

CHALCEDON

Report

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GOVERNMENT

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Craig Dumont *on* Family Government
William Einwechter *on* Civil Government
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See Steve Schlissel's Controversial
Article on Fathers' Authority
in the Church

CHALCEDON Report

A Monthly Report Dealing With the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

GOVERNMENT

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Rev. R. J. Rushdoony is chairman of the board of Chalcedon and a leading theologian, church/state expert, and author of numerous works on the application of Biblical Law to society.

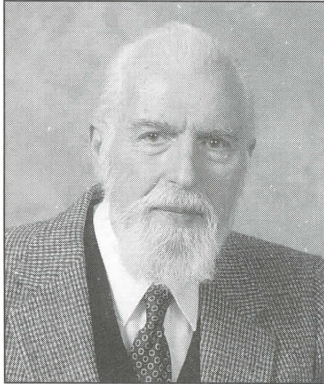
Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony is president of Chalcedon.

Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin is executive vice president of Chalcedon and editor of its publications.

The Biblical Doctrine of Government

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony

(Adapted from *The Politics of Guilt and Pity*, The Craig Press, 1970)



One of the most revealing and deadly linguistic errors of our time is the equation of the word "government" with "state." When the average person, and indeed almost every man, hears references to government, he immediately thinks of the state. This usage is a relatively modern one.

There was a time when, in common usage, especially among the Puritans, the term for the state was "civil government." Government in itself was a much broader concept.

Government meant, first of all, the self-government of the Christian man. The basic government is self-government, and only the Christian man is truly free and, hence, able properly to exercise self-government. A free social order rests on the premise that self-government is the basic government in the human order, and that any weakening of or decline in self-government means a decline in responsibility and the rise of tyranny and slavery.

Second, next to self-government is another basic form of government, the family. The family is man's first state, church, and school. It is the institution which provides the basic structure of his existence and most governs his activities. Man is reared in a family and then establishes a family, passing from the governed to the governing in a framework which extensively and profoundly shapes his concept of himself and of life in general.

Third, the church is a government and an important

one, not only in its exercise of discipline but in its religious and moral influence on the minds of men. Even men outside the church are extensively governed in each era, even if only in a negative sense, by the stand of the church. The failure of the church to provide Biblical government has deadly repercussions on a culture.

Fourth, the school is a government, and a very important one. The desire of statists to control education rests on the knowledge of the school's significant part in the government of man. For formal education to be surrendered to the state is thus a basic surrender of man's self-government.

Fifth, a man's vocation, his business, work, profession, or calling, is an important government. A man is governed by the conditions of his vocation or work. In terms of it, he will educate himself, uproot his family and travel to another community, spend most of his waking hours in its service, and continually work therein to attain greater mastery and advancement. Vocations are both areas of government over man and, at the same time, a central area of self-government.

Sixth, private associations are important forms of government. These can include a man's neighborhood, his friends, voluntary organizations, strangers he must meet daily, and other like associations. A man dresses, speaks, thinks, and acts in an awareness of these associations, with a desire to be congenial, to further a given faith or cause, or to enhance his social status. These associations have a major governing influence on man, but they can also be means and areas whereby he exercises his government over others, influencing or directing them.

Seventh, another area of government is civil government, or the state. The state is thus one government

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among many, and to make the state equivalent to government per se is destructive of liberty and of life. The governmental area of the state must be strictly limited lest all government be destroyed by the tyranny of one realm. The issue in the persecution of the early church was the resistance of the Christians to the totalitarian claims of the state. The Christians were asked to sacrifice to the genius of the emperor, *i.e.*, to offer incense to him. This, in its earlier forms, was not a recognition of the deity of the emperor, because only the dead emperor was deified upon approval of the senate. It was a recognition that the state, in the person of the emperor, was the mediating and governing institution between the gods and men, and that all life and government was under the jurisdiction of the state. Religious liberty was available to the church upon the recognition of that premise. The Roman Empire, in other words, like the modern state, assumed that it had the right to deny or to grant religious liberty because religion, like every other sphere of human activity, was a department under the state. The church denied this. Christians defended themselves as the most law-abiding citizens and subjects of the Empire, ever faithful in prayer for those in authority, but they denied the right of the state to govern

the church. The church, directly under God, cannot submit itself to any government other than that of Jesus Christ. This was the issue.

Abuses of order within the church are no more under the government of the state than abuses within the state are under the government of the church, and the same is true of every other realm of government—family, church, school, business, and the like. Reformed theologians restricted the right of rebellion against an unjust order within the state to a legitimate order within that state, *i.e.*, to other civil magistrates, who in the name of the law moved to correct the abuses of civil order.

The various spheres are interlocking and interdependent and yet independent. Thus, Deuteronomy 21:18-21 deals with the death penalty for a juvenile delinquent. The parents do not have the power of the sword, *i.e.*, of capital punishment. Upon reporting the incorrigible nature of their son to the city elders, the parents carried their governmental authority to its limits. The elders, upon confirmation of the charges, then assumed their jurisdiction, capital punishment for what was now, upon report, a civil offense. Clearly, the various spheres do not exist in a vacuum; they are interlocking, but the integrity of each is nonetheless real.

Chalcedon Vision Statement

Chalcedon labors to articulate in the clearest possible terms a distinctly Christian and explicitly Biblical solution to the prevalent evils of the modern world. Our objective is nothing short of setting forth the vision and program for rebuilding the theological fortifications of Christian civilization. These fortifications have been eroded by the forces of humanism and secularism over the past three centuries. We are not committed, though, merely to reproducing a glorious Christian past. We work to press the claims of historic Christianity as the Biblical pattern of life everywhere. We work for godly cultural change across the entire spectrum of life. We strive to accomplish this objective by two principal methods.

First, Chalcedon is committed to recovering the intellectual foundations of Christian civilization. We do this in two main ways, negatively, we expose the bankruptcy of all non-Christian (and alleged but compromising Christian) systems of thought and practices. Positively, we propose an explicitly Biblical system of thought and action as the exclusive basis for civilization. Only by restoring the Christian Faith and Biblical law as the standard of all of life can Christians hope to re-establish Christian civilizations.

Second, Chalcedon is dedicated to providing the tools for rebuilding this Christian civilization. We work to assist individuals, families, and institutions by offering explicitly Biblical alternatives to anti-Christian ideas and practices. In the way we guide Christians in the task of governing their own spheres of life in terms of the entire Bible: in family, church, school, vocation, arts, economics, business, media, the state, and all other areas of modern life.

We believe that the source of godly change is regeneration by the Holy Spirit, not revolution by the violence of man. As God regenerates more and more individuals, and as they reorient their lives and areas of personal influence to the teachings of the Bible, He employs them to advance His kingdom and establish Christian civilization. We believe that God's law is the divine pattern of sanctification in every area of life, but it is not the means of justification; man is saved by grace, not by law. The role of every earthly government—including family government, church government, school government, vocational government, and civil government—is to submit to Biblical law. No government in any form can make men Christians or truly obedient; this is the work of God's sovereign grace. Much less should civil government try to impose Biblical law on an unbelieving society. Biblical law cannot be imposed; it must be embraced.

A guiding principle of Chalcedon, in fact, is its devotion to maximum individual freedom under God's law. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition of Jesus Christ as God of very God and Man of very man, a formula directly challenging every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, schools, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; only Christ may announce that "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and earth" (Matthew 28:18). Historically, therefore, the Chalcedonian creed is the foundation of Western liberty, setting limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of all human freedom (Galatians 5:1). Consequently, we oppose top-heavy, authoritarian systems of government which are, by definition, non-Christian. We advocate instead a series of independent but cooperative institutions and a highly decentralized social order.

Chalcedon is an educational institution. It supports the efforts of Christians and Christian organizations to implement the vision of Christian civilization. Though unapologetically Reformed, Chalcedon supports the kingdom work of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon is an independent Christian foundation governed by a board of trustees, Christian men in accord with Chalcedon's vision statement. The foundation is not subordinate to the authority of any particular denomination or ecclesiastical body.

Self-Government

By Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

Pr. 25:28



Having lost all defensive fortifications, a man who cannot govern himself is like an ancient city whose walls have been broken. It is an enticing prey to all alien armies. Similarly, we read in Romans 6:9, 16:

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more;

death hath no more dominion over him. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

When we become Christ's servants, we are liberated from the shackles of sin as we stand united to Christ; and under His authority, we are dramatically alive to obedience and liberty (*vv. 11, 17*).

The principal government in the earth is the self-government of the godly man under God's authority. This is often referred to generically as self-discipline, but we must immediately distinguish this Biblical self-discipline from its classical, pagan expression. The self-discipline of ancient pagans, the unbelieving military community, and the modern sports community has nothing to do with Biblical self-discipline. Experiential self-discipline of the Christian is a direct effect of his union with Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (*Rom. 6:1-8*). It is not "pulling oneself up by his bootstraps." It is not lacerating the body and mind to subordinate them to some "higher purpose." It is not the strenuous efforts of man in all of his humanistic Athenian glory.

The Biblically self-disciplined man lives moment by moment in absolute dependence upon Jesus Christ's great redemptive complex, energized by the Holy Spirit's great resurrection power (*Rom. 8:11*).

Biblical self-discipline is a fundamental aspect of self-government. Men who govern themselves under God's authority require few other human governments—and

only limited ones at that. Self-governed men do not need the church to regulate their families. Self-governed men do not need the state to forcibly expropriate money from their paychecks in order to guarantee retirement income. Self-governed men energetically train their wives and children in the Faith, with the church supporting and assisting them. Self-governed men save money (and other assets) for their own retirement, while the state protects their property from molestation.

Self-Discipline or External Discipline

When men refuse to govern themselves, they implicitly invite others to govern them. Lack of self-discipline leads to external discipline. We discipline our minor children in order to lead them to self-discipline. A man who lacks self-government demonstrates an embarrassing immaturity.

Christians complain bitterly about ecclesiastical and civil tyranny. Yet they often have only themselves to blame for inviting that tyranny. Overzealous church nannies who justify their salaries by meddling in the details of every member's family are forced to return to their real job of preaching, prayer, and pastoring when strong husbands and fathers govern their own lives and their own families. The udders of a maternalistic state dry up when self-governing families refuse the warm, addictive, statist milk and earn and consume and save their own bread and meat by which they are sustained. Childish citizens clamor for the "protection" of government schools, Social Security, ADC, Medicare, Medicaid, and minimum wage. A number of these same little brats will complain every year at April 15, but they lack the discipline and maturity to Just Say No! to Mommy State that offers all sorts of goodies in return for the privilege of wet-nursing its mindless, security-blanket-shrouded citizens. Steel-backed men are an anathema to the Nanny State. This is why the modern state colludes with feminism in assaulting godly manhood. Both the Nanny State and feminists are uninterested in equality; they are interested in destroying self-governing men, for self-governing men render obsolete most of the modern state as well as all of modern feminism.

The crying need of the hour is self-governed, godly men decisively leading their families, churches, businesses, and the state into greater conformity to the law of God.

CHALCEDON CONFERENCE

**Speakers
include:**



**P. Andrew
Sandlin**

*Executive Vice
President of the
Chalcedon Founda-
tion and
Editor of the
Chalcedon Report*



**Monte
Wilson**

*Director of Global
Impact*

Christian Orthodoxy & Cultural Leadership

Date:

March 18 from 9:00am to 3:00pm

Location:

First Presbyterian Church, Ft. Oglethorpe, GA
*(located at the corner of Highway 27 and Harker Road,
just outside the Chickamauga Battlefield)*

About the Speakers:

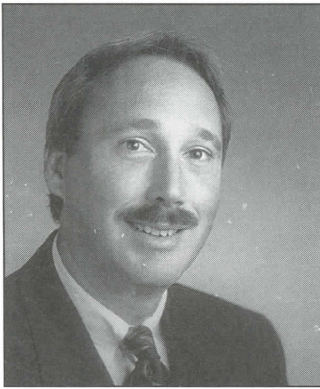
Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin is executive vice president of Chalcedon and editor-in-chief of the *Chalcedon Report* and *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*. He holds undergraduate or graduate degrees or concentrations in English, history, and political science. His essays have appeared in numerous scholarly and popular publications, and he has written or edited several monographs. He is married and has five children.

Rev. Monte E. Wilson, ordained minister in the Reformed Episcopal Church, is director of Global Impact and editor of *Classical Christianity*, a teaching publication designed to introduce ecumenical orthodoxy to the evangelical church. He holds B. A., M. R. E., and D. Min. degrees.

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Family Government

By Rev. Craig R. Dumont



Mention “family government” to most Christians, especially conservative “Bible believing” ones, and thinking immediately centers on the hierarchical structure of the family: The husband is to be the head of the home, directing, providing for, and overseeing the welfare of wife and children under

the sovereign authority of Christ.

The wife is to joyfully submit to her husband and, in return, her authority over the household, which extends over the children, is firmly established. The children are to honor their father and mother not only by giving verbal acknowledgment, but in their actions (see *Eph. 5:22-29* and *Eph. 6:4*; *Col. 3:17-21* and of course, *Pr. 31*). As true as all this is, if this is all we see, we have a defective and truncated view of family government.

Total Life Government

When we seriously consider family government from a Biblical perspective, we are astounded that so much is vested here. Almost every area that now is governed by civil government is actually a family responsibility! While realizing that civil government is a good gift from God, when properly understood and implemented, family government is by far the more practical, desirable, and, of course, Biblical administrative and supervisory unit, providing the very best context and content for regulatory overview.

