the heart of the OT revelation – the **Abrahamic Promise** (Gn 12:3; 18:18; 22:18)” (1097). “With you” means protection and defense, but especially enabling [i.e., supernatural empowerment – R.E.F.] (cf. Mt 4:19).¹⁸

Clearly, there is much more to the Great Commission than we typically have been led to believe.¹⁹ In fact, the Great Commission is “a republication of the cultural mandate” (Gn 1:28), within the context of the covenant of grace.²⁰

The second chapter of the book of Acts narrates the Spirit-filled, tongue-speaking, Apostle Peter applying Christ’s kingdom rule in his preaching on the Day of Pentecost. First, let’s observe the contextual outline. Verse 22 speaks of the earthly ministry of the Jesus the Messiah. Verse 23 speaks of the death of Jesus the Messiah. Verses 24-32 speak of the resurrection of Jesus the

¹⁸ Frederick D. Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1987, 1990), 2:1106 (bold added). For a plethora of selected commentators’ quotes on the great commission see Robert E. Fugate, *The Foundation and Pillars of the Biblical Worldview* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2020), 388-394.

¹⁹ Kenneth L. Gentry, *The Greatness of the Great Commission* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

²⁰ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 310. William Edgar, *Created & Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 161, 215; citing Harvie M. Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace*, 63.

Messiah. Verses 33–36 speak of the reign of Jesus, who is both Lord and Messiah.

²⁹ “Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch **David**, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

³⁰ “Therefore, being a **prophet**, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the **Christ to sit on his throne** [Davidic covenant],

³¹ “he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the **resurrection** of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

³² “This Jesus God has **raised up**, of which we are all witnesses.

³³ “Therefore being **exalted to the right hand of God** [Ps 110:1], and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

³⁴ “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: “The **LORD** said to my Lord, “**Sit at My right hand**,

³⁵ Until I make Your enemies Your footstool.” [Ps 110:1]

³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God **has made** [aorist tense, indicative mood²¹] this Jesus, whom you crucified, both **Lord** and **Christ**” (Acts 2:29–36).

This passage tells us that the real significance of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was that it was the visible evidence that the Lord Jesus is sitting **on David’s throne**, at God the Father’s right hand, where He will reign until His enemies are made His footstool! Or, in the thought of the Great Commission, until the nations are discipled. Can you see why the devil hates believers being filled with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit and

²¹ In Ac 2:36 ἐποίησεν (has made) is the aorist passive indicative of ποιέω, indicating an action completed in the past.

speaking in tongues? They are proof that he is defeated and doomed, and that Jesus has triumphed!

The Apostle Paul majestically declares the Lordship of Jesus over all things in the first chapter of Ephesians, where he writes:

²⁰ which He [God the Father] worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand [Ps 110:1] in the heavenly *places*,

²¹ 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.

²² And He **put**²² [aorist tense, indicative mood] **all *things* under His feet** [Ps 110:1], and gave²³ Him *to be head over all **things*** to the church,

²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Eph 1:20-23).

Observe that these and other verses (e.g., Ro 10:12; 9:5; 15:12) depict Jesus Christ's *present* status as Lord of the universe. They do not describe what will finally become the case *after* the second coming of Jesus. Most Christians tragically minimize both the victory Christ won during His earthly ministry and the power of His present rule — while exalting the power of the devil and the antichrist as the lords in history. When the church finally exercises more faith in the universal reign of the Lord Jesus Christ from the throne of David in heaven (Ac 2:29-36) as she does in the devil and the antichrist on earth, nations can truly be discipled!

This takes us back to the Great Commission, where we note it was on the basis of the fact that “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth,” that the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ

²² In Eph 1:22 ὑπέταξεν (put) is the aorist active indicative of ὑποτάσσω.

²³ In Eph 1:22 ἔδωκεν (gave) is the aorist active indicative of δίδωμι, indicating an action completed in the past.

commissioned His church to disciple the nations (Mt 28:18-19; note “go therefore” in verse 19, which indicates the logically-deduced application from Christ’s universal authority in verse 18).

At this point we should ask, What constitutes a “nation?” The Biblical term “nation” usually denotes a specific people group within certain geographical boundaries.²⁴ Additionally, every nation includes various domains or spheres:²⁵

religion (e.g., worship of Baal, Molech, Ashtoreth, Artemas);

family and social welfare;

civil governments, laws, armies (1 Sm 18:5, 19-20);

education (e.g., Ac 7:22; Dn 1:4, 10);

economics and business (including science and technology) (e.g., herdsmen, craftsmen,²⁶ tradesmen; coins, Mt 22:19-21; just weights and measures); and

media; the arts and sports (e.g., Greek and Roman games, 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 2:5).

Nations cannot be disciplined without a Biblical worldview that teaches God’s blueprints for these basic elements of any nation. Without such a Biblical worldview, how can the nations be disciplined and the Great Commission be fulfilled?

²⁴ ἔθνος denotes a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions, nation, people (BDAG, 276 def. 1). (For a bibliography see *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* [NDBT], eds. T. Desmond Alexander, *et al.* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 687).

²⁵ Cf. Douglas Layton, *Our Father’s Kingdom* (Nashville, TN: World Impact, 2000), 42.

²⁶ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Trades and Occupations of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986). “Crafts,” ISBE, rev., 1:798-800.

Jesus' Lordship over civil governments

Scripture frequently calls Jesus “Christ.” The term “Christ” (Greek Χριστός) or “Messiah” (Hebrew *mashiyach*) has strong political overtones, denoting the anointed, kingly ruler who is the Son of David (i.e., the descendant of King David who was to fulfill the promises of the Davidic covenant) (Mt 22:42; cf. Ps 89:27).²⁷

“In Paul, as in Acts, **messiahship and lordship are interchangeable categories**. When Paul said that Jesus died and rose that He might be the Lord (κυριεύω) of the dead and the living (Ro 14:9), he was saying nothing different from his assertion that He must reign as king (βασιλεύω) until He has subdued all His enemies (1 Cor 15:25).”²⁸ **“In the New Testament the central message is ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’** (Ro 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11).”²⁹ When the New Testament writers call Jesus “Lord” approximately 475 times, they are proclaiming Him to be the reigning king.

The Apostle John applied Jesus' Lordship to the civil sphere when he wrote to seven, first-century churches in Asia Minor, declaring that Jesus Christ is already “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rv 1:5; cf. 19:16 “King of kings and Lord of lords”; 17:14). Thus, the gospel of the **Lord Jesus Christ** cannot be pietistically quarantined away from the civil sphere.

Consider Psalm 2. The New Testament clearly places the fulfillment of verses 1–9 in the first century – not after the second coming of

²⁷ The term “Christ” (Χριστός), in its first-century Jewish setting, denoted the eschatological Messiah, i.e., a kingly-military deliverer to fulfill the Davidic Covenant (2 Sm 7:14) (BDAG, 1091; William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 109).

²⁸ George E. Ladd, “Kingdom of God,” in ISBE, rev., 3:29.

²⁹ John M. Frame, *The Escondido Theology: A Reformed Response to Two Kingdom Theology* (Lakeland, FL: Whitefield Media Productions, 2011), 257; bold added.

Christ (Ac 4:25–26; 13:33; Heb 1:2, 5; 5:5; Rv 2:26–27; 12:5; etc.).³⁰ Psalm 2 teaches that God the Father is now commanding all kings/rulers and judges to bow in submissive obedience to His incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Now therefore, be wise, O **kings**; be instructed, you **judges** of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish *in* the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him (Ps 2:10–12; cf. Phil 2:9–11).

There are only two options for civil magistrates and for every nation: “serve” Yehowah’s co-reigning Son or rebel and perish. There is no religious neutrality; nations and their leaders are either for Christ or against Him (Mt 12:30; Lk 11:23). God declares, “Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD” (Ps 33:12), but “**all** the nations that forget God” “shall be turned into hell” (Ps 9:17). It is thus impossible for there to be a religiously-neutral civil government — and any “gospel” stating otherwise is not the true gospel!³¹

The Apostle Peter also applied Jesus’ Lordship to the civil sphere, instructing a Roman military commander that “Jesus Christ . . . is Lord of all” (Ac 10:36). The terms “Christ” and “Lord” were highly politicized terms in first-century Rome.³²

When the early church preached the gospel of the kingdom in the power of the Spirit, their opponents conceded that they had “turned the world upside down” by “acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another **king** — Jesus” (Ac 17:6–7). At its heart, the gospel is exclusive and antithetical: Jesus Christ is Lord; Caesar is

³⁰ Robert E. Fugate, *The Foundation and Pillars of the Biblical Worldview*, 364–377.

³¹ For a Biblical demonstration that there can be no epistemological, religious, or ethical neutrality, see Robert E. Fugate, *The Foundation and Pillars of the Biblical Worldview*, 277–295.

³² Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1955), 81–89.

not! Naturally, Caesar considered promoting a rival king to be treasonous, and he violently reacted against this gospel message.

This brings into focus the reason why ancient Rome persecuted Christians. Rome did not persecute Christians because Christians worshipped Jesus, had prayer meetings, and evangelized lost sinners. Rome persecuted Christians because they would not acknowledge Caesar as Lord and (once a year) worship him — while continuing to worship Jesus, of course.³³ **The issue is always sovereignty or lordship.** Francis Schaeffer perceptively noted that, “No totalitarian authority nor authoritarian state can tolerate those who have an absolute by which to judge that state and its actions.”³⁴ Yet, God has called the church to be His prophetic voice on the earth, declaring God’s absolute, authoritative, truthful, judging Word.

Because the law of God is a higher authority than the law of Rome, the greatest of the prophets and the forerunner of Jesus, John the

³³ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Revell, 1976), 24. The issue was sovereignty: “Should the emperor’s law, state law, govern both the state and the church, or were both state and church, emperor and bishop alike, under God’s law? Who represented true and ultimate order?” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many* [Fairfax, VA: Thoburn, 1978], 93). Contrast Ac 4:12 with Augustus Caesar’s coins (Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars*, 88). A poignant example of a Christian martyr refusing to acknowledge the Roman state as lord was Polycarp (“The Martyrdom of Polycarp,” 9ff; in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., rev. by A. Cleveland Coxe, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* [ANF], 10 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980–1983], 1:41). Several of these sources are cited by David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987), 7–10.

³⁴ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1976), 26.

Baptizer, “reproved/rebuked” King³⁵ Herod, saying, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife [i.e., Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife]” (Mk 6:17-18; Lk 3:19). Indeed, Scripture is filled with God’s prophets, speaking by God’s Spirit, who rebuked political leaders.³⁶

If the church confines its teaching to spiritual matters, it must neglect most of Scripture, which speaks to man’s condition in every area of life. Christian faith is either relevant to *all* of life or it is relevant to *none* of it: the claims of God are either total, or He is *not* God. To ask Christianity to stay in its own territory is to ask it to *stay* in all of life. Religion as the Bible conceives of it and declares it has no *separate domain* apart from the rest of life. It is the over-all purpose and meaning of all life in its *every* sphere. . . . The task of the church must be to challenge every sphere of life in the name of the sovereign God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Great Commission requires that all nations be made disciples, and every sphere of life be brought under the dominion of Christ the King, made to hear Christ the Prophet, and find its redemption and intercession in Christ the Priest. Anything less than this is a defamation of the Gospel.³⁷

Thus, politics is a gospel issue! Those asserting otherwise do not properly understand the gospel message. Furthermore, the doctrine of redemption cannot be divorced from the Biblical doctrines of creation,³⁸ fall, and consummation. Neither can it stand on its own

³⁵ Herod Antipas was a petty king. Technically, he was the tetrarch (emperor-appointed provincial ruler) over Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39.

³⁶ For examples, see the heading, “When prophetic rebuke is warranted” in part one, “Civil Disobedience.”

³⁷ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Thy Kingdom Come: Studies in Daniel and Revelation* (Vallecito, CA: Thoburn Press, 1970), 178.

³⁸ The Apostle Paul began with Genesis when preaching the gospel to pagans who were unacquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures (Ac 14:15-17; 17:16-31; Ro 1:20, 25; 8:19-22, 39). Robert E. Fugate, “The Contents of the Gospel Message,” 1.

epistemologically. A pietistic, “spiritual”³⁹ gospel is, at best, a truncated, neutered gospel. Some would call a “gospel” that truncates the Lordship of King Jesus, thereby robbing Him of glory, a caricature, counterfeit, or pseudo-gospel.

Contrast such a pietistic gospel of King Jesus with the Puritan commentator, Matthew Henry, expounding the Great Commission:

“Christianity should be twisted in [intertwined] with national constitutions, that the kingdoms of the world should become Christ’s kingdoms [Rv 11:15], and their kings the church’s nursing-fathers [Is 49:23]. [2.] What is the principal intention of this commission; to *disciple* all nations. *Matheteusate* — “*Admit them disciples*; do your utmost to make the nations Christian nations’; . . . Christ the Mediator is setting up a kingdom in the world, bring the nations to be his subjects; setting up a school, bring the nations to be his scholars; raising an army for the carrying on of the war against the powers of darkness, enlist the

³⁹ After surveying Paul’s use of the word *πνευματικός* in his letters (*God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, 28–32), Gordon D. Fee concludes that *πνευματικός* never means “spiritual” (32). Fee explains that the problem with the English word “spiritual” is that it “is almost always understood over against an antonym of some kind, in a way that the word “Spirit” is not (667). The translation “spiritual” is misleading, since most contemporary uses of the English word “spiritual” — such as “religious,” “nonmaterial” “(a meaning absolutely foreign to Paul,” “mystical,” or, even worse, “the interior life of the believer” — inevitably incorporate elements of Greek philosophical thought (32). “It is extremely doubtful whether Paul would have thought of the blessings associated with the Spirit [Eph 1:3] as being over against such ‘material blessings’” (667). Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida define *πνευματικός* as “pertaining to being derived from or being about the Spirit” (L-N, §12.21). “The adjective [*πνευματικός*] does not primarily point to a contrast with what is material (e.g., Dt 28:1–14), secular, or worldly” (Peter T. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 95).

nations of the earth under his banner” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 5:362 = one volume ed. 1175f).

This is exactly what the Puritans did in early America (cf. John Cotton, “An Abstract of the Laws of New England . . .,” written in 1641; it takes most of its civil laws directly from Scripture⁴⁰).

For many years I have been convinced that evangelicalism in America could never have produced this country in the first place; and it is theologically impotent to return this nation to any of its former greatness. We must regain the Puritan⁴¹ (i.e., Biblical) vision for a comprehensive application of the Lordship of Jesus ruling over everything in the cosmos, which requires the application of God’s authoritative, infallible, written law-Word to every area of life.

Since politics/civil government is a gospel issue, and since Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, what is the Christian to do when civil magistrates are fighting against Christ and His kingdom?

⁴⁰ John Cotton, “An Abstract of the Laws of New England . . .,” is reprinted in Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1984), 549–569; = 3rd ed. (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2002), 525–550.

⁴¹ Joseph Boot, *The Mission of God: A Manifesto of Hope for Society*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Ezra Press, 2016). Ian H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971).

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

As a general rule, Christians are morally obligated to be respectful and submissive to civil magistrates (Ex 22:28;⁴² Ro 13:1–7; 1 Pt 2:13–14, 17; Tit 3:1; Mt 23:2–3). However, we may distinguish between honoring the office and showing honor to those civil magistrates who are misusing their office to promote evil (Mt 23:2–12ff).⁴³ Honor for the office sometimes requires rebuking a civil magistrate misusing his/her office (Mt 23:13–38; Lk 13:32; Jn 18:23; Ac 23:1–4⁴⁴; Mk 6:17–18; the Old Testament prophets; shaking off the dust from one’s feet⁴⁵; etc.).

⁴² Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Curses: Divine and Demonic* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2017), 61.

⁴³ “Paul was always ready to honor the office even while criticizing the present holder” (N.T. Wright, “Romans,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. L.E. Keck, 12 vols. [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994–2004], 10:721). However, this is not to say that the legitimate distinction between office and office holder is specifically taught in Romans 13:1–7, as some classic Reformed writings have asserted; for “the text does not clearly teach the divine ordination of government in general; for Paul speaks throughout concretely of governmental authorities and not about the concept or the institution of government” (Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NICNT, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018], 824).

⁴⁴ The Apostle Paul was, in fact, cursing the Jewish high priest. See Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Curses: Divine and Demonic*, 33f.

⁴⁵ Christ instructed His disciples to shake the dust off of them from any city refusing the gospel of the kingdom (Mt 10:14 // Mk 6:11 // Lk 9:11; Lk 10:11; Ac 13:51). This action was not simply a “protest”; it was a prophetic curse that will result in greater eternal damnation (Mt 10:15; Lk 10:12). Henry J. Cadbury, “Dust and Garments,” in Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, part 1: *The Acts of the Apostles*, eds. F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, 5:270 n 5. Robert E. Fugate, “Shaking Off Dust from One’s Feet: A Prophetic Curse.”

Biblical examples of God-endorsed civil disobedience

The *locus classicus* verse is, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Ac 5:29). The Bible teaches that there are at least thirteen scenarios in which God’s people may disobey a civil magistrate. Observe that the Biblical text itself indicates that God approved or endorsed the civil disobedience in the examples cited.

When prohibited from doing what God has commanded

Moses and Aaron opposed Pharaoh (calling down God’s curses on Pharaoh, Egypt, and its gods) in order to deliver the Jewish people from slavery (Ex 5-14).

Daniel refused to obey King Darius’ order to not pray to any god but Darius for thirty days, thereby obeying the law of God rather than the law of the Medes and Persians (Dn 6:5-10).

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to Zerubbabel, the governor, Joshua the high priest, and to the Jews in Judah to rebuild the Temple, violating the orders of King Artaxerxes (Ezr 4:19 - 5:3; Hg 1-2).

Peter, John, and the rest of the Apostles refused to obey the direct command of the supreme judicial and legislative court in Jerusalem (later called the Sanhedrin),⁴⁶ which had explicitly ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus. The Apostles replied that they must obey God rather than men (Ac 4:19-20; 5:29).

When commanded to do what God has prohibited (e.g., calling Caesar “Lord,” or giving to Caesar what belongs to God)

Moses’ parents and the Hebrew midwives refused to kill Moses (Ex 1:15-21; 2:2-3; Ac 7:20; Heb 11:23).

Jonathan refused to obey King Saul’s order to kill David (1 Sm 19:1-3).

⁴⁶ *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David N. Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1166f.

King Saul's servants refused to obey his order to kill the Lord's priests at Nob (1 Sm 22:17).

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to eat the food prescribed for them by King Nebuchadnezzar (Dn 1:8, 16).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to obey King Nebuchadnezzar's command to bow to his idol (Dn 3).

Daniel refused to obey King Darius' order to not pray to any God but Darius for thirty days, obeying the law of God rather than the law of the Medes and Persians (Dn 6:5-10).

Mordecai refused to pay homage to Haman (the highest court official) as King Ahasuerus had ordered (Est 3:1-5).

The wise men from the East disobeyed Herod the Great (King over Palestine) by not returning through Jerusalem and not reporting the location of the newly-born Messiah as Herod had ordered (Mt 2:7-12).

When defending the church's jurisdiction⁴⁷

Moses and Aaron opposed Pharaoh (calling down God's curses on Pharaoh, Egypt, and its gods) in order to deliver the Jewish people from slavery (Ex 5-14).⁴⁸

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to Zerubbabel, the governor, Joshua the high priest, and to the Jews in Judah to rebuild the Temple, violating the orders of King Artaxerxes (Ezr 4:19 - 5:3; Hg 1-2).

Peter, John, and the rest of the Apostles refused to obey the direct command of the supreme judicial and legislative court in Jerusalem (later called the Sanhedrin), which had explicitly ordered them not

⁴⁷ Cf. *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici or the Divine Right of Church Government* (1646; reprint: Dallas, TX: Naphtali Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ Note the numerous references to Israel going out of Egypt to sacrifice to the Lord (Ex 3:18; 5:3, 8, 17; 8:25-29; 10:25-27).

to speak in the name of Jesus. The Apostles replied that they must obey God rather than men (Ac 4:19-20; 5:29).

The priest Azariah rebuked King Uzziah for usurping authority that God had delegated to the church (2 Ch 26:16-23).

Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD — valiant men.¹⁸ And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, “*It is* not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You *shall have* no honor from the LORD God. . . . They thrust him out of that place” (2 Ch 26:17-18, 20c).

King Uzziah wasn’t forcing Azariah to sin personally; but Azariah still opposed the king, due to having a divine mandate to protect his ecclesiastical stewardship against civil usurpation. Note that Azariah blatantly accused King Uzziah of trespass/sin (not “overreach”). God sometimes directly punishes, within history, civil magistrates who usurp the role of the church (e.g., King Saul, 1 Sm 13:8-14; King Jeroboam, 1 Ki 12:32-13:5; King Uzziah, 2 Ch 26:16-23).

When defending the family’s jurisdiction

Naboth refused to obey Ahab’s demand of eminent domain⁴⁹ (1 Ki 21). As God’s faithful steward, Naboth protected his family

⁴⁹ Regarding eminent domain see Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government* (Omaha, NE: Thy Word Is Truth, 2007), 125-128.

jurisdiction (in this case his family's multi-generational land inheritance, v. 3)⁵⁰ against the state's unlawful intrusion.⁵¹

When private interposition is needed

The Hebrew midwives refused to kill Moses (Ex 1:15-21; 2:2-3; Ac 7:20; Heb 11:23).

Rahab protected the two enemy Jewish spies (Jos 2; Heb 11:31; Ja 2:25).

When family interposition is needed

Moses' parents refused to kill Moses (Ex 1:15-21; 2:2-3; Ac 7:20; Heb 11:23).

Michal, David's wife, deceived her father, King Saul, enabling David to escape from Saul (1 Sm 19:11-17).

Jehosheba rescued the infant prince, Joash, from Queen Athaliah's agents who were sent to slaughter him (2 Ki 11:2-3 // 2 Ch 22:11-12).

⁵⁰ In the third section of this book, "Biblical Quarantine: Preliminary Principles, Analysis, and Applications," we list what is included in the separate jurisdictions of family, church, and state. The jurisdiction of family includes: marriage; child-raising; property ownership; business ownership; inheritance; education; and welfare. God raised up Naboth as a perpetual Biblical example of faithful stewardship in opposing state tyranny and as legal evidence in Elijah's covenant lawsuit/inditement against King Ahab to exterminate Ahab and his entire family.

⁵¹ Recall the prophet Samuel's generalized warning of kings' behavior (1 Sm 8:9-19), as summarized in the phrase he uses six times, "He will take/confiscate" (vv. 11, 13-17). Samuel's warning may be applied to any civil magistrate who sees himself or herself as above the law of God and as the creator of law. See Robert E. Fugate, *Toward a Theology of Taxation* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2009), 17-25.

Joseph fled to Egypt to save baby Jesus from the edict of Herod the Great (Mt 2:13-15).

When ecclesiastical interposition is needed

The prophet Elijah (with help from the people) executed Queen Jezebel's prophets of Baal (1 Ki 18:40; cf. v. 36).

The priest Jehoiada hid Joash, the rightful heir to the throne, in opposition to Queen Athaliah, and he instigated a political coup to dethrone and execute her (2 Ch 22:12 - 23:15 // 2 Ki 11:3-16).

When civil interposition by lower magistrates (e.g., city, sheriff, or state) is needed

Saul's army rescued Jonathan from King Saul's unjust and foolish command (1 Sm 14:24-45).

Jonathan refused to obey King Saul's order to kill David (1 Sm 19:1-3).

King Saul's servants refused to obey his order to kill the Lord's priests at Nob (1 Sm 22:17).

The prophet Obadiah defied Queen Jezebel's orders and hid God's prophets (1 Ki 18:4).

Jehu mobilized the military to overthrow the wicked King Ahaziah and Queen Jezebel, in obedience to God's prophetic word (2 Ki 9).

Four civil leaders of Ephraim opposed the returning Israelite army from bringing Judean captives into the northern kingdom of Israel, which would violate Leviticus 25:39-55 (2 Ch 28:12-14; cf. vv. 9-11).

The Levitical city of Libnah (cf. 1 Chron. 6:57) seceded from Judah because the king "had forsaken the LORD God of his fathers" (2 Chron. 21:10). God honored that city throughout its existence, yet it was a city founded on refusal to submit to tyranny. They engaged in interposition to protect the citizens under their jurisdiction. The book of Judges is filled with examples of lower governments resisting a national government. They sometimes did so passively for a time and other times did

so actively. Granted, the national government was run by foreigners, but that's the whole point—what is legitimate authority? Just because a civic officer commands something does not mean that he has the authority to do so. In our country, the equivalent of king is the Constitution, and those civil magistrates who give statutes that are unconstitutional can be disobeyed if we are willing to face the costs. And the Supreme Court is not the final authority. They cannot dictate law since all legislative powers are vested in the Congress (Article I, section 1). Reuben, Gilead, Dan and Asher are criticized for not having the courage to be involved in the uprising in Judges 5 (vv. 16–17). Even stronger language is given to the city Meroz: “‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the LORD, curse its inhabitants bitterly, because they did not come to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.” We would not have an America without this doctrine of interposition by lower magistrates.⁵²

When a magistrate gives an unlawful⁵³ order that hinders your calling

Moses and Aaron opposed Pharaoh (calling down God's curses on Pharaoh, Egypt, and its gods) in order to deliver the Jewish people from slavery (Ex 5–14).

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to Zerubbabel, the governor, Joshua the high priest, and to the Jews in Judah to rebuild the Temple, violating the orders of King Artaxerxes (Ezr 4:19 – 5:3; Hg 1–2).

⁵² Philip G. Kayser, presentation to Covenant Presbyterian Church presbytery meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, 8/12/2020.

⁵³ I.e., unlawful according to God's law. Reformed creeds frequently mention “lawful” civil magistrates. If the term “lawful” simply means any ruler—whether he is a tyrant or a “foster father” (Is 49:23) to the church—then, the qualification is meaningless and unnecessary. Instead, “lawful” denotes a civil magistrate who is ruling in submission to the higher law of God.

Esther disobeyed the law by entering the king's presence unsummoned (Est 4:11, 16).

Peter, John, and the rest of the Apostles refused to obey the direct command of the supreme judicial and legislative court in Jerusalem (later called the Sanhedrin), which had explicitly ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus. The Apostles replied that they must obey God rather than men (Ac 4:19-20; 5:29).

Paul and Silas did not leave Philippi when the chief magistrates had asked them to leave (Ac 16:39-40).

Divine commands to flee persecution

Fleeing from persecuting civil magistrates is a form of civil disobedience.⁵⁴

When a civil magistrate makes illegal something that is a fundamental right of every person

David fled from King Saul and evaded capture on numerous occasions (1 Sm 16-24), even disobeying Saul's direct orders to come (1 Sm 26:21).

Elijah refused to obey the summons of Israel's King Ahaziah to appear before him, twice calling down fire from heaven to incinerate fifty soldiers Ahaziah had sent to arrest him (2 Ki 1:9-12).

Joseph fled to Egypt to save baby Jesus from the edict of Herod the Great (Mt 2:13-15).

