Elenctic Theology

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*Theology of Civil Government*

## Systematic Theology & civil Government: An Overview

### Introduction

#### **Questions for Christians Studying Civil Government**

##### Is there a knowable, transcendent Divine Law by which human laws must be judged?

##### Should the Christian employ Scripture as well as Natural Law in the formation of our temporal, positive law and public policy?

##### Should the Christian seek to make a Christian nation? A religiously pluralistic nation? A secular nation?

##### What are the proper definitions of the following concepts: Freedom, Rights, and Duty in the context of civil government?

##### Is there a different standard of freedom, duty, and rights for believers and unbelievers?

##### What is the Source of freedom and rights?

##### Should civil government have a role in protecting the Christian church and promoting true religion?

##### What is the proper relationship of the institutions of the Nuclear Family, the Church, and Civil Government?

#### **Selected Theological Stipulations for a Christian Study of Civil Government**

##### The Scriptures are inspired (verbal plenary), inerrant, reliable, and the final say on all they address (2 Tim. 3:16-17; *et al.)*

##### There is only one true and living God (Is. 43:10). This one true God is the Triune God of the Christian Scriptures.

##### God rejects all false religion. (Ex. 20:1-4; Deut. 18:9-13; Is. 47:8-15; Jer. 10:10-11; Rom. 1:18-25; I Cor. 8:4-6; II Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15; Gal. 1:6-9, 4:8; II Thess. 2:9-12; II Tim. 4:1-8)

##### Christianity is the one true religion by which fallen man can be saved. (John14:6; Acts 4:12)

##### Every human being is made in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26-27)

##### God has made Himself known to us apart from the Scriptures. (Rom. 1, 2)

##### Every human being is responsible to God for their conduct and belief, whether they are genuine Christians or not. Each person, believer and unbeliever, will be judged by God. (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev 20)

##### The entire human race is lost, in sin, and apart from salvation in Christ, will remain in this state forever in endless punishment. (Gen. 3; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 5:12-21; Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev.20:11-15)

##### God separated the human race into distinct nations due to the sinfulness of mankind. (Gen. 11) As such, man shall not attempt to create a one world government in a fallen world. Christ shall implement His universal Kingdom at His Second Advent.

##### God is the Ultimate Authority. All human authority is delegated authority from God. (Rom. 13:1)

#### **Christian General Responsibilities to Civil Government**

##### Christians have several responsibilities as citizens:

###### The Christian is to render appropriate service and obedience to the government (Matt. 22:21).

###### The Christian is to appropriately submit to civil authority (1 Pet. 2:13–17) as they would other institutions of God, such as family or the church.

The Christian should note that submission to government is not absolute

*See* Civil Disobedience, *infra*) for details.

##### A Christian’s ultimate allegiance is to God.

###### We are to obey civil authorities (Rom.13:5) in order to avoid anarchy and chaos.

###### However, there may be times when we may be permitted or compelled to disobey (*See*, e.g., Acts 5:29).

### The Purpose of Life & Models of Government

#### *The Trinity & the Image of God*

##### In order to understand how we are to live as bearers of the Divine Image, we need to consider the Source of the Image of God, the Trinity. (See Anthropology Syllabus: Image of God)

##### Humans are designed to live life mirroring the intra-Trinitarian love relationship.

##### Pre-Fall Eden and the future Kingdom of God are snapshots of the way humans are designed to live, that is, in perfect, loving community with God and with each other (See Gen 2, *et al*.)

##### Conclusion: All mankind should seek to live as man was designed to live in Eden and the future Kingdom of God, even though sin has created obstacles to God’s plan for human community and conduct.

#### *Sin Corrupts Human Nature & Behavior*

##### All humans are fallen (Rom. 5:12-21)

##### The heart of man is evil. (Jer. 17:9)

##### No one seeks after God apart from divine grace (John 6:65; Rom. 3:9-18)

##### Conclusion: Since all humans are fallen, power and authority should not be concentrated, but limited and checked. (See Gen. 11).