One example: Today we look to the civil realm for government of health regulations and all sorts of health care. We beg for a bureaucracy that requires oversight, micro-regulating, certification, and “appropriate labeling” of every conceivable food and activity when it is almost always a food or activity that should be governed by the family. And then, when we’re sick or old, we want the government to dictate our care.

But health care is first and foremost a family function. My mother took responsibility for the nutritional health of her family by the food she prepared and by what she didn’t let us eat. Believe it or not, even before all the mandatory labeling and government meddling, she knew that a balanced diet and moderation in all things was the key to good health and she didn’t shrink from the task of

providing just that. Although she wouldn’t have thought of her actions in these terms, she was governing our diets.

Both my father and mother governed our health by limiting the amount of TV my brother, sister, and I could watch before we were ejected from the house into the yard to do farm chores (my brother and I were my father’s automatic gutter cleaner in the barn, thus saving substantially on the cost of automation), or simply to play ball and work off energy and calories. They further governed my health by monitoring the friends I associated with; in other words, they regulated my associations, keeping me away from ungodly people who would have corrupted my thinking and lead me into sins with definite health-destroying consequences (see almost all of Proverbs, especially 1:10-19, 4:14-27, and all of chapter 7).

The health and well being of each member of our family was always something my father and mother assumed was their marital and parental obligation. Growing up, I cannot once remember my parents thinking it was the duty of any elected (or appointed) official to take responsibility for whether or not I wore a bicycle helmet (and back then I would have been laughed off any playground if I would have shown up with a helmet, severely damaging my emotional health!). My father did require that I wear a helmet as a condition for buying me a motorcycle, however. So, throwing “cool” to the wind, I accepted the governing terms and agreed to his regulating authority. I wore a helmet.

How about smoking? No state or federal government needed here! Further, there was no call to tax the tobacco companies to cover health care costs. My father smoked most of his life and knew it was harmful to his health, but he loved them! Fortunately he threatened me with my life if I ever picked up the habit. Who says that “don’t do what I do, do what I say” doesn’t work? While obviously not the desirable pattern, love does cover a multitude of sins with this type of government administered at the family level where communication is personal and the motives authentic (and the threat very real).

In other words, my parents governed the daily health aspects of our family by fulfilling the role established for them by God, not by asking the city officials to draft guidelines for safe conduct. This family government—government that never *seems* like government—is what is sorely needed in Christian families today.

The point is, modern conservative Christian families have no problem acknowledging a husband-wife-children hierarchy, but they fail to grasp the full implications of

true family government. It's more than simply requiring a husband to treat his wife and children nice; it's more than calling upon a wife to "just say yes" to the husband; and it's more than raising children that don't despise their parents. Family government is, more than anything else, total life government. It's the original Department of Health, Education, and Welfare! The family governs relationships, conduct, finances, education, worship, work, property, and almost anything else you can name. It's for this very reason that communist and socialist states always target the family for destruction and eradication, substituting the state in its place. They understand the family as a powerful institution that balances the power and scope of the state.

And further, family government is as much about being governed as it is governing. As the Roman centurion so well understood, authority is only established under authority and this is clearly exhibited within the family. Precisely because Christian families are under the governing authority of God, the husband and wife discover there are many regulating factors in family life. For instance, while as a father I govern and regulate my children, it is undeniable that I am also governed and regulated by them. Not directly of course, but through the responsibilities and obligations that are placed upon me by God. My wife and I are reminded just how much we are governed by our seven children (number eight on the way) each time we plan on going out to dinner by ourselves. School schedules, church activities, finding trustworthy babysitters, and a host of other considerations regulate our lives. A significant percentage of our family income is governed by the responsibility of placing our children in Christian schools. To a large extent the vehicles we drive are governed by the number of children we have (never try to cram nine people into a Camaro!).

The world sees the governing aspect of family life as something to be despised and avoided. They see responsibility as the limitation of the "good life," and Hollywood portrays that life through sitcoms that revolve around 30-somethings who are rootless, having neither spouses nor children. But, of course, everyone knows that government is needed; so Hollywood's answer is to seek to transfer governing responsibility from the family to the federal and state governments. While they pursue a dreamworld where no individual is responsible for anything, they create instead a culture of dependence and servitude. This is true because if one never comes under authority and learns to handle responsibility, stagnation sets in and slavery, not more freedom, results.

However, the Christian family is an institution of dominion specifically because it is under God's authority, with the parents accepting all the governing responsibilities. As parents govern and rule under God's

authority, children learn to honor and respect them and submit willingly to the parents' authority, which sets the stage for a long and prosperous life for them (*Dt. 5:16*).

When authority is submitted to and responsibilities fulfilled, God promotes faithful servants into areas of greater leadership and authority. Hence, to be an elder or deacon in a church requires proven success in family governing (*1 Tim. 3:40*). An older woman can be entrusted to counsel young wives only when she has successfully governed her household and fulfilled her responsibilities (*Tit. 2:3-5*). Because a man or woman comes under the authority of God and learns to be governed in all areas of family life, he or she can go on to greater things, securing the confidence and admiration of those in church, business, and politics.

The sad reality is, however, that even conservative Christian families now view the family, not as a training ground for godly dominion and kingdom advancement, but as a hindrance to personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Family life is tolerated, not enjoyed, and children are seen only in terms of being wealth consumers and the source of inconvenient problems.

The Centrality of the Family

Ironically, many Christians see the responsibility of administering Biblical family government as holding them down spiritually, since they're not able to attend every church service, prayer meeting, Bible study, and small group that is offered. Somehow we have moved away from understanding the Biblical supposition of the family as the foundation upon which all else is built. The home should be a center of worship, of prayer, and Bible study and it should go without saying that it's the natural "small group" (*very* small, because most Christians are horrified by the prospect of more than two children) where you can and must develop and create long-lasting "relationships."

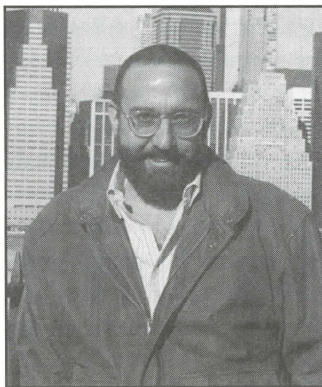
May God grant us grace and mercy and raise up strong Christian families that are governed by Christ, Who is the Word of God. May family government once more be conceived and acted upon in all the fullness that God has set forth for it and may we embrace that responsibility with faith and courage, trusting in God to lead us into all righteousness.

Craig Dumont is the pastor of Okemos Christian Center in Okemos and also the Grand Ledge Christian Center in Grand Ledge, MI. He writes a regular column called "Biblically Speaking" for The Towne Courier community newspaper and presents Biblical principles of government at a weekly Luncheon Lecture Series at the State Capital to Senate aids, lobbyists, and business leaders. He can be reached at (800)290-5711 or lwcog@tcimet.net.

Make Room for Daddies

By Rev. Steve M. Schlissel

Editor's Introduction: Steve Schlissel is one of the most profound thinkers and powerful preachers in today's Reformed world, and below appears one of the most important ecclesiological statements written in modern times. It demonstrates how the government of the Western church assimilated the authority structure of pagan Rome, and how this pagan conception survives in all branches of Western Christianity. The only authentic alternative is the Hebraic-Biblical model so quickly abandoned by the church of the patristic era. The article is a condensation of the author's chapter in Keeping Our Sacred Trust: Biblical Authority, Creedal Orthodoxy and Heresy, available from Chalcedon for \$19.



It's a type of sentence Rushdoony has become famous for among those who read him carefully: a nearly nonchalant assertion in the middle of a paragraph, offhand but on target, huge in its implications: "*The stronger man makes the state, the weaker he makes himself.*"¹

Bingo! *Power is a commodity*, subject to the law of scarcity: there's just so much to go around. Find an undue concentration of power in one institution and you'll likely discover it was obtained at the expense of another. How important it is, then, to strive to keep institutions operating within their God-appointed limits! The untoward amassing of power in the state, for example, is not innocent. It's power taken from another to whom it had been assigned by God.

What is true for the state is every bit as true for the institutional church. When it takes—or when men yield to it—more power than God indicates is proper, that power has been poached from a source that is going to find itself weakened. Much of the power exercised by churches today has been siphoned from the covenant community, particularly the fathers of Israel. The tragic (and ironic) consequence of this is that the church, in arrogating to itself powers that rightly belong to covenant fathers, has actually, by this theft, been made *weaker*. Weak Christian *men* = weak Christian *church*. To correct

this imbalance of power we need to reconsider the institutional church's relationship to the covenant community, and the powers God has granted to each.

Power From Above Grows From Below

The authority of the church, according to God's Word, is ministerial rather than magisterial. When the church honors the limits of her authority and uses her power to empower—build up—covenant fathers, everybody wins. Our Lord was not ambiguous about His will concerning the character of His church's authority.

When the ten heard about this [J & J's effort to secure the #2 & #3 power positions in the kingdom], they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (*Mk. 10:35-45*).

St. Paul's life and ministry leave no doubt that Christ was not using mere hyperbole. Paul, possessor of miraculous power and *apostolic* authority, was reluctant to use that authority, preferring to reason and plead with the churches he founded and nurtured. He was slower than frozen molasses to say anything which might appear to be a raw exercise of authority. Consider how he approached the matter of Onesimus' manumission:

Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains ... (Phil. 8-10).

Equally instructive is St. Paul's dealings with those misbehaving and misbelieving Corinthians. Here was a church that was sinfully divisive, practicing sectarianism with aplomb, and turning schism into an art form. They were proud of gross sin among them, ill-informed about marriage, indifferent to any implications of eating food offered to idols, chaotic in public worship, and prone to forsaking a doctrine as cardinal as the resurrection. Yet, Paul is clear as daylight: his authority over them was ministerial, his power was given him for their edification.

Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.... For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it ... This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down (2 Cor. 1:24; 10:8,10).

The Roman Road

A variety of factors, perhaps particularly the post-apostolic church's adoption of the hierarchy-model of the Roman Empire,² led to a very different approach to power from that given to us by our Lord and seen in Paul. In fact, the institutional church purloined power not only from the people, but from Christ Jesus, too. The distortion of the Lord's Supper into a sacrificial rite, for example, required an anointed *priesthood* rather than an ordained *ministry*. This priesthood eventually inserted itself between God's people and God at every point.

By the 1500s, ecclesiastically speaking, the people had no power left. The church had become the clergy and "religious," and the laity was assigned only a supporting and servile role. The reversal was complete. Rather than the church being comprised of God's people for whose benefit servant-leaders were appointed, the people weren't even regarded as necessary for divine worship to take place. Religion had become, core and crux, something someone *else* did for you.

According to the *The Catholic Catechism*,³ while "liturgy is public worship, its dependence on the Church's hierarchy is so distinctively Catholic as almost to define its essence. This is more than a dependence on regulation or surveillance. It means that the liturgy is bound up with the apostolic hierarchy established by Christ in such a way that, except for the hierarchy, there would be no public worship as Catholicism understands the liturgy." The hierarchy—just so there is no misunderstanding—according to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*⁴ "includes all grades or ranks of the clergy." It is the clergy, then, who comprise the true and actual "worshipping" church.

The hierarchy is absolutely distinguished from the laity. And the people have *no power* in their selection or empowerment of the hierarchy. For the clergy, according to Rome, do not act as people-appointed representatives. "This touches on the heart of the Catholic faith, which does not hold that all Christians are equally possessed of priestly power, [as if] the priest at the altar acts only in virtue of an office committed to him by the community."⁵ It is the hierarchy which makes worship valid, says Rome. Indeed, it is the clergy *alone* who offer worship, liturgically speaking. *The laity participate in worship only as they identify themselves with the priest.* "[I]n what sense do all the faithful actively participate in the Eucharistic liturgy? They do so by uniting themselves in spirit with the priest. . . ."⁶

See You at the Office

And it's not just worship that is performed through the vicarious instrumentality of a human priesthood. Doctrine, too, is a matter Roman Catholics needn't concern themselves with, for in their system doctrine is something someone else can *believe for you*. Romanism distinguishes "between 'explicit' faith (belief which knows its object) and 'implicit' faith (uncomprehending assent to whatever it may be the church holds). Only the latter (which is evidently no more than a vote of confidence in the teaching church and may be held with a complete ignorance of Christianity) is thought to be required of laymen for salvation."⁷

The astute reader will have observed that the Roman church explicitly rejects the Christian view of office. For in the Biblical idea of Christian office it is precisely the case that the minister "acts . . . in virtue of an office committed to him by the community." He occupies a *covenantal* office and performs *covenantal* functions, serving God *and* the congregation of God and is accountable to *both* in his exercise of that office. The thought that the people participate in worship by "uniting themselves in spirit with the priest" is a robbery of the glory which belongs to Christ as sole Mediator, as well as a theft of the privileges of access given to the community in virtue of Christ's once for all sacrifice.

The Christian minister, then, is a servant who must be possessed of a certain character and display a covenant competency enabling him to lead. But he is not appointed to be, himself, the object of the community's attention. Rather, he is a *pointer* to Christ and an explainer of His Word. Rome dismisses the servant role of church leaders assigned to them by God in His Word. Collectively, the elders' distinctive role in public worship is exactly what Rome rejects: "regulation and surveillance," or, order and oversight. A much humbler role for man, to be sure, than that imagined by Rome, but one which results in at least the possibility that Christ will receive honor from His people for *His* accomplished work.