Jesus commanded His disciples, "He who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one" (Lk 22:36). But it was illegal for private

⁵⁴ Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex or The Law and the Prince* (1644; reprint: Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982), 159. For a plethora of examples of divinely-directed fleeing, see Robert E. Fugate, "Fleeing." Christ himself frequently hid, fled, and avoided dangerous territory (Lk 4:28-29; Jn 5:13; Mt 12:14-15 // Mk 3:6-7; Jn 7:1; 8:59; 10:39-40; 11:53-54; 12:36).

citizens to possess swords in Israel.⁵⁵ Jesus allowed His disciples to carry illegal military weapons (Luke 22:36-38). Interestingly, two of Jesus' disciples – Peter and another (perhaps “Simon called the Zealot,” Lk 6:15; Ac 1:13) – were already conceal carrying short swords.⁵⁶

During Jesus' six trials, four times He refused to answer His interrogators, thereby giving a silent rebuke to the illegal proceedings: (1) Caiaphas, the high priest who functioned as the presiding officer of the supreme judicial and legislative court in Jerusalem (later called the Sanhedrin)⁵⁷ (Mt 26:62-63 // Mk 14:60-61); (2) Pontius Pilate, the governor⁵⁸ of Judea (Mt 27:13-14 // Mk

⁵⁵ Edwin Goodenough, *The Jurisprudence of the Jews Courts of Egypt: Legal Administration by the Jews under the Early Roman Empire as Described by Philo, Judeaus*, (1929; reprint: Union, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, 2002), 151 (discussing Philo's “The Special Laws” [*De Specialibus Legibus*] Book 4, regarding the Eighth Commandment of the Decalogue). Philo was a contemporary of Jesus, living from about 20 B.C. to about A.D. 50. Goodenough writes, “Roman law in Egypt treated the mere possession of weapons as a crime worthy of death.”

Josephus notes that the Essenes “take their weapons with them for fear of thieves” (Josephus, “The Wars of the Jews,” 2:8:4 § 125 [William, Whiston, *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 605]).

⁵⁶ “These Galileans, after the custom of their countrymen, had provided themselves with short swords, which they concealed under their upper garment” (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. In 1 [McLean, VA: Macdonald Publishing, n.d.], 2:537f; in Book V, Chapter XII “Gethsemane”).

⁵⁷ *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David N. Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1166f.

⁵⁸ Pontius Pilate was a Roman procurator who ruled the imperial province of Judea as a personal representative of the Roman emperor. The emperor, rather than the Roman senate, ruled Judea (*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1085).

15:4-5); (3) Herod Antipas, the governor⁵⁹ of Galilee and Perea (Lk 23:9); and (4) Pontius Pilate (Jn 19:9-10). He also refused to perform a miracle (Lk 23:8) or to prophesy (Mt 26:68 // Mk 14:65 // Lk 22:64) at the ruler's command.

The 144,000 not having the mark of the beast (and thus part of the true church) must have bought and sold goods on the black market to be able to survive – in disobedience to the Satan-empowered emperor (Rv 13:16-17). Revelation 12 depicts God helping the church escape the clutches of Satan's assaults (12:6, 14-16), which operated through the Satanically-empowered Roman emperor.

Phil Kayser elaborates on fundamental rights:

Two examples of a fundamental right: a) **The right to provide food for your family** was defended by Gideon who hid parts of his crop to keep it from being seized by the authorities (Judges 6:11). The right to survival food allowed David to break the law and eat shewbread under the oversight of godly Ahimelek (1 Sam. 21). When civil authorities in Revelation prohibited any buying and selling of food without the mark of the beast, it is clear that the 144,000 and others resisted that unlawful decree, and did so with God's permission. Thus when Zimbabwe prohibited the use of any foreign currencies or means of exchange other than their dollar which was being inflated by massive amounts each day, any who obeyed that law ended up starving. It would be imperative to disobey that law in order to feed your family. b) **The right to self-defense**. Despite it being illegal for private citizens to possess swords in Israel (due to Roman fears of assassinations),⁶⁰ Jesus allowed two of His

⁵⁹ Herod Antipas was appointed by the Roman emperor as tetrarch to rule over the provinces of Galilee and Perea (*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1288).

⁶⁰ "Roman law forbade Jews and other subject peoples from carrying swords. See Edwin Goodenough, *The Jurisprudence of the Jews Courts of Egypt: Legal Administration by the Jews under the Early Roman Empire as Described by Philo, Judeaus* (Union, NJ: The

disciples to carry those illegally owned swords (Luke 22:36-38). This was a clear case of civil disobedience, and it speaks directly to the example of people rounding up guns. The right of self-defense from common criminals is so fundamental and so inalienable, that no order to withhold such protection is lawful and disobedience to such a directive is clearly authorized by Jesus. But as soon as Peter used one of those swords to attack the civil magistrate, Jesus forbade such revolution. Though they could lawfully own such illegal weapons and hide such weapons from the civil officers, they could not lawfully use the weapons against the civil officers. So, if officers started collecting all guns, it would be perfectly Biblical to hide such weapons (numerous examples in Judges), but it would not be Biblical to shoot the officers to prevent them from confiscating the weapons (indeed it would be murder). David illustrates this when he illegally obtained a weapon (Saul disarmed citizens and made soldiers turn in their weapons when off-duty), but David refused to use that sword against the Lord's anointed. Junius Brutus's book, *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants* brilliantly tears apart the limits to resistance to tyranny. Of course, examples could be multiplied in the Old Testament. Judges 5:8 says that during the

Lawbook Exchange, 2002 [1st ed., 1929]), p. 151. If you examine books that delve into the legal codes of that time you will also see that they had other laws relating to weapons. No one (including incoming soldiers) was allowed to carry weapons inside the city of Rome because the emperors were afraid of coups. Under Julius Caesar and Augustus, France/Gaul and other nations were disarmed. Carthage was disarmed. The reason Jews were disarmed was because of all the assassinations of soldiers by the zealots and sicarii. So, what Jesus allowed the disciples to carry was not legal according to Roman law, but it was lawful according to Scripture. In fact, self-defense was so important to a Jew that even when the government confiscated weapons (as happened a number of times in Jewish history) they did not consider it sin to carry such illegal weapons if they could find them. What was illegal by fiat statute was lawful according to the Bible.”

time preceding Barak's judgeship, "not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel." And the rest had their weapons illegally. But 40,000 had zero weapons of defense or offense. Throughout history tyrants sought to disarm the people, whereas leaders who were actually interested in liberty always insisted on an armed citizenry. These judges always rearmed all of their citizens and kept them armed throughout the duration of their judgeship. Most examples of judges in the book of Judges involved disobedience to the orders of weapon confiscation by civil magistrates.⁶¹

When God calls a church to become an underground church

Revelation 12:6, 14-17 shows God's authorization of an underground, unlicensed, illegal church continuing to operate on every level without heeding the government's restrictions. The very presence of underground churches in China and other places is a constant act of disobedience on the part of churches. Nor is it simply disobeying on fundamental issues of continued worship, evangelism, etc. They are disobeying the government's prohibition of unauthorized Bibles, literature, preaching on Daniel (something prohibited for many years in China), collecting tithes, etc. Underground churches continually disobey the civic officers on both the elements and the circumstances of worship. The former Soviet Union prohibited the church from picking up orphans, engaging in charity, and numerous other acts of mercy ministries. Why did Paul never apply for a license (*lice*) or a corporate charter from Rome? Failure to do so was clearly illegal (as research books that I referenced in my presbytery paper on church incorporation demonstrated), and the Jews who had incorporated their synagogues (not all did, but

⁶¹ Philip G. Kayser, presentation to Covenant Presbyterian Church presbytery meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, 8/12/2020. For an overview of "rights" see Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Patriarchy: Male Headship in Family, Church, and State* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2018), 233-239.

many did) tried to use that fact as a reason to take Paul to the Roman courts. The church of the first 300 years was an underground church. Yes, you could say that certain illegal things they did were because of the first two points above, but not everything falls under that category. It is not the state's jurisdiction to dictate anything in the church's jurisdiction.⁶²

When prophetic rebuke is warranted

Moses and Aaron opposed Pharaoh (calling down God's curses on Pharaoh, Egypt, and its gods) in order to deliver the Jewish people from slavery (Ex 5-14).

The prophet Elisha dishonored King Jehoram: "And Elisha said, 'As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you [Jehoram, king of Israel], nor see you'" (2 Ki 3:14). The prophet Elisha's words reflected God's attitude toward the idolatrous king of Israel.

Jeremiah prophesied surrender to Babylon, against the directives of King Zedekiah and the governing officials of Judah (Jer 38). This was considered treason.

Old Testament prophets frequently prophesied God's judgment against kings of many nations.⁶³ The prophets' rebukes of the kings of Israel and Judah caused them to be persecuted and sometimes killed.

⁶² Philip G. Kayser, presentation to Covenant Presbyterian Church presbytery meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, 8/12/2020. Both China and the former Soviet Union prohibited people under the age of eighteen from attending church.

⁶³ John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, rev. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 74. J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, (1973; reprint: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 660-664.

Jesus called Herod Antipas a female fox (Lk 13:31–32), thereby dishonoring the governor/king, and Jesus did not immediately leave Herod’s territorial jurisdiction.⁶⁴

Jesus Christ rebuked and pronounced prophetic curses⁶⁵ against several unbelieving cities that had witnessed many of His miracles (Mt 11:20–24; Lk 10:13). These rebukes and curses would have included the civil magistrates, as well as the ecclesiastical leaders of those cities.

On one occasion Jesus rebuked and pronounced six prophetic curses against hypocritical, self-righteous Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers (Lk 11:39–52). On another occasion He rebuked in

⁶⁴ Herod Antipas was the Roman tetrarch (governor) of Galilee and Perea. He ruled his territory as a king (Mk 6:14, 22).

“Jesus views Herod [Antipas] with something less than respect.” “Fox” connotes: (1) a person of no significance; (2) a deceiver, a person of cunning; (3) a destroyer. Jesus stated that He would continue His ministry and then die in Jerusalem, regardless of Herod’s will (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, BECNT, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996], 2:1247).

⁶⁵ “Woe” is a distinctive form of prophetic speech, and is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It occurs in prophecies to express intense anger against evil actions and to convey threats of impending divine judgments (*The Anchor Bible Dictionary* [ABD], ed. David N. Freedman, 6 vols. [New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992], 6:945–947; *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* [ISBE₂], ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, rev. ed., 4 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988], 4:1088). “Jesus made use of woes in his speech – as a kind of negative prophetic oracle” (ABD, 6:947). The New Testament uses the Greek word οὐαί (translated “woe”) 46 times. Of these, 30 occur in the Synoptic Gospels – all being uttered by Jesus himself (Mt 11:21; 18:7; 23:13, 15f, 23, 25, 27, 29; 24:19; Mk 13:17; 14:21; Lk 6:24–26; 10:13; 11:42–44, 46f, 52; 17:1; 21:23; 22:22)! A few of these occurrences express more prophetic warning and lamentation over foreseen impending judgments than prophetic condemnation or curses (e.g., Mt 18:7; Mt 24:19 // Mk 13:17 // Lk 21:23).

extremely denunciatory language — even pronouncing seven prophetic curses against — hypocritical, self-righteous Pharisees and scribes (Mt 23:13-36). These were undoubtedly ecclesiastical leaders; however, some were probably also members of the Sanhedrin, i.e., the supreme judicial and legislative court in Jerusalem.

Jesus also spoke several general curses that could also have included some civil magistrates.⁶⁶

During Jesus' six trials, four times He refused to answer His interrogators, thereby giving a silent rebuke to the illegal proceedings: (1) Caiaphas, the high priest who functioned as the presiding officer of the supreme judicial and legislative court in Jerusalem (later called the Sanhedrin)⁶⁷ (Mt 26:62-63 // Mk 14:60-61); (2) Pontius Pilate, the governor⁶⁸ of Judea (Mt 27:13-14 // Mk 15:4-5); (3) Herod Antipas, the governor⁶⁹ of Galilee and Perea (Lk 23:9); and (4) Pontius Pilate (Jn 19:9-10). He also refused to perform a miracle (Lk 23:8) or to prophesy (Mt 26:68 // Mk 14:65 // Lk 22:64) at the ruler's command.

⁶⁶ Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Imprecations: Christians' Secret Weapon* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2007), 20f.

⁶⁷ *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David N. Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1166f.

⁶⁸ Pontius Pilate was a Roman procurator who ruled the imperial province of Judea as a personal representative of the Roman emperor. The emperor, rather than the Roman senate, ruled Judea (*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1085).

⁶⁹ Herod Antipas was appointed by the Roman emperor as tetrarch to rule over the provinces of Galilee and Perea (*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1288).

The Apostle Paul spoke a prophetic⁷⁰ curse⁷¹ against Ananias, the high priest⁷² who presided over the “Sanhedrin,” which was trying Paul; Ananias had violated Biblical law by ordering Paul (who had not been convicted of any crime) to be struck (Ac 23:2). This prophetic curse was fulfilled about nine years later (A.D. 66) when

⁷⁰ Acts commentators: Craig S. Keener, 3:3274f; F.F. Bruce, *Acts Greek Text*, 464; I. Howard Marshall, 363; Ben Witherington III, 689; Ernst Haenchen, 637; Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, part 1: *The Acts of the Apostles*, eds. F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, 4:287.

⁷¹ Richard I. Pervo, *Acts*, Hermeneia, 573. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, AB, 717. I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC, 363 and G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 598. C.K. Barrett, *Acts*, ICC, 2:1059, 1061. Hans Conzelmann, *Acts*, Hermeneia, 192. Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts*, 809. Johannes Munck, *Acts*, AB, 223. The Biblical basis for this curse was probably Lv 5:1; 19:15a; Dt 28:22, 28.

⁷² I believe Ac 23:3–5 should be understood to mean that Paul knowingly rejected Ananias as a valid High Priest (as taught by Augustine [Epistle 138:13 in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, First Series (NPNF1), 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980–1983), 1:485], Calvin [*Acts*, 2:229], Luke Timothy Johnson [397], I. Howard Marshall [364], Ben Witherington [689], Johannes Munck [223], James D.G. Dunn [302], J.A. Alexander [326], John Eadie [369], H.A.W. Meyer [429], Paton J. Gloag [2:310], etc.). Evidence for this view includes that facts that on the previous day: Paul had appealed to Ananias as a suitable witness (Ac 22:5); Ananias issued orders that those standing near Paul obeyed (23:2); and Paul addressed Ananias as “sitting to judge” (23:3). Furthermore, Paul did not apologize or retract his prophetic curse: “The chief priest’s behavior was not in accord with his status and function. Far from an ‘apology’ for a mistake, Paul’s statement is another prophetic criticism of the chief priest, whose behavior makes him ‘unrecognizable’” (Luke Timothy Johnson, *Acts*, SacPag, 397). For a thorough discussion see Craig S. Keener, *Acts*, 3:3279–3281.

rioting Jews burned down Ananias' house, kidnapped his son, and later found Ananias hiding in an aqueduct, where Menahem's lawless Sicarii (a branch of the Jewish Zealots) murdered him.⁷³

Most of the above examples of God-endorsed civil disobedience are taken from Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government: Proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the Nations* (Omaha, NE: Thy Word Is Truth, 2007), 119–120. This book also contains additional examples of prophets rebuking civil magistrates (p. 20):

God declares that, “It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts” (Pr 16:12). That is why the prophet John the Baptizer could tell Herod Antipas (Roman Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea), “It is not lawful for you to have her [i.e., Herodias, the wife of his brother, Herod Philip]” (Mt 14:4). (John was not referring to Roman law, but to the law of God, the law that transcends Roman law.) Additional examples include Nathan rebuking King David (2 Sm 12:1–14), an unnamed prophet rebuking King Jeroboam (1 Ki 12:31–13:10), Elijah rebuking King Ahab (1 Ki 18:18; 21:17–26), the priest Azariah rebuking King Uzziah (2 Ch 26:16–23), and Daniel rebuking the pagan Babylonian King Belshazzar (Dn 5:17–28) for violating God's law. God's Word also prohibits the king from amassing too much personal power and wealth, so he will not consider himself better than his fellow countrymen (Dt 17:15–20).

⁷³ Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 625f (*Jewish Wars* 2:17:9:426, 429, 441f) and *Antiquities of the Jews* (20:10:3:208–210); cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:225. Regarding Menahem see *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 422; cf. *Jewish Encyclopedia* (JE), ed. Isidore Singer, 12 vols. (NY, NY: KTAV, 1901–1906), 8:468 (available at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10628-menahem-ben-jair>). Excerpt from Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Curses: Divine and Demonic*, 34.

These examples of prophetic rebuke demonstrate that we must interpret the instruction to “honor the king” (1 Pt 2:17)⁷⁴ in light of the whole Bible, which teaches that the Word of God is a higher authority than the king, and it includes numerous prophetic rebukes and judgments from God against civil magistrates who violated His just law.⁷⁵ Without recognizing this truth, people can again fall into the idolatrous doctrine of the divine right of kings, in which the word of the king is the word of God, and any disobedience to the monarch is always sinful.

We will conclude this section with a portion of John Murray’s description of the church’s responsibility of “proclamation”:

The church is charged to **define the functions of these other institutions and the lines of demarcation by which their spheres are distinguished.** . . . The functions and duties of the civil magistrate do come within the scope of the church’s proclamation in every respect in which the Word of God bears upon the proper discharge of these functions and responsibilities. **When the civil authority trespasses the limits of its authority, it is the duty of the church to condemn such a violation. When laws are proposed or enacted that are contrary**

⁷⁴ 1 Peter 2:17 says “Honor all people. . . . Honor the king.” 1 Peter 3:7 teaches that husbands should honor their wives. The same Greek term for “honor” is used in both these verses. The call to honor all people and to honor our wives is not a call for husbands to submit to all people or to submit to their wives. The inescapable conclusion is that the command to honor does not imply obedience or submission to the king in all circumstances.

⁷⁵ John Howie wrote a treatise on judgments God brought on church and state leaders who were opposing the reformation/reformers in Scotland, which included prophetic denunciations: John Howie, *The Judgment and Justice of God Exemplified*. . . (Glasgow, Scotland: John Bryce, 1782). Several prophetic judgments are listed in Robert E. Fugate, “Scots Worthies Miracles Referenced,” taken from John Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, rev. by W.H. Carslaw (1870; Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995).

to the Word of God, it is the duty of the church in proclamation and in official pronouncement to oppose and condemn them. . . . It is misconception of what is involved in the proclamation of the whole counsel of God to suppose or plead that the church has no concern with the political sphere. The church is concerned with every sphere and is obligated to proclaim and inculcate the revealed will of God as it bears upon every department of life.⁷⁶

When the civil magistrate trespasses the limits of his authority, it is incumbent upon the church to expose and condemn such a violation of his authority. When laws are proposed or enacted which are contrary to the law of God, it is the duty of the church to oppose them and expose their iniquity. When the civil magistrate fails to exercise his God-given authority in the protection and promotion of the obligations, rights, and liberties of the citizens, **the church has the right and duty to condemn such an action**, and by its proclamation of the counsel of God, to **confront the civil magistrate** with his responsibility and promote the correction of such neglect.⁷⁷

Additional key verses giving God's perspective on civil magistrates

We have noted the hermeneutical principle that a given Scripture must be interpreted in a manner that is consistent with the teaching of all of Scripture — applying it to 1 Peter 2:17. This principle must also be applied to Romans 13:1-7. The following verses also have powerful implications and applications that can correct wrong views of civil government:

⁷⁶ John Murray, "The Church, Its Identity, Function, and Resources" in *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, 4 vols. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976-1982), 1:241 (bold added).

⁷⁷ John Murray, "The Relation of Church and State," in *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, 1:255 (bold and underline added).

“The LORD *is* our Judge, The LORD *is* our **Lawgiver**, The LORD *is* our King; He will save us” (Is 33:22). [When a nation rejects God as Lawgiver, God acts as Judge in issuing the ruling of guilty with its appropriate sentence, which He then enforces as King. Your lawgiver is your savior.⁷⁸]

“Those who forsake the law [of God] praise the wicked, But such as keep the law [of God] contend with them” (Pr 28:4). (Several verses in this chapter warn against wicked rulers: vv. 12, 15-16, 28.) [Example of praising the wicked: presidential endorsements made by antinomian, Zionist, evangelical leaders.]

“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law” (Pr 29:18). [Without God’s absolute standard everyone does what is right in his own eyes — including civil magistrates (cp. Jdg 17:6; 21:25; Dt 12:8).]

When God’s law is not applied, obeyed, and enforced “justice never goes forth” but “perverse judgment proceeds” (Hab 1:4; contrast Heb 2:2).

“Ephraim is oppressed *and* broken in judgment, because he willingly walked by *human* precept” (Ho 5:11 NKJV).

As a form of judgment on His covenant-breaking, apostate people, God “gave them up to [live under pagan⁷⁹] statutes that were not good and judgments by which they could not live” (Ezk 20:25).

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you. . . . Because you have

⁷⁸ This is not merely an abstract principle. Consider first-century Roman Caesars, such as Augustus, whose coins vividly portrayed that “salvation is to be found in none other save Augustus, and there is no other name given to men in which they can be saved” (contra Ac 4:12) (Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars*, 88).

⁷⁹ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, AB, 368f. Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, NIVAC, 262 n 12. Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, WBC, 12. Douglas Stuart, *Ezekiel*, CC, 182.

forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Ho 4:6).

“A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor” (Pr 28:16a).

Cunning, evil rulers “cause deceit to prosper” under their rule (Dn 8:25).

God compares evil officials to roaring lions and evil judges to ravenous wolves that completely devour their prey (Zp 3:3; cf. Pr 28:15).

Similarly, Christ exposed evil leaders who “devour widows’ houses” (Mt 23:14 // Mk 12:40 // Lk 20:47).⁸⁰

⁸⁰ The Greek term οἶκος denotes “a house and what is in it, *property, possessions, estate*” (BDAG, οἶκος, def. 4; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [TDNT], 9 vols + Index, eds. Gerhard Kittle and Gerhard Friedrich [ET, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–1976], 5:131); thus, the scribes “rob widows of their houses (and household goods)” (BDAG). Scribes could prey on widows: “through excessive legal fees, through mismanaging to their own advantage an estate of which they were made trustees, through taking their houses as pledges for unpayable debts, through promoting the temple cult which ‘eats up’ the resources of the pious poor, or more generally through exploiting their hospitality and trust” (R.T. France, *Mark*, NICNT [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002], 491; cf. J.A. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, AB, 2:1318; D.L. Bock, *Luke*, BECNT, 2:1643f). The fraudulent means (“pretext”) included “receiving large sums of money in return for a commitment to pray at length for the widows” (J. Nolland, *Luke*, WBC, 3:976); cf. “payment for the prayers of a religious professional which became common in medieval Christianity” (France, 492). These exploited widows could include both poor widows and rich widows (A.Y. Collins, *Mark*, Hermeneia, 584). “There were widows aplenty to be taken advantage of; for adolescent girls were often married off to men a number of years their senior” (R.H. Gundry, *Mark*, 727).

Evil civil magistrates oppress a man and his household by coveting and seizing his field, his house, and his inheritance (Mc 2:2; cf. 1 Ki 21).

Warmongering, empire-building nations fight “to possess dwelling places *that are* not theirs” (Hab 1:6; cf. Dt 2:5, 9, 19; 2 Ch 25:19; Pr 26:17). God will “scatter the peoples that delight in war” (Ps 68:30).

God curses every thief and his household (Zc 5:3–5; Hab 2:9), even declaring, “The one who accumulates what does not belong to him is as good as dead” (Hab 2:6 NET). [“Every” includes civil magistrates.]

When God’s covenant people wanted a centralized civil government “like all the nations” (1 Sm 8:20), they subsequently “walked in the statutes of the nations” (because they “feared other gods”). Consequently, God sent them into exile as slaves (2 Ki 17:7–8; cf. Mc 6:16 “the statutes/regulations of Omri are kept,” rather than the just statutes of God).

“They set up kings, but not by Me; They made princes, but I did not acknowledge *them*” (Ho 8:4).⁸¹ (Cp. Is 10:1–2; Ps 94:20; Lk

⁸¹ Duane A. Garrett translates, “It is they who make kings — kings who are not from me; they appoint rulers [whom] I do not know” (*Hosea, Joel*, NAC, 182). “The prophet represents YHWH as not related to, and thus not approving, the appointment of kings and officials. . . . The monarchy and its officials do not represent YHWH’s will for his people. . . . The kings (and related officials) have not been YHWH’s designees” (J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, NICOT, 220). “The people appointed kings over themselves without YHWH’s authorization” (Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, Berit Olam, 2 vols, 1:221). “The kings they made lacked the authority of divine appointment because they were not from God. . . . He [Yahweh] was not consulted. The government acted solely on the basis of expediency and political motivation without any recourse to God” (Thomas McComiskey, in *The Minor Prophets*, ed. Thomas E. McComiskey, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992–1998], 1:123). “The Israelites have

18:6.) [Israel did not choose civil magistrates in accordance with God's prescriptive will, i.e., by inquiring of Yehowah, by looking for His supernatural anointing in potential candidates, and by correctly applying His revealed, written Word that is the standard giving the Biblical qualifications for civil magistrates.]

‘Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’ (Dt 27:26).

God describes His moral law as “the statutes of life” (Ezk 33:15; cf. v. 11).

“Do not associate with those given to change” (Pr 24:21b). “I hate the double-minded, But I love Your law (Ps 119:113). [Pragmatic, flip-flopping politicians are not committed to the unchangeable God of the Bible, to His unchanging revealed truth, or to His unchanging justice (which is articulated in Biblical law). Being “double-minded” they are “unstable” in “all” their ways; consequently, God will not answer any of their prayers (Ja 1:6-8).]

“And Elisha said, ‘As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you [Jehoram, king of Israel], nor see you’” (2 Ki 3:14).

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Ps 33:12). “Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin *is* a reproach to *any* people” (Pr 14:34).⁸² “**All** the nations that forget God” “shall be turned into hell” (Ps 9:17).

arrogated to themselves the right to install or depose kings (cf. 7:3-4). Yahweh *alone* determines who can be king either by charismatic gifts or by direct revelation through a prophet. He *gives* kings to the nations (e.g., 1 Ki 19:15-16); they do not decide who their kings will be” (Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC, 131).

⁸² These verses are taken from Robert E. Fugate, “Biblical Qualifications for Civil Government Officeholders,” 12f.

Responses to tyrannical governments

I discussed successive stages of Christian resistance to tyrannical civil governments in *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government* (85–88). I will not repeat that material here. However, it is helpful to distinguish two general scenarios and the different Christian responses to each.

Scenario 1

If an unjust order/law causes you to sin (for example, by prohibiting you from doing what God has commanded, or by commanding you to do what God has prohibited), then you **must** disobey it (i.e., you have the Biblical obligation to disobey it).

Scenario 2

If an unjust order/law does not cause you to sin (for example, either by prohibiting you from doing what God has commanded, or by commanding you to do what God has prohibited), then you **may** disobey it (i.e., you have the Biblical right to disobey it). In this case you should:

- Ask God to give you wisdom to discern the seriousness of the unjust order/law with regard to the kingdom of God.

Most American Christians are not presently fighting certain laws that usurp the jurisdiction of the family, such as: requiring marriage licenses and driver's licenses; paying unbiblical taxes (e.g., income tax, property tax, inheritance tax, etc.);⁸³ filing forms to homeschool their children; filing paperwork to obtain a concealed carry gun permit; filling out somewhat intrusive census forms; etc. In a time of ubiquitous usurpations by all-controlling civil governments, a person cannot simultaneously fight on every front. Even trying to do so would make it impossible to do anything else God has called you to do. We are finite creatures. Freedoms that were incrementally lost over decades and centuries are

⁸³ Robert E. Fugate, *Toward a Theology of Taxation*.

seldom regained instantaneously. Nevertheless, if a man does not fight to protect his God-given jurisdiction, it won't be long before he won't have any jurisdiction at all!