#### *God Punishes and Restrains Sin*

##### INTERNAL RESTRAINT: The ultimate way God restrains sin is by fixing human nature. God changes us so that we desire to do the good in the inner man (Matt. 15:15-20 cf. Ezek. 36:22-28; Titus 3:5)

##### EXTERNAL RESTRAINT: God has ordained institutions such as civil government to restrain evil with external coercion. (Rom. 13:1-7)

### Providence & Civil Government[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### *God Sovereignly Guides History to its Consummation in Christ’s Universal Lordship*

##### God rules all things.

###### Ps. 145:13

###### Pss. 47; 93; 95-99

##### God is the King of His creation forever.

###### Ex. 15:18

###### Ps. 146:10

##### God’s Kingship is manifested through His redemptive acts, continuing guidance, verdicts and judgments.

##### God’s Kingship extends to all creation.

###### Ps. 47:6 - His people

###### 103:19 – Universal Kingship

###### Ps. 95:3-5 – All Creation

###### Jer. 10:6-7 – The Nations

##### The Purpose of God’s Providence is to secure the coming Kingdom of Christ

###### Matt. 28:18

###### Rev. 22:6-21

###### I Tim. 6:15

##### Augustine – City of God (*De Civitate Dei*)

##### All Kings are subject to Yahweh

###### Dan. 5:23

#### God’s Governance Through Christ

##### All Power has been given to Christ (Matt. 28:18)

###### This does not mean divine omnipotence.

###### This is executive power as Messiah.

## Sphere Sovereignty & Divinely Ordained Human Institutions

### The Concept of Sphere Sovereignty

#### Sphere sovereignty is the theory that in God’s created order He designed each sphere or sector of life, such as the family, church, and civil government, to have its own distinct responsibilities and authority.

#### These distinct societal institutions or sovereign spheres of God’s created order exist and function under God’s supreme authority and governance, but each institution has its own distinct leadership and authority structure.

#### While each sphere is sovereign and has its own authority structure and function, intervention by another sphere is sometimes necessary when a particular sphere fails to fulfill its created function.

### Essential Divine Institutions

#### *The Family* (Eph. 5:22–32, 1 Pet. 3:1–7)

##### The family is an institution under God and His authority (Gen.1:26–28, 2:20–25).

##### When the family breaks down, the government often has to step in to protect the rights of the wife (in cases of wife abuse) or children (in cases of child abuse or adoption).

##### Example

#### *The Church* (Heb. 12:18–24; 1 Pet. 2:9–10).

##### The church is a sovereign institution under God and His authority.

##### The government should work in harmony with the church and should recognize its sovereignty in spiritual and moral matters (Matt. 22:21).

##### Example

#### *Civil Government* (Rom. 13:1-7)

##### Civil Government is also an institution under God and His authority.

##### Since civil government is necessary and divinely ordained by God (Rom. 13:1–7), it is ultimately under God’s control.

##### It has been given the “sword” to do justice and establish order—among other duties.

##### Example

#### Other Sovereign Spheres

## Rights

### Introduction

#### The NT word translated as “right,” “authority,” or “power” is the Greek word *exousia*.

##### All *authority* (*exousia*) comes from God (Romans 13:1).

##### He gave the *right* (*exousia*) to become children of God (John 1:12).

#### A useful, working understanding of a “right” in the biblical context is that a “right” is something a person is authorized to do without consequences, that is, one has the authority to act without consequence.

### Natural & Inalienable Rights

#### One of the most important of the categories of rights is often designated as “natural rights,” because they are grounded in human nature, given by and designed by God.

#### They are inalienable, that is, unable to be removed or transferred because they are given by God and are grounded in human nature.

#### One example of a natural right is the right as a human being, made in the image of God, to pursue knowledge of the true and living God who made us and to whom we will give an answer for our lives.

#### Rights, natural and otherwise, include and relate to the corresponding freedoms or liberties necessary to exercise those rights.

### The Distinction Between Positive and Negative Rights

#### *Positive Rights*

##### A positive right gives one the authority to make a demand on someone to do something for you or give you something.

##### Examples Contract Law

#### *Negative Rights*

##### Negative rights give one the authority to demand that someone not interfere with your rights, duties and freedoms.

##### Examples:

Criminal Law

#### *Analysis of Positive & Negative Rights*

##### A strong case can be made that positive rights flow from covenants in the Scriptures, one of which is the covenant of marriage.