There can be little doubt that Romanism interposes itself between God and His people in a magisterial rather than a ministerial manner. Not only does Rome claim that her hierarchy has exclusive possession of the commodity of ecclesiastical power, but she consolidates and secures that power by treating God's grace as if it, too, were just another commodity. For Rome, grace is an item which can be leveraged or traded, like silver or rice or pork bellies. To its mind, she has been granted all the contracts and options on grace and has exclusive power to dispense, withhold or withdraw them through her hierarchy.

Who's Free?

If it is the truth that makes one free—and Christ says it is—and this truth is confined to one class of people, only that class can be free. The laity of the Roman church are ecclesiastical vassals, bondslaves, whose role in the kingdom is to do and believe what they are told. If they

do this, all will be well, they are assured. According to Vatican II, “They are fully incorporated into the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, *accept her entire system* and all the means of salvation given to her, and through union with her visible structure are joined to Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops.”⁸

You’ve got to say this much for them: they’ve got a system. Unfortunately, it’s wrong. The arrogance of Rome is astonishing. It is not an exaggeration to summarize their view of power as: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to the hierarchy. Borrowing its scale-of-being ontology from the Greek philosophers and its hierarchical-pontifical organization from the Caesars, Roman Catholicism has morphed into an abominable entity whose only hope of redemption is found in her continued subscription to the Ecumenical Creeds. But what a lot of work must be (un)done before she is saved!

The Crisis of the Missing Men

Our point in surveying Rome’s power grab is to offer it as a partial explanation of how Christianity can become feminized and lose the participation of men in the church’s affairs. In his important book, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity*,⁹ Roman Catholic author Leon J. Podles surveys with sorrow the declining involvement of men in Christian churches (not just Romanist). “Men think religion, and especially the church, is for women,” he says in his introduction, and echoes the thought in his concluding chapter: “Men do not go to church. They regard involvement in religion as unmasculine.”

Mr. Podles’ nearly 300-page analysis, though valuable, suffers from being mainly sociological and theological (he’s better at sociology, though some of his theological insights are bracing). He would have enhanced the value of his study had he incorporated ecclesiastical considerations, that is, structures of church power.

For Podles is very aware that the situation he laments as having overtaken Christianity is simply *not an issue* in orthodox Judaism. Why? Here, by confining himself to a sociological/theological analysis of Old Testament models and themes, Podles misses the point (almost) entirely. Orthodox Judaism has no crisis of the missing male because it more closely follows the *ecclesiastical structures* of the Biblically-approved synagogue system, a system where the synagogue is a servant of the covenant community, *not vice-versa*.

For orthodox Jews, it is not a priest with mystical “powers” who is needed to constitute a legitimate or acceptable worship service, but a *minyon* (quorum) of at least ten Jewish *men*. Without covenant men, there simply is no public liturgy. There is no “missing male crisis” in Judaism because if males were missing, there’d be no Judaism! We might profitably incorporate a Podles-type analysis here: men respond to being *needed* in community affairs, they respond to the requirement of being *responsible*, especially for others. Why expect men to show

up if they are regarded from the get-go as unnecessary?

In Romanism, and much of the rest of Christendom, covenant fathers are not required. In Romanism it’s the clergy who make up the worshipping church. In most other communions, it is mostly women. In the synagogue—which follows the sense of Scripture at this point—worship is performed and led by covenant men. The covenant community as a whole is viewed (quite Biblically) by Jews as being comprised of *men, along with their wives and children*. From their earliest years, orthodox Jewish children are infused with a worldview which, at this point at least, better reflects the Bible than does any Christian communion experiencing the crisis of the missing men.

Re-formation

This sort of covenant thinking was nearly recaptured at the Reformation. The Reformation was marvelous in bringing about a redistribution of power in accordance with God’s prescriptive will. Though the Reformers focused principally on regaining for our Savior what had been robbed from *Him*, a happy by-product was that the fathers of the New Israel (the church) found themselves reinvested with much of the power God had entrusted to them in His Word. The restoration of filial authority—particularly the authority which belonged to the head of the home—occurred as the sortilege of priests in performing “transubstantiation” was exposed as a fraud. Power moved from the priesthood toward the people.

It wasn’t enough that Scripture had been rediscovered, however. The truth had to be disseminated. It has been mentioned so many times yet it is no burden to say it again: the printing press made the Reformation possible. The prodigious production of sound Christian literature, placed into the hands of the people, especially the heads of homes, resulted in benefits which have drenched the West to this very day.

The Heidelberg Catechism—arguably the best of all Reformed symbols—was put to immediate and widespread use as a tool for instructing old and young, both in church and home. Continued reform, our Reformation forebears knew, was dependent upon the re-enfranchising of the Christian father. That they knew this is evident from a reading of the preface to the 1647 edition of the Westminster Standards (approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland) entitled, “*To the Christian Reader, Especially Heads of Families*,” and signed by 44 Presbyterian luminaries including the Three Thomases: Watson, Manton, and Goodwin.

Family religion was clearly front and center. Thomas Manton’s *Epistle to the Reader*¹⁰ stays on the theme:

Religion was first hatched in families, and there the devil seeks to crush it; the families of the Patriarchs were all the Churches God had in the world for the time ... Now the devil knoweth that this is a blow at the root, and a ready way to prevent the succession of churches: if he can subvert families, other societies and

communities will not long flourish and subsist with any power and vigour; for there is the stock from whence they are supplied both for the present and future.... A family is the seminary of Church and State.

Representative government, modeled very much after the decentralized administration of Israel, became the norm throughout the Reformed and Presbyterian portions of Europe. The men were involved full tilt and the benefits were flowing. Once again, the church came to believe that if a man desired to be an *episkopos*, an overseer, he desired a good thing. Men were encouraged to assume responsibility and control of the churches, under the sole headship of Christ and according to His Word.

*Activity as a measure of
Christian virtue was
superseded by receptivity.
That's a playing field
clearly tilted in favor of
women.*

The Scripture's requirement of a plurality of local elders was revived, Reformers providing that a watchful eye be kept on man, a sinner. Safeguards against abuse of power were put in place, including provisions for appeal of local decisions.

In the sixteenth century, William Tyndale, in a dispute with a clergyman, vowed, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost." God caused the Reformation to bring a fulfillment of that vision, a fulfillment beyond anything Tyndale might have dreamed. The farmer-theologian became a commonplace wherever the Reformation took hold, from Europe to North America.

Yes, farmers as elders listened attentively to ministers' sermons, sitting in judgment on their orthodoxy and profitability for the people. It was a custom in some communions to have the minister shake the hand of each elder as he descended from the pulpit: if any thought the message lacking in soundness or sense, they'd not extend their hand. This was done in front, in the sight of the entire congregation. What a far cry from the thralldom of the laity under Rome!

And as the covenant community, particularly its men, became stronger in grace and knowledge, the ministry of the churches very nearly burst. Never in history had so much good been done so widely, so *normally*, by so many.

Missionary societies were established and expanded, orphanages were founded, immigrants were welcomed in Christ's Name: the Word of God was poured, like anointing oil, upon every area of life.

Something Happened

Now we find ourselves once again in need of Reformation. Podles is not the only one to notice that, when it comes to Christianity, men are missing from action.

What happened? For one thing, we have missed center, or rather, have swung passed center. From the extreme of encountering Christ through the conjuring of a priest, we've come to believe that He is encountered through the conjuring of emotions. First He was only "up there on the altar." Now He's only "in here, in my heart." The piety of Reformational Christianity devolved, in many circles, into sentimental pietism. The genuineness of Christianity came to be measured by experience, *internal* experience, and with that change of venue came a sign in the window: Real men need not apply. *Activity* as a measure of Christian virtue was superseded by *receptivity*. That's a playing field clearly tilted in favor of women.

The Scriptural imagery of the church as the Bride of Christ was twisted into an insistence that each individual Christian become a bride. Cotton Mather, in the late seventeenth century, "while recognizing that the mystical marriage" spoken of in Scripture "first referred to the Church, applied it also to each Christian: 'Our Savior does Marry Himself unto the Church in general, But He does also Marry Himself to every Individual Believer.'" No, he does not. It's the corporateness of our calling that stands at the head of our covenant peoplehood. Converts are "added to the church."

Thomas Shepherd insisted that "all church members are . . . virgins espoused to Christ."¹¹ No, we are not. We are men of God who belong to Him through Christ, the Captain of our salvation. Scripture's figures and images are helpful when kept in context and perspective, but when they are removed therefrom, all kinds of mischief can ensue.

Slip-Slidin' Away

And something beside emotionalism happened. That is, something happened *again*. Man does himself no good by failing to confront his natural indolence. Look how content Americans are to have the state take care of their responsibilities. The federal government didn't grow to its mammoth proportions through a violent warfare against its citizens. Rather, we *gave* away our power because we didn't want to take care of our responsibilities. This tendency to allow others to do the work operates in the ecclesiastical sphere as well.

Gradually, until it became the default instinct in most denominations, the people allowed professional clergy to perform the religious obligations which belonged to them as fathers, or families, or local churches. The kids get

dropped off at catechism class. They get dropped off at school, usually humanistic—but even when it's Christian, the oversight which would keep it sound is left to others who “have the time.” Missions is something done someplace else, and those who profess to do it are to be accountable, not to the church that pays, but to a professional board. The training of ministers is left *entirely* to the seminary, with rigorous ordination exams now a thing of the past. After all, the seminary “must know what they're doing.”

Implicit faith dies hard.

Power to the People

In the Bible, the church is the congregation of the Lord, the community of faith, the assembly of the righteous. Yes, they have leaders, but leaders have been given for the very purposes sneered at by Rome: *regulation and surveillance*. They have not been given as intermediaries or interlopers, but as helpers. They have *not* been given as if there could be no church without them. Paul and Barnabas had elders ordained in churches that were already extant (*Ac. 14:23*). They were elderless, but they were *churches!* And Titus was left in Crete to appoint elders in existing churches. Elders serve the church, bringing order and guarding orthodoxy. They are servants, not lords.

Thus, churches, like synagogues, must be understood as being composed of fathers, along with their wives and children, for whose sake elders and deacons have been appointed. “To *all the saints* in Christ Jesus at Philippi,” writes Paul, “together with the overseers and deacons.” Indeed, to whom are all of Paul's congregation-bound letters written? To ministers? To elders? No. To the people of God.

Now if the Word of God is written *directly* to the people of God, then the task of leaders can only be ministerial. That is, if it was God's design that a clergy class be interposed between Himself and His Word, we would expect His inspired Word to be addressed to those mediators. Instead, it is addressed to the people. And reformation occurs only when the Word of God is delivered to the people of God. The glory of the teaching office is ministerial; it exists to help the people to understand and apply the Word.

But this Biblical view has again been displaced by another, one which views the ministry as a sort of Protestant priesthood. *Whenever such views are espoused and adopted, there is a draining of authority from the fathers to the new priests.* Witness the following.

Actual Footage

In an e-mail discussion, a seminarian wrote to a child of the covenant, 20 years of age: “The church . . . has more authority over you than your father.” Really? But it got worse when this pompous claim was challenged, for he then explained himself: “The Father's authority is

derived from the church, seeing as he is under the authority of the elders.”

It was hard to believe I was reading this from a senior at a “conservative” Midwest Presbyterian seminary. When challenged again, he answered, “If I have a preference for my sons that is not a scriptural mandate, my elders have every right to gently persuade me from it or [to] even go so far as to usurp my fatherly prerogatives.”

According to this young man, power flows from Christ to the church elders, who then *allot it* to fathers. “If the church is Christ's body and all institutions derive their authority from Christ, then . . . well, you see where I am going.”

Lord, protect us from where he is going! This is a frightening echo of Rome's view: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to the hierarchy. The only difference is that in this new Protestant version, the hierarchy may graciously allocate certain powers to others, if they please. The young seminarian believes that whatever powers are not *explicitly cited* in Scripture as belonging to the fathers are reserved to the elders. This is a doctrine of enumeration of powers which flows in exactly the wrong direction!

According to this aberration, if something is not commanded or forbidden in Scripture, church officers can authoritatively dictate to my children that their preferences be followed. To use a trite example, if I tell my son he must wear a green tie to church, the elders can overrule me and command him to wear a red tie because there is no Scriptural mandate to wear green ties. A more serious example: If my daughter wants to attend a coed college which I do not approve of, the officers can void my veto. In effect, this view teaches that the elders are the *true fathers* of the children in the church, and that individual fathers are *permitted* to do the daily dirty work on behalf of those true fathers, who may overrule individual fathers in all non-mandated matters.

“I'm with you,” a PCA elder wrote to the seminarian. “I don't read much in the New Testament emphasizing the authority of the parents or the centrality of the family but I do read about the authority and centrality of the church.” And whatever authority anyone else may have, in his view, is subordinate to, not coordinate with, the church's authority. “Parents and state may derive their authority directly from God, but they exist *for* the church” (emphasis his).

Well, there we have it. All authority goes from Christ directly to the church, or to others who have been given it only for the sake of the church! And there is a further danger: the tacit assumption that “the church” means *ordained officers*. But why can't the church mean *the church*, the people of God, the covenant community? Does not Scripture use the term in just this way? Review the destination of those epistles once more.

'Fess Up

If we miss the context of Christ's establishing and

commissioning of His church, we miss a lot. He was not establishing a new priesthood to lord it over covenant fathers! He was establishing a new synagogue, henceforth to be called the church.