- Ask God to lead you by His Holy Spirit with regard to what He is calling you to do in this situation, which battle/s He is calling you to fight now. For example, is God calling you to prophetically rebuke an idolatrous civil magistrate and proclaim Jesus Christ's Lordship/Sovereignty/Dominion over all things, calling the magistrate to repent or God's curses will fall upon him/her?

Reformed vs. Lutheran views of the state

The one sharp difference which at the present time distinguishes Luther and Calvin more than any other doctrine is their differing conception of the relation of the Christian individual and the Christian Church on the one hand to the civil Government or the State on the other hand.⁸⁴

Reformed theology emphasized God's sovereign dominion over everything, including both church and state. God's written Word is His scepter by which He rules the universe.⁸⁵ Thus, the Word of God is the standard by which to judge civil magistrates. The Bible (not natural law) is the only standard of justice and the just ordering of society. That is why Presbyterian theologian and apologist John Gresham Machen called the Bible "the charter upon which all human liberty depends."⁸⁶ The truth of this is readily seen by

⁸⁴ Hugh T. Kerr, *A Compend of Luther's Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1943), xiii.

⁸⁵ John Calvin, "Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France," *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, translated and indexed by Ford L. Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), 1:12.

⁸⁶ John Gresham Machen, *God Transcendent*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse (1949; reprint: Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 120. R.J. Rushdoony demonstrates that

observing that in whatever nations the Bible has been freely circulated and believed, those “nations have gained liberty, enlightenment, justice, and prosperity.”⁸⁷

Conversely, Martin Luther taught a theology of two-kingdoms:

KINGDOM OF GOD'S LEFT HAND	KINGDOM OF GOD'S RIGHT HAND
Secular	Spiritual

where there is no transcendental law and power in a separate and omnipotent being, then power has a wholly immanent and immediate source in a state, group, or person, and it is beyond appeal. The state becomes the saving power and the source of law; it becomes the priestly agency of its own total power and the manifest power of its divinity. Such a state becomes god walking on the earth [Hegel], and its every tyranny is identified as liberty, because being and meaning are both identifiable in terms of the state. Since it is held that there is no law beyond the state, meaning is what the state defines, and liberty is what the state provides. In this faith, for man to be free means to be in the state. More than that, for man *to be*, he must be a member of the state, for being is one and continuous, and salvation is a metaphysical unification of all being (*The One and the Many*, 60f).

⁸⁷ Johannes G. Vos, “Bible,” *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, eds. Edwin H. Palmer and Philip E. Hughes, 4 vols. (Wilmington, DE: National Foundation For Christian Education, 1964–1972), 1:662. “Everywhere it has been the precursor of civilization and liberty, driving out barbarity and despotism. . . . It has dispelled ignorance and superstition” (Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962], 96; cf. 97–103, 379f, 430–446). Cf. Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, 249–251, 105–112; in *Complete Works*, 5:248f, 135–140; Douglas F. Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World* (Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 1992). Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011).

The world and its culture; the state	Church
Temporal realm	Heavenly/eternal realm
God rules by law (justice, wrath, force, severe punishment)	God rules by His Word and Spirit (mercy and kindness)
Public, secular ethics: law based upon natural law ⁸⁸ (reason)	Private, religious ethic: Sermon on Mount

The first thing that should strike an informed person is that Luther's bifurcated two-kingdoms are rooted in Platonic dualism, i.e., spirit vs. matter. Also note that Luther's two-kingdoms dualism postulates an ethical dualism governed by two kinds of law, with the Bible being irrelevant to the "secular" world, culture, and the state. God's revealed Word is unnecessary in this "secular" realm/kingdom (contra a proper understanding of the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*); human reason is sufficient. In practice, Luther subjected the church to the state, rendering the church impotent to oppose tyranny (as is evidenced by the history of Lutheranism in Germany⁸⁹) and to be

⁸⁸ The classical scholar Melancthon attempted to establish the legitimacy of God's secular rule from natural law (Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 4 vols. [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996], 4:186). This is demonstrated by his treatment of Romans 13:1-7 (cf. P.D.W. Krey, P.D.S. Krey, T. George, S.M. Manetsch, and D.W. McNutt, eds., *Romans 9-16*, Reformation Commentary on Scripture [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016], vol. 8).

⁸⁹ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 236, 91. "Karl Barth, in his letter to the French Protestants in December, 1939, suggests that the difficulty of understanding the apparent complicity of modern Church life in Germany must be accounted for on the basis of 'Martin Luther's error on the relation between

God's prophetic voice. This has been recognized by numerous scholars, as the following quotes demonstrate.

"In his [Luther's] reaction against the Roman Catholic idea of the domination of the Church over the State, he went to another extreme, and virtually **made the Church subject to the State** in everything except the preaching of the Word."⁹⁰

"The Lutheran Reformers handed the work of reorganization largely over to them [i.e., the German princes], and thus unwittingly introduced a caesaropapacy; that is, such a union of church and state as makes the head of the state also the supreme ruler in the church. It is just the opposite of the hierarchical principle of the Roman church, which tries to rule the state."⁹¹

"Luther and Melancthon . . . established State churches controlled by princes, theologians, and pastors. . . . Lutheran congregations in the old world are almost passive, and most of them enjoy not even

the temporal and the spiritual order and power'" (Hugh T. Kerr, *A Compend of Luther's Theology*, pp. xiv-xv).

However, some of the earliest Lutheran reformers attempted to develop a theology of resistance to Roman Catholic tyrants who conducted military incursions into Protestant territories (e.g., Martin Bucer, d. 1551; Martin Luther, d. 1546; and eventually Philip Melancthon, d. 1560). The excellent Magdeburg Confession was written in 1550. See Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, volume 2: "The Age of Reformation" (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 189-219 and Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvinism and the resistance theory, 1550-1580," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 200-203.

⁹⁰ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 560. Cf. Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 109.

⁹¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. (NY, NY: Scribner's, 1902), 6:545. For a plethora of such historical and theological observations see Robert E. Fugate, "Luther's Two Kingdoms" and idem., "Lutherans and Gods' Law."

the right of electing their pastor. . . . Luther first proclaimed the principle of the **general priesthood**, but in practice it was **confined to the civil rulers**, and carried out in a wrong way by making them the supreme bishops of the Church, and reducing the Church to a degrading dependence upon the State. Luther and his followers carefully **abstained from politics**, and entrusted the secular princes friendly to the Reformation with the episcopal rights.”⁹²

“Luther’s social ethic has been described as ‘defeatist’ and ‘quietist,’ encouraging the Christian to tolerate (or at least fail to oppose) unjust social structures.”⁹³

Luther’s “advocacy of passive obedience to lawful temporal jurisdiction encouraged the 17th century doctrine of the **divine right of kings**.”⁹⁴

Naturally, Luther’s view of the state controlled his exegesis of Romans 13:1-7.⁹⁵

⁹² Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom*, 6th ed., 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 1:218. Schaff contrasts this with Reformed theology 218f (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1.vii.iii.html>). Schaff notes that Calvinistic churches “start from the **absolute sovereignty of God and the supreme authority of his holy Word**, and endeavor to reconstruct the whole Church [and all of life] on this basis,” beginning with theology and proceeding to anthropology (216). “The inalienable rights of an American citizen are nothing but the Protestant idea of the general priesthood of believers applied to the civil sphere, or developed into the corresponding idea of the general kingship of free men” (219).

⁹³ Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 209.

⁹⁴ “Church and State,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols + 2 suppl. (NY, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 3:733.

⁹⁵ “Christians should not refuse, under the pretext of religion, to obey men [i.e., civil magistrates], especially evil ones” (Martin Luther, *Luther: Lectures on Romans*, LCC [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1961], 358).

What difference has the Reformed versus the Lutheran perspectives on state made? The outstanding Reformation historian Merle d'Aubigné observes, "What chiefly distinguishes the Reformation of Calvin from that of Luther is, that wherever it was established, it brought with it not only truth but **liberty**, and all the great developments which these two fertile principles carry with them."⁹⁶ Alister McGrath adds, "**Domination of the church by the state**" became "**a virtually universal feature of Lutheranism.**"⁹⁷ Conversely, "**Dictatorship has never arisen on Reformed or Calvinistic soil.**"⁹⁸

Tragically, many conservative Presbyterian seminary professors in America have left the Reformed theology of the state (which was inherited from our spiritual forefathers, i.e., the English Puritans, the Scottish Covenanters, and the French Huguenots), retreating to the failed, impotent, Lutheran, "two-kingdoms" theology.⁹⁹

["The Anabaptist reformers, on the other hand, encouraged at least two attitudes toward government: either to withdraw altogether from the world and form a true Christian community according to biblical models [?], like the Hutterites, or, like Thomas Müntzer, to build the kingdom of God on earth and if necessary revolt against 'ungodly' rulers who resisted them."¹⁰⁰]

⁹⁶ Jean H. Merle d'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation in the Time of Calvin*, 8 vols. in 4 (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 2000), 1:3. Douglas F. Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World: The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments from the 16th Through 18th Centuries*.

⁹⁷ Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 2nd ed., 209f.

⁹⁸ Hugh T. Kerr, *A Compend of Luther's Theology*, pp. xiii-xiv).

⁹⁹ John M. Frame, *The Escondido Theology: A Reformed Response to the Two Kingdom Theology*. In this exposé, Frame critiques Reformed scholars Meredith Kline, Michael Horton, R. Scott Clark, David Van Drunen, Darryl Hart, and Jason Stellman.

¹⁰⁰ P.D.W. Krey, P.D.S. Krey, T. George, S.M. Manetsch, and D.W. McNutt, eds., *Romans 9-16*, Reformation Commentary on Scripture, 8:150.

Reformed heritage of civil disobedience

Our Reformed heritage includes many Reformed leaders who functioned as God's prophetic voice to civil magistrates, men who opposed tyrants¹⁰¹ in person and/or by their powerful writings. Classic examples include:

- The Scottish Confession (1560), section 14, What Works are Reputed Good before God: "to obey their [rulers] charges (not repugnant to the commandments of God) . . . to repress tyranny (Jer 22)."¹⁰²
- John Knox: "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women"; "Appellation . . . to the Nobility . . ."; "Summary of the Second Blast of the Trumpet"; etc., were all written in 1558. Six years later the "The Debate at the General Assembly, June 1564" occurred.¹⁰³ In response to Knox's imprecatory prayers, Roman Catholic Mary Queen of Scots (later named Mary

¹⁰¹ Centralized civil governments possessing significant authority are always oppressive. See: Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 79–85; idem., *Toward a Theology of Taxation*, 17–25. However, a tyrant goes beyond that. For an in-depth analysis of what constitutes a tyrant, see Junius Brutus (Philippe Duplessis-Mornay?), *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos / A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants* (1579).

¹⁰² *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*, compiled by James T. Dennison, Jr., 2:195. Cf. the First Helvetic Confession 27 (1536; Dennison, 1:351) and the Second Helvetic Confession 30 (1566; in Dennison, 2:880).

¹⁰³ John Knox, *On Rebellion*, ed. Roger A. Mason (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Marvin A. Breslow, *The Political Writings of John Knox* (London: Associated University Press: Folger Books, 1985). Most of these writings are included in David Laing, ed., *Works of John Knox*, 6 vols. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014).

Stuart) is reputed to have said: “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe.”¹⁰⁴

- French Huguenot writer using the penname Junius Brutus (probably Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, perhaps in collaboration with Hubert Languet), *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* or *Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants* (1579), which taught that lesser magistrates have a God-ordained duty to resist tyrannical magistrates — including waging war against them — and to interpose themselves between a tyrant and the people (the Biblical doctrine of interposition);
- Scottish Covenanters George Gillespie, “Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty” and Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex or The Law and the Prince* (both written in 1644); and
- Geneva Bible (1560) notes (e.g.: 1 Sm 8:21; 1 Ki 21:11; Dn 6:22; Ac 5:29).

We will summarize Reformed teaching regarding resisting tyrants in the words of Henry Bullinger and John Calvin:

We ought not at any time to defend the tyrannical power, and say that it is of God: for tyranny is not divine, but a devilish, kind of government; and tyrants themselves are properly the servants of the devil, and not of God. . . . We ought not to obey the wicked commandments of godless magistrates, because it is not permitted to magistrates to ordain or appoint any thing contrary to God’s law, or the law of nature.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Alternately, “more than an army of ten thousand men” (John Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, 57).

¹⁰⁵ *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, ed. Thomas Harding, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 1:315f. Cf. Henry Bullinger, “Henry Bullinger On The Duties Of Rulers And Subjects,” in *Puritan Political Ideas 1558–1794*, ed. Edmund S. Morgan (New York: Bobbs-Merill [1587], 1965), 19. Johann Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) was the successor to the great Swiss Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531). Bullinger authored The

For earthly princes lay aside all their power when they rise up against God, and are unworthy of being reckoned in the number of mankind. We ought rather **utterly to defy** [Latin: “*conspuere in issorum capita*,” to spit on their heads] than to obey them whenever they are so restive and wish to spoil God of his rights, and, as it were, to seize upon his throne and draw him down from heaven.¹⁰⁶

Second Helvetic Confession, which was “the most widely received of the sixteenth century Reformed confessions” (*Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*, compiled by James T. Dennison, Jr., 4 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008–2014], 2:809) . . . “the last and the best of the Zwinglian family” (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 1:390). He also organized covenant theology into a cohesive system (Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant Tradition* [Louisville, KY: 1991], 9).

¹⁰⁶ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, translated by Thomas Myers, 2 vols., Lecture XXX, on Daniel 6:22 (1:382). Earlier Calvin had written, “The Lord, therefore, is the King of Kings, who, when he has opened his sacred mouth, must alone be heard, before all and above all men; next to him we are subject to those men who are in authority over us, but **only in him** [i.e., God]. If they command anything against Him [God], **let it go unesteemed**. And here let us not be concerned about all the dignity which the magistrates possess” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, 2:1520 [4:20:32], 1559 ed.; cf. pp. 1517–1521). Robert White translates a portion of this passage more clearly: “**Their command must be dismissed as worthless, with no thought given to their superior authority**” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014], 784; translated from the 1541 French edition). Cf. *Institutes*, 2:8:38 and Calvin’s commentaries on Ex 1:17; Ho 5:11; Ac 4:1–20; 5:29; 17:7. Scholars and pastors need to pay attention to the fact that Calvin grew in his understanding of liberty and resistance to tyranny. “Calvin’s thought underwent some evolution on this point [i.e., civil resistance] in the 1560s, however, during the religious wars in

France. . . . Calvin came to see that the king's power is rightly limited 'under law' and 'under covenant.' . . . Calvin moved from strong denials of sympathy with antimonarchical activity (as in his dedicatory epistle to Francis I in 1536) to openly raising the question of resistance in his early 1560s Sermon XXIX on 1 Samuel 8" (Douglas F. Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World: The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments from the 16th Through 18th Centuries* [Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 1992], 11, 28f; cf. 17f, 28–31). After 1562 Calvin helped raise funds for the Huguenot cause for religious liberty (Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 131). The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which impacted Reformed thought regarding resistance, did not occur until 1572, eight years after Calvin's death. Kelly observes that "Knox developed more thoroughly than Calvin the appeal to scriptural precedents, especially of the Old Testament Hebrew theocracy, as a basis for shaping – and overturning – contemporary legal institutions" (140; cf. 54, 60f). With regard to scriptural precedents, such as the pre-monarchical judges, Jehu, and perhaps others, Reformed writers typically have not recognized the chronological sequence: The Holy Spirit came upon them to destroy their wicked oppressing civil magistrates; then, after being deliverers, they became civil magistrates. In other words, some Spirit-directed, Spirit-anointed men were not lesser magistrates at the time they initially fought against evil, unjust rulers.

¹⁰⁷ Due to different political situations, it is generally the case that Calvinists on the continent of Europe tended to settle for reiterating the more cautious constitutional theory of resistance by inferior magistrates, while Calvinists in Scotland and England developed more individualistic and populist implications of the private-law argument (Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, volume 2: "The Age of Reformation," 210f).

John Knox was "more influenced by the Old Testament theocracy, and rather less by natural law, than Calvin" (Douglas F. Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World: The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments from the 16th Through 18th Centuries*,

51). “Knox developed more thoroughly than Calvin the appeal to scriptural precedents, especially of the Old Testament Hebrew theocracy, as a basis for shaping – and overturning – contemporary legal institutions” (Kelly, 140; cf. 54, 60f). Knox and Christopher Goodman taught that, since all the people were in a covenant with God, under the law of God (Ex 34; 2 Ki 23; 2 Ch 15) – not just their leaders – all the people had a sacred duty imposed by God to resist and remove evil and idolatrous civil magistrates – and will be judged by God accordingly (Kelly, 52–56, 140f; Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, volume 2: “The Age of Reformation,” 235–238); Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation: Studies in the Thought of John Knox* [Grand Rapids, MI: Christian University Press, 1980], 114–125). “Although not well received initially, his [i.e., Knox’s] view was subsequently influential . . .” (Greaves, 155f). Of course, Knox held to the unity of Scripture, presupposing considerable continuity between the old and new covenants (unlike Luther) (Greaves, 21; Kelly, 59).

One difference between Knox and Calvin that is not often discussed is their different giftings. Calvin was the preeminent systematic teacher (both theologian and exegete). Knox certainly was a teacher (indeed, he was “the principal theologian of the Scottish Reformation”), but he “conceived of himself as a prophet and compared himself to his Hebrew predecessors” (Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 135, 1–4), directly confronting idolatrous leaders in both church and state with the absolute word of the sovereign God. (The supernatural gift of prophecy was common among the leaders of the Scottish Presbyterian church, including: Robert Blair, Robert Bruce, Donald Cargill, John Davidson, David Fergusson, John Knox, Alexander Peden, Patrick Simpson, John Welch, and George Wishart. See John Howie, rev. by W.H. Carlsaw, *The Scots Worthies* [1870; reprint: Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995]. Many other sources could be cited.)

With regard to scriptural precedents such as the pre-monarchial judges, Jehu, and perhaps others, Reformed writers typically have not recognized the chronological sequence: The Holy Spirit came upon them to destroy their wicked oppressing civil magistrates; then,

Conclusion

Normally, Christians are morally obligated to be respectful and submissive to civil magistrates (Ex 22:28; Ro 13:1-7; 1 Pt 2:13-14, 17; Tit 3:1; Mt 23:2-3). However, Christians must disobey civil magistrates: (a) when they are prohibited from doing what God has commanded; and (b) when they are commanded to do what God has prohibited. Furthermore, Scripture gives at least eleven additional situations in which disobeying the unrighteous commands of a civil magistrate is the righteous thing to do. The leading of the Holy Spirit is vital in such situations (see the heading, “Applications of Biblical principles to COVID-19,” in part three, “Biblical Quarantine”).

Because Reformed theology elevates Scripture as a higher authority than civil magistrates, and because Scripture speaks to the area of

after being deliverers, they became civil magistrates. In other words, some Spirit-directed, Spirit-anointed men were not lesser magistrates at the time they initially fought against evil, unjust rulers. *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* or *Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants* allows for such revelatory direction today, but offers needed cautions (Yale ed., 61-63; SWRB ed., 46f). In answering four of Knox’s questions regarding obedience to lawful magistrates in 1554, Henry Bullinger gives characteristics needed for godly believers to determine which lesser magistrates to following in opposing a sovereign tyrant, one of which was that they “obey the impulses of the Holy Ghost” (*Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, 3:226). Quentin Skinner, professor of political science at the University of Cambridge, has an important discussion demonstrating logical problems with asserting that tyrants are ordained of God and are God’s ministers, but they should be disobeyed and even resisted in some circumstances. Luther and Melancthon made no attempt to resolve the logical contradictions. Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr Vermigli attempted explanations that rendered their views self-contradictory and incoherent. Only the more radical Calvinists of the 1550s (i.e., Ponet, Goodman, and Knox) squarely faced the logical difficulties and provided coherent explanations (225-230).

civil government, Reformed theology developed a Biblical doctrine of civil disobedience to tyrants (in contrast to Lutheranism).

In sum,

Tyrants ought to be actively resisted for conscience sake by the following means: not granting to them conscientious subjection, not acknowledging them to be the ordinance of God, not honoring them as the minister of God to thee for good, disobeying their unlawful commands, testifying against their wicked rule, praying for the demise of their throne which is established upon wickedness, fleeing their wrath when necessary, and as a last resort revolting against their tyrannical rule when force is necessary for self-defence.¹⁰⁸

For further reading

Junius Brutus (pennname for Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, perhaps in collaboration with Hubert Languet), *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* (1579).¹⁰⁹ Reprints: Junius Brutus, *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants* (1689; Edmonton, AB, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, 1989); Stephanus Junius Brutus the Celt, *Vindiciae Contra*

¹⁰⁸ Greg Price, *Biblical Civil Government Versus the Beast; and the Basis of Civil Resistance* (Edmonton, AB, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, 1996), 19. For successive steps in civil resistance see Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 79–88.

¹⁰⁹ According to U.S. President John Adams, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* was one of the most influential books in America at the time of the American War for Independence (John Adams, *Works* [Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851], 6:4; cited by Douglas F. Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World: The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments from the 16th Through 18th Centuries*, 50 and Rousas J. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic* [Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1978], 25, 28). Thus, it is not surprising that one of the eighteenth-century leaders of Britain referred to the American War for Independence as the “Presbyterian War.”

Tyrannos, ed. George Garnett (Cambridge, UK: Yale University Press, 1994).

Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex or The Law and the Prince* (1644; reprint: Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982).

George Gillespie, “Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty” (1644); available at <https://www.naphtali.com/articles/george-gillespie/wholesome-severity>. Reprinted in *Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature*, ed. Christopher Coldwell, vol. 4 (Dallas, TX: Naphtali Press, 1991), 178–198.

The Magdeburg Confession: April 13, 1550; reprint by Matthew J. Trehwella, translator Matthew Colvin (North Charleston, SC: Create Space, 2012); <https://books.google.com/books?vid=isbn9781470087531&hl=en>.¹¹⁰

Matthew J. Trehwella, *The Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2013).

James M. Wilson, *The Establishment and Limits of Civil Government: An Exposition of Romans 13:1–7* (1853; reprint: Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press, 2009).¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Part two of the Magdeburg Confession (“Concerning Resistance”) argues in part: all the powers [authorities] that be are ordained by God in order to fulfil a particular office; since the magistrate is ordained by God in order that he should be an honor to good works and a terror to evil works (Ro 13), it follows, by definition, that if he begins to be a terror to good works and to honor evil, then he cannot any longer be counted as an ordinance of God, but is the ordinance of the devil; therefore, he is no longer a legitimate civil magistrate and may righteously be disobeyed and resisted (pp. 57ff).

¹¹¹ James R. Willson also wrote *Prince Messiah’s Claims to Dominion Over All Governments: and the Disregard of His Authority by the United States, in the Federal Constitution* (Albany, 1832).

John Knox,¹¹² *On Rebellion*, ed. Roger A. Mason (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994); or

Marvin A. Breslow, *The Political Writings of John Knox* (London: Associated University Press: Folger Books, 1985).

William Symington, *Messiah the Prince or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ* (1884; reprint: Edmonton, AB, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, 1990).

Greg Price, *Biblical Civil Government Versus the Beast; and the Basis of Civil Resistance* (Edmonton, AB, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, 1996); available at http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLs/bibcg_gp.htm.¹¹³ Price provides a nice selection of quotes from the Reformers, Reformed creeds, and Puritans.

Still Waters Revival Books photocopied into one spiral binding an excellent anthology of classic Reformed political writings under the

¹¹² For select Knox quotes regarding civil disobedience see Greg Price, *Biblical Civil Government Versus the Beast; and, the Basis for Civil Resistance*, 12–41.

¹¹³ Regarding the relationship between church and state, Greg Price, following many of the Westminster Divines and the Scottish Covenanters, is a proponent of the **establishment principle**, in which one particular denomination (in their case, Presbyterian) becomes the state church. (Greg Price is also following the historicist interpretation of the book of Revelation.) I believe a sounder position is **national confessionalism**, in which no one Christian denomination is made the official church of that nation, but Biblical Christianity is the official religion of the nation, which entails: (a) Jesus Christ being officially recognized as the Lord over that nation, including over its civil government; (b) the (Protestant) Bible being the highest authority in the nation, and all constitutions, civil laws, judicial decisions, wars, economic policies, etc. being conformed to it; and (c) civil magistrates and the people making covenant to worship and obey only the Triune God as He has instructed in the Bible. Cf. Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*.

title, *Church & State: The Biblical View: A Compilation of Articles from Some of the Best Christian Minds in History, Including Cunningham, Smeaton, M'Crie, Symington, Gillespie, The Westminster Divines, Bannerman, Owen, and Shaw*. It is available digitally at <http://www.puritandownloads.com/church-and-state-the-biblical-view-a-compilation-of-articles-from-some-of-the-best-christian-minds-in-history-including-cunningham-smeaton-mccrie-symington-gillespie-the-westminster-divines-bannerman-owen-and-shaw>.

Douglas F. Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World: The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments from the 16th Through 18th Centuries* (Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 1992); see “Resistance” and “Tyranny” in the Index, 155f.

David W. Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square: Liberal Democracies, Rights, and Civil Liberties* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).

Gary North, ed., *The Theology of Christian Resistance: A Symposium*, vol. 2 of Christianity and Civilization (Tyler, TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1983).

Gary North, ed., *Tactics of Christian Resistance: A Symposium*, vol. 3 of Christianity and Civilization (Tyler, TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1983).

Some of these authors built on the earlier writings of John Ponet,¹¹⁴ Peter Martyr Vermigli,¹¹⁵ Christopher Goodman,¹¹⁶ Theodore Beza,¹¹⁷ Pierre Viret,¹¹⁸ and George Buchanan.^{119 120}

¹¹⁴ John Ponet, “A Shorte Treatise of Politike Power, and of the true obedience which subjects owe to kynges and over civil governours . . .” (1556), noting his discussion and affirmative answer of the question, “Whether it be lawful to depose an evil governor and kill a tyrant?” Ponet lists disarming the people of their weapons as a characteristic of tyrant (50).

¹¹⁵ Peter Martyr Vermigli, commentaries on Judges (1561) and on Romans (1558).

¹¹⁶ Christopher Goodman, “How Superior Powers Ought to Be Obeyed by Their Subjects: And Wherein They May Lawfully By God’s Word Be Disobeyed And Resisted,” <https://defytyrants.com/01/superior-powers.pdf>. For key points in Ponet’s and Christopher Goodman’s arguments see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, volume 2: “The Age of Reformation,” 221–224, 229f, 234–238, 240. For similarities in the teachings of Ponet and Knox see Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 152f.

¹¹⁷ Theodore Beza, “On the Right of Magistrates over Their Subjects and the Duty of Subjects Towards their Rulers,” <http://www.onthewing.org/user/Beza%20-%20Rights%20of%20Magistrates.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ Pierre Viret, “Remonstrances aux Fideles qui Converssent entre les Papistes”; cf. Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 132f, 155. It is unfortunate that the Pierre Viret’s *Christian Instruction* has not been translated into English. For choice, categorized quotes see Jean-Marc Berthoud, *Pierre Viret: A Forgotten Giant of the Reformation* (Tallahassee, FL: Zurich Publishing, 2010) and <http://www.pierreviret.org>.