##### Regarding rights, civil government was instituted by God to protect both negative and positive rights.

##### Punishing crime is an example of enforcing a negative right.

##### Enforcing the privileges of marriage and contracts are examples of the government enforcing positive rights.

### The Limits of Human Authority

#### All human authorities, whether they are parents, pastors, or presidents, are under the authority of God as the supreme Authority (Romans 13:1, *et al.)*

#### Since God is the supreme and final Authority in all matters, subordinate authorities cannot legitimately:

##### Command what God Forbids

##### Forbid what God Commands

##### Permit what God Forbids

##### Forbid what God Permits

#### Human rulers—parents, pastors, or presidents—acting outside the scope of their authority may be disregarded or ignored, but this most often creates conflict and hardship. Therefore, count the cost.

#### See the section below on Civil Disobedience

## Worldview Conflicts & Civil Government

### Worldviews, Law & Government

#### A worldview is “an overall perspective on life that sums up what we know about the world”[[2]](#footnote-2) Thus, simply speaking, a worldview is a set of beliefs about the most important issues of life.

#### The tacit implication is that the beliefs forming the worldview must logically cohere in some way to form a system or conceptual scheme. If this is accomplished, the worldview is a “conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and *by which we interpret and judge reality*.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

#### And although the answers differ in the diverse worldviews, the philosophical questions about ultimate reality are essentially the same, and include questions about what exists (metaphysics and ontology), how human being should live and treat others (ethics), and how human beings know things (epistemology and logic).[[4]](#footnote-4) The answers to these questions form the presuppositions from which one evaluates the world—and more specifically, the importance and nature of human persons.

### The Major Elements of a Worldview

#### **Introduction**

##### A minimally complete worldview should include beliefs in at least five major spheres of thought: God, ultimate reality, knowledge, morality, and humanness.[[5]](#footnote-5)

##### Moreover, there are important sub-issues that flow from the five essential elements. Issues such as the meaning of human history and what happens to a person at death contribute important factors to the discussion of the definition and value of personhood. In sum, a worldview is a set of presuppositions that one holds, consciously or unconsciously, concerning the essential composition of the world.

#### **The Elements of a Worldview**

##### **God in a Worldview**

###### The *Encyclopedia of Gods* lists over 2,500 names for the various gods worshipped by human beings.[[6]](#footnote-6) Nonetheless, these 2,500 appellations for deity represent a mere handful of substantive concepts about God—such as monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, panentheism, dualism, and atheism—with their respective subcategories.[[7]](#footnote-7)

###### The question of God is the most important in any worldview and the various worldview differ greatly on the issue. Here, the inquiry concerns such issues as whether God exists, the number of Gods, what are God’s characteristics or attributes, whether God is personal or impersonal, and whether God can know, love, forgive, or act in any sense in our realm of existence.[[8]](#footnote-8)

###### Classic atheism does not escape this worldview concern since the term “God” is employed to mean “one’s ultimate concern.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam are simultaneously different religions and different worldviews because of their divergent conceptions of deity. However, conservative Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—the classic western monotheistic religions—have much in common because of their similar ideas of God.[[10]](#footnote-10)

##### **Ultimate Reality in a Worldview**

###### When the issue of ultimate reality is raised, it is ultimately a discussion of metaphysics.[[11]](#footnote-11) Here, the most frequent question is whether there are only material entities (materialism), whether there are only immaterial mental entities (idealism), or whether both exist simultaneously (metaphysical dualism).[[12]](#footnote-12) Other issues raised here are: the nature and individuation of substances, space and time, and identity.[[13]](#footnote-13) Also, related to the previous category, the issues of the relationship of God to the universe, whether God created the universe and, as a result, our dependency on God, and such questions as the possibility of miracles.[[14]](#footnote-14)

###### This is significant for answering the anthropological question of the metaphysics of humanness. For example, if naturalism is the true view of the world, then there is no God and no such thing as an immaterial soul, in which personality is grounded, that survives the death of the body. But if theism is correct, with its corresponding view of substance dualism, then souls are possible. And should be given great weight in a discussion of what a complete person is.