Christ, the true Temple, was going to found His church according to the structure of the synagogue.¹² The Jewish leaders “had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue” (*Jn. 9:22*). That is, confessors would be placed under the ban: *herem*, excommunication. Jesus, however, made that very confession the key which would open the door to *His* synagogue. Thus, when Peter made that acknowledgment—“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (*Mt. 16:16*)—our Lord declares this to be the foundation upon which His community will be built.

The church, then, from the beginning, is built upon her creeds, not her officers. It is the *professing* Peter, as a type, who is called the foundation stone. This is just another way of saying that souls are joined to Christ and His church by faith in Him. Notice how Jesus sought out the excommunicated blind man to elicit from him the good confession: “Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him” (*Jn. 9*).

The Key to “The Keys”

The “keys” entrusted to Peter (as per Matthew 16) are not mysterious powers; what they are is made clear as Peter employs them in the Book of Acts. It is Peter who is present at the “grand opening” of the universal kingdom at each of its major junctures: Peter preaches to and baptizes *Jews* in Acts 2; he is the agent (along with his closest friend, John) through whom the Spirit is conferred upon *half-Jews*, the Samaritans, in Acts 8; and he is the vessel chosen to representatively open the gates of God’s household to *non-Jews*, *i.e.*, Gentiles, when he preaches to and supervises the baptism of the family of Cornelius.

The key in each case is *the key of knowledge*, the knowledge of Christ, made known through declarative preaching, the proclamation of the truth as it is in Jesus. This is as Jesus said in His rebuke of the lawyers: “Woe unto you, lawyers! for you have taken away *the key of knowledge*: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered” (*Lk. 11:52*). This is not magic power but *truth* that has been entrusted to the church. The church uses its keys by teaching that is in and from Christ.¹³ That is why it is called, by the Spirit through Paul, “the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of *the truth*.” The church’s officers are appointed to watch out that the creeds are kept pure for the sake of the sheep and the glory of the Lord.

Move Over

The “binding and loosing” which Jesus in Matthew 16 said belonged to Peter, was broadened in Matthew 18 to include the other apostles. It is a most important concept but is regularly severed from its background by ecclesiocrats. *This was no new idea Jesus spoke of.* It is one constantly referred to by the rabbis, used abundantly, *e.g.*, in the controversies between Shammai and Hillel. The phrase was used most often in reference to what was prohibited and what was permitted according to the traditions of the lawyers and scribes and Pharisees. In Matthew 16, Jesus conferred this binding/loosing power upon His apostles.¹⁴ The apostles, then, were appointed by Christ to *replace* the unbelieving teachers of the Jewish synagogue; they were appointed to teach the truth in *His* synagogue. They were given authority to reveal and dictate to the church just what is *permitted* and what is *prohibited*.¹⁵

Had Christ not entrusted the apostles with *this very authority* they could not have given us the norms of behavior which we find in the New Testament. It was by this power that we are told that Gentiles need not take upon themselves the various ceremonial obligations which had bound Israel, whether obligations of diet, dress, calendar, or pilgrimage. Peter had a hard time adjusting to these truths.¹⁶ It was given to Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, to leave no doubt concerning them.¹⁷ And these teachings were given, always and in every case, that we might walk in the fullness of the freedom that is found in Christ. Leaders were appointed in each church for the same reason.

As the message of Christ went from place to place, churches, *i.e.*, synagogues of Christ, were founded. “Right at the outset,” says Eric Werner, “it should be remembered that it was not the Temple but the Synagogue which set the pattern for the divine service of the primitive Christian community.”¹⁸ And while “the temple was controlled by the priests, the synagogue was a lay institution. . . . Actual leadership was in the hands of elders.”¹⁹

Who were these elders? People who had special mystical experiences? People upon whom special powers had been conferred? No. They were “respected heads of the families in the community.” It is clear as day that this was what St. Paul also had in mind when he gave the list of qualifications to be used in determining whether those who sought to be servant-leaders in Christ’s synagogues should be admitted to that office. It was their objective character and competence that was of primary concern, not their subjective sense of calling. “Someone wants to be an overseer? Fine. He must be above reproach, not overbearing, must be a one-woman man, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, sober, peaceful, not a quarreler, not greedy.”

But today, with our sacerdotal view of ministry, so long as a boy is graduated from a seminary and passes what is called an examination, he’s made to preside over a church

of Christ! And people argue that such a practice is perfectly *Reformed*. It is not, because it is not Biblical.

Merit It

If we keep in mind the competency and authority that belonged to the congregation, *i.e.*, to the men of Israel assembled as a worshipping community, you can see that anyone who would be appointed or elected to lead them would be permitted to do so only because of his *greater competence*, because of his exemplary life and proven skills, skills proven especially in his home (“If anyone does not know how to manage his own family,” Paul asks, “how can he take care of God’s church?”).

In other words, *all the fathers of Israel were expected to be competent leaders*. The one who would lead them, therefore, must be able to demonstrate *greater competence*, particularly in the art and science of *real life*—blood-real—day to day Christian living. The higher the level of Christian grace and knowledge among the people, the higher the level to which any would-be leader must attain.

As far as congregational worship was concerned, “Although there were some designated officers, there was no one specifically charged to conduct worship in the synagogue—to read, preach, and pray. *All males, even young boys,*²⁰ *were qualified to participate in the service.*”²¹ The purpose of covenantal education, typically a service provided by the synagogue, was to familiarize the sons of Israel with the law as a basis for life and to prepare them to be, among other things, knowledgeable worshippers.

Ordination is not the bestowal of special powers inaccessible to the normal father in the church. Ministers lead as a helpful convention, not as the product of a command. The difference is in his occupation of an *office*, not in his person. And others might fill that office, if need be. The churches existed as churches without officers, remember! To use an old phrase, they are necessary not for the being, but for the well-being of the churches.

Any pious father is qualified, if liturgically competent, to lead in service as needed. We install ministers in office because we have examined them and found them to have met the requirements of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, because we recognize in them a living orthodoxy in which we have confidence. They are there by *merit*—not the merit attained by persevering through required seminary courses, but the merit of competence to lead their own families *and other men*, men who, by God’s appointment and grace, are also prophets, priests and kings. There is nothing improper about involving several men, ordained or not ordained, in leading worship, so long as things are done decently, in order, and according to the sound doctrine we have received from God in His Word. Ordained men have been entrusted with, not exclusivity in leading worship, but responsibility for “regulation and surveillance.”

Obey Your Leaders

We love, honor and respect those who have rule over

us in the church, *not* because they’ve been given magic power, not because they stand in a supposed line of apostolic succession, not because they’ve been authorized by God to bypass our authority in the rearing of our children, but we “esteem them very highly in love *for their work’s sake*” (1 Thes. 5:13). If they want to *stay* ministers, they have to prove their worth in the trenches, have their mettle tested daily by questions and challenges concerning real life, invest themselves in the edification of the lives of the people under their charge, especially the men.

When Rome wanted all power in the church, at least she took it in a manly fashion. In the Reformed churches, the power that God has granted to the worshipping community has simply been *given* away; the churches have passively “niced” themselves into impotence. What we commonly see today is entry into Christian ministry as if it were entry into a club: candidates endure the nuisance of initiatory rites and they’re in.

It’s a case of “Where the Boys Are,” my friends. Preach to women, have women; preach to men, have men, women, and children.

We’ve distorted the Biblical model for church, church government, and church officers. We have reached this nadir because we neglected to complete the work of reformation as it bears on church structure and polity. We have not cleansed our churches of the gobs of lingering sacerdotalism. The way to this cleansing lies in *the fathers of Israel* reclaiming and being reinvested with the authority which Christ has given to them.

How About This?

When churches are structured in such a way that the clergy are lords over the faith and practices of the men, the men will simply stay away. That is what has happened in Romanism, and where Romanism is strongest it has given rise to reactionary machismo, a desperate and misguided attempt by men to be the “real men” they weren’t allowed to be in church. What the church needs to do is to acknowledge the authority God has given to *fathers*, to nurture and guard that authority, not usurp it.

Toward that end, the following items are offered, offered not as “laws,” but as suggestions, or at least things to be considered.

First, as a rule, a mission work should not be denoted

as a particular church unless there are ten male covenant heads. Remember, the church is made up of covenant *men*, along with their wives and children. Typically, the concern today focuses on the “legitimacy” of the officers when it should be at least equally concerned about the presence of men whom the officers are serving.

Yes, ten men is the traditional number required to establish a Jewish synagogue. But it is also the smallest governed civil unit above the family level in the Mosaic administration (*Ex. 18:21, 25; Dt. 1:15*), and the stopping point in Abraham’s prayer for the deliverance of a community of righteous men (*Gen. 18:32, 33*).

Second, preaching should be self-consciously directed to the men of the covenant. Preaching is *very powerful*. In many contexts it reproduces its character in the congregation. If preaching is soft, round, pretty, and introspective, you’ll have a congregation of women, though they be of both sexes. If it is clear, well-defined, direct, and objective, you’ll find men drawn to it, *and* women and children, too! It’s a case of “Where the Boys Are,” my friends. Preach to women, have women; preach to men, have men, women, and children.

Uh-oh

Third, and this may seem a little radical, but ask yourself: If officers are appointed for “regulation and surveillance,” why shouldn’t the fathers be permitted to baptize their own children while the officers “regulate and survey”? Is there something lacking in a father’s authority to do this?

The knee-jerk reaction views this as a theft of the lawful authority belonging to the church. Well, once again, we are faced with a definition of the church that is bound up in the clergy rather than the fathers of Israel. But beside that, we can see that this objection is without merit by considering a (hypothetical) parallel case in the civil sphere.

Let’s say a child is murdered. The suspect is apprehended, properly tried, and found guilty. If the lawfully appointed magistrate calls for the nearest of kin to have the honor of pulling the switch (or casting the first stone), does that constitute a relinquishing of the magistrate’s power? Not at all! It was for that very reason he was appointed by God and the community—to guard the righteous and see to it that the wicked are punished. When he “re-confers” the authority to execute the sentence to the one most interested (under God) in the matter, there has been no diminishing of authority whatsoever.

Neither is there when elders “oversee” the propriety of baptisms. There is no necessity to have the act executed by their hand (though it is permissible so to do). We are suggesting that such infant baptisms could easily be done in an assembly of the covenant people, with the officers present.

After all: Why not? This really cuts to the heart of the matter. Whose children are they? God’s, yes. But under

Him they belong to the parents, *not the minister*. The church officers may legitimately see to it that things are done properly and in order, but they have no special power or authority which makes baptism by them more efficacious. It is a covenant event and the father is certainly a proper covenant figure to welcome the child—in Christ’s Name and in the presence of His people—into the covenant.

The simple fact that such a practice would serve to reinforce is this: the children of the church are *not* directly under the authority of the elders. So long as the children reside under their father’s authority, the church’s approach to those children must, until their majority, be mediated by the father. When the church encroaches upon the father’s prerogatives and privileges, it weakens the father and therefore weakens itself.

A very pregnant fact relevant to this question is found in Acts 10:48. There we read that Peter, though an apostle—nay, the only apostle present—rather than performing the baptism of Cornelius’s household himself, simply instructed ordinary believers to do it. He “commanded that they [the first whole-hog Gentiles to be joined to the church—*sms*] be baptized in the name of the Lord.” The significance of the phrasing has not escaped gleg commentators. Barnes notes, “it seems not to have been the practice of the apostles themselves to baptize very extensively.” And Kistemaker is equally unafraid to accept the obvious: “Peter, as the Greek text implies, orders the six Jewish Christians to baptize the Gentile converts. . . . The apostles, then, place the emphasis not on themselves but on the name of Jesus.” The male Jewish believers were covenantally competent to perform the rite. The text says that Peter was accompanied to Caesarea by “some of the brothers,” the common term; not, “some other elders.” The baptism was done under the apostle’s supervision, which was fine.

Think of the implications of this! J. A. Alexander is forceful and to the point: “It can scarcely be a mere fortuitous coincidence, that Peter, Paul, and Christ himself, should all have left this rite to be administered by others. ‘Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples’ (*Jn. 4:2*). ‘I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus, etc.’ (*1 Cor. 1:14*). ‘Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel’ (*ib. v. 17*). As none of these expressions can be intended to detract from the value and importance of the rite in question, they can only be explained as warning us against the error of exalting this part of the Christian system to a disproportionate importance, which may be just as superstitious as the eucharistical corruptions of popery, or the hierarchical excesses of prelacy. One idolatrous extravagance cannot be corrected by another.”

Further, if baptism replaces circumcision, may we not learn lessons from the administration of the older rite? Zipporah’s circumcision of her and Moses’ son was *valid*. God was wrathful toward Moses because the boy was uncircumcised. When Zipporah performed the rite, God

relented. It was done. So also, Abraham circumcised his entire household. It is very unlikely that he performed at least 318²² circumcisions by himself in one day (*Gen. 17:23*). The important thing is that they were circumcised in virtue of the covenant; it was not a question of who performed it. Yet the mere suggestion that it may be perfectly fine for fathers to baptize their own children induces apoplexy in modern Protestant sacerdotalists. Why should it? If it is done under the regulation and oversight of orthodox officers, it satisfies all Biblical requirements and is in keeping with Biblical examples.

Seder and Supper

The same question naturally arises when dealing with the “other” sacrament. Let us ask it plainly: May not fathers directly administer the Lord’s Supper to their own families in the congregation? Cannot regulation and oversight be accomplished by the elders as they distribute the elements *directly* to the fathers, who in turn distribute them *directly* to their families. Does not this method of administration fulfill all covenant righteousness?