¹¹⁹ George Buchanan, *De jure regni apud Scotos*; idem., *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*.

¹²⁰ Dave Kopel, “The Calvinist Connection,” *Liberty* (October 2008), 27–31, available at <http://www.davekopel.com/Religion/Calvinism.htm>. Robert M.

Sometimes, we must pay more attention to a Reformer's actions than his teaching. For example, William Tyndale taught that civil magistrates were not to be actively resisted; but "he issued an unsanctioned edition of various books of Scripture, went abroad without permission, and disseminated prohibited books in England."¹²¹

For a historical case study applying Biblical principles of civil resistance to tyranny, consider the American War for Independence (1775-1783).¹²² The Reformed doctrine of the sphere sovereignty of church and state:

Contributed much to the American establishment of consent of the governed, covenant or constitutional limitations of all civil power and all institutions, being seen in terms of God's transcendent law, checks and balances of power in the political and legal structure, liberty of conscience, and the inalienable right to resist tyranny, no matter how powerful or legal its pretensions.¹²³

There is still a need to develop a Reformed theology of civil disobedience and resistance to tyranny that is not dependent on classical, humanist, legal traditions and antinomian philosophers,

Kingdon, "Calvinism and the resistance theory, 1550-1580," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, ed. J.H. Burns, 194-218.

¹²¹ Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 151.

¹²² "Presbyterians and the American Revolution," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 52:4 (Winter 1974), ed. James H. Smylie. W.P. Breed, *Presbyterians and the Revolution* (1876; reprint: Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2008).

¹²³ Douglas F. Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World: The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments from the 16th Through 18th Centuries*, 141. "Knox was a key link in the development of political ideology that culminated in the American Revolution" (Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 156).

but is derived solely from Scripture.¹²⁴ Such a perspective would be much more epistemologically sound and would comport with the Biblical doctrine of *sola Scriptura*.

¹²⁴ Calvin never escaped his scholastic and legal-humanist formal training, frequently appealing to classical sources (e.g., Cicero and Justinian I) as providing the answer to difficult questions regarding the grounds for resisting civil magistrates (Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, volume 2: “The Age of Reformation,” 320; cf. “Index II Author and Source Index” in the McNeill edition of *Calvin’s Institutes*, 2:1592ff).

Theodore Beza, Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, and the other leading Huguenots “turned to the scholastic and Roman law traditions of radical constitutionalism” (Skinner, 320; see p. 321 for Duplessis-Mornay’s dependence on non-Biblical authorities); cf. Roman law, feudal law, and canon law (Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 150). Consequently, the third and longest part of Duplessis-Mornay’s *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* (answering question three, Is it lawful to resist a prince who oppresses the state?) “develops a theory of government and a theory of resistance which is [*sic.*] really secular, cut loose from the religious foundations of much of the rest of the treatise and most of earlier Calvinist resistance theory” (Robert M. Kingdon, “Calvinism and the resistance theory, 1550–1580,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J.H. Burns, 213; cf. Skinner, 338).

ROMANS 13: WHAT DEGREE OF SUBMISSION IS ENVISIONED?

Romans 13:1-7 has often been interpreted to mean that Christians must give absolute submission and obedience to civil magistrates, because all civil magistrates are ministers of God. Let's begin by examining what the text actually says:

Let every soul be subject¹²⁵ to the governing authorities [ἐξουσίαις].¹²⁶ For there is no authority [ἐξουσία] except from God, and the authorities [ἐξουσίαι] that exist are appointed by God.

² Therefore whoever resists¹²⁷ the authority [ἐξουσία] resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

¹²⁵ “Always in the NT submission carries the sense of that which would honor Christ, or as Paul says in Colossians 3:18, ‘as is fitting in the Lord’” (James R. Edwards, *Romans*, NIBC [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992], 307).

¹²⁶ The plural of ἐξουσία occurs in Paul's letters seven times (Ro 13:1 [2x]; Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:15; Tit 3:1; cf. 1 Pt 3:22; cp. the singular in Eph 1:21; Col 2:10). The four occurrences in Ephesians and Colossians probably include the thought of spiritual authorities (i.e., angelic and/or demonic spirit beings that work through human civil magistrates). Romans 13:1 probably refers only to human magistrates. For a discussion of this view see: Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NICNT, 812f n 284; C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 2 vols. [Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1979], 2:656-659; John Murray, *Romans*, NICNT, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), 2:252-256.

¹²⁷ “The word ‘resisteth’ implies an across-the-boards radical defiance of authority, not a moral stand on a particular point” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Romans and Galatians* [Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1997], 247).

³ 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.

⁴ For he is God's **minister** [διάκονος] 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** [διάκονος], an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices **evil**.

⁵ Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath¹²⁸ but also for conscience' sake.

⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers [λειτουργός] attending continually to this very thing.

⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. (Ro 13:1-7).

In this section I am not going to provide a detailed exegesis of this passage. Rather, I want to focus on key interpretive principles that answer the question whether Romans 13:1-7 demands virtually-absolute obedience to civil magistrates and thus precludes civil disobedience.

Historical context

Roman Emperor Claudius was murdered in 54 A.D. by his wife Agrippina. Her son Nero became emperor, but since he was only sixteen years of age, Burrus and Seneca (the Stoic philosopher) were his advisors (virtually his guardians).

It is due largely to the tutelage and guidance of these two men that the first five years of Nero's reign were not noted for corruption or disruption. . . . He also immediately allowed Jews to return to Rome on his accession, which was three years or a

¹²⁸ Cf. Ro 12:19. Paul means "anger in action to bring about retribution. The use of this word thus requires us to believe in God's justice and to expect it and work for it. It refers to God's justice at work in history" (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Romans and Galatians*, 245).

little less before Paul wrote Romans in the spring of 57. Until 59, there was relative peace and calm, especially in Rome.¹²⁹

There was dissatisfaction with Nero's taxation policies,¹³⁰ but overall, it was a relatively peaceful time throughout the empire. Nero even boasted that no blood had been shed, his weapons were for adornment. This situation radically changed once Nero committed matricide in 59 A.D., lost both Seneca and Burrus, and then persecuted Christians.¹³¹

Some scholars suggest that Paul wrote these positive things about civil magistrates because he was writing during a time of peace in the empire.¹³² However, Paul's universal terms ("every soul . . . no authority except from God . . . whoever") suggest that he is not merely describing a certain time in history or addressing a local issue in the first-century church of Rome.

¹²⁹ Ben Witherington III with Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 305.

¹³⁰ James D.G. Dunn, *Romans*, WBC, 2 vols. (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 2:766.

¹³¹ Ben Witherington III with Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 305f. Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 490f, 498.

¹³² Furthermore, "When this Epistle was written the Roman Empire had never appeared in the character of a persecutor. Persecution had up to this time always come from the Jews or from popular riots. To St. Paul the magistrates who represented the Roman power had always been associated with order and restraint. . . . At Paphos, at Thessalonica, at Corinth, at Ephesus, St. Paul had found the Roman officials a restraining power" (William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 5th ed. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902], 370).

Who defines “good” and “evil”?

God has ordained civil magistrates to be His **servants** (διάκονος) “to you [i.e., to Christians, Christ’s church¹³³] for **good**” (Ro 13:4). God’s “servant” **praises** those doing what is **good**, but punishes “him who practices **evil**.” The question most Christians (including most pastors teaching on Romans 13) fail to ask is, Who defines “good” and “evil”? Do mass murderers like Nero, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung/Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Robert Mugabe, etc. define good and evil?¹³⁴ Does Mohammad? God forbid! Burning Christians as torches at orgiastic, idolatrous parties does not constitute “good,” contra Nero. God alone is the definer of good and evil.¹³⁵ But if God is the definer of “good” and “evil,” then there

¹³³ Compare Ephesians, where the Apostle Paul states that God has put **all things** under the feet of the resurrected-enthroned Lord Jesus Christ “to the church” (Eph 1:20–23).

¹³⁴ 1–2 Kings give a plethora of examples of kings who “did evil” in the sight of the Lord, and, consequently, received His judgments. Most of their evil acts flowed out of the sin of idolatry. God defines good and evil.

¹³⁵ In the New King James Version, there are at least 45 occurrences of the phrase “evil in the sight of the Lord” in the books of Judges, 1 & 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles (along with 4 occurrences elsewhere). There are 18 occurrences of the phrase “right in the sight of the Lord” in the books of Deuteronomy, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles. Slight variations of wording add up to 82 occurrences of “in the sight of the Lord” in the entire Bible. These phrases describe God’s value judgments on the behavior of specific individuals (especially the kings of Israel and Judah)—value judgments based on God’s objective standard of righteousness-justice, not man’s standard. In addition to defining good and evil, God also defines justice and injustice. Hebrews 2:2 states that in the Old Testament “every violation and disobedience received its just punishment” (NIV). To say that “every violation and disobedience received its just punishment” is to say that God’s infallible, sufficient, written Word defines and illustrates justice. Man, God’s image-bearer, is to reflect God’s attribute of justice, as it is revealed by God’s just law-word.

is a higher standard by which to judge the actions of civil magistrates, i.e., the revealed Word of God. In Romans 13 the Apostle Paul describes God’s civil “servants” as “rulers [who] are **not a terror to good works,**” but to **evil** (Ro 13:3). Paul then proceeds to teach that good works are defined by God’s moral law (13:8–10).¹³⁶ This comports with the fact that Paul had already told the Romans that

Cf. Robert E. Fugate, *Justice and Sovereignty: Perfections of God Imaged by His People* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2016).

While not acknowledging the applicability of God’s law, Douglas J. Moo concedes, “For the purpose of his argument at this point, Paul is assuming that the laws of the state embody those general moral principles that are taught in the word of God. The ‘evil’ that the civil authorities punish, therefore, is evil in the absolute sense: those acts that God himself condemns as evil” (*Romans*, NICNT, 818f).

“**The giver of law is the god of that society**, whatever name he may be given. **The law-giver defines good and evil, right and wrong**, and he thereby ordains the course of that society” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law: The Intent of the Law*, vol. 3 [Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1999], 3:47). Cf. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* [n.p.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1973], 1:4f. Elsewhere Rushdoony notes that “there are as many ideas of justice as there are religions” (*Faith and Obedience: An Introduction to Biblical Law* [Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon/Ross House Books, 2012], 23).

¹³⁶ In the Old Testament the term “shepherd” is applied metaphorically to both civil and religious leaders (Ezk 34; etc.) – even to the Persian king, Cyrus (Is 44:28) (Leland Ryken, *et al.*, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998], 782f; ISBE, 4:465). Ezekiel 34 describes God’s condemnation and judgment on selfish, oppressive, cruel shepherds. Consistent with Ezekiel 34, Jesus describes the self-sacrificial care, leadership, and protection that the “good shepherd” provides – in contrast to a hireling (Jn 10:1–16, 27). This is another line of evidence showing how God defines “good” and “evil” civil magistrates.

God's law is "just and good" (7:12-13, 16).¹³⁷ Thus, **whatever contradicts or is opposed to God's law must be unjust and evil.** Logically, this context forces us to conclude that **Romans 13 depicts civil magistrates as God has called them to function; it does not describe those civil magistrates who are antinomian tyrants who believe they are god** (2 Th 2:3-4; Ezk 28:2, 6, 9; Is 14:4, 13-14).¹³⁸

Hermeneutical principle of the analogy of Scripture

With regard to interpreting Paul's statements in Romans 13, John Murray wisely cautions,

It is, however characteristic of the apostle to be absolute in his terms when dealing with a particular obligation. At the same time, on the analogy of his own teaching elsewhere or on the analogy of Scripture, we are compelled to take account of exceptions to the absolute terms in which an obligation is affirmed.¹³⁹

More pointedly, Oscar Cullmann affirms,

¹³⁷ God's law is not opposed to love. See Robert E. Fugate, *God's Royal Law: Foundation of Moral Order*, 25f.

God describes His law as: God's law (Ro 7:22, 25; 8:7; 1 Cor 7:19); "perfect," "right," "pure," and "righteous" (Ps 19:7-9); "spiritual" (i.e., given by the Holy Spirit; Ro 7:14); "holy, righteous/just, and good" (Ro 7:12-13, 16; cf. 1 Tim 1:8; Dt 4:8; 12:28; Mc 6:8); "the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth" (Ro 2:20); a delight to the godly man (Ro 7:22); and the rule of service (Ro 7:25). Idem., *God's Royal Law: Foundation of Moral Order*.

¹³⁸ This principle also applies to the Apostle Peter's discussion of civil magistrates, whose God-given authority is "for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good" (1 Pt 2:14).

¹³⁹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 2 vols. in 1, 2:149. There is clear Biblical precedent for this procedure. Consider the absoluteness of the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex 20:13 KJV). Yet, in light of all Scripture, the Sixth Commandment does not rule out all killing (i.e., self-defense, capital punishment, and just war — not to mention killing animals).

Few sayings in the New Testament have suffered as much misuse as this one [i.e., Ro 13:1]. . . . The fountainhead of all false biblical interpretation and of all heresy is invariably the isolation and the absolutizing of one single passage. This applies most especially to the interpretation of Romans 13:1ff.¹⁴⁰

Two classic examples of such “misuse” were: German Christians asserting that Christians owed allegiance to Adolph Hitler (citing Luther’s interpretation of Romans 13); and a former president of the Republic of South Africa (P.W. Botha) reading Romans 13 to justify unequivocal support of the Nationalist Government’s apartheid policy.¹⁴¹

Sound hermeneutics demand that Romans 13 be interpreted in such a manner that harmonizes with all Scripture. Consequently, we must observe what the entire Bible teaches about unjust civil magistrates and unjust laws. Let’s consider some key texts.

Civil laws criminalizing what God has not criminalized are unjust (Is 10:1; 24:5; Pss 82:1–2; 94:20; Lk 18:6, 2, 4; 2 Th 2:3; Rv 13). A magistrate creating unjust laws is a “throne of destruction” “which devises mischief by decree” (Ps 94:20). **Unjust judges** “do not fear God” (Lk 18:4, 6), so they are “an abomination to the Lord” (Pr 17:15). Indeed, God speaks a prophetic curse on unjust magistrates:

¹⁴⁰ Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (NY, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956), 55f.

¹⁴¹ The first example is offered by Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans, Interpretation* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1985), 203f. The second example is cited by John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God’s Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 341f. Hitler was opposed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church in Germany, but the vast majority of professing Christians supported Hitler.

“Woe¹⁴² to those who enact **evil statutes** and to those who constantly record **unjust decisions**” (Is 10:1; cf. 5:20).¹⁴³

Hosea 8:4 is particularly interesting: “They set up kings, but not by Me; They made princes, but I did not acknowledge *them*.” Israel did not choose civil magistrates in accordance with God’s prescriptive will, i.e., those meeting the Biblical qualifications for civil magistrates.

Satan often works through civil magistrates (or their demonized advisors) for his evil purposes (Ac 13:6-10; Ac 17:9 with 1 Th 2:18; Rv 12:3-5 with Mt 2:1-17; Rv 11:7; 13:2-4ff; Ex 7:11-12, 22; 8:7). Through worshipping a bestial state, one is actually worshipping Satan (Rv 13:4). Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 portray militaristic emperors (e.g., Nero) as: (a) wild, ravenous “beasts” who blaspheme (Rv 13:1, 5-6; cf. Dn 11:36); (b) having received their power (δύναμις) and great authority (ἐξουσία) to rule from Satan (Rv 13:2, 4-5; cp. Mt 4:8-9 // Lk 4:5-7; Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:4); and (c) “the man of lawlessness/sin”¹⁴⁴ who claims to be God (2 Th 2:3-4). Thus, Scripture makes a strong distinction between those civil magistrates functioning as God’s servants (Ro 13:1-7; e.g., King Cyrus in 2 Ch 36:22-23 = Ezr 1:1-2ff; Is 44:28; 45:1) and those bestial civil magistrates who are servants of Satan, who are militantly fighting against God and His kingdom (which includes Christ’s church) (Ps 2).

¹⁴² “Woe” is a distinctive form of prophetic speech, and is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It occurs in prophecies to express intense anger against evil actions and to convey threats of impending divine judgments (ABD, 6:945-947; ISBE₂, 4:1088).

¹⁴³ See also the verses in Robert E. Fugate, “Biblical Qualifications for Civil Government Officeholders,” 12f.

¹⁴⁴ ἀνομίας (lawlessness) occurs in the eclectic Greek text of the United Bible Societies and Nestle-Aland. The Majority/Byzantine Text contains ἀμαρτία (sin).

[We have already seen a plethora of examples of God-endorsed civil disobedience. Note also the above section entitled “Additional key verses giving God’s perspective on civil magistrates.”]

Key principles regarding Romans 13

1. Submission and obedience are distinct concepts. Romans 13:1–7 requires voluntary submission to civil magistrates; it does not require absolute obedience to them in all circumstances.¹⁴⁵
2. Since rulers’ authority is delegated to them by God, they are accountable to Him to rule in a manner that is consistent with God’s purposes for civil government (vv. 3–4) and according to God’s standard of justice. (See commentators below for a demonstration that Paul’s statement is radically subversive of Caesar’s claims and his rule.)
3. The interpretation of Romans 13:1–7 that best harmonizes with all of Scripture is that Paul is describing civil government as it should be. The passage demands honor and obedience to civil government only as long as the civil government functions according to the purposes for which God ordained it (vv. 3–4).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ “This verb [ὑποτάσσω] means not ‘obey’ but ‘submit.’ Paul does not counsel blind obedience. Three Greek verbs could be translated ‘obey,’ and Paul uses none of them here” (Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 312). This point is acknowledged by Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NICNT, 825. Moo adds, “The ultimate claim of God, who stands at the peak of the hierarchy of relationships in which the Christian is placed, is always assumed” (825f). Cf. Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 788. The three New Testament verbs meaning “obey” are *πειθαρχεῖν*, *πείθεσθαι* and *ὑπακούειν* (C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 2:660).

¹⁴⁶ This is view # 6 in Douglas Moo’s list of interpretive options, a view Moo says “is very common” among scholars (*Romans*, NICNT, 825).

Do exegetes support these three conclusions? Since this is such a crucial issue (not to mention being a current hot topic with worldwide quarantine lockdowns), I will take the liberty to cite quite a few of the top academic commentaries to conclusively prove that this interpretation is fully justified.

Quotes from commentators

Romans 13 would be offensive to Roman authorities, since they are depicted as servants of the God of the Jews, even the God who revealed Himself in Jesus the Messiah, who was convicted and executed by Roman authorities for the crime of sedition.¹⁴⁷

“Roman officials are severely demoted in this passage, for they stand under the authority of the one true God and have power and authority only insofar as he has given it to them.”¹⁴⁸

“It would have been viewed as thoroughly subversive. That the Roman authorities were appointed by the God and Father of Jesus

It should be noted that Moo (who comes from a Lutheran background) is a proponent of the antinomian New Covenant Theology (see Kevin McGrane, *New Covenant Theology: Weighed and Found Wanting* [1 Chaplins, Frinton-on-the-Sea, Essex, CO13 ORU: The Gospel Magazine Trust, 2018], 10f, 15). Having rejected Biblical law, Moo has little basis on which to resist tyranny, a fact exposed by Walter C. Kaiser (in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993], 393–400 [especially p. 400]) and Greg L. Bahnsen in the same book (383–392).

¹⁴⁷ Robert Jewett, “Response: Exegetical Support from Romans and Other Letters,” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard A. Horsely (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 58–71; cited by Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 307.

¹⁴⁸ Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 307f.

Christ turns the entire Roman civic cult on its head, exposing its suppression of the truth.”¹⁴⁹

“The gospel and rule of Jesus the Messiah, the world’s true Lord, subverted the gospel and rule of Caesar, whose cult was growing fast in precisely the cities (Corinth, Ephesus, and so on) where he [i.e., Paul] spent most of his time.¹⁵⁰ . . . This does not mean a holy anarchy in the present, an overrealized eschatology in which the rule of Christ has already abolished all earthly governments and magistrates. . . . The rulers are not themselves divine; they are set up by the one God, and they owe this God allegiance. Romans 13 constitutes a **severe demotion of arrogant and self-divinizing rulers. It is an undermining of totalitarianism, not a reinforcement of it.**”¹⁵¹

“In depicting rulers in such a good light, as commending the right and opposing the wrong, he [i.e., Paul] **is stating the divine ideal, not the human reality.**”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia, 790. Jewett gives many examples. Cf. Robert Jewett, “Response: Exegetical Support from Romans and Other Letters,” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard A. Horsely, 65–68.

¹⁵⁰ See Richard A. Horsely, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); and *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard A. Horsely.

¹⁵¹ N.T. Wright, “Romans,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. L.E. Keck, 12 vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994–2004), 10:718f (bold added). Elsewhere, Wright contrasts the kingdom/empire of Jesus, the Lord and Messianic King of the cosmos, His salvation, righteousness-justice, and peace on the one hand, as over against the gospel of Caesar, the pseudo king, pseudo savior, and source of pseudo justice and peace (“Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire,” in *Paul and Politics*, ed. Richard A. Horsley, 160–183).

¹⁵² John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God’s Good News for the World*, 341.

“The important implication is that **unjust authorities are not due the obedience of which Paul speaks**, but rather are outside these boundaries of necessary obedience. Rather than being a text which calls for submissive obedience, Romans 13:1–7 is a text which **only demands obedience to what is right, never to what is wrong.**”¹⁵³

“Rom. 13:1–7 does not justify the sins of the state, as if might makes right and whatever the state is able to do is a reflection of God’s will. Paul is not calling for the resignation of Christian conscience, especially not in the face of a pagan state. There is no full-blown theology of church and state here; there is rather, by implication, a limited endorsement of the state **in principle** until Christ returns — **if the state truly operates as servant of God and minister to the people, bringing justice and peace.** . . . [Ro 13:1–7 was] written at a moment of some peace in the realm, and is guiding Roman Christians as to how to respond **if the state is operating in a just and fair manner.**”¹⁵⁴

“This text is misunderstood if it is taken out of context and used as an absolute word so that Christians uncritically comply with the state, no matter what is being demanded. Here we have a general exhortation that delineates what is usually the case: people should normally obey ruling authorities. The text is not intended as a full-blown treatise on the relationship of believers to the state. It is a general exhortation setting forth the typical obligations one has to civil authorities. Indeed, Paul envisions a situation in which the

¹⁵³ Staley E. Porter, “Romans 13:1–7 as Pauline Political Rhetoric,” *Filología Neotestamentaria* 3 (6; 1990), 117f; cited by Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, PNTC, 499 (bold added).

¹⁵⁴ Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 307f (bold added). Witherington contrasts this time period with the latter part of Claudius’ reign, when the Apostle Paul “could say very different and negative things about the state when the state was malfunctioning” (1 & 2 Thessalonians, especially 2 Th 2).

governing authority carries out its task by punishing evildoers and rewarding those who do what is good.”¹⁵⁵

“The apostle is thinking of the ruler who is performing his duty of preserving order, approving good behavior, and punishing evil. In *that* case he who opposes the authority is, indeed, resisting the divine ordinance. . . . The apostle is not establishing a universally valid principle that opposing the authority and disobeying a command issued by a civil magistrate is always wrong.”¹⁵⁶

“By placing *every* civil government *under* the triune God, he [i.e., Paul] radically altered the nature of politics. . . . Paul not only places civil government under God, but he implicitly and surely **requires that civil government to comply with God’s law**. . . . We obey Caesar as God’s servant, not as a sovereign. . . . Every kind of authority and every civil government lives in God’s world under God’s government. . . . When the state abuses God’s law and enslaves people unjustly, or kills them without cause, God will enslave and kill that state. . . . The doctrine of the divine right of kings has its echo in too many commentaries which call for passive obedience. . . . Since in v. 19 [i.e., Ro 12:19] Paul tells us that vengeance belongs to God, it can only be exercised by the state under God, by delegation, according to God’s law. Since God’s vengeance has reference to God’s law, **no state has the freedom to create its own law and use coercion to enforce it**.”¹⁵⁷

“Paul is speaking of human government in terms of an **ideal**. This is apparent from the general terminology of the passage. By ‘ideal’ we need not imagine a state of perfection, but simply **what government ought to be**, which according to Paul, is an ordered civil structure ordained by God to **reward good and punish evil**. . .

¹⁵⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 687 (= p. 669 of 2018 ed.) (bold added).

¹⁵⁶ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, NTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 434.

¹⁵⁷ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Romans and Galatians*, 245–248 (bold added).

Obedience to rulers apart from (or against) conscience is idolatry. . . . It [government] must reflect the divine order of honoring good and punishing evil. . . . His [Paul's] formulation implies an unmistakable if unspoken corollary: when a state wholly perverts the ideal (by promoting evil and persecuting good, for example) it can **no longer be regarded as God's servant**, and it cannot take the submission of its citizens for granted. **The Christian's higher allegiance to God and good releases him or her from the claims of an idolatrous regime.** . . . It is 'God's servant' who bears the sword, and this excludes all arbitrary and indiscriminate uses of power apart from the cause of **justice**."¹⁵⁸

"Those governing authorities **cannot claim for themselves divine prerogatives**. A government that claims for itself the total and absolute devotion which a creature can give only to its Creator, ceases in the moment it makes that claim to be an agent of divine order, or a divine servant. It has become instead an **idolatrous** opponent of the living God. **Governments that claim for themselves divine prerogatives are hence no longer the kind of governments of which Paul speaks in this chapter.** The early Christian reaction to that kind of government can be seen in Revelation 17:1–19:10. . . . That government **no longer functions as a servant of God and is therefore no longer to be obeyed as such.**"¹⁵⁹

"It is plain from the immediate context, as from the general context of the apostolic writings, that the state can rightly command obedience **only within the limits of the purposes for which it has been divinely instituted** – in particular, the state not only may but

¹⁵⁸ James R. Edwards, *Romans*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 304–309. Edwards adds that Paul wrote "not as a Sadducee who lived from the advantages of the state, not as a Zealot who lived to overthrow the state, not as a Pharisee who divorced religion from the state, not as a Roman citizen for whom the state was an end in itself. Paul wrote as a free man in Christ" (308).

¹⁵⁹ Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, Interpretation, 203–205.

must be resisted when it demands the allegiance due to God alone.”¹⁶⁰

“Where there is a conflict between the command of the earthly ruler and the commandment of God, ‘We must obey God rather than men’ (Ac 5:29; cf. 4:19–20). . . . This will not mean an uncritical blind obedience to the authority’s every command; for the final arbiter of what constitutes ὑποτάσσεσθαι [being subject] in a particular situation is not the civil authority but God. . . . The Christian ὑποτάσσεσθαι to the authorities is limited to respecting them, obeying them **so far as such obedience does not conflict with God’s laws**, and seriously and responsibly **disobeying them when it does**.”¹⁶¹

“Paul is not arguing for the divine right of kings. . . . Nor does he oppose here revolution for a change of government.”¹⁶²

“They [i.e., magistrates] are not to rule on their own account, but for the public good. Nor do they have unbridled power, but power that is **restricted to the welfare** [i.e., well-being, “good”] **of their subjects**.”¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ F.F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, TNTC, rev. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 223f.

¹⁶¹ C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 660, 662.

¹⁶² Archibald T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1931), 4:407. (Robertson’s term “revolution” needs qualification.)