##### **Knowledge in a Worldview**

###### The third main element of a worldview is one’s view of knowledge—or more specifically, the justification of knowledge. The questions are simple to pose, but the answers are lengthy and seemingly enigmatic in nature. Is knowledge about the world possible? If it is, how can we know it and to what degree of certainty?[[15]](#footnote-15) Here, the epistemological scope of responses range from the topics of axiomatic certainty[[16]](#footnote-16) and absolute skepticism[[17]](#footnote-17) to foundationalism,[[18]](#footnote-18) methodism and particularism.[[19]](#footnote-19)

###### These are certainly essential prerequisites for approaching the question of when and how we will know the nature of human persons in the context of a legal issue. For example, if skepticism is the true approach, then judges and legislators should suspend judgment on the issue because they cannot know the truth about it.[[20]](#footnote-20)

##### **Morality in a Worldview**

###### Here, in worldview analysis, the focus is not on casuistry,[[21]](#footnote-21) but on systemic concerns such as whether morality is action based or virtue based,[[22]](#footnote-22) deontological or[[23]](#footnote-23) teleological,[[24]](#footnote-24) or whether morality is absolute[[25]](#footnote-25) or relative.[[26]](#footnote-26) These ethical factors are necessary for answering a question such as whether it is ever morally right to kill a human person.

##### **Humanness in a Worldview**

###### Here lies the core of the essay. What are human beings and why are they important in the worldview? Are humans merely physical beings or, as previously stated, do we have an immaterial soul as well? Are human persons essentially sleeping gods—as in Idealism, persons in the image of God—as in Theism, merely physical machines or highly evolved apes—Naturalism? Are our wills free or determined? This would be essential to answer for the sake of moral culpability. What is the nature of human death? Do we survive death or is death all that there is? If we do survive death, is there reward and punishment based on what we do in this life? This would certainly be a determining factor regarding whether to “pull the plug” or wait as long as one can and hope for a miracle.

### Worldview Analysis & Civil Government

#### ***Pantheism***

##### All that exists is divine. There is only one substance that exists.

##### This leads to an ontological and axiological egalitarianism, that is, all things are of the same essence and are, thus, equally valuable.

##### In this view, humans and trees share the same essence.

##### What should civil government emphasize here?

#### ***Atheistic Physicalism (i.e., Atheistic Materialism or Atheistic Naturalism)***

##### All that exists is a-teleological matter-in-motion, that is, non-purposeful, non-designed, accidentally assembled physical particles.

##### There is no design or purpose inherent in any existing thing.

##### Arguably, the concept of a hierarchy of intrinsic value in this worldview is impossible.

##### In this view, humans and trees are different accidental arrangements of physical particles.

##### What should civil government emphasize here?

#### ***Monotheism***

##### God is an eternal, immutable perfect Being. And since He is the most valuable Being, He is the measure for all lesser beings and things.

##### God creates, out of nothing, a world distinct from Himself. In the created, contingent world there are persons and things that are similar God.

##### In theism, the things that are the most like God would be the most valuable. The things that are least like God are the least valuable. (cf. Matt. 10:31)

##### Thus, monotheism provides a clear basis for a hierarchy of the value of beings.

##### What should civil government emphasize here?

#### **Other Worldviews**

##### Polytheism

##### Dualism

##### What should civil government emphasize in these views?

### Tower of Babel Principle of Separation

### The Law Above the Law and Worldview

## The Agents who Administer the Uses of the Law& the gospel: Church & State[[27]](#footnote-27)

### Introduction

#### Students should review the Hamartiology Syllabus discussing Law, Justice & Gospel before continuing with this section.

#### The State or Civil Government, as an institution, is primarily concerned with temporal life as an end in itself.

#### The Church, as an institution, is primarily concerned with eternal life and the temporal issues that affect eternal life.

#### There is always a tension between these two institutions.

##### Augustine in his *City of God, City of Man*

### The Church

#### The Universal Church—is that body of all believers in all ages.

#### The Universal Church is distinguished in two forms—the church militant and the church triumphant.

##### The Church Militant is the earthly church presently engaged in the Christian warfare against sin, death, and the devil.