Have we, in the area of the sacraments, retained just enough sacerdotalism to make the inquiring mind ask if there really is as much difference between ourselves and Rome as we fancy? Is there something that *happens* to the baptismal water, or to the bread, or to the wine? Are the sacraments given some special character by the hands of a minister that would be marred by the hands of a “common” Israelite?

Surely we recognize that the Passover antecedent had fathers acting as priests of their families *especially* during the seder. Why not on into the new administration? For it is especially at the Supper that the glorious character of the New Covenant can be revealed, especially as fathers lead their respective families in celebration of the Supper²³ under the “regulation and surveillance” of the elders.

But this goes to what is perhaps a profounder problem: We have nearly lost the sense that the Supper was designed to be a *covenantal*, not a personal, event. In many churches, the Supper has become a modified mass, a mass minus the magic. It has morphed into a “me and Jesus” celebration. This is a travesty. The whole point of the meal is the strengthening of the covenanted body which derives its corporate life from Christ. That is why Paul rebuked the Corinthians: they failed to discern the *corporate* character of the meal. Listen to him identify the problem:

Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of

others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you. (1 Cor. 11:17-22)

Their divisions and factions made a mockery of this, the highest point of *covenant* communion. The whole design of the meal is lost if we do not eat it together! The Corinthians were treating it as a *private* matter, just between the worshiper and God. This elicits one of the sternest warnings found in Paul’s letters: “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.” Why? Because he eats by himself, thus “not discerning the Lord’s body,” *i.e.*, the church (*v. 29*).

In order to guard the covenantal-ness of the meal, then, Paul commands that every man, every head of household “check himself out” to make sure that he and those under his charge are participating *not as individuals but as part of the body*. “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

That Paul is addressing the covenant men as “liturgically competent” is very clear when we consider that his admonishment is that each man “examine himself,” *not that each man be examined by the elders!* The elders bring and maintain order by doing as Paul did: reminding the men that this is a celebration of the church, corporately, not a celebration of individuals who happen to be in the same room.

What is written here should not be taken as opposition to the duty of taking personal inventory before the Lord. Such inventory-taking is necessary for fallen creatures! Nor should this be read as a suggestion that such self-examination *never* be conducted prior to the Supper. The point is only that *Paul’s point* was: examine yourself to make sure you are not thinking only of yourself in this, but of others who, with you, are His. We discover the reason that *this* self-examination was necessary in Corinth by examining the context, and the context shows that the problem there was failure to grasp the covenantal, *not the mystical*, character of the Supper. Paul’s conclusion to the matter puts this conclusion beyond controversy: “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.” You can see his argument in his summary. All interpretations which fail to account for this, fail.

The Lord’s Supper crisis at Corinth has been used as alleged evidence in arguing that clergy are necessary for Christian worship to be legitimate. But properly understood the passage adds zero support to that contention. The Supper does not need to be in the hands of the clergy to be valid. Paul doesn’t even directly address ministers or elders in the chapter! Rather, he speaks to *every man*.

Consider, too, that more than 5,000 men (in addition to women and children) in Jerusalem were frequently celebrating the Lord’s Supper in their respective homes before *any* officers—beside the apostles—had been appointed (*Ac. 4:4; 5:14; 2:42, 47; 6:1-6*).

By distributing the elements to covenant heads who in turn administer them to their households, the church can avoid the Scylla of sacerdotalism while steering clear of the Charybdis of chaotic individualism.

The church is made up of men, along with their wives and children. Elders are appointed as leaders, not lords. No men, no church. It is *not*: no ministers, no church. Ministers and elders (we hope!) make a church *better*, they don't make it *real*. The men in covenant with Christ do.

Exiles On Main Street

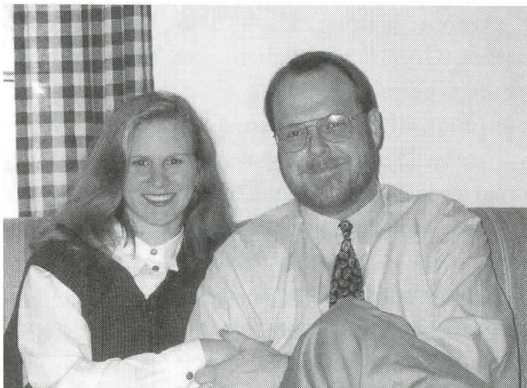
A Protestant priesthood has usurped paternal prerogatives. Orthodoxy has declined, along with family religion. Why? Because baptized men have been led to believe that women and a professional clergy can “do their religion” for them. They cannot. The answers to the crises confronting the church today will elude us as long as fathers remain the governors-in-exile of the covenant. Fathers must be reinstated. *This is their due; it is not a favor*. The power accorded to them by God in His making them the very church of God has for too long been unduly concentrated in the hands of a few. Power to the people. It is high time to make room for daddies.

¹ *Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, 1991), 822.
² See Michael Kelley, *The Impulse of Power* (Minneapolis, 1998).
³ John A. Hardon, S.J., *The Catholic Catechism* (New York, 1981), 449-450.
⁴ Robert C. Broderick, Editor, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Nashville, 1987).
⁵ *ibid.*, 469.
⁶ *ibid.*
⁷ J. I. Packer, *Faith*, in Walter A. Elwell, Editor, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1984).
⁸ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Hierarchy” Emphasis added.

⁹ Dallas, 1999.
¹⁰ The bulk of it was actually written by Richard Baxter and edited by Manton, but these quotes are from Manton.
¹¹ Cited by Podles, 116. See the whole of chapter 7.
¹² See W. F. Skene's introduction to Bickell's *The Lord's Supper and the Passover Ritual* (Edinburgh, 1891).
¹³ For a balanced and edifying view of “the keys,” see Heidelberg, Q&A83-85.
¹⁴ Those whom Matthew calls “wise men and scribes” in 23:34, Luke calls “apostles” in 11:49.
¹⁵ People (*Mt. 18:18*) could be “bound” (placed under the ban) for flagrant, willful, and persistent rejection of *apostolic* doctrine and precepts, or “loosed” (remitted) upon repentance. They could not be “bound” for beliefs or behavior not addressed by Scripture.
¹⁶ Acts 10; Galatians 2:11ff.
¹⁷ See especially Ephesians 2; also 1 Timothy 4:1-7; Colossians 2:11; Philippians 3:3, etc..
¹⁸ *The Sacred Bridge: The Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church during the First Millennium* (New York, 1959), 2.
¹⁹ J. Julius Scott, Jr., *Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1995), 142-143.
²⁰ 13 and older.
²¹ Scott, 143. Italics added.
²² Cf. Genesis 14:14
²³ Do you suppose more baptized men would attend church if their families depended upon them to be there? “Daddy, you *have to come*. Who is going to give us the Lord's Supper?”

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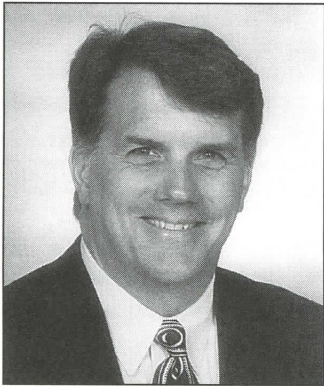
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Church Government: The Problems of Tyranny and Anarchy within the Local Church

By Dr. Monte E. Wilson III



I was nine years old when I had my first experience with church government in Baptist World. My father had just been installed as the new pastor. This was his first Wednesday night business meeting—his first ever, for this was his first pastorate after graduating from Southwestern Baptist Seminary

in Ft. Worth, TX. After some preliminary decisions voted on and approved by the majority of the 100 or so faithful who attended that evening, things began to heat up. Apparently my dad had plans that rubbed the deacons the wrong way. They sought to run roughshod over the meeting, but dad was trained well and outmaneuvered them. (I think Baptist pastors have to take an entire semester on parliamentary procedure.) At one point, the atmosphere was so charged that everyone under the age of 14 was dismissed. When the dust settled some months later, three deacons resigned, three died, and three publicly confessed that they had never been converted. I kid you not.

What had rubbed the deacons the wrong way was that they had been the unquestioned authority of this church for years and this upstart was threatening their reign. Thinking they could control a freshly minted pastor, they put his nomination on the fast track. They discovered on that Wednesday night that they had miscalculated how the young man would respond to their spiritual tyranny.

The issue was profoundly simple. *Who is in charge here?* Who is the delegated spiritual authority? The answer, however, was and is not so simple. In a typical Baptist church the majority of the voting members of that local church elects the delegated authority. This is a form of church government called *congregationalism*. In some such congregations, this delegated authority must constantly seek the approval of 51% of the members for every decision he wishes to make. However, in other such congregations—with the same form of government—the pastor becomes a mini-pope whose every pronouncement is infallible. In still other such churches, the deacons

function as elders, acting more in a Presbyterian fashion.

After 27 years of ministry, I have discovered that it is quite naïve for anyone to think that simply because a church's constitution and by-laws establish it to operate according to a particular form of government—Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopal—this does not mean it's *actually* how things will function! The reality is that you will most often find Baptists conducting business like Episcopalians, Episcopalians operating as Presbyterians, and Presbyterians mimicking the Congregationalists. It makes one pray for a truth-in-advertising law in regard to church governments!

By the way, why map out specific requirements for elders, as well as for the members' duties in regard to these leaders, if church government is optional or unnecessary? Clearly the Apostle Paul thought it of paramount importance to establish such governments wherever he went (*Tit. 1:5*). The neo-Amish desire to replace churches with little home Bible studies and prayer meetings where “we are all priests and need no officers” might sound spiritual, but it flies in the face of Scripture and 2000 years of *church* history. One cannot help but wonder if this disregard for church is rooted in the problem of everyone's wanting to do what is right in his own eyes: anarchy with a religious veneer.

Who Lays His Life Down for Whom?

A Biblical case can be made for each of the above mentioned forms of church government. Each of them has a revered history. Each also has its potential weaknesses. Congregationalism can degenerate into a democracy where we vote on God's revealed will and everyone does what's right in his (or her!) own sight, a.k.a., anarchy. Presbyterianism may morph into a ruling aristocracy detached from and insensitive to the spiritual needs of the congregation. Episcopacy can lead to an autocracy that is utterly divorced from the local congregation it presumes to lead.

It appears to me that as we move from church to church we witness the polar opposites of anarchy and tyranny. Further, those who suffer damage under a government that permitted one particular sin often run headlong into its sinful counterpart! Did I suffer at the hands of a tyrannical hierarchy? Now I revel in the “freedom” of anarchy!

Ideally, the congregation should focus on honoring and obeying their appointed/elected spiritual authorities (*Heb. 13:7, 13*). The officers should focus on serving the people as emissaries of Jesus Christ, the Head of the church (*1 Pet. 5:1-4*). All too often, however, the members focus on telling the officers how to do their job; the officers focus on telling the members how they are supposed to submit. No one is behaving as Christ commanded. Neither is willing to yield until the other does what “they are supposed to do.”

I suggest that, as in a marriage, it is the head—in this case, the officers—who must first yield. As Jesus loved and died for us—while we were yet sinners—so too should leaders in the church lay their lives down for those whom they serve. It is Gentile-like authority that forces and coerces. Christ-like authority motivates and inspires through godly living and service.

Building the Walls

How do we guard against tyranny and anarchy?

I think that one of the very first things we must do is to own up to our peculiar proclivities. We should be honest about our particular church government’s potential weaknesses, as well as the community’s psychological bent. (By the latter, I am referring to the community’s personality. For example, does the church lean toward a passive resignation regarding its leaders or toward a militant individualism or family-ism? “Family-ism,” you ask? This is where every family does what is right in its own eyes with no regard for the church’s lawful jurisdiction.) With this self-awareness, we then stand vigilant, prayerfully watching over our weakness in this regard, guarding against falling into corporate sin.

There also must be a clear understanding of the Biblical parameters within which the officers lead the congregation. I suggest the Bible teaches that our churches are to hold its members accountable for maintaining orthodox doctrine (*Gal. 1:6-10*); for keeping the Ten Commandments (*1 Cor. 5:9-13*); for doing our part to maintain the peace and harmony of the community (*Tit. 3:9-11; Mt. 18:15-20*); and for how our gifts are used within the community (*1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Cor. 14*).

Furthermore, the officers within the community simply cannot govern as they wish. They do not represent their own ideas but the Word of God, and they must not presume to take authority where Scriptures have not given them the right to do so. As Rushdoony has noted, ministers are not *legislators* but *representatives*. Subsequently, there must be some sort of functioning body that exercises oversight, holding the leader(s) accountable for keeping their charge.

We must not ignore the Biblical stipulations concerning an officer’s character. The Bible is clear as to what sort of character qualifies a man for office (*1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-11; Rom. 12:3-8*). To the degree we ignore

these requirements, to that same degree we become vulnerable to spiritual disaster within the community. I would add here that it is also critical that leaders not merely possess godly character but have the necessary gifting and training necessary for leading a church.

It is also the responsibility of the leaders of the congregation to disciple its members: in Paul’s words, to equip the saints for ministry and for the building up of the body of Christ (*Eph. 4:7-12*). The goal is for every member to consistently engage his gifts in serving the other members of the community. Leaders following Christ’s charge are not men who fulfill every ministry need of the community, but men who train the members to fulfill those needs.

*It is Gentile-like authority
that forces and coerces.
Christ-like authority
motivates and inspires
through godly living and
service.*

The spiritual leader(s) is not every member’s personal chaplain or Bible answer man. Some people insist on this sort of spiritual tyranny, but the godly leader will refuse this temptation to tyranny. How can the member grow if I answer every question, never requiring any research and deliberation on the member’s part? How will the member mature if I make all of his decisions rather than teaching him how to be self-governing under God’s Word? And how can I, as one individual leader, minister adequately to the many members of the congregation? I must train and equip others so that we all may be built up in Christ.