¹⁶³ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, eds. D.W. Torrance and T.F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 282. Elsewhere Calvin warned that “many . . . under pretext of due submission, obey the wicked will of kings in opposition to justice and right. . . . To gratify the transitory kings of earth, they take no account of God. . . . They plead the frivolous excuse that they obey their princes according to the word of God” (*Commentaries on the Four Last Books of*

“This saying of Paul must be understood to apply to legitimate powers by which the human race is ruled where God the Creator advises this arrangement and **not to those that are established by tyranny or even by impiety.**”¹⁶⁴

“This injunction does not apply in the case of authorities who persecute the faith. It only applies to those who are going about their proper business.”¹⁶⁵

“If anyone thinks that he ought to submit to the point where he accepts that someone who is his superior in temporal affairs should have authority even over his faith, he falls into an even greater error.”¹⁶⁶

Definition and traits of tyrants

The English term “tyrant”¹⁶⁷ denotes “a king or ruler who exercises his power in an oppressive, unjust, or cruel manner; a despot”

Moses, 4 vols., 1:33 [on Ex 1:17]). Calvin calls such obedience “criminal obedience.”

¹⁶⁴ Theodore Beza, in P.D.W. Krey, P.D.S. Krey, T. George, S.M. Manetsch, and D.W. McNutt, eds., *Romans 9–16*, Reformation Commentary on Scripture, 8:155.

¹⁶⁵ Origen, “Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans” (*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament, vol. 6 Romans, ed. Gerald Bray [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998], 326; citing Origen, *Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos*, ed. T. Heither, 5 vols. [Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1990–1995], 5:94).

¹⁶⁶ Augustine, “On Romans 72,” in P.F. Landes, ed., *Augustine of Romans* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 41, 43; cited in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament, vol. 6 Romans, ed. Gerald Bray, 325. Cf. Theodoret of Cyrrhus: “They must do so [i.e., obey the commands of secular rulers] **insofar as obedience is consistent with godliness**. If the rulers demand something which is ungodly, then **on no account are they allowed to do it**” (Bray, 325).

¹⁶⁷ The Greek term τύραννος denotes an “autocratic ruler, despot, tyrant” (BDAG). Cp. the Hebrew adjective עָרִיץ 'ariyts (pronounced aw-reets') terrifying, ruthless. HALOT, 735c. NIDOTTE, 3:534 #

(*Oxford English Dictionary*)), or, “a despot; a sovereign or ruler, legitimate or otherwise, who uses his power unjustly and arbitrarily, to the oppression of his subjects” (*Black’s Law Dictionary*, 6th ed.). Noah Webster provided a more descriptive definition:

(1) A monarch or other ruler or master, who uses power to oppress his subjects; a person who exercises unlawful authority, or lawful authority in an unlawful manner; one who by taxation, injustice or cruel punishment, or the demand of unreasonable services, imposes burdens and hardships on those under his control, which law and humanity do not authorize or which the purposes of government do not require. (2) A despotic ruler; a cruel master; an oppressor.¹⁶⁸

Renowned jurist and judge William Blackstone adds that “every wanton and causeless restraint of the will of the subject, whether practiced by a monarch, a nobility, or a popular assembly, is a degree of tyranny.”¹⁶⁹

“For Calvin, a tyrant is one who claims for himself exemption from the laws of the land.”¹⁷⁰ (This definition would render the vast majority of members of the U.S. Congress to be tyrants!)

R.J. Rushdoony offered a more theologically-oriented definition: “The root meaning of tyranny is **government without God**. A tyrant

6883, listed under 3:543f # 6907. TWOT, 2:699 # 1702b. BDB, p. 792a # 7450 (Strong’s # 6184).

¹⁶⁸ Noah Webster, *Noah Webster’s First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828; reprint: San Francisco, CA: Foundation For American Christian Education, 1985).

¹⁶⁹ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4th ed., 4 books in 2 vols. (Chicago, IL: Callaghan & Co., 1899), 1:126.

¹⁷⁰ Michael R. Gilstrap, “John Calvin’s Theology of Resistance,” in Gary North, ed., *The Theology of Christian Resistance: A Symposium*, vol. 2 of Christianity and Civilization (Tyler, TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1983), 216.

is one who **claims sovereignty** and is unrestrained by any law or by God.”¹⁷¹

Thus, we should regard a civil magistrate to be a tyrant if he or she:

- rules autonomously and sovereignly, i.e., apart from the one true God and His moral and civil law, as revealed in the Bible;¹⁷²
- defines good and evil, justice and injustice however he/she wishes, often calling evil good and good evil (Is 5:20);
- transcends his/her God-ordained jurisdiction, usurping the jurisdictions of the family and the church, and sometimes the jurisdictions of other civil magistrates;
- unjustly robs individuals of their God-given rights to life, liberty, the ownership and control of their private property, and the pursuit of happiness;
- disarms the populace.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Deuteronomy* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2008), 254 (bold added). Of course, Rushdoony is referring to the Christian God of the Bible.

I object to defining tyranny as “any rule that is not under the restraint of law.” Although this definition may be viewed as a historical description of the term “tyranny,” it lacks Biblical theology and Biblical ethics, because this definition does not root law in the law of the tri-personal God of the Christian Bible. (And as we know, he who defines terms wins the argument—and, in this case, much more.) Given such a definition, Sharia law, Talmudic law, Marxist law, Hindu or Buddhist law, Nero’s law, etc., by definition, would not be tyrannical—even though all of them promoted unjust and cruel oppression and persecution of Christians by their manmade laws derived from their false religions.

¹⁷² God’s stern warnings and curses against adding to His law-word (Dt 4:2; 12:32; Pr 30:5–6; Rv 22:18–19 and not obeying it (Dt 27:26) surely apply to antinomian tyrants who create their own law.

¹⁷³ The characteristic of disarmament is noted by the author of *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* or *Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*

(Very relevant to these points are the quotes identifying the source of law in any culture with the god of that culture. See the heading “Rushdoony on quarantine” in part three, “Biblical Quarantine.” Cf. “Appendix A: Attributes of God Counterfeited by an Idolatrous State.”)

The classic French Huguenot monograph on tyrants, written under the penname Junius Brutus (probably authored by Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, perhaps in collaboration with Hubert Languet), *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* or *Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants* (1579), discusses several common traits of a tyrannical civil magistrate:

1. Does not govern according to law and equity (117).
2. Neglects the contracts and agreements he vowed to enforce at his inauguration (117, 131).
3. Ambitiously invades his neighbor's countries to enlarge his own (118).
4. Confines his desires within no limits; rules by self-will (119).
5. Oppresses by calumnies and fraudulent practices the principal officers of the state (120).
6. Manufactures conspiracies against himself so that he might destroy his opponents (120).
7. Promotes unworthy persons instead of ancient and worthy nobles (120).

(Yale ed., 145, 160; SWRB ed., 121, 136) and by John Ponet, “A Shorte Treatise of Politike Power, and of the true obedience which subjects owe to kynges and over civil governours . . .” 50.

Cf. Jay Simkin, Aaron Zelman, and Alan M. Rice, *Lethal Laws: “Gun Control” is the Key to Genocide* (Milwaukee: Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership, 1994). The authors document how gun control (and gun confiscation) has preceded the slaughter and genocide of millions of people in Ottoman Turkey, the Soviet Union (Stalin), Nazi Germany (Hitler), China (Mao Tse-tung), Cambodia (Pol Pot), Uganda (Idi Amin), etc. In the twentieth century alone, governments tortured and exterminated over 170 million of their own people!

8. Hates and suspects wise men; fears virtue (120).
9. Promotes drinking, gambling, brothels, immoral entertainment to effeminize and bastardize noble men (120).
10. Paranoid — prohibits or avoids all public assemblies; fears parliaments (120).
11. Encourages factions and dissensions among his subjects; ruins one by the help of another that he might vanquish all (121).
12. Hires mercenaries as national guards and security guards; builds fortresses against his own people; **disarms the people**; pays for spies and informers with public treasury (121).
13. Causes wars abroad (122).
14. Endless ways of taking the money/possessions of his subjects; pillages the people (122, 132).
15. Extorts unjustly from many to enrich a few unworthies (122).
16. Cunning and deceptive (123).
17. Professes piety (123).
18. Confusion (123).
19. Sends the greatest enemies of order and reformation to key government assemblies to divide and undermine them (124)
20. Special interest groups destroy the well-being of the state (124).
21. Perverts and resists legal proceedings and lawful rights (131).
22. Enslaves his subjects (132).
23. Breaks his public promises and oaths (132).

(The numbers in parentheses are page numbers taken from the 1689 edition, reprinted by Still Waters Revival Books [Edmonton, AB, Canada, 1989]).

These traits clearly indicate that a tyrant **rejects the moral law of God** as revealed in Scripture. Carefully consider how many of these traits apply to the civil magistrates in your country.

Tyrannical civil magistrates are usually murderous.¹⁷⁴ Over 170,000,000 people have been murdered by their own governments from 1900 to 1988 alone.¹⁷⁵

Conclusion

When civil magistrates cease to perform their God-given duty to punish evil and praise good (as God defines these terms in Scripture), but rather to promote evil and dishonor good, then they are **no longer “the ordinance of God”** (Ro 13:2; i.e., “what God has instituted/appointed” NIV, NRSV) **or the “ministers/servants of God”** (Ro 13:4, 6). Such idolatrous magistrates have exalted themselves to the place of God. God pronounces His curse on all such magistrates:

“Woe¹⁷⁶ to those who **call evil good, and good evil**; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Is 5:20).

“Woe to those who enact **evil statutes** and to those who constantly record **unjust decisions**” (Is 10:1; cf. 5:20).

God does not recognize every civil magistrate to be “the ordinance of God”: “They set up kings, but not by Me; They made princes,

¹⁷⁴ For numerous Biblical examples see Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 81–85.

¹⁷⁵ Rudolf J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994). Stephane Courtois, *et al.*, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). No abortion or infanticide statistics are included in this figure.

¹⁷⁶ “Woe” is a distinctive form of prophetic speech, and is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It occurs in prophecies to express intense anger against evil actions and to convey threats of impending divine judgments (ABD, 6:945–947; ISBE₂, 4:1088).

but I did not acknowledge *them*” (Ho 8:4).¹⁷⁷ Similarly, God’s people do not recognize every civil magistrate to be “the ordinance of God.” David did not acknowledge his son Absalom — who had won the hearts of the people, gained control over much of the military, and removed David from the throne — to be “what God has instituted/appointed.” Evil Queen Athaliah ruled Judah for over six years, but she was not “the ordinance of God,” which is why the righteous priest Jehoiada instigated a political coup to overthrow her and have her executed (2 Ch 22:12 – 23:15 // 2 Ki 11:3–16). Moses and Aaron certainly did not submit to Pharaoh as “the minister of God” for their good (Ex 4–15)!

Simply stated, **tyrants are not legitimate civil authorities**, and people do not need to treat them as legitimate authorities (e.g., by honoring them, submitting to them, not resisting them, etc.¹⁷⁸). (Christians can still honor the office of civil magistrate without honoring an evil person.)

¹⁷⁷ See our above discussion of this verse under the heading “Additional key verses giving God’s perspective on civil magistrates.”

¹⁷⁸ Ordinarily, a tax revolt is not advisable (Robert E. Fugate, *Toward a Theology of Taxation*, 41, 76f, 79f.

Some classic Reformed explanations of Romans 13

John Knox, “Appellation . . . to the Nobility . . .” (1558); reprints: Marvin A. Breslow, *The Political Writings of John Knox* [London: Associated University Press: Folger Books, 1985], 116 = John Knox, *On Rebellion*, ed. Roger A. Mason (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 85 = *Selected Writings of John Knox: Public Epistles, Treatises, and Expositions to the Year 1559* (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1995), 491 = *Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, 6 vols. (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 4:483. (A discussion of the duties of magistrates immediately precedes Knox’s treatment of Romans 13.)

Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex or The Law and the Prince* (1644; reprint: Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982); note pages 141, 145, 153, 155, 159, 220, 232.

James M. Wilson, *The Establishment and Limits of Civil Government: An Exposition of Romans 13:1–7* (1853; reprint: Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press, 2009), 78, 85–87, 93.

Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1984), chapter 19 “The Civil Magistrate in the New Testament.”

BIBLICAL QUARANTINE: PRELIMINARY PRINCIPLES, ANALYSIS, AND APPLICATIONS

I am writing this book during the alleged, worldwide “pandemic” called COVID-19. Most countries are in various states of lockdown. Some Christians — especially Reformed Christians who (correctly) hold to the applicability and relevance of the Old Testament — are using certain passages to justify the state locking down their city, state and/or nation. These passages are Leviticus 13-14, Numbers 5:1-4, and 31:19-20. We will examine each of these passages to discover what they may teach regarding state-mandated, medical quarantines. However, it is necessary to begin with some crucial preliminary principles.

Preliminary principles¹⁷⁹

1. God-ordained three distinct covenantal institutions, i.e., the family, the church, and the state.¹⁸⁰ The family, unlike church and state, is a creation ordinance; it has priority. God took some of the authority originally held by the family and delegated it to the newly-instituted church and state (probably at the time of Moses and Aaron).¹⁸¹ Family, church, and state have **separate jurisdictions**:

- Family: marriage,¹⁸² child-raising, property ownership, business ownership, inheritance, education, and welfare;

¹⁷⁹ For a demonstration that the Bible is the foundation for all life and thought, see Robert E. Fugate, *The Bible: God’s Words to You* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2012) and *The Foundation and Pillars of the Biblical Worldview*.

¹⁸⁰ Robert E. Fugate, “3 Covenantal Institutions.”

¹⁸¹ Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Patriarchy: Male Headship in Family, Church, and State*, 25-27, 248-249. Idem., *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 110. Idem., “The Origin of the State.”

¹⁸² Marriage pre-dated both the state and the church (both of which grew out of the patriarchal family). Marriage is within the jurisdiction of the family, not the state or the church. This is evidenced by the

- Church: the public ministry of God’s Word, corporate worship, and sacraments;¹⁸³
 - State: ministry of civil justice and national defense.¹⁸⁴
2. Since God designed family, church, and state to have separate jurisdictions, **it is against divine order for one of them to usurp the others’ jurisdictional authority.**

fact that, in the Bible, “Marriage is actually a covenant between two families” (*Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* [IDB], ed. G.A. Buttrick, 4 vols. [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1962], 2:239). Biblically, the state has no authority to grant marriage licenses or to have judges (or other civil magistrates) perform marriages. The state’s role is two-fold: (1) To legislate against unbiblical marriages (e.g.: incestuous marriages that violate the Biblical laws of consanguinity, Dt 22:30; 27:20, 22-23; Lv 18:6-18; 20:11-12, 14, 17, 19-21; homosexual marriages; marriages of children; forced marriages); and (2) to enforce legal contracts when one party prosecutes the other party for breach of contract. All branches of Protestantism reject as unbiblical the Roman Catholic teaching that marriage is a sacrament and therefore under the control of the church. “Both in Israel and in Mesopotamia marriage was a purely civil contract, not sanctioned by any religious rite” (Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Social Institutions* [NY: McGraw-Hill, 1965], 33). Thus, Biblically, marriages do not need to be performed by pastors. Of course, the church has the God-given responsibility to teach God’s Word with regard to marriage and family.

¹⁸³ Where there is no extended family to help, the church steps in to aid the poor (i.e., those who are Biblically-defined as poor). This church ministry is overseen by deacons (Ac 6:1-6; Tim 5:3-16; etc.). Robert E. Fugate, “Poverty: Causes, Biblical Solutions, False Solutions,” especially 12-15.

¹⁸⁴ Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 18-27.

“For one sphere to violate the authority structure or usurp the functions of any of the other spheres is an attack on the very sovereignty of God himself in those spheres.”¹⁸⁵

3. The regulative principle of civil government¹⁸⁶ and the regulative principle of church government¹⁸⁷ teach that the state and the

¹⁸⁵ Stephen C. Perks, *A Defence of the Christian State* (Taunton, England: Kuyper Foundation, 1998), 154.

¹⁸⁶ Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Patriarchy: Male Headship in Family, Church, and State*, 248-249. Cf. <https://theonomyresources.blogspot.com/2014/11/sola-scriptura-and-civil-government.html>.

¹⁸⁷ The Westminster Confession of Faith teaches, “But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited to his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture” (WCF, 21.1; cf. WLC, 107-110; WSC, 49-52). See also: “John Calvin, “The Necessity of Reforming the Church,” in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, ed. Henry Beveridge, 7 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 1:128-129; the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 (22.1); Belgic Confession, Article 32. Reformed churches teach that the church “has a right to decree nothing, except what expressly or by implication is enjoined by the Word of God.”

Conversely, Anglicans and Lutherans teach that, with regard to worship, the church “has a right to decree everything, except what is forbidden in the Word of God” (James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, 2 vols. [1869; reprint: Edmonton, AB, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, 1991], 1:339f). See also: The (Anglican) Church of England 39 Articles of Religion, Article 20; the Lutheran Augsburg Confession, Article 15.

In popular language, The Reformed view is “whatever is not commanded is forbidden; the Anglican/Lutheran view is “whatever is not forbidden is permitted” (John M. Frame, “The Regulative Principle: Levels of Specificity,” in *John Frame’s Selected Shorter Writings*, volume 1 [Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014], 124). Frame then demonstrates that the Reformed view would more accurately be

church have only the authority that God specifically granted to them (from the family), which is revealed in the infallible and sufficient Word of God written, i.e., the Bible. The Biblical family retains all its original authority except what God specifically delegated to the church or to the state.

4. **Both family and church have a God-given stewardship responsibility to resist¹⁸⁸ a civil government that tries to usurp their God-given jurisdictional authority.¹⁸⁹**

stated, “Whatever we do in worship must be a legitimate *application* of a biblical command” (135).

It should be noted that both the Biblical Hebrew and Greek words translated “worship” have broad definitions, even including “work” and “serve” (see Robert E. Fugate, “The Importance and Practice of Worship,” 1).

¹⁸⁸ Of course, such resistance must be Biblical. See Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 79–88.

¹⁸⁹ Consider the priest Azariah rebuking King Uzziah for usurping authority that God had delegated to the church (2 Ch 26:16–23):

Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD— valiant men.¹⁸ And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, “*It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the LORD God*” (2 Ch 26:17–18).

King Uzziah wasn’t forcing Azariah to sin personally; but Azariah still opposed the king, due to having a divine mandate to protect his ecclesiastical stewardship against civil usurpation. Furthermore, Azariah blatantly accused King Uzziah of trespass/sin (not “overreach,” etc.). Additionally, God sometimes directly punishes (within history) civil magistrates who usurp the role of the church (e.g., King Saul, 1 Sm 13:8–14; King Jeroboam, 1 Ki 12:32–13:5; King Uzziah, 2 Ch 26:16–23). For examples of God’s prophets rebuking civil magistrates see Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 20; cf. 26. For examples of Biblically-endorsed civil disobedience, see 119–120. The *locus classicus* verse

5. **To willingly obey a civil magistrate who usurps the God-given authority of the family or the church is to disobey God and to make a god of the state.**¹⁹⁰ One of the primary responsibilities of the church is to be God’s prophetic voice on the earth. This includes denouncing idolatry (cf. the first two Commandments in the Decalogue), especially an idolatrous state and a civil magistrate setting himself/herself up as god, determining and dictating good and evil, justice and injustice, by arbitrary fiat decree.
6. The key to distinguishing which Biblical laws are civil laws (in contrast to moral laws or ceremonial laws) is that **civil laws have a stated punishment attached to them.**¹⁹¹
 - Example: Biblical law does not contain civil penalties for violating quarantine regulations. Thus, in Biblical law the civil government is not to enforce quarantines.

is, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Ac 5:29). Even fleeing from persecuting civil magistrates is a form of civil disobedience. (For numerous examples of divinely-directed fleeing, see Robert E. Fugate, “Fleeing.”)

¹⁹⁰ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Politics of Guilt and Pity* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn, 1978), 337. Rushdoony adds, “The triumph of statism is the death of every sphere of government other than the state [e.g., self-government, family government, and church government] and their absorption by the state” (341).

Where there is pervasive state usurpation, a Christian could obey some laws under protest (not “willingly obey”) — laws which didn’t cause him to sin by commission or omission) — all the while seeking God regarding which battles to fight first and for Biblical ways to resist, plus teaching the whole counsel of God, praying imprecatory prayers against tyrants, and protecting his family’s jurisdiction as much as possible.

¹⁹¹ Robert E. Fugate, *God’s Royal Law: Foundation of Moral Order* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2015), 31–48. Idem., *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 54–56.

7. **For a civil government to impose laws having civil or criminal penalties on churches for violating its manmade quarantine laws is idolatrous¹⁹²** (since the state is proclaiming itself to be the definer of good and evil, right and wrong) **and tyrannical**. Such a view of the relationship between church and state is implicitly **Erastian**, in which the church is merely a department of the state.¹⁹³

Are ceremonial laws health laws?

For millennia people have asked what purposes were served by the Old Testament ceremonial (ritualistic) laws.¹⁹⁴ One proposed answer is that a primary purpose was to promote health among God's people. Old Testament commentator John Hartley analyzes seven proposed explanations for the Levitical laws of ritual impurity, one being that they promote good health. On the surface, this proposal would seem plausible. However, upon examination, it has serious difficulties. Hartley (and others) point out that

The greatest obstacle to the health interpretation is that the NT removes all distinctions between edible and inedible animals. This change is based on the teachings of Jesus and the apostles

¹⁹² See "Appendix A: Attributes of God Counterfeited by an Idolatrous State." Robert E. Fugate *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 88-91.

¹⁹³ Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 109. Historically, the Reformed church has opposed both the Roman Catholic church-state ecclesiocracy (in which the church controls the state) and the Erastianism/prelacy view of church-state relations (in which the state controls the church; the church is a department of the state). Both Romanism and Erastianism deny the Biblical separation of church and state.

¹⁹⁴ For Biblical evidence of the necessity of distinguishing between the moral, civil, and ceremonial law, and for a description of the ceremonial law, see Robert E. Fugate, *God's Royal Law: Foundation of Moral Order*, 39-57.

(Mark 7:14-20; Acts 10:9-16).¹⁹⁵ It is inconceivable that God would do away with rules he had given to promote good health.¹⁹⁶

Furthermore, “Why are other harmful animals and vegetables not prohibited?”¹⁹⁷

The same basic question could be asked regarding male circumcision. If one of its purposes was health, then why is it discontinued in the new covenant? Indeed, mandating circumcision for gentiles is strictly forbidden in the new covenant.

In the following discussion of passages that have been used to teach medical quarantine, it is important to remember that ritual laws concerning “leprosy” are part of the ceremonial law. If a primary purpose of many of the Old Testament ceremonial laws was to promote health among God’s people, then this principle should be applied across the board. Christians advocating medical quarantines on the bases of the ceremonial law should, logically, apply the same principle to food laws and to circumcision.

Analysis of Leviticus 13–14, Numbers 5:1–4, and 31:19–20

Some Reformed scholars have suggested three passages that may address the subject of medical quarantine: Leviticus 13-14; Numbers 5:1-4; and 31:19-20. We will examine each of these passages to assess their relevance to contemporary medical

¹⁹⁵ Many New Testament passages teach that the Old Testament food laws have been revoked (Mk 7:19; 1 Tim 4:3-5; Col 2:16; Ro 14:2, 14, 20ff; 1 Cor 8:8; 10:25-31; Heb 9:10; Ac 10:12-15; 15:19-20, 28-29).

¹⁹⁶ John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1992), 140-147, citation from 142f. Mark F. Rooker concurs (*Leviticus*, NAC [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000], 172).

¹⁹⁷ Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, AOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 38.

quarantines, such as COVID-19. But first, let's address the question, What is Biblical "leprosy?"

Background: What is "leprosy?"

Numerous Bible translations translate the Hebrew term *tsara`ath*¹⁹⁸ with the English word "leprosy" (e.g., KJV, NKJV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, ASV). The Septuagint, using the Greek word λέπρα (*lepra*), eventually contributed to this confusion.¹⁹⁹ However, "Scholars now generally agree that **OT *sāra`at* is not leprosy nor does it include it and that NT λέπρα, if it refers at all to leprosy, does so only as one among many skin conditions.**"²⁰⁰

According to modern dermatologists and leprologists throughout the U.S., the symptoms in Leviticus 13 do "not fit any single disorder as we know it today."²⁰¹ So, it is not surprising that most scholars believe that *tsara`ath* does not denote a single disease, but it is "a comprehensive designation for a wide variety of skin afflictions."²⁰² Some scholars suggest that "These symptoms fit many

¹⁹⁸ *tsara`ath* BDB, 863 # 6883. G-K, #7669. HALOT, 817 "skin disease, not leprosy." Holladay, 310 "skin-disease (not leprosy)." TDOT, 12:468-475 (T. Seidl). NIDOTTE, 3:846f, listed under # 7665 (R.K. Harrison). TWOT, 2:777 # 1971a (Elmer A. Martens).

¹⁹⁹ *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT), eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, *et al.*, 15 vols. (ET: Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974-2006), 12:473.

²⁰⁰ David P. Wright and Richard N. Jones, "Leprosy," ABD, 4:277f. Cf. "skin disease, not leprosy" (HALOT, 817); λέπρα, BDAG, 592. Many modern scholars do not believe that Hansen's disease existed at all in the ancient Near East during Old Testament times; for example: ABD, 4:278; John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC, 187f; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, AB (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 816; contra R.K. Harrison, "Leprosy," ISBE₂, rev., 3:105.

²⁰¹ Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, Teach the Text (TT) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 83. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, AB, 817.

²⁰² R.K. Harrison, in NIDOTTE, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:846, listed under # 7665.

types of skin diseases such as psoriasis, seborrheic dermatitis, certain mycotic infections, patchy eczema and pityriasis rosea.”²⁰³ With regard to diseases in humans described in Leviticus 13, *tsara`ath* is best translated “**ritually defiling skin disease**.”²⁰⁴

“A collective term for various curable skin anomalies” (TDOT, 12:473). “Skin disease” (HALOT, 817). “Scale disease” (Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, AB, 816f). “A grievous skin disease” (John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC, 189). The term includes “a variety of skin diseases” (Wenham, Harrison, Hartley, Milgrom, Sprinkle). Gordon J. Wenham believes that “twenty-one different cases of skin disease are distinguished in” Leviticus 13:2-46 (*The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT, ed. R.K. Harrison [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], 193).

The comparison “like snow” (Ex 4:6; Nu 12:10; 2 Ki 5:27) may designate the texture of flakiness, rather than white color (Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, TT, 83; “Leprosy,” ABD, 4:278). “There is no justification for [translators] adding ‘white’ to the simile. The point of comparison may well be the flakiness of snow (cf. Ps 68:14; 147:16)” (Gordon J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, NICOT, 195).

²⁰³ David P. Wright and Richard N. Jones, “Leprosy,” ABD, 4:278. However, psoriasis is not an infectious skin disease (Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT, 196). Even more telling, one leading dermatologist objected that “chronic skin diseases . . . such as psoriasis, *favus*, and vitiligo, will not disappear or even change appreciably within one or two weeks. Thus, if these are the diseases described in Lev. 13, the prescribed quarantine period is ineffectual and, indeed, can be misleading” (Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, AB, 817). Thus, it is difficult for us today to identify *tsara`ath* more precisely than scaly skin diseases.

²⁰⁴ Jay Sklar, *Leviticus*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 184. Cp. “defiling skin disease in the NIV 2011.