###### *The Militant Church Proper*—is the congregation of genuine believers.

###### *The Militant Church Improper*—is the admixture of believers and unbelievers in the same body.

##### *The Church Triumphant*—is the church of the Blessed Saints or the Church at rest.

#### The Marks of a True Church

##### True Preaching of the Word of God

##### True Administration of the True Sacraments or Ordinances

### The State or Magistrate

#### The magistrate is the authority ordained by God to administer the Civil Law (Rom 13:1-7).

#### The Magistrate is primarily concerned with the temporal, non-spiritual life of the individual.

##### See the section on Law and Justice in the ECD Hamartiology Syllabus

### The Principle of Separation: Kingdoms, Reigns, Spheres & Worlds

#### *Old Testament*: The King was separated from the Levites in the OT.

#### *New Testament*: Jesus said “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the Things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21)

##### Jesus formally distinguished the obligations owed to both institutions.

##### But Jesus did not declare with specificity the line of demarcation between them.

#### *Post-New Testament*: Since the fourth century, Christians debated concerning where they might fix the “wall of separation.”

### The Theological Development of the Church-State Doctrine

#### **Pre-Constantine Church-State Theology**

##### General Precepts of Pre-Constantinian Church & State Doctrine

###### Be subject to the governing authorities. (Rom. 13:1)

###### The Christian may refuse to be in subjection when the commands of the government conflicted with the clear commands of God (Acts 5:29).

###### The duty of obedience to civil rulers was always contingent on the condition that they were restraining evil and pursuing peace and safety (Rom. 13:1-7; Rev. 13).

##### Prior to Constantine, the church had no legal right to exist in the Roman Empire until the Edict of Milan (313 AD) recognized Christianity as an official religion.

##### By the end of the fourth century Christianity was recognized as the sole official religion.

#### **From Constantine through the Medieval Period**

##### *Constantine:* With Constantine, the church becomes an institution. However, Emperor Constantine not only considered himself the political head, he believed he was the religious head of the empire as well.

###### He took the title *Pontifex Maximus*.

###### He assumed the right to intervene in the affairs of the church.

###### Later Emperors did not take the title, but continued to intervene in the church.

##### *From Rome to Byzantium (330 AD*) Coinciding with the movement of the capitol of the empire, the Eastern Orthodox churches developed a theory and practice of Church-State relations which came to be known as “Caesaropapism.” Caesaropapism held:

###### The secular ruler, the emperor, had supreme authority over the church.

###### This included authority over doctrinal issues.

###### The western church retained, for a number of reasons, more freedom from direct control by the civil government.

##### *Pope Gelasius I (494 AD) & The Two Swords Theory*

###### Due to increasingly ineffective political leadership in the Western Empire coupled with the authority of the Roman Church, Roman bishops increasingly assumed responsibility for civil affairs such as the justice system and military defense.

###### *Two Swords Theory (494 AD):* “There are two powers by which this world is chiefly ruled; the sacred authority of the popes and the royal power. Of these the priestly power is much more important because it has to render an account for the kings of men themselves at the divine tribunal.” (Gelasius I)

##### *Development & Application of the Two Swords Through the Middle Ages (500-1500 AD)*

###### Early Middle Ages: The Church, generally, struggled to free itself from secular control. In the Sixth Century, once the Western church was somewhat free from Byzantine control, the power of the popes increased.

###### *800 AD: Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as emperor.*

Charlemagne attempted to resurrect the Roman Empire in the West.

He held views similar to caesaropapism.

Later popes used the precedent of Pope Leo III crowning Charlemagne to demonstrate that emperors received their power from the papacy.

Later emperors claimed the right to approve of those elected to the papacy.

Conflict was inevitable.

###### *1075 AD: Pope Gregory VII*

Gregory challenged the right of Emperor Henry IV to appoint the Archbishop of Milan.

After decades of conflict, an agreement on the issue was reached by the Concordat of Worms (1122 AD).

The trend of increased authority of the papacy continued to its zenith in the reign of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216 AD).

For a century after Innocent III, it was clear that the royal power was subordinate to the papacy.

###### *The Decline of Papal Power (1309-1517)*

The Babylonian Captivity of the Church (1309-1377)

The Great Papal Schism (1378-1417)

The Renaissance

All the aforementioned weakened the papacy and made way for the Reformation.