To state the matter succinctly: *If qualified and duly appointed church leaders will get about the business of equipping all the church members to be ministers and will hold those members accountable in doctrine, morality, and maintaining the peace and harmony of the community (no slander, gossip, or factious behavior), then the problems of tyranny or anarchy will be infinitesimal.*

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The Biblical Model for Civil Government

By Rev. William O. Einwechter



There have been various attempts to set up a distinctly Christian civil government throughout the New Testament era. Some more recent endeavors have been that of Calvin in Geneva, Knox in Scotland, and the Puritans in New England. These recent attempts have one thing in common: they were

sincere and worthy efforts by godly *but* fallible men. Their work is instructive and important, and those who would seek to institute a Christian civil government in their own nation today neglect their work at their own peril. However, none of these can provide the definitive *model* for erecting Christian civil government today because none were without error; all were plagued by human frailty and mistakes. Examples from church history may provide help, and we ought to learn from them; but none carries divine authority or infallibility.

Therefore, in seeking a Christian reconstruction of the institution of civil government, it is imperative that we make our standard the only inspired, infallible model on godly civil government that we have: the Hebrew Republic established by God through Moses. Note that we use the term “model.” This is because the Hebrew Republic had elements unique to its own time and place in redemptive history. Hence, it is an error to seek to reduplicate today, in all of its particulars, that Republic (*e.g.*, hereditary kingship, a central tribunal presided over by Levitical priests, cities of refuge, some of the laws of inheritance and warfare, a division of the nation into 11 tribal units, or the exact jurisdictional unit of the city and its gates, *etc.*). The Hebrew Republic does not provide us with a detailed blueprint for all the specifics of civil government or civil law, but it does give us a sufficiently clear model for framing a government and laws that are according to the will of God. We must remember that every detail of the Hebrew Republic was based on the unchanging, righteous standard of God’s moral law. Our interest is in discovering, through proper historical-grammatical exegesis, the moral law that informs each particular, and then applying that law to the nations of the New Testament dispensation.

With that as our goal, this article explores one key Old Testament text that gave instructions to Israel on setting up their civil government in the land of Palestine after

the conquest. Deuteronomy 16:18-20 is foundational to understanding the Biblical model for civil government. The text reads:

Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. 'Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

In this article, I delineate five aspects of civil government that are revealed in this passage. These aspects help provide the fundamental model for civil government.

1. *Civil government is the ordinance of God and under His authority.* As the author of the institution of civil government, God gives to the people of Israel His instructions on how to set up their civil rule, and on the duties of the people and the leaders. The fact that there is divine law on these matters indicates that civil government is not an institution of man that can be dispensed with or framed as man sees fit. Deuteronomy 16:18 begins with an imperative, “Judges and officers shalt thou make” and is followed by two other commands from God. The Lord is definite on the matter—thou shalt set up civil government in the land, and here is how it will function! Man is not granted autonomy in the sphere of civil rule. All nations and societies are under the rule of the Creator and responsible for following the imperatives of His law in framing their civil governments.

2. *Civil officers are chosen by the people and are answerable to them.* The first command of Deuteronomy 16:18-20 is addressed to the people of Israel. First, it is their responsibility to choose the men who will govern them. They are to establish “judges” and “officers” in their “gates.” The word “judges” refers to those who act as law-givers, judges, or governors, *i.e.*, civil magistrates. The term “officers” indicates subordinate officials who assist the judges. The “gates” were the place in the city where the civil magistrates met to decide controversies and carry out the task of governing the people. Thus, the people of Israel were responsible to select and establish in office the men who would serve as civil rulers. The office of magistrate was not determined by hereditary descent, by a class of nobles, or by the appointment of a king or other civil officers; it was determined by the people through free

elections. We say free, but we do not mean that the people were free to choose whomsoever they would; they were bound by the law of God only to select men who met certain stated qualifications (*cf. Ex. 18:21; Dt. 1:13*).

Second, the people of Israel were to hold their officers accountable to rule justly and wisely. The magistrates were to govern the people “with just judgment.” If the leaders failed to govern in such a manner, the implication is that the people had the authority to remove them from office (the right of impeachment). Hence, although the ultimate authority to govern came from God, the proximate source of magisterial authority is from the people. God charges His people to set up righteous men as rulers, and to remove those who fail to meet that standard in office (*cf. Am. 5:15*).

3. *Civil government is to be decentralized and local in orientation.* When the people are charged to establish “judges and officers in all thy gates . . . throughout thy tribes,” two levels of government are indicated. The “gates” refers to the government that is to be set up in each town and village in Israel. This level is the most basic and important; it is also the most *local*. Here both civil and criminal law was to be decided. Here important matters of community defense and well-being were discussed and determined. Only in cases where the local magistrates could not come to a decision because of the particular difficulty of the case was the matter to be transferred to another jurisdiction, *i.e.*, the central court at the place of God’s choosing (*Dt. 17:8-13*).

The “tribes” refers to the division of the nation into 11 tribal units by the command of God. Each tribe had a council of “elders,” “princes,” or “chief fathers of the tribes” as representatives from the towns and cities within its bounds. This council had responsibility to determine matters that affected the whole tribe (*cf. Num. 32:28; Dt. 31:28; Jos. 22:11-34*). Thus, each tribe had jurisdiction over its own territory, and had the duty to see that its cities, towns, and villages had proper civil government. The rulers of the tribes (*1 Chr. 16:22-24*) also met in council as the “elders of Israel” to decide matters affecting the whole nation (*cf. 1 Sam. 4:3; 8:4; 2 Sam. 3:17; 5:3; 1 Kin. 8:1; 1 Chr. 11:3*). Israel existed for centuries without a king (a central government), and the appointment of a king was primarily directed to the conduct of the nation’s defense and foreign policy, not the enforcement of civil and criminal law, which was the province of the elders in the gates (*1 Sam. 8:20*).

The model of the Hebrew Republic provides for a locally oriented, decentralized civil rule, with various levels of government. In Israel, this consisted of the local magistrates in the gates, the rulers of the tribes, the council of the elders of Israel, and, eventually the king. The office of king was never intended by God to supersede the local government of the towns and the tribes (*Dt. 17:14-20*). Biblical law stands against a centralized government embodied in an unitary state.

4. *Civil magistrates are to govern justly, that is, according*

to God’s law. In Deuteronomy 16:19-20 the magistrates are charged with the duty of governing the people in wisdom and justice. First, they are commanded not to “wrest judgment.” To “wrest” was to bend or turn aside, and is used here in the figurative sense of deviating from the path of loyalty or duty. The word “judgment,” in this context, stands for the whole work of governing. Hence, this command means that the civil magistrate is not to pervert God’s purpose for civil government by governing according to his own autonomous standards or by using the office to his own selfish ends. The magistrate is God’s minister who is to serve the people under him by upholding God’s standards and serving the interests of God’s kingdom.

Second, they must not respect persons, nor receive a bribe. The effect of either of these actions would be to corrupt justice. There is to be one standard of law for all within the nation—rich and poor, citizen and foreigner, king and farmer, family, friends, or personal enemies. The rule of law must be beyond price, and held as the most valuable resource of the nation. A civil ruler who perverts justice for a bribe not only sells his own soul, but that of the nation as well.

Third, they must zealously pursue justice in every aspect of their governing. This is the heart of the magistrate’s concern—that justice be done! The Lord says to civil rulers, “that which is altogether just shalt thou follow.” This command contains the interesting Hebrew idiom of intensifying the attribute of a word by means of its repetition. The translation “altogether just” is literally, “justice, justice.” This intensification of the attribute of justice leads to the translation of “altogether just”; other possible renderings would be, “nothing but justice,” or, “pure justice.” The pursuit of pure justice should be the consuming passion and concern of civil magistrates! And this justice is the justice set forth in the written law of God.

5. *Civil government is under the sanctions of God’s law.* Both the people and the civil rulers are to carry out their duties in the fear of God, knowing that obedience to God’s law brings blessing while disobedience brings cursing. Since civil government, as every other sphere of life, is under the law of God, it is also under His sanctions. The text of Deuteronomy 16:20 is clear on this matter as it ties blessing in the land to obedience to the stated commands in regard to civil government that have just been given. The Lord promises that Israel shall enjoy “life” and all that the promised inheritance of land implies if they keep His law. Liberty, justice, prosperity, and peace are blessings that descend from God upon the people who follow His law in the civil sphere. On the contrary, the wrath of God is upon that nation and rulers who spurn His law, and thus, they are visited with tyranny, injustice, poverty, and strife (*cf. Ps. 2:10-12*).

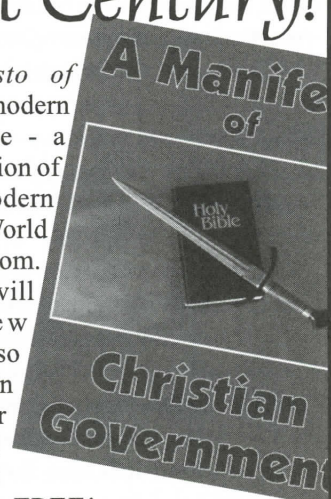
The Hebrew Republic, as established and defined by God’s Word, provides men and nations with the only infallible model (the model is not found in history *or*

natural law) for constructing civil governments that are in accord with the will of God. Although the whole counsel of God on the matter of civil rule must be taken into account, this article has focused on one very important text that is foundational to understanding the Biblical model for civil government. The model of the Hebrew Republic calls for a civil government that officially recognizes the authority of God over it and operates in view of His sanctions; for a government that is local and decentralized; for a people who act responsibly and choose wise and godly men for civil rulers, and then hold their rulers accountable to govern justly; and for civil magistrates who are zealous in the pursuit of pure justice (*i.e.*, the justice revealed in God's law), and who refuse to recognize persons or take a bribe because of their commitment to the rule of law. By the grace of God and the power of our Mediatorial King, Jesus Christ, may the model of the Hebrew Republic become the model for the civil government of all nations.

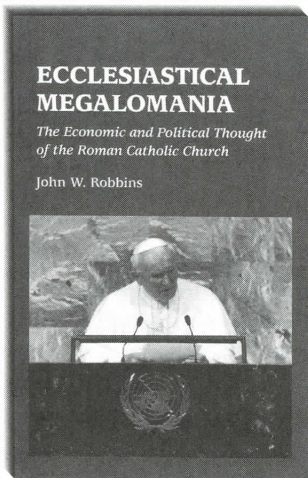
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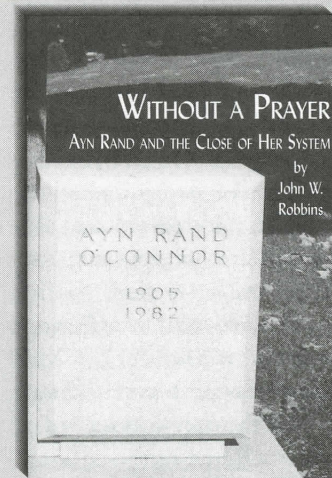
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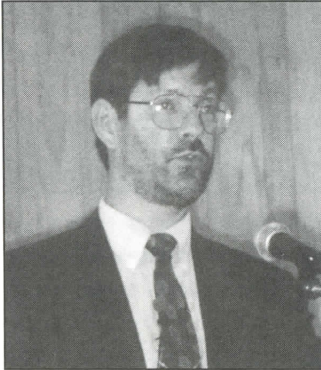
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Vocation as a Government

By Terry Applegate

The Glory of the Mundane



How is it that the pursuit of such a mundane thing as working for a living with the added goal of making a profit can actually qualify as a calling?

My goal is to convince you that it is specifically because what we undertake is mundane, “or characteristic of this earth or man’s life on earth,”

that what we do as business people rises to the level of a calling. The value of our calling derives specifically from its relationship to earthly ventures and needs. “If the goal of the Christian life is a neoplatonic flight from this world, then pietism has effectively undermined the doctrine of non-ecclesiastical callings,”¹ and that thought must be resisted. If we believe that only the clergy and clerical office are callings, then most of life is meaningless, for perhaps only one in several hundred is serving in those offices.

Each Christian should perceive and acknowledge that his vocation is nothing other than a calling from God; therefore, his thinking should be reflected in the way he lives life and conducts business. My goal isn’t just to make a theological statement, which is necessary, but to set forth a practical, Biblical approach for us to follow.

To engage in business activity, for the Christian, is to be immersed in ministry. This was the Puritan understanding as they came to this country and developed what would come to be known as the “Puritan work ethic,” which has been stripped of all theological ramifications and is now called simply the “American work ethic,” or “work ethic.” Puritans believed that while there were different callings in life and varying stations, everything was to be “done as unto the Lord.”

Leland Ryken, in his book, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were*, does an excellent job of documenting this understanding of work and business that existed in Puritan theology. He writes:

William Tyndale said that if we look externally “there is difference betwixt washing dishes and preaching of the word of God; but as touching to please God; none at all.” William Perkins agreed: “The action of a shepherd in keeping sheep ... is as good a work before God as is the action of a judge

in giving sentence, or a magistrate in ruling, or a minister in preaching.” This Puritan rejection of the dichotomy between sacred and secular work had far-reaching implications.