Tsāra`ath could affect both persons and material things, such as houses (Lv 14:34, 44, 55), leather goods (13:48, 51–53, 59; 14:55), and fabric/clothing (13:47, 51–53, 59; 14:55).²⁰⁵

At present, the Greek term λέπρα can't be defined more precisely than "serious skin disease."²⁰⁶

Leviticus 13–14

In assessing whether Leviticus 13–14 applies to modern medical quarantines imposed by the state, three key principles must be observed.

1. Leviticus 13–14 is not primarily about medical quarantine.

"The priests . . . were never required to identify the diseases."²⁰⁷

"There is no discussion of either a treatment or a cure of the skin disease."²⁰⁸

"This quarantine period is not effectual for the treatment period of any skin disease, nor are skin diseases generally contagious, unlike many other diseases."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ HALOT. NIDOTTE, 3:846. With regard to material objects described in Leviticus 13, *tsara`ath* could be translated "ritually defiling infestation" (Jay Sklar, *Leviticus*, TOTC, 189).

²⁰⁶ λέπρα, BDAG, 592.

²⁰⁷ Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus*, BST (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 174.

²⁰⁸ Richard S. Hess, "Leviticus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev., eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 1:690.

²⁰⁹ Richard S. Hess, "Leviticus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev., 1:692; citing Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, AB, 816–826.

“It is not clearly indicated that the offending skin disease was infectious, for some of the diseases that might cause the disorders described in Leviticus 13 (e.g., psoriasis) are not infectious.”²¹⁰

“Protecting health is at best a secondary explanation for these laws. Hansen’s disease, which some identify with biblical leprosy . . . is not highly contagious. **Other diseases that are highly contagious and harmful to public health did not require exclusion from the camp.** This would be odd if hygiene were the primary motive.”²¹¹

“Other more contagious diseases did not involve such a quarantine.”²¹²

“For Leviticus the concern is not spread of the disease itself but that the disease makes persons, garments, or dwellings ritually impure; they therefore have to be kept separate from the holy realm until symptoms abate, when they can be purified.”²¹³

²¹⁰ Ronald B. Allen, “Numbers,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev., 2:125. Cf. Jay Sklar, *Leviticus*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 184. Sklar notes that **some translations go beyond the Hebrew** with added specificity, e.g., “infectious skin disease” (NIV 1984) and “contagious skin disease” (NJB). He recommends “**ritually defiling skin disease**” (cp. “defiling skin disease in the NIV 2011).

²¹¹ Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, TT, 86.

²¹² J. Barton Payne, “Leviticus,” in *The Biblical Expositor*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Philadelphia, PA: A. J. Holman Company, 1973), 115.

²¹³ Roy E. Gane, “Leviticus,” in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, eds. Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 101. Gane also observes that “**it is priestly pronouncement, not mere presence of fungus, that makes a house and its contents impure.** This reinforces the fact that impurity is a conceptual category” (102; bold added).

“Its [i.e., isolation] prime purpose from the Levitical perspective, however, was to remove the unclean from possible contact with the holy” (Christopher J.H. Wright, “Leviticus,” in *New Bible*

“It was not that the disease as such was thought to be infectious or would result in his death, but the symptoms were incompatible with full membership of the covenant people.”²¹⁴

“The role of Aaron and his sons in these matters is **entirely ritualistic**; there is no attempt at giving medical treatment or cures. Thus chaps. 13–14 do not present a combination of a religious observance along with a center for medical treatment. The concern, as in this whole section of chaps. 11–15, is to present all persons in such a condition as to make them qualified and fit to enter into the worship of God as holy persons. . . . **The constant emphases of chapters 13–14 are on being clean and being unclean.** In these two chapters alone, variations of “clean” (טהר *ṭāhēr*) appear thirty-six times while forms of “unclean” (טמא *ṭāmē*) occur thirty times. Only four times does the word נרפא (*nirpā*’, “be healed”) occur.”²¹⁵ Accordingly, we are involved in **ritual questions here and not medical ones.**”²¹⁶

“The purpose is not hygienic but ritual.”²¹⁷

“The purpose of these chapters is less to preserve the good health of the Israelites than to determine who is fit to approach God.”²¹⁸

“These two chapters [Lv 13–14] are primarily concerned with legal status rather than biological condition. If this is not the case, then why wasn’t it mandatory to burn the furniture that had been moved

Commentary, eds. D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994], 140).

²¹⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT, 203.

²¹⁵ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, AB, 817, quoting the statistical work of David P. Wright and Richard N. Jones.

²¹⁶ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Book of Leviticus*, in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. L.E. Keck, 12 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004), 1:1095f.

²¹⁷ Walter J. Houston, “Leviticus,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, eds. James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 113.

²¹⁸ Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus*, BST, 171.

outside the house? It was the priest's declaration of a suspected house that would make ritually unclean everything inside the house at the time that he entered it. It was not the biological organism itself that would make everything inside the house unclean. . . . This law was **not based on considerations of public biological health**; it was based on public judicial health. . . . **It was not assumed that an individual had caught the disease from another individual. It was not assumed that this individual could pass on the disease to another individual. . . . It was not a concern about biological contagion. . . .** It was entirely judicial. . . . Quarantine laws of Leviticus had more to do with **quarantining the people from the presence of God than they did with quarantining sick people from healthy people. . . .** Laws of leprosy were related to the temple's laws of purity far more than they were to modern public health laws."²¹⁹

2. Quarantine was part of the ceremonial law, not the civil law.

Leviticus 13-14²²⁰ is part of a larger unit dealing with ceremonial uncleanness generally (Lv 11-15). (In fact, Lv 11-15 is the most

²¹⁹ Gary North, *Leviticus: An Economic Commentary* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1994), 167, 169, 171f, 174 (bold added).

²²⁰ "Holiness in Leviticus is symbolized by wholeness. . . . God's abiding presence with his people depended on uncleanness being excluded from their midst (cf. Is 6:3-5)" (Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT, 203). "Disease and decay are incompatible with the holiness of God. . . . Bodily diseases are incompatible with the holy presence of the LORD" (Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the LORD: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002], 277, 282). "The law of the 'leper' symbolizes that God is separate from sin" (Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, TT, 86).

"What is necessary for the cleansing of the leper or a house infected with mold-leprosy is blood atonement" (92). Observe that the regulations in Leviticus 13-14 require: (a) animal sacrifices that provided atonement (including all the mandatory sacrifices – burnt offering [Lv 1], cereal offering [Lv 2], purification offering [Lv 4], and reparation offering [Lv 5] – plus sacrificial birds); (b) ritual

concentrated part of ritual purity laws found in the entire Pentateuch.²²¹) The regulations regarding uncleanness in Leviticus 11-15 are an integral part of the ceremonial law, which was fulfilled once-for-all in the atoning death of Jesus Christ.²²² There is no Levitical priesthood offering atoning animal sacrifices at the tabernacle to remove ceremonial uncleanness in the new covenant.

3. Quarantine laws were not subject to state legislation and penology.

Leviticus 13-14 gives no authority to the state to impose isolation/quarantine. This is particularly evident in the fact that no civil penalties are attached to the regulations, which is always the key to distinguish civil laws from moral and ceremonial laws.²²³ Scripture

washings, shaving all bodily hair, and bathing to remove ceremonial uncleanness; and (c) a Levitical priest who was involved throughout the process, declaring a person ceremonially clean or unclean. Levitical priests were involved because they had God-given duties to distinguish between clean and unclean and to teach the people the difference (Lv 10:10-11; 14:57), and to protect the sanctuary from uncleanness.

Since the central emphasis was on ritual purity (i.e., cleanness and uncleanness under the ceremonial law), Elmer A. Martens suggests a discontinuity in the new covenant: "That a priest in Israel's theocracy was to diagnose the illness does not mean that today's clergy should become health officers" (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* [TWOT], eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, 2 vols. [Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980], 2:777 # 1971a).

²²¹ "Ritual purity was a vital dimension of daily life in ancient Israel. Decrees regarding ritual purity are found throughout the priestly legislation of the Pentateuch, but the core legislation comes in Lev 11-15" (John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC, 141).

²²² However, there can still be abiding moral implications from ceremonial laws.

²²³ Robert E. Fugate, *God's Royal Law: Foundation of Moral Order*, 54. Idem., *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government: Proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the Nations*, 54f.

does not teach that the priest's responsibilities in Leviticus 13–14 have been transferred to the state in the new covenant. Thus, in terms of Biblical law, whatever authority a civil magistrate exercises to protect life by passing health regulations cannot contain civil penalties; at most, his authority is only “ministerial,” not magisterial in the area of medical quarantine.

Nevertheless, Leviticus 13 does show that “God is associated with life and wholeness,” and that “God wants to protect people from disease.”²²⁴ Thus, it is reasonable to infer that each God-ordained, covenantal institution, i.e., family, church, and state, has some role in promoting safety (i.e., in preventing likely accidental deaths or severe injuries) and in preventing the spread of contagious diseases through exercise of good sanitation practices and quarantining individuals known to have contagious diseases.²²⁵ However, each of these three governmental institutions may only exercise its God-given authority within its own God-appointed jurisdiction. For example, a person who has a sickness that is likely communicable will refrain from going out in public (self-isolation) until he or she is better. Similarly, parents may restrict a sick child from going to school or church. Most instances should be handled at the individual or the family level. Churches may set up health guidelines for families regarding which symptoms indicate keeping a sick child home from church.²²⁶ A local civil government may issue guidelines

²²⁴ Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, TT, 82f.

²²⁵ “When the state is maximized, Biblical law is minimized. God’s law provides us with government and with the means of government in all the spheres of life: personal, familial, educational, ecclesiastical, vocational, societal, and also in the civil realm” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Leviticus* [Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2005], 142; commenting on Leviticus 14).

²²⁶ See “Appendix B: Sample Church Guidelines Regarding Sicknesses and Pandemics.”

My opinion is that disobedience to church health guidelines would not be punishable by church discipline. However, parents — who

regarding a dangerous disease that is spreading throughout the community; however, it would go beyond the civil government's Biblical authority to pass laws fining or criminalizing someone for not self-quarantining.²²⁷

Numbers 5:1–4

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse. ³ “You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp, **that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell.**” ⁴ And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the LORD spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did (Nu 5:1–4).

Some have interpreted Numbers 5:1–4 to teach that the modern state has the responsibility of imposing medical quarantines, accompanied by sanctions. But consider the following key principles.

had a history of bringing sick children to church, and there was evidence that this practice had likely led to specific people in the congregation becoming infected with that same sickness on multiple occasions — could be exhorted that they were not walking in love toward their brothers and sisters in Christ, and if they persistently refused correction and subsequent rebukes from the elders, may be guilty of insubordination. Certainly, considerable education and loving instruction should precede excommunication for insubordination in such instances. Presbyterian churches should not be characterized by being litigious societies.

²²⁷ However, if someone having a known, dangerous, contagious disease willfully endangered others through his negligence or complete disregard, and they contracted his disease, they could sue for damages (e.g., medical expenses, lost wages, etc.) in a civil court. In this regard, the state, too, would have a role in quarantine. (Or, if both parties were Christians, the case would need to be brought before a church court or Christian arbitration.)

1. Yehowah gives this revelatory word to His prophet Moses to deliver to the people²²⁸ (not merely to the leaders of church or state). In other words, this quarantine command was given to all “the children of Israel” – not specifically to civil magistrates or priests – and “the children of Israel” obediently performed the duty.
2. The directives in Numbers 5:1–4 differ somewhat from Leviticus 13–14, probably because the Numbers’ passage concerns the Israelite war camp.

Consider the context. Numbers chapter 4 completed the ordering, numbering, and structuring of the Israelite war camp. Chapter 5 begins the various commands for ritual purity within the camp.²²⁹

“The more stringent rules in Numbers 5:1–4 regarding genital discharge and corpse contamination appear to reflect an elevation in the sacral status of the Israelite war camp. Under normal conditions only scaly skin diseased persons are to be banished, but the war camp is a special situation.”²³⁰

3. Numbers 5:1–4 is **not primarily about medical quarantine**.

The reason for sending impure persons away is not to avoid the spread of ordinary sickness, which definitely would not include

²²⁸ “In [Nu] 5:2–3 God commands Moses to instruct **the people to put those** who are unclean **outside** the camp. . . . Numbers 5:4 reports the obedient response of **the people**, in line with the atmosphere of dutiful compliance throughout these beginning chapters of Numbers: ‘as the LORD had spoken to Moses, so the Israelites did’” (Dennis T. Olson, *Numbers*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 34; bold added).

²²⁹ Ronald B. Allen, “Numbers,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev., 2:123.

²³⁰ Roy E. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 520; citing Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, AB, 33.

corpse contamination, but to avoid defiling the holy camp in which the Lord dwells among his people (Nu 5:3).”²³¹

“According to Milgrom, the conflict addressed in vv. 1–4 is not simply order versus disorder, but **the life-giving power of holiness versus death**. The contamination to camp members by contact with a corpse clearly illustrates the conflict between holiness and death. Defilement from skin disease addresses the same conflict. Although this condition is translated “leprosy” (צִרְעָתָא *ṣārāʿat*), the term most likely encompasses a variety of skin disorders described in more detail in Leviticus 13–14. Once again, **it is not the health consequences of the disease that force a person from the camp, but its association with death, which is incompatible with holiness.**”²³²

“It is **not the threat of contagion** [i.e., contagious disease] to man and his objects that causes the banishment. Rather, as the text makes amply clear, it is the threat to the **sanctuary**, that is, ‘the camp in whose midst I dwell’ (v. 3).”²³³

“The purity of the encampment must be sustained at all costs, precisely because the God of Israel had located his earthly residence within it.”²³⁴

“**It is not clearly indicated that the offending skin disease was infectious**, for some of the diseases that might cause the disorders described in Leviticus 13 (e.g., psoriasis) are not infectious.”²³⁵

²³¹ Roy E. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIVAC, 520.

²³² T.B. Dozeman, “The Book of Numbers,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. L.E. Keck, 12 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004), 2:60.

²³³ Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 33.

²³⁴ Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1–20*, AB (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 186.

²³⁵ Ronald B. Allen, “Numbers,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev., 2:125.

4. Quarantine was part of the ceremonial law, not the civil law.

- The stated purpose of this quarantine was to prevent ceremonial uncleanness (“that they may not defile”), which could result in divine judgment on the offending person and on the whole community (Lv 15:31).
- God did not allow ceremonial uncleanness near His dwelling place, i.e., the tabernacle, which was the physical location of His glorious, manifest presence on earth. In the new covenant, there is no single geographical dwelling place for God’s presence.^{236 237}
- There are no civil penalties listed; thus, this is not a civil law that civil magistrates should enforce.

As was the case in Leviticus 13–14, there is nothing in Numbers 5:1–4 to indicate that quarantine was within the state’s legislation and penology. In light of these facts, it is probable that Numbers 5:1–4 commanded each Hebrew “family” (the Hebrew term includes one’s extended family and one’s clan²³⁸) to put their own ceremonially unclean persons outside the camp (presumably after a determination of “unclean” by a Levitical priest).²³⁹

²³⁶ J. Ryan Lister, *The Presence of God: Its Place in the Storyline of Scripture and the Story of Our Lives* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015). Gregory K. Beale and Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014).

²³⁷ Similarly, under the new covenant with the priesthood of all believers, the ceremonial regulations that no one having any physical defect can be a priest (Lv 21:17–23) is no longer applicable.

²³⁸ Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Patriarchy: Male Headship in Family, Church, and State*, 37–44.

²³⁹ This comports with the fact that “the onus for dealing with a skin disease lies with the person who is suffering from it or with his or her family. These regulations . . . discourage priests from conducting witch-hunts. The initial steps that might lead to a person

Numbers 31:19–20

¹⁹ “And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. ²⁰ Purify every garment, everything made of leather, everything woven of goats’ *hair*, and everything made of wood.”

²¹ Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to the battle, “This *is* the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses . . .” (Nu 31:19–21).

Background. The Old Testament distinguishes between Israel’s “holy war” or “Yehowah’s war” (Nu 21:14; 1 Sm 18:17; 25:28; cf. Ex 17:16) and Israel’s normal wars. The former was directed against the seven specified nations inhabiting Canaan (Dt 7:1), plus the nomadic Amalekites (Ex 17:14, 16; Dt 25:17–19; 1 Sm 15:2–3). In “holy war” these specific nations were devoted to utter destruction (*herem*). This meant that God ordered the complete annihilation of this enemy, his army, his women, children and often the livestock (“let nothing that breathes remain alive,” Dt 20:16; cf. Jos 10:40), and the destruction of his cities and towns (Dt 20:16–18; Jos 8:24–

being declared unclean do not lie with the priests, but rather with others, who are expected to assume responsibility in the matter” (Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus*, BST, 172). Of course, the Hebrews’ camp was organized by their tribes, and was subdivided into their clans and extended families.

It should be remembered that the extended family (and even the clan) was a financial safety net for the nuclear family. Thus, if a diseased man was put outside the camp (thereby cut off from the blessings of the covenant), his extended family would be responsible for taking care of his family. Likewise, if a man’s house had irremediable *tsara`ath* (perhaps mold, mildew, fungus, dry rot, or termites) and had to be demolished, the extended family could help rebuild it.

29; 1 Sa 15:3).²⁴⁰ Often (but not always²⁴¹), no booty was to be taken (Jos 6:18-19, 24; 10:11-14; 1 Sm 15:3). Thus, *herem* involved genocide and the complete destruction of the enemies' culture. By contrast, standing law or normal rules for warfare against non-Canaanite nations involved the killing of all adult males only, while sparing the women, children, and livestock and taking spoils (Dt 20:10-15; 21:10-13; cp. Nu 31:14-18; Jdg 21:11).

Since Midian was not one of the Canaanite nations, normal rules of warfare would be expected to apply (Dt 20:10-15; 21:10-13). However, Numbers 31 is unique in that Yehowah's war against the Midianites is a hybrid of "holy war" and normal warfare against non-Canaanite nations.²⁴²

- Here it is those Midianites associated with Moab that are picked out for vengeance (vv. 8, 16; cf. chapters 22 and 25), not the whole group. . . . The campaign is called *the Lord's vengeance on Midian* (v. 3) because it is seen as punishment for the Midianites' seduction of Israel from their true husband, the Lord (cf. 25:1-13). Adultery carried the death penalty in the ancient world (e.g., Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22).²⁴³

Numbers 31 resumes the narrative from chapter 25, which ends with Yehowah commanding Moses to attack the Midianites (25:16-18), executing Yehowah's vengeance. The Hebrew term translated "vengeance" (*naqam*, Nu 31:3) denotes "retributive justice to redress crimes committed."²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Apparently, not all the Canaanite cities (which God had devoted to utter destruction) were to be burned (Dt 6:10-11; Jos 11:13; 24:13).

²⁴¹ Dt 2:35; 3:7; 20:16? Jos 8:2, 27; 11:14; 10:28-29?

²⁴² "The war against Midian is a special case of holy war" (Dennis T. Olson, *Numbers*, Interpretation, 178).

²⁴³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, 233-234.

²⁴⁴ Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, TT, 397; citing George Mendenhall.

Normally, women are to be spared in war outside Canaan (Dt 20:13–15), but these women have been part of a plot that causes the death of twenty-four thousand Israelites (Nu 25:9). . . . These women are not innocent. They en masse had participated in the plan to seduce Israelite men through sexual immorality into idolatry at Peor (see Nu 25), acts that may have involved the capital offense of adultery (Lv 20:10; Dt 22:24).²⁴⁵ [Cp. Gn 12:3; Nu 24:9.]

What was the high priest's son Phinehas' role in this battle? Obviously, he was in charge of the sacred vessels of the sanctuary and the priest's trumpets (Nu 31:6). However, since Moses' anger at sparing the women was directed at the officers and captains (31:14), apparently Phinehas was not involved in such military decisions.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, TT, 397, 395.

²⁴⁶ "Proof of Phinehas's nonmilitary role is afforded by the fact that Moses does not scold him but only the officers (v. 14)" (Jacob Milgrom, *JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* [Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1990], 257).

The priest Phinehas joins the Israelite warriors bearing the sacred vessels of the sanctuary²⁴⁷ and the trumpets²⁴⁸ for battle, both signs that this is a holy war campaign (Nu 10:1-10; Dt 20:2-4). The high priest Eleazar, Phinehas's father, does not go out in battle lest he become contaminated by contact with dead bodies in the battlefield. Such contamination is strictly forbidden for the high priest (Lv 21:11). . . . The priest Phinehas

²⁴⁷ The text does not specify what holy vessels from the Tabernacle Phinehas brought into battle. Scholars have suggested: holy war priestly garments (Dt 22:5); the ark of the covenant (Nu 10:35; 14:44; 1 Sm 4:4; 2 Sm 11:11; 1 Ki 8:8; cp. Nu 3:31; 4:15; 18:3); the Urim and Thummim (Nu 27:21) for obtaining revelation from God during the battle (1 Sm 14:41; 28:6); small implements from the worship of God in the Tabernacle; etc. — or some combination. In any case, they were symbols of God's presence. As "Yahweh was with his people in the sacred place, so he was with his people as they went to war" (Ronald B. Allen, "Numbers," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Numbers-Ruth*, eds. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012], 2:398). The warriors could take courage from the fact that Yehowah had made an everlasting covenant of peace with the priest Phinehas and his descendants (Nu 25:11-13). Furthermore, Phinehas was an example to the warriors to execute God's zeal and finish the job, as he had done.

²⁴⁸ The metal trumpets (in contrast to the ram's horn shofar) "were sounded exclusively by the priests" (Jacob Milgrom, *JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers*, 373). The trumpet in this text is the "sacred clarion" (*h'ṣōṣṣ'rā*) from 10:8 (see also 2 Ch 13:12). This was a long, straight metal tube with a flowing bell; it is distinguished from the shofar (*šōpār*), the ram's horn of ancient Israel. The verbal root *ḥṣṣr* (GK 2955) is denominative and means "to sound a clarion" (see 2 Ch 5:13, Piel; 1 Ch 15:24, Hiphil). The blowing of the sacred clarion was an act of celebrative worship" (cf. Ps 149:6) (Ronald B. Allen, Numbers, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Numbers-Ruth*, 2:398).

blows the trumpets to sound the alarm for the holy war as prescribed in Numbers 10:1-10 (31:6).²⁴⁹

Phinehas “now serves as the spiritual leader of Israel’s forces. . . . Phinehas’s function is not to lead the army, but to act as chaplain, that is, to render priestly services, especially in consulting the Urim and Thummim.”²⁵⁰

Levitical priests were not required to fight in wars. Both Eleazar and Phinehas were functioning in their sacral Levitical capacities. Phinehas was not functioning in the role of civil magistrate.

The bulk of Numbers 31 deals with the ceremonial purification of soldiers and booty from the impurity of war and the allotment of the spoils. Here are three key points to observe.

1. Just as we saw in Numbers 5:1-4, Numbers 31 concerns the Israelite war camp.
 - In particular, it concerned the unique, temporary Israelite “holy war” protocol.
 - Moses was functioning as covenant mediator, as Yehowah’s prophet/mouthpiece declaring His revealed directives, and as the human commander-in-chief of the military. In no respect is this describing a normative civil magistrate’s function over a civilian population.

²⁴⁹ Dennis T. Olson, *Numbers*, Interpretation, 176, 179. “The participation of Phinehas, son of Eleazar the high priest (6), shows that this is a holy war. The priests’ duties are described in Deuteronomy 20:2ff . . . a holy war carried out in obedience to the divine command and sanctified by the presence of the priest” (Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, 211). “His [Phinehas] leadership in the sacral aspects of the battle demonstrates that this was truly holy war” (Ronald B. Allen, Numbers, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Numbers-Ruth*, 2:398). Such quotation could be multiplied.

²⁵⁰ Jacob Milgrom, JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers, 257.

2. As was the case in Leviticus 13-14 and Numbers 5:1-4, **Numbers 31 concerns ceremonial uncleanness, not medical quarantine.**²⁵¹

- “War causes ceremonial uncleanness that excludes an Israelite from approaching God (Nu 31:19-24; cf. Nu 19).”²⁵²
- “All soldiers who have come in contact with corpses are required to remain outside the main encampment, where

²⁵¹ Rousas J. Rushdoony points out that the orgiastic perversions of cultic prostitutes involved in the Baal fertility cult would have spread many types of venereal diseases (*Numbers*, 353f, 346f, 276, 278-281). While this is quite plausible, it is not the point of the ceremonial uncleanness protocols discussed in Numbers 31. The text specifically states that the returning warriors were to remain outside the camp for seven days because of being ceremonially unclean due to contact with dead bodies (Nu 31:19). Seven days would hardly have been adequate time for the men to have recovered from venereal diseases acquired from the Midianite women.

“The lives of young girls (demonstrable virgins) only would be spared; for only they had not contaminated themselves with the debauchery of Midian and Moab in Baal worship (v. 18). The suggestion is that the participation of Midianite women in the debased orgiastic worship of Baal described in chapter 25 was extensive, not selective. Who would know which of these women was innocent of participation in these rituals? The presumption is that each one was guilty in some manner” (Ronald B. Allen, *Numbers*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Numbers-Ruth*, 2:403).

All Midian females were to be executed who had experienced sexual intercourse — i.e., “vaginal penetration of a female by a male” (Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21-36*, AB [New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000], 456) — regardless of the males involved, “whether Midianite or sinful Israelite men” (R. Dennis Cole, *Numbers*, NAC [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000], 499).

²⁵² Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, TT, 398.

the holy sanctuary is, and to undergo ritual purification (31:19; cf. 5:1-4; 19) to avoid bringing the conceptual sphere of impurity/death into association with divine holiness/life (see comments on Lv 12). . . . Operating under the assumption that the surviving girls have contacted dead bodies, the Israelites also purify them for a week (31:19b).”²⁵³

- “The procedures for purifying humans and objects after holy war is outlined in this section [Nu 31:19-24]. Purification is necessary, because death defiles all participants in war; and contact with the dead threatens the holiness of the camp. Numbers 5:1-4 stated the initial rule that any person defiled by contact with a corpse must be expelled from the camp. Numbers 19 outlined the general procedures for purification from contamination by corpses. Central to the process of purification was the ‘water of cleansing’ made from the ashes of the red heifer. The priestly writers intend that these verses be read in relation to chapter 19, which not only refers to the rituals associated with the water of cleansing, but also describes the legislation with the same language: Both are ‘the statute of the law that the Lord has commanded’ (19:2; 31:21).”²⁵⁴
- The red heifer offering described in Numbers 19 was “a special type of purification offering used only for corpse impurity. . . . Uncleaness from a corpse lasts seven days. . . . According to the book of Hebrews, purging ‘uncleaness’ through the ashes of the red heifer illustrates the spiritual cleansing of Christian consciences from dead works through the high priestly work of Christ (Heb 9:13-14). The sacrifice of the heifer and the sacrifice of Christ

²⁵³ Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIVAC, 769f.

²⁵⁴ Thomas B. Dozeman, *The Book of Numbers*, in *New Interpreter's Bible*, 2:247. Dozeman then explains that “death is defined over against holiness by priestly writers and in New Testament literature. Death is a power that is incompatible with the holiness of God, and thus it defiles. . . . Jesus becomes the ashes of the red heifer in his role as high priest (Heb 9:11-14).”

have several similarities: . . .”²⁵⁵ [Unquestionably, the focus is uncleanness, which is removed by the God-appointed, sacrificial, blood atonement — not by medical quarantine.]