## Church & State During the Reformation

### Introduction

#### There are three major divisions of the Protestant Reformation: the Lutheran Reformation, the Reformed Churches, and the Anabaptists of the Radical Reformation. Additionally, the Baptists (General Baptists) of English descent emerged from the Church of England’s Puritan-Separatist movement.

#### Martin Luther, John Calvin, the Anabaptists, and the General Baptists each made important contributions to a theology of civil government.

### Martin Luther’s Two Kingdom Theory

#### **Overview**

##### In his theology of civil government, Martin Luther abolished the medieval distinction between the “temporal” and “spiritual estates,” developing his own theology of dual spheres of authority.

##### Luther’s “Two Kingdom” view is based on his understanding of the “Two Kingdoms” proffered in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) and in Romans 13:1-7.

##### Luther’s “Two Kingdom” theory affirms two distinct kingdoms: (1) the Kingdom of God governed by the Gospel, in which dwells believers, and (2) the Kingdom of the World governed by Law.

##### Luther held both Kingdoms were ordained by God, but that the Kingdom of the World (i.e., civil government) was strictly a *secular* sphere. It has no authority in matters of Gospel and Doctrine.

##### Luther’s Two Kingdom theory is consistent with his general approach to theology, dividing theological statements into statements of Law and Gospel.

##### God’s Kingdom is ruled through Believers in the Church and by the Gospel. The Kingdom of the World is ruled through secular, human authorities.

##### Luther did not insist on Christians for rulers in civil government. He held that God provide justice through Non-Christian leaders. Simultaneously, Luther insisted that civil leaders had no authority over the Christian’s conscience or the church’s doctrine.

#### **Critique of Luther’s Two Kingdom View**

##### Opinion of Luther’s “Two Kingdom” doctrine is varied.

##### Some see his separation of the spheres and the grounding in conscience as a foundation of freedom of religion.

##### In contrast, due to the secular-sacred distinction in the Two Kingdoms, some have argued that the Two Kingdom doctrine was the motivating force in the failure of German Lutherans to oppose Hitler. Thus, this doctrine encouraged Christians to be tolerant or to refrain from opposing injustice in society as it was not the Christian’s Sphere.

#### **Conclusion**

##### Positive Contributions: Luther attempted to separate the two spheres of authority which was conflated during the medieval period, during which the Roman Catholic Church claimed political authority. At that time secular rulers interfered in matters of faith and doctrine. Luther clarified the tasks of each sphere.

##### Negative Contributions: For some, Luther’s view seemed to argue that Christianity had no relevance in the public square and “secular” life. It was only relevant to the sphere of the church and private conscience.

### John Calvin & the Reformed Tradition

#### **Overview**

##### John Calvin explained the relationship between church and state with a “Two Kingdom” doctrine, but Calvin’s view was significantly different from Luther’s on a number of issues. Calvin wrote extensively on civil government, with some of his most detailed thoughts found in Book 4, Chapter 20 of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

##### Calvin’s work was a response to what he believed was the extremes of Anabaptist liberalism and Roman Catholic legalism. He rejected the doctrine promoted by some Anabaptists that asserted Christian’s were not subject to civil government. Calvin also rejected the doctrine taught by some Roman Catholics that Christians were only free when they submit to law and authority.

##### In Calvin’s view there are two governments. The first, the Spiritual Kingdom, rules over the inner man and concerns itself with eternal life, foreshadowing the perfect kingdom of Christ to come. The second kingdom, the Civil Kingdom, exists to establish civil justice in the creation.

##### Calvin taught that it was the duty of the State to:

###### Maintain Peace

###### Protect the Church

###### Follow Biblical Guidelines in Civil Affairs

##### Summary of Calvin’s Principles of Government from the *Institutes*

###### Depravity as a perennial human variable is considered in the formulation;

###### Accountability for leaders provided via a *collegium*;

###### Republicanism as the preferred form of government;

###### Constitutionalism needed to restrain both the rulers and the ruled; and

###### Limited government, beginning with the family, as foundational[[28]](#footnote-28)

###### Generally, the Reformed churches in Europe attempted to follow this model and avoid civil domination.

###### The Pilgrims & Puritans brought this model to America.

#### **Distinction Between Calvin & Luther**

##### Calvin argued that these two kingdoms complement each other. Luther would agree. However, Calvin asserted a greater role in religion for civil government.