For one thing, it renders every task of intrinsic value and integrates every vocation with a Christian’s spiritual life. It makes every job consequential by making it the arena for glorifying and obeying God and for expressing one’s love (through service) to one’s neighbor. Thus Hugh Latimer saw in the example of Christ the true dignity of all work:

This is a wonderful thing, that the Savior of the world, and the King above all kings, was not ashamed to labor; yea, and to use so simple an occupation. Here He did sanctify all manner of occupations.²

Their view of how Jesus Christ sanctified work by engaging in it Himself as a carpenter and, I might point out, as an independent businessman is very insightful. “What God has cleansed, you must not call common.”³ Quoting Ryken once more:

For the Puritans, all of life was God’s. Their goal was to integrate their daily work with their religious devotion to God. Richard Steele [a Puritan scholar] asserted that it was in the shop “where you may most confidently expect the presence and blessing of God.”⁴

Work is so important in the economy of God’s plan—no pun intended—that it is enshrined in the Ten Commandments in a positive way. The Fourth Commandment tells us to observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, but there’s no doubt that it also sanctifies work as well: “Six days you shall labor and do all your work.” In fact, the bulk of the week is taken up by this very “worldly” activity, and yet it is a worldly activity that God tells us to enter into with energy and expectation. Work is good, it’s commanded and it will be blessed when done in accordance with God’s Word.

The Jewish writer Meir Tamari notes:

Man’s earning of a livelihood and his creation of economic and material assets are seen as the reflections of Divine pleasure. Leafing through the pages of the Bible, one is immediately struck by the fact that the observance of God’s commandments leads to an abundance of material goods.... A God fearing man is characterized as one whose flocks and

orchards bear their fruit in season and produce a bounty of goods... the high priest offered a special prayer in the Temple, the major component of which is a request for a year of bounty, a year in which Jews will not have to be dependent on others for their livelihood.⁵

Of course, one needs only turn to Deuteronomy 28 to see that God's plan is to prosper His people in the material or "mundane" things of life; and one way He does this is through business transactions or commerce, or in "the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks." His promise here is that all their agricultural labor and business dealings would meet with success.

And further, His people were to prosper through banking and commerce with other nations. "You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow." God promised to bless them in their international banking activities! In today's world, we often curse the international bankers and imply that there is something inherently immoral about their occupation; but, in reality, God's people should be the ones prosperous enough and wealthy enough to dominate this entire realm of commerce. It should be a tool of dominion to serve Christ's kingdom, but we have brushed it off as unworthy of the Christian and, indeed, even evil.

It's amazing. We've come to the point in Christianity where we desire to avoid like the plague a career in lending, but we have embraced with little or no restraint the desire to be a borrower! The call is to lend so we can evangelize and disciple, but we look upon Christians in the banking business as ethically challenged.

The Biblical point is this: commerce, when undertaken by Christians, is sanctified and godly work. When a man uses God-given skills and knowledge to provide a service to others, the anticipation is that he will be rewarded financially. In fact, God holds that man accountable specifically in the area of profitability.

Profit: A Biblical Imperative

In Matthew 25:14-30 Jesus gives us this parable:

For [the kingdom of heaven is] as a man travelling into a far country, [who] called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several abilities; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made [them] other five talents. And likewise he that [had received] two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, [thou] good and

faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, [there] thou hast [that is] thine. His lord answered and said unto him, [Thou] wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and [then] at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give [it] unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The gifts and skills which we have been given by God must be developed and used with a view towards profitability, even if it's just at the minimum end of the scale of letting it draw interest. To not apply or to misapply the resources that we have been appointed stewards over is a grievous sin before God.

Business as Ministry

I'd like to examine several specific ways a vocation, when understood and undertaken as a calling, serves our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and, by God's grace and mercy, our culture, and society.

First and foremost, our calling provides for the needs of our families. The Bible tells us that if a man doesn't work, he doesn't eat. When we are successfully engaged in business as a calling, we are able to minister directly the required food and shelter to our family. Our family is our primary and most important ministry project. In fact, so important is it to minister to our family properly, that if we cannot do that, we cannot expect to minister anywhere else in the church. Properly providing and caring for my wife and my children through the money I earn in my business means that I am a successful minister in that I am responsibly fulfilling God's most fundamental call on my life.

Second, the Christian businessman provides a financial example to others that they too can provide for their own by utilizing their talents and skills in the marketplace. In other words, we provide the positive Biblical model for those whom the Apostle Paul commands not to steal. Do not steal. Do labor with your hands to provide for yourself

and then, because you will make a profit, give to those who are truly in need (*Eph. 4:28*).

This can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, I am modeling to my children this basic Biblical law. It is educational for them to see me working diligently at my calling. The promise is that God will bless and prosper the work of my hands and, by setting myself to the task God provides, there is no need for me to act in a lawless and criminal manner. Do not steal. Labor.

On the other hand, what I do should inspire other believers. Once again, the Apostle Paul encouraged people to be a follower of him as he followed Christ. We shouldn't dismiss the power of constructing godly role models, nor should we shrink from accepting, dare I say, the calling to live our life as a model for others to emulate. None of us is an island unto ourselves. We should always be looking for opportunities to provide edification and inspiration.

Think of who inspires you. It used to be that John D. Rockefeller was seen as someone to be admired because of his great character and Christian liberality. During his lifetime, Rockefeller gave away more money to Christian causes than anyone had ever even earned up to that time. While he was giving away multiple millions of dollars to Christian missions and building Christian churches and funding Christian schools, Rockefeller was simultaneously producing a higher quality oil, lowering the price around the world and employing tens of thousands in well-paying, satisfying, and life-enhancing jobs.

The John D. Rockefellers of the world challenge me to take what I do seriously and to do it to the very best of my ability—to use my business as a tool in the hands of God just as he did. May God even now raise up and effectually call men of like caliber to conquer their business frontiers for the glory of God and the service of all those they sell to!

An Antidote to Lawlessness

Third, businessmen are an antidote to lawlessness; they hold back anarchy and lessen social upheaval. The business community provides a moderating influence in any culture that is foundationally based on law.

Out of necessity business people create and uphold law in the midst of a collapsing culture. To be successful, a business must operate on God's principles; it must be honest, keep its covenants, not steal, not falsely, defame its competition, etc. If a business breaks God's laws it will collapse—sooner or later, it will fail.

No matter how lawless our political institutions become, no matter how antinomian our popular culture, businesses and businessmen serve as a stronghold against crime and abuse of power.

James Q. Wilson, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, states:

Violence in the Middle Ages appears to have been commonplace. The great historian of medieval society, Marc Bloch, concluded that murder and the

abuse of power were inevitable when trade was scarce and difficult. With little chance of enriching themselves through commerce, ambitious men turned instead to plunder or oppression.

... England, through widespread property ownership, entered more quickly and less violently into a commercial society. Individual property ownership meant that people could buy, sell, bequeath and inherit property. This ownership system permitted market economies as each owner sought to buy or sell land and to trade his goods with somebody else, thereby creating a system of mutual dependence. The courts became more important as they sought to manage this dependency and differences of opinion about transactions. And as the courts became more important, respect for the law grew.⁶

In order for business to flourish, there has to be law. Business activity requires mutual dependence and, as Wilson pointed out, there must be clear and enforceable codes of conduct and laws regarding transactions. If a seller doesn't know if he will get paid for his product, he will not part with it. If a buyer doesn't know for certain that if he pays for a product he'll get it, he won't participate in the exchange. Because private property owners and, more specifically, business people desire to maximize their resources, they will press for a righteous judicial system even if they themselves are not righteous.

Now, on top of this, there are laws that are not laws, yet they are just as binding and perhaps more effective. In other words, in the absence of law the businessman may operate on the basis of a handshake. There is a contract made, even if a court of law will not uphold it. In the absence of civil law, trust in personal honor becomes the only way to do business—in effect, the business community upholds a Biblical law-standard.

Any businessman who breaks his word under these conditions will never do business in his community again! A shady person may stay in business longer when the rule of law is upheld than when it is absent because someone will always take a chance that the threat or reality of a lawsuit will recover his investment. Absent a law-abiding court that can be appealed to, no one will take that chance on a man who breaks his word in lawless times. The dishonest and unethical person is effectively excommunicated and put out of business. When there is a breakdown in law, a man's honesty and integrity is his greatest capital and must be diligently guarded at all time.

At the same time, by placing a premium on law and order, the businessman has the opportunity to extend the kingdom of God through his ethical behavior and personal obedience to God's law. The law is beautiful for the converting of the soul and so it is in the business sphere as well. Thus, business law is one of God's schoolmasters in teaching us His laws in a very concrete and real way! The more people that there are in business, the more who get taught God's ethical laws. So even when the sphere of civil government and all its "entitled children" are

destroying and breaking down God's legal framework, the mature businessman continues to abide by Biblical standards because they work.

Just and honest weights and balances, a day's pay for a day's work, keeping your word even to your own hurt; all these things serve as light in the darkness and provide the Christian businessman an exalted platform to set forth God's laws as the standard for all areas of life, not just for regulating business.

The Blessing of Wealth

Fourth, businessmen create wealth, not only for themselves and their families, but for their community. Economic life by its nature creates community and is destructive of isolation. Business not only mandates cooperation, recruitment, common goals, team-work, and subordination to others' needs and wants—Wilson's phrase, "system of mutual dependence" once more comes to mind, as does the Biblical concept of servanthood—but the wealth that it creates is absolutely worthless outside of community.

What good is money, land, precious metals, or any form of wealth, if it can't be consumed or put to use? You can't eat Federal Reserve Notes; land not tilled and gardened doesn't produce crops, and so on. Wealth is only of consequence if it can be invested or spent. If it is spent to acquire other goods, it is passed on to others who thereby profit from the purchases and the cycle continues, with assets being put to use as productive capital which will benefit owners, workers, customers, vendors, and many others.

Productive capital investment creates even more wealth. This could be through increases in company stock prices and dividend payouts, such as happened with Coca-Cola during the late 80s and through the 90s, and with companies such as Microsoft today. It could also be through producing better products at lower prices—again, Microsoft comes to mind, as does MCI Long Distance. Companies such as Dell Computer have made many investors wealthy and, in the process of making lots of money themselves, they have saved hundreds of millions of people thousands of dollars each by drastically lowering the cost of computers. Even if you don't own a Dell you can thank them because they made IBM, Compaq, Apple, and everyone else lower their prices to compete.

Our company has grown from one plant to five and from one and a half million dollars a year in sales to an order of magnitude more. Along the way our products have continued to improve in quality and yet we have been able to lower our prices. Our company is more profitable today than 20 years ago, our customers have a better product and a lower price; hence they are better off than they were 20 years ago. We buy thousands of tons of newsprint from churches, schools, and community groups, along with commercial paper brokers; therefore, because our company continues to operate at a profit, stay in business, and expand, others profit as well. Wealth generation cannot be

limited to simply one level or one company or even one community. The Christian businessman is ministering financially to many people he will never meet.

This wealth creation is not widely understood. As Ronald H. Nash has observed, "[O]ne of the most serious errors to be found in much recent Christian writing about economics is the mistaken belief that economic exchange or trading creates no value. Many people believe that while an activity like building a house or painting a work of art creates value, the simple act of exchanging something does not."⁷ But every voluntary transaction in the marketplace proves that there is value added in the exchange; otherwise there would be no market to start with, for no one would ever desire a valueless product or service. Businessmen benefit their whole society by every profitable transaction. Were they to try not to, they would have to hoard their wealth—which the Bible explicitly says is ungodly and, therefore, if they go this route their wealth would be dissipated. Wealth can only be kept by being put to use. Wealth in use, of which each business transaction is a very "real symbol," provides economic benefits to many others.

Keeping Big Brother At Bay

Fifth, as more businesses are added (or existing ones expand) to a community, they enlarge the domain of property that is under their control; and this serves as a massive restraining wall against an aggressive and oppressive state. Microsoft is able to effectively thwart ungodly Justice Department meddling and attacks because they have earned enough profits through legitimate business practices to combat the unlimited resources of the Federal government. IBM withstood the government pressure 30 years ago because they too had the financial resources and property assets in place to counteract destructive interference.

The examples are countless: *Forbes* magazine consistently challenges the socialistic propaganda published and broadcast at taxpayer expense. General Motors, Ford, Mobil Oil, and other businesses have demonstrated success in opposing much of the renegade Environmental Protection Agency agenda along with other environmental wacko's and United Nations power plays. Western farmers and large land-owning ranchers are now mounting an increasingly effective and powerful counterattack on ungodly Federal and state land-confiscation and land use laws.

*As the preacher is called to oppose sin and tyranny from the pulpit and to make the case for righteousness, so too is the businessman called to oppose sin and tyranny and press for the righteous application of God's law in the realm of private property use, which is the fundamental basis for commerce, as James Q. Wilson so clearly documented in the *Wall Street Journal* article mentioned earlier.*

As we saw earlier, business is a superb vehicle for teaching God's standards for ethical behavior in quick, sharp ways that are hard to ignore! Consequently, the higher the percentage of businessmen in a culture, the

stronger the pressure to base civil law on Biblical standards and the weaker and more restrained the civil government will be.

The more people have property and, hence, business to steward, the more mature and skilled in practical wisdom they will become. This means it will be more difficult for the “unproductive elite” to stir up envy and promulgate statist policies for communal theft.