- “In the case of the cleansing of these soldiers, they had to wait until the seventh day, then wash their clothes before they could enter the camp. This pattern of seven days of exclusion from the camp because of uncleanness is well established in Israel (see the story of Miriam in chapter 12).”²⁵⁶
- “The returning army, requiring purification from corpse contamination (v. 19), could not enter the camp. This requirement follows the law of 5:1-4 (and Dt 23:10-15). . . . In contrast to a settlement, the war camp must always be in a state of purity to allow for God’s holy Presence to rest there.”²⁵⁷
- “The purification is from corpse contamination, which can pollute the sanctuary. . . . These rules apply solely to the Israelite camp in the wilderness, which is conceived as a war camp from which all impurity is to be excluded as prescribed in Numbers 5:1-4.”²⁵⁸

3. Quarantine was part of the ceremonial law, not the civil law.

- Eleazar, the high priest, directed the returning warriors in the protocol for purification of the booty from the impurity of war (Nu 31:21-24).
- “The ritual of the water made with the red cow ashes in Numbers 19 is used to purify the soldiers contaminated by corpses and to purify the booty as it is brought into the camp (31:19-24).”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, TT, 302-304.

²⁵⁶ Ronald B. Allen, Numbers, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Numbers-Ruth*, 2:406.

²⁵⁷ Jacob Milgrom, *JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers*, 258.

²⁵⁸ Jacob Milgrom, *JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers*, 260.

²⁵⁹ Dennis T. Olson, *Numbers*, Interpretation, 179.

- There are no civil penalties listed; thus, this is not a civil law that civil magistrates should enforce.

As we saw with regard to Leviticus 13–14 and Numbers 5:1–4, Numbers 31 does not justify modern, state-imposed medical quarantines with civil penalties.

Summary of Leviticus 13–14, Numbers 5:1–4, and Numbers 31

1. These passages are inseparable from the ceremonial law, with its ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness, Levitical priesthood, and atoning animal sacrifices.
2. In the bigger picture of the entire ceremonial law, it is virtually impossible to consistently hold the view that the ceremonial laws had a health or medical purpose, since Christ and the Apostles nullified the ceremonial food laws and circumcision for Gentiles. Why would God — in the new and better covenant — be less concerned for the health of His covenant people? Additionally, why were other harmful animals and vegetables not prohibited in the law?
3. The Hebrew term *tsara`ath* (translated “leprosy” in most English Bibles), when applied to people, denotes a “ritually defiling skin disease.” Leviticus 13 probably lists symptoms of at least twenty-one such diseases. But, when applied to things (e.g., fabric, leather goods, house walls), *tsara`ath* denotes mold or mildew²⁶⁰ — not diseases that can be communicated to people as skin diseases.
4. These passages are concerned with ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness, not with medical quarantine.

²⁶⁰ When applied to a house, the meaning of *tsara`ath* could also include dry rot or termites.

- The dominate theme of Leviticus 13-14 is ceremonial cleanness/uncleanness (terms occurring 66 times in these two chapters), not disease.
 - A Levitical priest was summoned to make a judicial ruling of clean or unclean. He made no attempt to diagnose which skin disease an infected person might have or to prescribe any medical treatment for curing this condition.
 - Most skin diseases are not contagious. Some modern skin diseases that meet the criteria given in Leviticus 13 are not contagious (e.g., psoriasis). Other serious diseases that are highly contagious – even diseases that were known in the ancient Near East – did not require quarantine.
 - According to modern dermatologists and leprologists, the quarantine period of seven to fourteen days is not effectual for the treatment period of any known skin disease.
 - Being healed of one's disease did not render an infected person clean. He could only become clean after performing elaborate, atoning, ritual, animal sacrifices, and then being pronounced clean by a Levitical priest. These atoning sacrifices were an integral part of the ceremonial law that preached the gospel in pictures.
 - With regard to *tsara'ath* inside one's house, objects removed from the house just prior to a Levitical priest's judicial ruling of the house being unclean were not unclean. The modern concept of biological germs or bacteria being on the physical objects that were removed was not a consideration. Since God – who gave these laws to Moses – had comprehensive knowledge of how diseases were spread, quarantining to prevent the spread of infection from person to person was not what the passage is about.
5. The stated reason why unclean persons or objects could not remain among God's covenant people was that God's physical dwelling place on earth was in their midst (i.e., the tabernacle in the wilderness and the war camp when engaging in genocidal "holy war" to conquer the land of Canaan). The dwelling place of God's glorious, manifest presence on earth is holy and must

not be defiled by ceremonial uncleanness. Thus, quarantine in these passages was to protect God’s sanctuary from defilement — the profaning of which would likely result in an outbreak of God’s holy wrath against the offenders. In other words, in these passages quarantine had more to do with separating unclean people from the presence of God than with quarantining sick people from healthy people. (Ritual ceremonial uncleanness was caused by many things besides certain skin diseases — even normal things that were not sinful, e.g. sexual relations with one’s spouse, a wife having a baby, or a woman having her menstrual period.)

6. No role is assigned to civil magistrates in these passages, and there are no civil penalties listed.

Consequently, it is **poor hermeneutics to use Leviticus 13-14, Numbers 5:1-4, and Numbers 31 to justify contemporary medical quarantines by civil magistrates.** It requires eisegesis (i.e., a subjective reading something into a text that isn’t there), not exegesis.

It is also important to remember the hermeneutical principle that each text has just one meaning (WCF, 1:9), although that one meaning may apply to various situations.

Nevertheless, as we stated above, “God is associated with life and wholeness,” and “God wants to protect people from disease.” These truths are taught throughout Scripture. Consider, for example, the pervasive Biblical teaching on healing that is associated with God’s name (i.e., His nature), God’s covenant promises, Christ’s atonement, the messianic kingdom, the age of the Spirit, etc. It is also true that God’s wants His people to protect life²⁶¹ — but that

²⁶¹ See the Westminster Larger Catechism’s exposition of the Sixth Commandment (Q&A 135-136). However, it must always be kept in mind that it is illegitimate to divorce the Sixth Commandment

must be done in a Biblical manner, recognizing the proper roles and limited jurisdictions of family, church, and state — not by abdicating liberty to tyrannical civil magistrates under the guise of keeping us safe. For example, civil government’s responsibility to “protect human life” (cf. the Sixth Commandment) must be Biblically defined within the civil government’s Biblical jurisdiction. Commanding people to “stop driving your cars,” “stop eating sugar,” “stop visiting and ministering to the sick,” or “take the mandatory vaccines” are unbiblical applications of “protecting human life.”

A few common traits do not prove true similarity

That is not to say that there are no similarities whatsoever between Biblical ceremonial laws and modern medical quarantines, but a few common traits do not prove true similarity. For example, both humans and animals breathe, eat, reproduce, and their physical bodies share several common chemical elements. But, Scripturally, humans are not animals, despite sharing a few common traits (contra the dogma of Darwinian evolutionism). Likewise, both Biblical ceremonial laws and modern quarantines involve humans, can involve isolating an individual demonstrably having a disease, and can cause the individual and his/her family economic hardship. But, as we have seen in our study of the relevant Biblical laws, there are considerable differences between Biblical ceremonial laws and modern medical quarantines. Failure to account for these differences can easily lead to logical fallacies in argumentation (e.g., false analogy, sweeping generalization, hasty generalization, etc.).

Rushdoony on quarantine

Rousas J. Rushdoony did a brilliant job demonstrating the relevance, practicality, and necessity of God’s law for today. His astute observation that the source of law for any society is the god of

from the first two Commandments (Ex 20:1-2). This has significant applications for civil magistrates.

that society is particularly helpful.²⁶² However, his view on quarantine is not easy to assess in a few brief paragraphs, but here are three initial observations.

²⁶² “Law in every culture is religious in origin. . . . **In any culture the source of law is the god of that society.** . . . In any society, any change of law is an explicit or implicit change of religion. Nothing more clearly reveals, in fact, the religious change in a society than a legal revolution. . . . There can be no tolerance in a law-system for another religion” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 1:4f).

“Not only is every church a religious institution, but every state or social order is a religious establishment. Every state is a law order, and every law order represents an enacted morality, with procedures for the enforcement of that morality. Every morality represents a form of theological order, i.e., is an aspect and expression of a religion. The church thus is not the only religious institution; the state also is a religious institution. More often than the church, the state has been the central religious institution of most civilizations through the centuries. . . . 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” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Christianity and the State* [Vallecito, CA: Ross House, 1986], 7).

“All systems of law are establishments of religion. The current insistence on ‘the separation of church and state’ is really the effort to disestablish Christianity as the religion behind our concepts of law and government and to replace it with a statist humanism” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law: The Intent of the Law*, vol. 3, 3:212).

“From a Christian perspective, **the State’s enactments are only law when they conform to the word of God.** . . . Because of the redefinition of all things now underway, *law* means simply the *present* stance of the State, nothing eternal nor absolutely true” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *To Be as God: A Study of Modern Thought*

1. First, it is important to recognize that Rushdoony does not distinguish between God's moral, civil, and ceremonial²⁶³ law (unlike traditional Reformed thought²⁶⁴); in fact, he rejects the term "ceremonial law."²⁶⁵
2. Second, Rushdoony does not always discuss quarantine laws from the perspective of continuity and discontinuity²⁶⁶ (i.e.,

Since the Marquis de Sade (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2003), 36).

"God's law is the only definition of justice. . . . Nor does He recognize as law any law other than His own. . . . When God begins the Ten Commandments with the words, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me' (Ex 20:3; Dt 5:7), He not only bans the worship of any other gods but also the acceptance of any other laws than His own" (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law: The Intent of the Law*, 25, 29, 75).

²⁶³ However, in his commentary on Leviticus Rushdoony wrote, "We cannot see these laws are merely sanitary rules: they are a part of the laws of holiness, and laws of clean and unclean" (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Leviticus*, 137).

²⁶⁴ For Biblical evidence of the necessity of distinguishing between the moral, civil, and ceremonial law see Robert E. Fugate, *God's Royal Law: Foundation of Moral Order*, 39–57.

²⁶⁵ "It is customary now to speak of this as a 'ceremonial law'; this is an example of the false divisions so common to the modern man" (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Numbers* [Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2006], 36). On the contrary, both Old and New Testaments distinguish between ceremonial laws and the moral law (even though they don't use that exact terminology). So did the early church. See Robert E. Fugate, *God's Royal Law: Foundation of Moral Order*, 39–57. Rushdoony's colleague, Greg L. Bahnsen, adopted the traditional Reformed (and Lutheran) view of distinguishing between God's moral, civil, and ceremonial law (*Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, 2nd ed., chapter 9 "The Ceremonial (Restorative) Law"). In fact, today it is in vogue among scholars to deny the distinctions between moral, civil, and ceremonial law.

²⁶⁶ John M. Frame also noted Rushdoony's lack of clearly stating his position regarding continuities and discontinuities ("The Institutes of Biblical Law: A Review Article," *Westminster Theological*

what continues into the new covenant and what does not and why).

3. Third, he does not interpret the relevant texts in light of the distinct roles of the family, the church, and the state with regard to quarantine.

In his trailblazing *Institutes of Biblical Law*, Rushdoony simply assumed that quarantine is under the jurisdiction of the civil government, but he made no attempt to demonstrate this from the Biblical text.²⁶⁷ Indeed, as we have seen, the text would seem to indicate otherwise. Furthermore, if Rushdoony's historical example of quarantine in medieval Europe²⁶⁸ was given to prove the validity of the state enforcing quarantine laws, then he committed the naturalistic fallacy. Logically, one cannot deduce from the fact that quarantine was done (which involves descriptive propositions) the

Journal 38:2 (Winter, 1976), 195–217; available at <https://framepoythress.org/the-institutes-of-biblical-law-a-review-article>).

Rushdoony recognized discontinuity when he wrote, “The *details* of these laws [i.e., Lv 13–15] are not applicable to our times, in that they have an earlier era in mind, but the *principles* of these laws are still valid” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law* [n.p.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1973], 293). Rushdoony had to hold to some degree of discontinuity, since he correctly believed that animal sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood have been done away with in the new covenant. “In looking at the modern application of this law, we must recognize, *first*, that the sacrificial rites are no longer valid, since Christ's sacrifice replaces them all” (idem., *Leviticus*, 145).

²⁶⁷ “The state has therefore a legislative power in dealing with plagues, epidemics, venereal diseases, and other contagious and dangerous diseases. Such legislation is plainly required in the Mosaic law (Nu 5:1–4) . . . a matter of civil legislation” (Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, 293).

²⁶⁸ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, 293. Idem., *Leviticus*, 144f.

“ought” (imperative) that quarantine should have been done or should be done today.²⁶⁹

However, in discussing quarantine in his commentaries on Leviticus and Numbers (both published posthumously), Rushdoony does not emphasize the role of the state.²⁷⁰

Applications of Biblical principles to COVID-19

It is outside the scope of this book to attempt a medical analysis of COVID-19 (and such an analysis would become outdated very quickly). However, it is crucial to distinguish between different aspects of the current COVID-19 “pandemic,” particularly the medical issues, governments’ responses, and economic consequences. Each presents its own distinct threats and would require its own analysis. Instead, we will review six typical mistakes made by church leaders during the COVID-19 lockdowns and then suggest nine key principles for churches going forward.

Typical mistakes made by American church leaders during the COVID-19 lockdowns

During the past nine months we have had opportunity to witness mistakes made by good, Bible-believing church leaders during the so-called pandemic. These mistakes have been made by both Reformed and Arminian evangelicals. We will enumerate and comment on six pervasive mistakes.

1. Having a general naivety towards the goals, as well as the corruption of: U.S. government officials and government

²⁶⁹ Perhaps Rushdoony is merely offering these historical examples as applications of his interpretation of Biblical law, rather than as proof of their validity.

²⁷⁰ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Leviticus*, 131–145, commenting on Leviticus 13–14; idem., *Numbers*, 35–37. “When the state is maximized, Biblical law is minimized. God’s law provides us with government and with the means of government in all the spheres of life: personal, familial, educational, ecclesiastical, vocational, societal, and also in the civil realm” (*Leviticus*, 142).

agencies (e.g., FDA, DEA, DHS, DOJ); medical agencies (e.g., CDC, WHO, AMA) and medical schools; intelligence agencies (e.g., CIA, FBI, NSA), and the U.S. military.

The pervasiveness of the love of money (1 Tim 6:10) and the lust for power and control over other human beings are ubiquitous.

In general, church leaders vastly underestimate the treasonous plans and cooperative programs of communistic globalists (whether in civil government, huge international corporations, mainstream media, or non-profit foundations [e.g., Bill and Melinda Gates, Rockefeller, Soros, etc.]) to: (a) exterminate a large portion of the world's population;²⁷¹ and (b) establish an anti-Christian, draconian, technocratic, world government controlled by god-like elites.²⁷² Many Christian leaders dismiss such draconian scheming on the ground of God's sovereignty. However, that may well be an erroneous application of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. It was the sovereign God Who, in Biblical times, raised up the bloodthirsty, occultic empires of Assyria, Babylon, and Rome to destroy the apostate covenant nation Israel, thereby fulfilling the prophetic curses of God's covenant (Dt 28:15-68; Lv 26:14-39; etc.). Throughout history, the sovereign, righteous God judges apostate, evil nations.

Most church leaders wrongly assumed: (a) that the medical issue was the primary issue regarding the so-called COVID-19 pandemic (rather than the economic impact²⁷³ and draconian

²⁷¹ This has been stated blatantly by elites such as David Rockefeller, Henry Kissinger, Ted Turner, etc.

²⁷² Such globalists are following their commander, Satan, whose kingdom is authoritarian and centralized. It's reminiscent of the occult ziggurat, the Tower of Babel.

²⁷³ The deliberate economic impacts of arbitrary, unscientific government health orders include: thousands of businesses closed; millions of people became unemployed and unable to provide for their families; small businesses (which promote free markets and

governments permanently taking away freedoms); (b) that the pandemic and lockdowns would end quickly; and (c) things would quickly go back to normal.

American church leaders are generally naïve regarding the propaganda, psychological warfare, and censorship campaigns being waged against the American people (and especially against Christianity) by government agencies, mainstream media,²⁷⁴ and the big tech corporations (e.g., Alphabet/Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube [owned by Google], etc.).

Most pastors flippantly dismiss such thinking as “conspiracy theories.”²⁷⁵

liberty) are deliberately bankrupted, causing millions of people to become totally dependent upon the state for a living wage; but the politically-correct big banks and huge international corporations received the bulk of federal stimulus funds, even the vast majority of funds earmarked for small businesses. Of course, the creation of such vast sums of money increases debt, debases the currency, and causes monetary inflation (resulting in price inflation)—which is a form of government theft, robbing people of the value of their savings and investments, as well as lowering the purchasing power of their present wages (which almost never increase as rapidly or as much as actual price inflation). (Official U.S. government figures of the rate of inflation [consumer price index] and the number of people unemployed are bogus (see shadowstats.com).

²⁷⁴ Five corporations own and control the American mainstream media (including newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations, books, music, movies, videos, wire services, and photo agencies): AOL Time Warner; Viacom; Walt Disney Company; Vivendi Universal; and Sony (<https://vigilantcitizen.com/vigilantreport/mind-control-theories-and-techniques-used-by-mass-media>).

²⁷⁵ Such people would be enlightened by reading the U.N. Agenda 30, as well as the reports produced by the World Economic Forum, especially its great “reset” program. For Biblical teaching regarding conspiracies and documentation regarding propaganda, see Robert E. Fugate, *A Biblical Philosophy of Truth*, 47–49.

2. A dangerous misuse of Romans 13:1-7 that demands almost absolute obedience to civil magistrates, since they are “ministers of God.”
3. A misguided belief that civil government officials are acting within their jurisdiction in the issuance of quarantine lockdowns, wearing of masks, social distancing, etc.
4. Divorcing the Sixth Commandment (i.e., to protect human life, Ex 20:13) from the first two Commandments (i.e., having no other gods but Yehowah, 20:3-6) with regard to God’s requirements for civil magistrates. (This breaks the covenant structure of Exodus 19-20.)
5. A failure to recognize that the civil government’s responsibility to “protect human life” must be Biblically defined and qualified within the sphere of the civil government’s Biblical jurisdiction. For example, making laws to protect life by commanding people to “stop driving your cars,” “stop eating sugar,” “lose thirty pounds,” “give us your children to educate and medicate,” and “stop visiting and ministering to the sick” are unbiblical applications of the principle of “protecting life.” Likewise, mandating quarantine of healthy people, the wearing of masks, and mandating vaccinations are not within the God-given jurisdiction of the civil government. Creating civil penalties for disobeying such unjust, liberty-destroying laws/orders is a violation of the Biblical jurisdiction of civil government and a usurpation of the God-given authority and jurisdictions of both the family and the church.
6. In what little teaching American pastors are giving on the subject of resistance to tyrannical governments (at least cessationist pastors), there seems to be a deafening silence on the dire need to be led by the Holy Spirit.
7. Sadly, we are now witnessing some Christian leaders echoing the media’s propaganda to: stop politicizing science; follow the dictates of the politically-correct scientists; stop objecting; wear

your mask; and take the COVID-19 vaccines.²⁷⁶ Simply put, stop thinking, shut up, and obey whatever you are told to do! Despite vociferous clamoring to the contrary, such thinking does not comport with the Biblical worldview; but it does promote idolatrous statism and pervasive tyranny. They might as well echo the ancient Romans, “Hail, Caesar, those who are about to die salute you!”

9 key principles for churches

Learning from past mistakes, how should church leaders respond to the current situation?⁹ Here are nine key principles.

1. **Churches do not need—and should not seek—permission from the civil government** to do what the one-and-only Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:22–23; 5:23; Col 1:18), has commissioned her to do. Jesus the Messiah is Lord; Caesar is not (Pss 2; 110; Ac 2:30–36; 10:36; 17:6–7; Phil 2:9–11; Rv 1:5)! Such rights do not derive from any human government. Any “rights” a government “graciously” confers it can revoke at will.
2. It is not possible for the church to fully obey the commands of her Lord Jesus Christ without meeting together (Ac 2:42, 46). For instance:
 - Partaking of the means of grace, which include (but are not limited to): the teaching of the Word; the sacraments (i.e., baptism and the Lord’s Supper); corporate praise

²⁷⁶ For example, the pro-evolutionist/anti-creationist group, BioLogos, “A Christian Statement on Science for Pandemic Times,” <https://statement.biologos.org>. Unfortunately, Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, wrote along a similar vein in his essay (which is filled with non-sequiturs), “Vaccines and the Christian Worldview: Principles for Christian Thinking in the Context of COVID,” <https://albertmohler.com/2020/12/14/vaccines-and-the-christian-worldview-principles-for-christian-thinking-in-the-context-of-covid>.

and worship (which include singing); corporate prayer; Christian fellowship; all members of the body of Christ exercising gifts of the Spirit for the edification of the body (1 Cor 12; 14; Ro 12:4-8); etc.²⁷⁷

- The “let us . . .” and “one another” commands of Scripture;
 - Personal ministry to individuals, such as: words of encouragement or exhortation or wise counsel; anointing with oil (Mk 6:13; Ja 5:14); and the laying on of hands;²⁷⁸
 - Ministry to the sick (Ja 5:14-16; pervasively throughout the Gospels and the book of Acts);
 - The expression of Christian physical affection.
3. In many geographical areas, civil governments have utilized COVID-19 to promote tyranny and overt suppression of Biblical Christianity and Christ’s Church.²⁷⁹ Church leaders must recognize this and prayerfully strategize accordingly.

²⁷⁷ Robert E. Fugate, “Means of Grace.” Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 950-963; cf. 754-756.

²⁷⁸ Concerning the laying on of hands, liturgical churches and Presbyterian churches are church office centric, so they think almost exclusively in terms of ordination. However, the New Testament teaches at least four normative purposes for the laying on of hands besides ordination.

²⁷⁹ Short-term isolation of specific persons having known communicable diseases is quarantine. Isolating healthy persons is tyrannical solitary confinement. Government-imposed, mandatory wearing of masks by the public is sinful, dictatorial control by tyrannical civil governments, based on poor (and often fake) science, promoted by brain-washing propaganda that incessantly spews forth from a media that acts like a collective false prophet! And prolonged wearing of masks typically makes people sicker, and it destroys brain cells. Mandatory COVID-19 vaccines are viewed as messianic, but

4. Church leaders (as well as seminary professors and ministry leaders) have a God-given responsibility to teach Biblical principles regarding: Jesus Christ's lordship/sovereign reign over everything; the proper **jurisdictions** of family, church, and state; the legitimate role and the limits of civil governments, with warnings against an idolatrous state; civil disobedience (including a proper understanding of Romans 13:1-7); etc.
 - For example, pastors must teach fathers that they do not need permission from the civil government to do what God the Father has commissioned them to do, such as: work to provide for their family; protect their family; educate their children; etc. (Recall our previous discussion that the jurisdiction of family includes: marriage; child-raising; property ownership; business ownership; inheritance; education; and welfare.) Such rights do not derive from any human government. Family derives from God the Father.²⁸⁰ Civil government neither defines the family nor is the lord over the family. Of course, fathers (as well as church elders) have a God-given responsibility to protect their God-given jurisdiction. Husbands/fathers should also be teaching these Biblical truths to their wives/children.

in reality, are probably satanic and highly dangerous. Given our present knowledge, people should avoid them at all costs!

While I readily admit that this is not the politically-correct view in America at this time, I have read and listened to quite a number of doctors and highly-credentialed scientists (including virologists, bacteriologists, former chief medical officers of vaccine companies, top medical officers in a couple countries, etc.) from numerous European countries, as well as from the U.S. and elsewhere.

²⁸⁰ God is the Father of all fatherhood (Eph 3:14-15). See Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Patriarchy: Male Headship in Family, Church, and State*, 70f. This book also demonstrates that family is the primary, God-ordained institution, with both church and state being derived from the patriarchal family.

5. Church pastors-elders who have a Biblical understanding of these issues and a concern regarding increasing state tyranny should:
- commit to personally “obey God rather than men” (Ac 5:29) in these issues, being God’s prophetic voice in their community – even if no one joins them;
 - pray and work to educate and recruit other Bible-believing pastors who would be willing to stand with them in opposing sinful state tyranny;²⁸¹
 - consider mobilizing other cobelligerents who are not necessarily Bible-believing, but who oppose state tyranny (e.g., some Roman Catholics, libertarians, etc.);²⁸²
 - pray imprecatory prayers (individually, as families, and as churches) against demonized, tyrannical civil government leaders who are persecuting the Lord Jesus Christ and His church.²⁸³
6. A local church does not have to meet all together in one centralized building; it can meet in houses, other buildings (cp. Ac 19:9), caves, etc.²⁸⁴ A church that is highly-centralized is more

²⁸¹ Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 79–88.

²⁸² *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* was written from this perspective (Robert M. Kingdon, “Calvinism and the resistance theory, 1550–1580,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J.H. Burns, 212f).

I don’t recommend forming an organization including such non-Bible-believing groups. It is fine to form an organization/coalition with other Bible-believing Christians (including those Pentecostals and charismatics who are committed to Scripture).

²⁸³ Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Imprecations: Christians’ Secret Weapon* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2007).

²⁸⁴ Robert E. Fugate, “Meeting Places for the Early Christians.” Biblically, buildings are not “churches.” Observe that the Epistles and the book of Acts portray one church per city (such as the church

easily controlled by the state. A Biblical church must not be building-dependent. The early church did not have its own buildings. The early church was often an “underground” church that met primarily in homes until the fourth century (and few of these Christians were wealthy with large houses). And, it certainly didn’t hurt their church growth! The same is true for much of China today, and it was certainly the case in the former Soviet Union. In such communist countries, the true church of Jesus Christ is the underground church. The compromised church is the state-licensed church that meets openly, but is regulated by the state and infiltrated by government spies. Of course, contemporary Christians must also meet secretly in many Muslim countries.

7. If opposition in your locality is strong, you should consider stewarding the resources God has given you and providing for your family by: storing some money and precious metals outside the country in which you live (perhaps owned by a foreign LLC or foreign corporation that you form and control); taking advantage of greater legal protections afforded in your country,²⁸⁵ such as having your home or other property/investments owned by an LLC or corporation that you form and control, rather than personally “owning” them. You don’t have to legally “own” property or possessions to control and use them.
8. Cultivate a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and be led by Him (Ro 8:14 and throughout the chapter; Gal 5:18).²⁸⁶ Biblical

at Corinth), but multiple churches per province (Robert E. Fugate, “ἐκκλησία in the New Testament”). Yet, it is problematical that such a first-century church in a given city ever met together in one building (at least after the first year). However, I am not suggesting that, in times of peace, a church should not have its own building.

²⁸⁵ The Apostle Paul utilized the Roman legal system, even using it against unjust civil magistrates (Ac 16:37-40; Ac 21-26, especially 22:25-29; 23:17; 25:11; Tit 3:13).

²⁸⁶ Orthodox theology teaches that the Holy Spirit is a Person, not an impersonal force. As a Person (sharing all the attributes of the

Christianity always combines God’s written Word (inspired and illumined by the Holy Spirit) and the supernatural empowerment and leading of the Holy Spirit. As vital as Bible study is, it cannot replace the dynamic, supernatural leading of God the Holy Spirit. Christian leaders must ask themselves, “Into which battles is the Holy Spirit calling us to fight now and with what strategies?”

9. In situations where God has brought judgment upon a people by enslaving them by means of a tyrannical government, the church must begin with: repentance (including repentance for failing to be God’s prophetic voice to the culture); casting itself on the mercy of God; praying imprecatory prayers²⁸⁷ upon tyrants persecuting Christ’s church; and, with the Holy Spirit’s leading, strategically choose which battles to fight and when to engage in them — all the while working toward the goal laid out in the comprehensive Biblical blueprints for all of culture being submitted to King Jesus.

divine nature of the Tri-Personal God), the Holy Spirit speaks — and that does not mean that the Holy Spirit can say nothing but the words He wrote in the Bible (Mt 10:20; Jn 16:13–15; Ac 1:16; 8:29; 10:19–20; 11:12; 13:2; 21:11; 28:25; 1 Tim 4:1; Heb 3:7; 1 Pt 1:11; Rv 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 22:17; 2 Sm 23:2; 1 Ki 22:24; etc.)! As His self-revelation in all Scripture shows, the Tri-Personal God is the living God, the “God Who Speaks and Shows” (to use Carl F.H. Henry’s depiction). The sovereign Person of God the Holy Spirit is neither dumb nor gagged. Throughout Scripture it is the false gods who cannot speak (Pss 115:4–8; 135:15; Is 46:7; Jer 10:5, 1, 10; Hab 2:18–19, 1–2). We reject semi-deism.

We previously noted that Henry Bullinger, writing his answers to four of Knox’s questions regarding obedience to lawful magistrates in 1554, gives characteristics needed for godly believers to determine which lesser magistrates to following in opposing a sovereign tyrant, one of which was that they “obey the impulses of the Holy Ghost” (*Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, 3:226).

²⁸⁷ Robert E. Fugate, *Biblical Imprecations: Christians’ Secret Weapon*.

Autonomous Medicine

Medical practitioners (and indeed all scientists) – to the degree that they are submitting their thinking and medical practices to the Biblical worldview – can be a great blessing.²⁸⁸ To the degree that they are functioning autonomously, not submitting to the Biblical worldview, they can be dangerous, cruel, and even deadly. America’s increased rejection of Biblical Christianity is having a colossal impact on truth, ethics, and liberty in the culture.

Truth

Apart from divine revelation from the tri-Personal, Creator-God of the Bible, truth is lost.²⁸⁹ Indeed, a person’s concept of God determines his concept of truth.

- Pragmatic views of truth have led to several research facilities fabricating and falsifying medical research data to obtain government or corporate grant money.
- 50% of articles in prestigious medical journals are bogus.

Dr. Marcia Angell, M.D., a Senior Lecturer at Harvard Medical School and former Editor-in-Chief of *The New England Journal*

²⁸⁸ Medical practitioners (and all scientists) have finite knowledge. Current medical practices may be demonstrated to be badly misguided in the future (such as blood-letting was in the past). It is a logical impossibility for scientists to ever discover absolute truth through their research (which is based on a philosophy of empiricism and inductive/probabilistic reasoning). See Robert E. Fugate, *The Foundation and Pillars of the Biblical Worldview*, 453–469 and the copious references to science in idem., *Modernism and Postmodernism: Their History, Beliefs, Cultural Influence – and How to Refute Them* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2015).

²⁸⁹ For a brief discussion of modernist, postmodernist, and existentialist perversions of truth, see Robert E. Fugate, *A Biblical Philosophy of Truth with Contemporary Applications* (Omaha, NE: Lord of the Nations, 2017), 27–33. Cf. idem., “Pragmatism: Philosophical Problems and Practical Consequences.”

of *Medicine*, wrote “It is simply no longer possible to believe much of the clinical research that is published, or to rely on the judgment of trusted physicians or authoritative medical guidelines. I take no pleasure in this conclusion, which I reached slowly and reluctantly over my two decades as an editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.”²⁹⁰ Elsewhere she writes, “Much of what we think we know about the pharmaceutical industry is mythology spun by the industry’s immense public relations apparatus.”²⁹¹

Similarly, Dr. Richard Horton, the current editor-in-chief of the *Lancet* (one of the most highly esteemed, peer-reviewed medical journals in the world), writes, “The case against science is straightforward: **much of the scientific literature, perhaps half, may simply be untrue.**”²⁹²

Science writer Richard F. Harris, who writes for the American national news syndicator, National Public Radio (NPR), concurs: “Almost everything they [i.e., the *Lancet* or the *British Medical Journal*] publish is ‘bogus.’ ... Most ‘science’ studies don’t hold up under scrutiny, and most of them can’t be reproduced when someone else attempts to perform the same experiment.”²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Marcia Angell, M.D., “Drug Companies and Doctors: A story of Corruption,” *NY Review of Books* [Jan. 15, 2009], <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2009/01/15/drug-companies-doctors-a-story-of-corruption> (bold added). This is a review of Dr. Angell’s book, *The Truth About the Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What to Do About It* (New York, NY: Random House, 2005).

²⁹¹ <https://newrepublic.com/article/139328/congress-just-quietly-handed-drug-companies-dangerous-victory>.

²⁹² Now removed from <https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736%2815%2960696-1.pdf> (bold added).

²⁹³ <https://www.naturalnews.com/2017-05-08-science-shock-almost-all-medical-studies-are-bogus-reproducibility-approaches-zero.html>;

- Medical researchers or doctors who expose either dangerous pharmaceutical drugs (especially vaccines) or corruption in pharmaceutical corporations, medical institutions, or The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will usually be censored, lose funding, and may be fired. Several have been murdered. Most people discovering natural or unpatentable cures for major diseases (especially cancer) will be censored, threatened with lawsuits, and maybe driven out of business.

Biblical ethics

Apart from submission to God's inerrant, sufficient, universally-binding Word, Biblical ethics are lost, as is clearly evident in American culture, with its:

- Unethical and even cruel medical and psychological experimentation on unknowing or unwilling humans;²⁹⁴ and
- Population control (abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, eugenics, unjust wars, vaccines, sterilizations,²⁹⁵ etc.) to "cull the herd," getting rid of "useless eaters" (Henry Kissinger's term).

citing Richard F. Harris, *Rigor Mortis: How Sloppy Science Creates Worthless Cures, Crushes Hope, and Wastes Billions* (NY, NY: Basic Books, 2017).

²⁹⁴

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unethical_human_experimentation_in_the_United_States (surveying over 150 years of unethical, non-consensual, and illegal medical experimentation on humans in the United States — typically financed by the U.S. government and often directly performed by some government agency, such as the CIA or the military).

<https://jonrappoport.wordpress.com/2015/01/19/vast-experiments-on-humans-a-forgotten-document>.

²⁹⁵ Nearly 65,000 American citizens have been forcefully sterilized (<http://www.uvm.edu/~lkaelber/eugenics>; sources can be multiplied by a web search for forced sterilization United States).

Liberty

In several countries the field of medicine functions in collusion with civil government, becoming a medical cartel that exercises a medical monopoly. The most prominent example, the American Medical Association (AMA), is a labor union (or trade union) that, after gradually implementing the 1910 Flexner Report,²⁹⁶ gained total

²⁹⁶ In 1892 wealthy oil monopolist John D. Rockefeller appointed Frederick T. Gates as head of all his “philanthropies.” Gates devised a plan to dominate the entire medical education system in the United States, and in 1901 organized the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research. Shortly thereafter, in 1904 the AMA established a Council on Medical Education, ostensibly to improve the national quality of medical education; this involved evaluating and rating all medical schools in the country. As is always the case, definitions are determinative. The AMA came to define “quality” of medical education in terms of being graduates of their certified medical schools, which required the prescribing of pharmaceutical drugs as the approved form of medical treatment—thereby disqualifying homeopaths, herbalists, naturopaths, chiropractors, etc. The AMA wasn’t able to finance to completion the ambitious project of visiting and evaluating all medical schools in the country, so the secretary of the AMA Council on Medical Education, N.P. Colwell, enlisted the assistance of the Carnegie Foundation (which was closely allied with the Rockefeller Foundation) to complete the project. The Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research was already functioning, and one of the Board of Directors was Simon Flexnor. Simon proposed that his brother Abraham (who knew nothing about medicine) be appointed to oversee the AMA’s medical school project, a proposal accepted by the Carnegie Foundation. Three years later the Flexnor Report was completed. It outlined a plan to create a medical monopoly in the United States. It involved significantly reducing the number of practicing physicians and controlling the medical schools. The plan was eminently successful. Nine years after the completion of the Flexnor Report (1919) over 92% of medical schools were no longer in business (650 down to 50), and the number of annual graduates reduced by 67% (7,500 down to 2,500)! By 1925, over 10,000 herbalists were out of business. By 1940, over 1,400 chiropractors were prosecuted for

control over medical schools and the accreditation of physicians. The Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations immediately began donating hundreds of millions of dollars to those medical schools that were teaching drug intensive medicine. In return for the financing, the “qualified” medical schools were required to continue teaching course material that was exclusively drug oriented; natural and nutritional prevention and treatments must be marginalized. Cartels — often operating through government licensure requirements for a given profession — limit free market competition and foster monopolies that control their respective industries (e.g., medicine, education, etc.). Fascist collusion between the civil government and corporations, cartels, and monopolies in many fields of business and education help explain why the United States has little free market economics or true capitalism. In such settings liberty is very restricted (contra Biblical law). There has been little medical freedom in America for a century. That is why America has the most expensive medical treatments in the world and why so many Americans seek medical treatment in other countries.

American medical schools typically offer no courses in nutrition; consequently, very few physicians engage in preventative medicine.²⁹⁷ Generally speaking, physicians have become glorified

practicing “quackery.” (Incidentally, John D. Rockefeller has been called a creature of the Rothschild dynasty and its Wall Street emissary, Jacob Schiff.) See Ty M. Bollinger, *Monumental Myths of the Modern Medical Mafia and Mainstream Media and the Multitude of Lying Liars that Manufactured Them* (n.p.: Infinity 510² Partners, 2013), 35–44 and Eustace C. Mullins, *Murder by Injection: The Story of the Medical Conspiracy Against America* (n.p.: Omnia Veritas, 1988), 9–64.

²⁹⁷ “Modern doctors are taught virtually nothing about nutrition, wellness or disease prevention” (Ty M. Bollinger, *Monumental Myths of the Modern Medical Mafia and Mainstream Media and the Multitude of Lying Liars that Manufactured Them*, 38). This obviously excludes functional medicine doctors — many of whom are not M.D.s — who received specialized training outside traditional medical schools.

drug dealers for the big pharmaceutical corporations — to the point of causing an “epidemic” of opioid addictions. The continuing education of many busy physicians consists of little more than the information they are given by sales representatives of the pharmaceutical corporations.

Of course, the driving ambition behind liberty-destroying cartels and monopolies is the love of money and lust for power. The Bible warns us: “The love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim 6:10); and “covetousness...is idolatry” (Col 3:5). Consequently, when analyzing the field of medicine, “follow the money” — especially the money of the big international pharmaceutical corporations and certain philanthropic foundations (e.g., the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). Also, remember Jesus’ statement that pagan rulers typically “lord it over [tyrannize]” those subject to them (Mt 20:25 // Mk 10:42), while promoting their own reputation as being “benefactors” (Lk 22:25) for their contributions. (Today, we often call such people philanthropists and their organizations non-profit corporations or charitable foundations.)

To conclude this discussion, remember that when Biblical revelation is rejected, this includes the truth that man is God’s creature, created in God’s image. Freed from the epistemological and moral constraints of God’s revelation, autonomous, evolutionary scientists view man as an animal kicked up by some fluke of chance in the blind and meaningless evolutionary process. But, if man is an animal, then the rule of the jungle that “might makes right” applies; “culling the herd” and getting rid of the weak and undesirable are impeccably logical.

In sum, to the degree that medical practitioners (and indeed all scientists) are submitting their thinking and medical practices to the Biblical worldview, they can be a great blessing. To the degree that they are functioning autonomously, not submitting to the Biblical worldview, they are always dangerous, and are often cruel and

deadly. The Biblical worldview includes truth, the doctrines of creation and the nature of man, Biblical ethics, liberty, etc.

APPENDIX A: ATTRIBUTES OF GOD COUNTERFEITED BY AN IDOLATROUS STATE

The modern Western notion of a religiously-neutral civil government is a hoax and a deception.²⁹⁸ Many contemporary nations are idolatrously counterfeiting many of the divine attributes. It is the responsibility of the church – indeed, the responsibility of every believer – to denounce an idolatrous state. What good is a church that refuses to proclaim and apply the first two commandments of the Decalogue?

The following is a list of God’s attributes or perfections, with some examples of various civil governments’ attempts to usurp or counterfeit God’s attributes.

Unity – the supreme virtue of a collectivist state; it destroys individuality.²⁹⁹

“Everything for the State; nothing outside the State; nothing against the State” (Benito Mussolini).

“The State dominates the nation because it alone represents it” (Adolf Hitler).

²⁹⁸ See the discussion under the heading “Jesus’ Lordship over civil governments” in the introduction. See also the quotes by Rousas J. Rushdoony demonstrating that the source of law for any society is the god of that society (under the heading “Rushdoony on quarantine”).

²⁹⁹ Joe Boot, “Utopia: Always a Dystopian Nightmare,” in *The Coming Pagan Utopia*, ed. Peter Jones (Escondido, CA: Main Entry Editions, 2013), 19-26.

“The State embraces everything, and nothing has value outside the State. The State creates right” (Franklin Delano Roosevelt).³⁰⁰

Independence, self-existence, self-sufficiency –

“The State is the supreme power, ultimate and beyond repeal, absolutely independent” (Johann Gottlieb Fichte).

Eternal (infinite/unlimited with respect to time) –

Immense and omnipresent (infinite/unlimited with respect to space) – total surveillance; worldwide presence and power through the U.S. military, the CIA, NSA spying, the Federal Reserve banking, IRS Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) laws, etc.

Unchangeable (immutable) – such as the laws of the Medes and Persians (Est 1:19; Dn 6:6, 12, 15).

All-knowing (omniscient, infinite/unlimited with respect to knowledge) – right to total surveillance.

The state exercises its omniscience through total surveillance, including: the NSA digitally storing almost all emails, text messages, and phone calls; cities’ CCTV (closed-circuit television) surveillance video cameras (coupled with both license plate-reading software and facial-reading software); FBI and police DRT boxes that spoof cell phone towers to intercept cell phone calls³⁰¹; smart meters and smart-grid technology; the “internet of things”; eavesdropping through cell phones, laptops,

³⁰⁰ Albert Jay Nock, *Our Enemy the State* (Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1959), 21f, 25. Cited by Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, 2nd ed., 12.

³⁰¹ Various names are used: stingray, cell-site simulator, triggerfish, IMSI-catcher, Wolfpack, Gossamer, and swamp box (<https://www.wired.com/2015/10/stingray-government-spy-tools-can-record-calls-new-documents-confirm>).

TVs, and smart appliances; Range-R radar technology to see through house walls; etc.

The state controls education — kindergarten through graduate school (e.g., accreditation and certification of schools and teachers, compulsory school attendance laws, control of curriculum). Collectivist thought must replace individual thinking. Tight controls are also maintained over medical schools and law schools.

All-wise — the source people look to for solving all the nation’s problems.

All-powerful (omnipotent, infinite with respect to power) —

The state (and its central banking system) “creates” wealth by fiat money, fractional reserve banking, and inflation.

The state creates personhood and controls reproduction, life and death (eugenics, genetic engineering, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, involuntary medical experimentation, forced sterilization, assassinations, etc.).³⁰²

The state owns the earth and all it contains — as evidenced by: pervasive, confiscatory taxation (e.g., real estate, personal property, income, inheritance, business, etc.), ubiquitous licensure laws, and bureaucratic regulations; eminent domain;³⁰³ civil asset forfeiture;³⁰⁴ control of natural resources (e.g., water, rain, wetlands) and wildlife (licensing to hunt or fish); etc.³⁰⁵ People are things to be used and resources to be exploited.

³⁰² Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*, 135f, 142.

³⁰³ Robert E. Fugate, *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*, 125–128.

³⁰⁴ https://www.nestmann.com/the-police-stole-his-house-over-40?inf_contact_key=238c63eacdb6068b4fe6c1744230254433da69d7d63655e37b1b648ff53c88ed#.VpVaHFI1jVc;%20http://www.fe-ar.org.

³⁰⁵ Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1983).

The state owns all children — statist education, definer of proper child discipline, coercive immunizations and medical treatments.

The state is the healer (licensure of medical schools, medical practitioners, hospitals, and clinics; FDA approved medicines; health insurance; mandatory vaccines; etc.).

Righteous-just — all that the state does is righteous-just, and it is itself the ultimate standard of what is right/just. The state is the source of law (which defines right and wrong, i.e., morality).

“The State creates right” (Franklin Delano Roosevelt).

Goodness — the state is the ultimate standard of good, and all that the state is and does is worthy of approval.

Benevolence and **Compassion** — the state is the generous provider (education, welfare, medical care, graciously granting tax deductions, bailouts).

Love — “social justice,” tolerance, anti-discrimination.

Mercy — presidential and gubernatorial pardons.

Truth — all the state says is both true and the ultimate standard of truth.

“In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”³⁰⁶

“Truth is treason in an empire of lies.”³⁰⁷

Freedom (sovereignty) — the state is autonomous and sovereign; there is no authority external to itself that can restrict its exercise of power.

³⁰⁶ Attributed to George Orwell.

³⁰⁷ Ron Paul, *The Revolution: A Manifesto* (Grand Central Publishing, 2008), preface.

The technocratic³⁰⁸ state (now technocratic globalist government) exercises its sovereignty through total control and planning, i.e., the ordination and the predestination of all things by man.

“The individual has no ‘rights’ against a sovereign state: he is simply state property.”³⁰⁹

(Note that the U.S. Constitution never calls America a “sovereign” nation.³¹⁰ Today, the term “sovereign” is applied ubiquitously and idolatrously to all nations.)

Jealousy, Hatred, Wrath — toward any rival sovereign (e.g., God); anyone claiming inalienable rights; those wanting to transfer money and goods out of one’s country, or even expatriate.

Where there is no transcendental law and power in a separate and omnipotent being, then power has a wholly immanent and immediate source in a state, group, or person, and it is **beyond appeal**. The state becomes the saving power and **the source of law**; it becomes the priestly agency of its own total power and the manifest power of its divinity. Such a state becomes god walking on the earth [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel], and its every tyranny is identified as liberty, because being and meaning are both identifiable in terms of the state. Since it is held that **there is no law beyond the state**, meaning is what the state defines, and liberty is what the state provides. In this faith, for man to be free means to be in the state. More than that, for man *to be*, he must be a member of the state, for being is one and continuous, and salvation is a metaphysical unification of all being.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Patrick M. Wood, *Technocracy Rising: The Trojan Horse of Global Transformation* (Mesa, AZ: Coherent Publishing, 2014).

³⁰⁹ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: 1991), 490.

³¹⁰ Dennis L. Bizzoco, ed., *The Exhaustive Concordance to the United States Constitution with Topical Index and Rapid Reference Constitution* (Chattanooga, TN: The Foundation Press, 1994).

³¹¹ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*, 60f; cf. 23. Joe Boot, “Utopia: Always a Dystopian Nightmare,” in *The Coming*

“Whenever man usurps the attribute of divinity and seeks omnipotence, he creates a hell on earth, and those he claims to be liberating become victims of the vindictive wrath of a counterfeit god.”³¹²

Pagan Utopia, ed. Peter Jones, 15–51, who discusses the state usurping God’s attributes of unity, omnipotence, and omniscience.

³¹² Joe Boot, “Utopia: Always a Dystopian Nightmare,” in *The Coming Pagan Utopia*, ed. Peter Jones, 41.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE CHURCH GUIDELINES REGARDING SICKNESSES AND PANDEMICS

Below is an example of church protocols written by the board of elders of a Presbyterian church at the beginning of the COVID-19 scare. Within a couple of months — as more information became available — the church resumed meeting together without practicing “social distancing” and with the leaders and most families choosing not to wear face masks (despite a newly-adopted city ordinance requiring the wearing of face masks). Christian liberty is practiced regarding wearing face masks. Fellowship meals were resumed several weeks later. The medical information regarding COVID-19 was based on what was available in April, 2020; it is now dated. Occasionally, fellowship meals were cancelled when someone attending church learned they had COVID.

Standard Church Protocols on Sickness

Note: These standard protocols will not work for containing the spread of COVID-19 since asymptomatic carriers can shed the virus without realizing they are sick. So, if you have been in close contact with a COVID-19 carrier, use extra precaution.

While we do want to be flexible, we also want to be clear in giving guidelines so that people do not have to guess what the church’s sickness policies are. After a lot of research on what Reformed Churches have had in place over the past 25 years, we have come up with a small list of guidelines that we believe are consistent with

the Bible's standards of *symptomatic* quarantine³¹³ (that is, symptoms that might³¹⁴ indicate infectious disease).

There is no way to enforce the following guidelines, but they do express the session's desires. In order to reopen this May, we are asking that all heads of households let us know they have read the following guidelines and agree to abide by them to the best of their ability (realizing that children sometimes may not display any symptoms until they get to church). If there is something you believe is unreasonable, let us know. Our desire is to serve, not to dictate. The intent is that each family, after careful consideration of the health and welfare of their household, and with love for their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, make wise decisions in their family's best interest and the church's resiliency. For clarification on a case by case basis, please discuss the concern with an elder prior to worship. Please do not allow any members of your family who have the following characteristics to attend the onsite worship:

1. A known or suspected infectious illness.
2. A fever of 100.4° F [38° C] or above within the past 24 hours.
3. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or have been feeling unwell in the past 48 hours. (Exceptions: noninfectious causes of nausea such as pregnancy, recurring irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, etc.)

³¹³ It is clear that most quarantines were based on symptoms, and only the symptomatic were quarantined (Lev. 13-15, Num. 5:1-4; etc.). The one exception is when people came into extremely close contact with infectious people. (See Rushdoony's comments on Num. 31). [This differs from my above analysis of Numbers 31 – R.E.F.] Thus, our encouragement of care on COVID-19 when you have been to the hospital or in contact with other health care givers.

³¹⁴ We say "might" because the Bible required erring on the side of caution. It is clear from the following Scriptures that the clergy [Levitical priests – R.E.F.] rules sometimes gave false positives, but the Bible mandated the quarantine of those with the symptoms anyway: Lev. 12:4-6, 21-23, 29-34; 13:4; 14:8; etc.

4. A cough, sore throat, croup, whooping cough (or has had lingering symptoms of it in the past 24 hours).

(Exceptions — Anyone with a diagnosed and/or known allergy that results in drainage, cough, etc. may come. Those with pertussis/whooping cough who have been on antibiotics for at least 4 days are not contagious and may come. There is no exception for croup since it is caused by a virus and antibiotics will not affect it.)

5. Started on antibiotics within the past 24 hours. (Exceptions include: urinary tract infection, kidney stone, preventive antibiotics such as those given prior to dental work, etc.)
6. Contagious skin rash.
7. Pink eye.
8. Lice.
9. Infected, open wounds that are not covered.
10. Symptoms of the usual childhood diseases such as mumps, measles, chicken pox, etc. Please be aware that the incubation from exposure to chicken pox or shingles is 10–21 days.
11. Open sores from shingles (unless able to cover the sores).

It is wise to wash hands after using the bathroom, and it is helpful if an adult accompanies small children into the bathroom. If any family member displays symptoms for the first time during the service (suddenly throwing up, etc.), then do not keep them in close contact with others. We ask that you leave immediately and care for them and presume that they have possibly infected other members of the family.

Depending on the severity of the illness, please allow 24–72 hours following the last symptom of an illness before returning the family member to worship services. Those with very serious infectious illness should allow even more time for recovery and quarantine.

Exceptions: Officers with responsibilities for the service will use the utmost caution to not spread their milder sicknesses (common cold,

etc.) by entering last minute, not socializing, and leaving at the end of the service.

Obviously, more serious illnesses would preclude them from coming to church as well. Common sense application of Biblical principles may call for other exceptions that we have not thought to note.

Temporary COVID-19 Protocols for 2020

As mentioned above, standard protocols will not work for mitigating the spread of COVID-19, since asymptomatic carriers can shed the virus without realizing they are sick.³¹⁵ So, if you have been in close contact with a COVID-19 carrier, use extra precaution. The following guidelines are supplemental to the standard health policy.

Until there is more certainty about the COVID-19 data in months to come, let's play it safe and engage in-home quarantine for at least 14 days if any of the following are true of you.

1. You were just tested positive for COVID-19 virus presence.
2. You have a fever of 100.4° F [38° C] or above.
3. You have experienced the sudden onset of a very sore throat, lung pain, shortness of breath, severe organ pain, total loss of smell or taste, waves of tiredness, or other serious or unusual symptoms associated with the disease.
4. You reside with someone who is sick with COVID-19 or has the above symptoms.

When we begin to meet again, we are asking members and visitors to abide by the following guidelines at the services until further notice.

³¹⁵ Asymptomatic carriers communicating COVID-19 is now known to be bogus (R.E.F.).
<https://www.lewrockwell.com/2020/12/joseph-mercola/asymptomatic-people-do-not-spread-covid-19>.
<https://nationalfile.com/what-new-study-of-10-million-chinese-finds-asymptomatic-covid-spread-never-existed>.

1. Family seating will be kept together, but rows of seats will be separated sufficiently so as to provide adequate social distancing.
2. Use towel or sanitizer napkin to open doors, and drop into the garbage can at each door. (Door handles will be periodically wiped with sanitizer napkins.)
3. Wash hands very thoroughly after using the bathroom.
4. There will be no fellowship meal at [our church building] after the service until further notice.
5. We will practice closer family-integrated policies when fellowshiping (keeping the whole family together and not allowing the children to run around the sanctuary or outside in the yard).
6. Deacons will use hand sanitizer while preparing elements for communion.
7. Elders will use hand sanitizer when handling the elements of communion. The elements will be left on front table and be picked up by one representative of each family. There will be social spacing on the lines to communion.

We hope these guidelines can be relaxed in the near future.

[The above guidelines were relaxed shortly thereafter, as it was learned that COVID-19 had been hyped way beyond what was scientifically justifiable. In this day of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda, Christians must work hard to discover honest medical research and honest statistics — such as deaths *caused by* COVID-19 rather than deaths *with* COVID-19 (in the latter, death was caused by comorbidities) — and, focusing on an increasing number of “cases” (which is to be expected since there is more testing performed), while obscuring the sharply-decreasing number of deaths, is deceptive. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the communist UN World Health Organization (WHO) are incredibly corrupt organizations, and they have major conflicts of interest (including the CDC’s own vaccine patents and large donations that both organizations receive from

pharmaceutical companies). Fake science and fear-mongering media propaganda must be discerned, “unmasked,” and rejected. Christians should also be aware of the fact the big pharmaceutical companies, to a large extent, control the licensed medical schools, doctors’ continuing education, and the medical journals in the U.S.A.

Of course, it is quite possible that future releases of bioweapons (or even dangerous, state-mandated vaccines!) will be more lethal than COVID-19. And globalists use such “plandemics” to further their draconian political and mass-genocidal plans. God calls Christians to resist such tyrants!³¹⁶]

³¹⁶ In light of numerous draconian, globalist agendas, such as, the United Nations Agenda 30 (which may be a driving force behind COVID-19), The World Economic Forum’s (WEF) work agenda, etc., civil disobedience will be required on several fronts in all nations.

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