Let me give you one powerful example of this truth. Oprah Winfrey, not exactly your model of a Christian with a Biblical worldview, has been a successful businesswoman for many years now. With her wealth growing and her years advancing, she finds herself thinking more in terms of the future. In a July 28, 1999 statement in the *Wall Street Journal*, Oprah makes the case for God’s inheritance law to triumph over ungodly statist inheritance laws—and she probably doesn’t even know it! She states:

I think it’s irritating that once I die, 55% of my money goes to the United States government. You know why that’s irritating? Because you have already paid nearly 50% in taxes! When you leave a house or money to people, then they’re taxed at 55%, so you’ve got to leave them enough so that when the government takes another tax, they still have some money.⁸

Can you see why we need more businesspeople! Even successful non-Christians can see the justice and righteousness of God’s law.

Conclusion

Sixth, by creating a profitable company, many charitable enterprises, including the church, benefit. Christian schools are financed, mission work is underwritten, and other potential Christian businesses are capitalized! I don’t know if you’ve noticed lately, but contractors and building supply companies insist on being paid these days.

Our church plans to build a Christian school and the building alone will cost about a million and a half dollars. That means that the members of our church are going to have to generate over 15 million dollars in profits (the increase) for the tithe to cover it. Operating expenses for the first year will raise that figure another half-million. While all Christians are called to faithfully tithe and give, the Christian businessman, gifted as God has made him in financial matters, has additional responsibilities to be a blessing to those within his covenant community. To whom much is given, much is required. Of course, generous giving with the right motives brings additional blessings, so the fact remains that it is impossible to “out-give” God.

This does not mean that a businessman should give out of guilt or succumb to pressure, because that is not acting as a wise steward. We are to test all things and try all things. Does what we are being asked to underwrite stand in right relationship to God’s Word? Are the people in charge men of integrity and have they demonstrated

faithfulness to God’s Word in their lives? Yes, there are important qualifiers; nevertheless the Word of God stands: To whom much is given, much is required. God places wealth, sometimes great wealth, at our disposal to carry out His plans and agendas.

One successful businessman, Andrew Carnegie, built 1,946 libraries in small towns in the United States and 865 in other lands.⁹ He also poured millions upon millions into other charities around the world. That is not to say the man was a saint, nor was Rockefeller, whom I mentioned earlier. I’m not even sure if Carnegie claimed to be a Christian, although there is no doubt that Rockefeller was. They were men just like all men. They could rise to the greatest of heights or fall flat on their faces. But they knew their calling and they accepted the challenge and the responsibility. The interesting thing about Carnegie is that even after he “retired” and occupied himself with nothing other than giving away his wealth, his wealth continued to grow and it was only through a “final burst near the end, he at last succeeded” in doing it.¹⁰

So in conclusion (and I use that phrase much more seriously than my pastor!) Christian businessmen have incredible ministry opportunities before them specifically because they are called to this task, this mission field. To dismiss our vocation as a calling is to dismiss God’s sovereign rule over the major aspects of life. My hope and prayer is that God will raise up and our churches will support and pray for Christian business people who “know in whom they believe.”

May God richly bless you in every business activity you set your hand to. May you find success and great profit in the marketplace on two levels, the first being that you are meeting the legitimate needs and desires of your customers and the second being that God Himself is sending unearned and undeserved blessings which will overtake and overwhelm you as you are obedient to His covenant of life and redemption. Amen.

¹ R. J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 1019ff.

² Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were*.

³ Acts 11:9.

⁴ Ryken, *ibid*.

⁵ Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling*, 41.

⁶ James Q. Wilson, “Capitalism Cuts Crime,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 17, 1999.

⁷ Ronald H. Nash, *Poverty And Wealth*, 54.

⁸ Oprah Winfrey, *Wall St. Journal* editorial, July 28, 1999, as quoted in *Craig’s and Steve’s Very Own Financial Newsletter*, August 1999.

⁹ Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling*, 61.

¹⁰ *ibid*, 59.

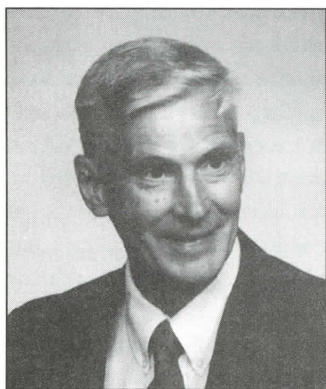
Terry Applegate is the Owner and C.E.O. of Applegate Insulation Manufacturing, Inc, with plants in 6 states serving U.S. and international customers. He lives in Haslett, Michigan, and serves as an elder at the Okemos Christian Center and interim elder at the Grand Ledge Christian Center.

The Economics of Civil Government

By Tom Rose

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

Psalm 2:2-3



As we begin our earthly journey into a new century, it is important to look over the last 100 years to see if we can learn anything about the social institution we call civil government.

James Jackson, in volume 7 of *History of the American Nation*, refers to an earlier age in which,

“An American may through a long life, never be reminded of the federal government, except when he votes at presidential and congressional elections.”¹

How things have changed! Today, Americans cannot escape the ever-present rules and regulations that emanate mainly from Washington, D.C., but also from our state capitols and local city halls. These political edicts besiege and attack us during every hour of every day, as well as in every nook and cranny of our personal and business lives: We cannot escape FDA-mandated “Truth in Labeling” requirements at the breakfast table, in the medicine cabinet, or at the supermarket.

Ninety percent of American school children are enrolled in tax-supported government schools where parents have no effective input about either policy or curriculum content. It is in these same tax-supported schools where millions of young children are regularly prescribed government-approved, mind-altering drugs which predispose young people to acts of violence. These violent acts, in turn, provide government leaders with fodder for removing people’s right to own and bear arms.

Employers are minutely regulated regarding whom to hire or fire. They also must provide working conditions, wages, and benefits established by government regulations. Finally, business firms are used by federal, state, and local civil governments as non-paid tax-collection agents through payroll deductions.

Then there are even federal regulations which regulate how much water we are allowed per flush in our toilets! So much for the concept of structured federalism designed by our founding fathers!

How Did We Get Where We Are?

How did we come to lose the system of widely dispersed and carefully limited political powers intentionally designed by our founding fathers only to end up in the year 2000 with citizens being suffocated by a centralized fascistic government which voraciously eats up the economic substance of the people? For, until the very early 1900s—in spite of Lincoln’s calculated destruction of the Constitution and the unconstitutional Reconstruction Acts after the war—the average American continued to enjoy a high degree of economic freedom. The strong arm of the federal government, as James Jackson indicated above, did not yet touch the ordinary citizen in his daily activities.

Fascistic regulation of business at the national level began with the Interstate Commerce Act in 1887, which established the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC). The ICC grew out of a U.S. Supreme Court decision—*Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroad Company v Illinois* (118 U.S. 557) 1886. This decision denied states the power of regulating interstate commerce and gave it to the federal government.

After 1900, bureaucratic intervention by the federal government into the lives of citizens gradually increased. Here is a selection of federal agencies with dates of establishment: Federal Drug Administration, which grew out of the Food and Drug Act (1906); the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which resulted from a presidential “executive order” (1908); The Federal Reserve Bank (1913); the Federal Trade Commission (1915); the Federal Power Commission (1920); the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (1933); the Federal Communications Commission (1934); and the Federal Housing Administration (1933). The intent of our founding fathers under the Articles of Confederation was that the power of the central government would *not* be able to touch citizens directly. The above listing shows how their intent was systematically undermined, thus culminating in the situation we have today.

How did we lose our original system of widely dispersed governmental powers and devolve into a centralized system of freedom-smothering fascism? The American people fell into the same trap that the Old Testament Israelites fell into when they asked for “a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). In short, they looked to the civil authority to provide what God said *He* would provide—their economic sustenance. What started out as a moderate level of government intervention in citizens’ business and personal lives in the early 1900s gradually accelerated into an ever-increasing army of

government bureaucrats who regulate and tax. Each succeeding generation of Americans has been conditioned to look more and more to the civil authority for economic sustenance. This occurred in spite of our Lord's clear instructions that we are to ask our Father in heaven, "Give us this day our daily bread" (*Mt. 6:11*). The sad result of our spiritual rebellion has been a steady increase in both governmental regulation and oppressive tax levels: In 1900 no American citizen was directly taxed by the federal government; and less than five percent of his income was taxed away by civil government at all levels—local, state, and national. Today the Congress has power to tax at any rate that is politically expedient.

Today, *all* citizens are unconstitutionally subject to the never-properly-ratified Sixteenth Amendment (the Personal Income Tax). But only a relatively few members of the political elite—and certain millions of low-income citizens, many living in subsidized housing and receiving various government subsidies—can effectively escape the major brunt of the personal income tax. And this low-income group is carefully maintained and crassly manipulated by political power brokers to guarantee that there will always be an ignorant, but self-interested, "cheering section" to avidly support the constant drive for increasing government expenditures. Thus, the effective control of wealth and income is insidiously transferred from private hands to a controlling fascistic elite.

Economic Analysis

Let's analyze the working of civil government in order to understand it, for what man does not understand he cannot control. Then we will make Biblical applications to provide a godly orientation to our understanding; for good theology leads to wholesome political rule which, in turn, produces a beneficial economic climate in which free-market exchange can take place for the benefit of everyone. Let us remember an old French proverb: "Civil government is a growling dog to be fed, not a cow to be milked!"

First, we must recognize that the institution of civil government is *coercive* by its very nature. Civil rulers act by *mandating*, and they *punish* those who refuse to acquiesce to their mandates. I have often advised students, "It is absolutely impossible for the civil authority to accomplish anything voluntarily. Its very God-given nature is to be forceful. 'Do this, or else!' is its threat." Sometimes a student would state, "But, sir, I pay my taxes voluntarily!" My reply was always, "But what would happen if you 'voluntarily' decided *not* to pay your taxes?"

Recognizing the inherently coercive nature of civil government leads us to these questions: Since civil government is, by its very nature, a *coercive* agency of society, is there any *limit* to the level of taxation that morally can be imposed on citizens? Also, are there any restrictions as to *what* tax monies should be used for?

From an economic viewpoint, we find that, when tax levels start exceeding 15 to 20 percent of income or on

the price of goods and services being exchanged, people start seeking ways to avoid paying taxes. Thus, black markets spontaneously appear. From a Biblical viewpoint, we see that God requires only a tithe (one tenth) of our incomes. When the civil authority starts mandating as much or *more* than ten percent of a person's income, does not the civil authority place itself equal to or higher than God? Only a "theologically challenged" citizenry (to coin a new "politically correct" term) would succumb to such tyranny instead of rising up in open rebellion!

In short, then, the answers to the above questions are:

1) Yes, there *is* a moral limit that a free and godly people should place on the taxing power of civil rulers. When the personal income tax was unconstitutionally placed on citizens in 1913, the vast majority of citizens were *exempt* from paying taxes, else they would never have permitted such a privacy-invading tax. The top tax rate was six-percent on income in excess of \$500,000, which would be equivalent to almost \$9 million today! The general populace would never have endured a personal income tax, except they were seduced by the illusion that the tax would always be paid by the privileged wealthy class!

2) And, yes, there are both *moral* and *constitutional* restrictions as to what tax monies should be used for. The Constitution of these United States of America limits the federal government to using tax monies only for "the common Defence and general Welfare . . ." But, during the 1930s administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the concept of "general welfare" was stretched unconstitutionally to finance a myriad of socialist schemes designed to redistribute the private wealth of citizens and to impose fascistic economic controls on business firms. Succeeding presidential administrations—Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," for instance—continued to fund and expand massive government-sponsored schemes of "legalized theft," which are euphemistically called "transfer payments." Since World War II, tax monies have been increasingly distributed, not only domestically, but also internationally to hundreds of nations in the form of "foreign aid." This serves as an unending cornucopia for special interest groups that are closely tied to domestic and foreign civil governments. It also serves to foster the spread of socialist/fascist regimes worldwide.

Our Sinful World

We live in a world peopled by billions of sinful people who are alienated from God. These people—that's you and I!—are always ready to capture the reins of governmental power with an eye to lining their own pockets at the expense of others. The result is always some form of government-sponsored monopoly or other form of favoritism, such as government licensing of professions and businesses. For an historical example, consider the English East India Company which was formed in 1599 and chartered by Queen Elizabeth in 1600. Its grant of monopoly power greatly enriched the privileged few. A

more modern instance can be seen in government licensing of certain professions (attorneys, medical doctors, dentists, various building trades, etc.). The goal is always tight control over the number of new entrants into a profession. The economic result is always fewer practitioners who thereby earn much higher incomes financed by lower income people. Government licensing is a superbly effective, but vicious, practice.

Our story of the symbiotic relation between the political sphere and the economic sphere, and of how political power is used to suppress voluntary free-market economic exchange, could go on and on. But readers would quickly become weary of reading such a sad tale.

Conclusion

Let us ask: Did God have an ideal model of economic exchange in mind when He created man, recognizing that God predestined man to live in a sinful world? I believe the answer to this question is a resounding YES! God instituted the social agency of civil government simply to maintain law and order so man could be free and self-responsible to his Creator (*Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 8:1; Dt. 17:14-20; Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Tim. 2:1-20*).

If the civil authority were strictly limited to the ideal of applying the *negative* force of punishing those who harm or plunder others, then a godly freedom and self-responsibility among mankind would be maximized. Such a policy would unerringly lead toward an unending spiral of economic progress, prosperity, and world peace. Let us pray for this kind of reformation in civil government, which can come about only through our own personal reformation to God's Word.

¹ Linda Bowles, "Government Has Mangled the Constitution," *Conservative Chronicle*, 24 November 1999, 19.

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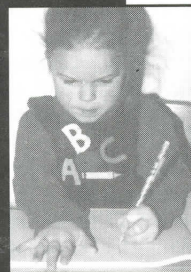
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