##### In addition to its other tasks, the Civil Kingdom for Calvin must protect the outward worship of God, defend sound doctrine, and promote civic righteousness.

##### Magistrates were used to accomplish these ends through the promotion of “true religion.” Calvin assigned two roles to the magistrates: (1) the maintenance of political and ecclesiastical order and the provision of the teaching of sound doctrine.

##### For Calvin, both magistrates and ministers were charged with the same duties. Thus, both magistrates and ministers were agents and servants of the same God, dedicated to the same Christian gospel, distinguished only in their spheres and methodologies*.*

##### Calvin and his heirs also explicitly permitted rebellion against evil governments and tyrants.

#### **Critique of Calvin’s View**

##### Calvin’s theory of the Christian conscience provided the foundation for the constitutional protections of liberty of conscience and free exercise of religion advocated by later Protestants in France, Holland, England, Scotland and America.

##### Calvin’s doctrine of law and duty is credited as inspiring several subsequent natural law and natural rights theories directed among other things to the protection of religious liberty.

### The Church of England

#### The Church of England adopted an Erastian form of government.

##### The King is the head of the church.

##### King & parliament regulated ecclesiastical government, worship and church discipline.

### The Anabaptists

#### The Radical Reformation of the sixteenth century was a response to both the corruption in the Roman Catholic Church and the increasingly influential magisterial Reformation. The Anabaptist segment of the Radical Reformation sought the reestablishment of the principles and practices of primitive Christianity.

#### The Anabaptists advocated for the notion of a complete separation of church and state, asserting the doctrine of “Two Worlds.

#### This “Two Worlds” distinction essentially affirmed the distinction was the “Kingdom of God” and the “Kingdom of Satan” (civil government).

#### Due to the complete separation of the religious and political realms, Anabaptists believed that a Christian could not hold the office of the magistrate because the civil government had no right to direct or influence the church.”

#### Most Anabaptists argued that violence must be avoided and adopted a view of Pacifism, noting in Article VI of The *Schleitheim Confession*, the first known Anabaptist confession, that “the sword is an ordering of God outside the perfection of Christ.”

#### Anabaptists hold that civil government was created because of sin, make possible an orderly society among sinners.

#### In contrast, the Church was created for the believer, which led Anabaptists to advocate the withdrawal from political life.

#### **Conclusion:** The Anabaptists became the first advocates for the disestablishment of the church from the state, holding that every person had the right to religious liberty and that religious liberty was absolute.

### The Baptists

#### The Baptists emerged from the Puritan-Separatist movement in the Church of England in the Seventeenth Century.

#### They advocated against a union of church and state they experienced in the Church of England.

#### They affirmed that civil leaders should handle civil affairs only, leaving the Christian religion free, to every man in his own conscience.

#### Thomas Helwys’ *Mistery of Iniquity* (1612) is best known as the first treatise in England calling for complete religious liberty. He acknowledged the divine right of a civil government, but protested that the king is not God, and therefore has no power over the immortal souls of his subjects.

#### ***Summary of the Anabaptists & Baptists***

##### They insisted the correct biblical relationship between church and state is absolute separation of the two spheres.

##### They were accused of being anarchists and antinomians by the Roman Catholic Church and the other Protestant churches.

##### They argued the logical corollary to the doctrine of religious liberty and the priesthood of the believer was their view of absolute separation of church and state.

###### Matt. 22:21

###### Rom 13:1-7

###### James 4:12

##### They understood the relationship of church and state to mean:

###### that the state had no right to interfere with the religious beliefs and practices of individuals or congregations

###### that the church has no claim on the state for financial support, because to receive public money was invite government control and loss of religious identity

### The Post-Reformation & Modernism Periods

#### Natural Law and Natural Rights theorists popularized the view that civil government was rooted in social contract, not divine appointment.

#### With this notion, the church’s particular purpose was subordinated to the concept of the common good

## Views of Civil Disobedience[[29]](#footnote-29)

**“We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29)**

### Introduction

### Radical or Absolute Patriotism

#### Definition: One should never disobey the government.

#### God Ordained Government (Gen. 9:6; Rom. 13:1)

##### Yes, but how do evil governments fit this view? (Rom 13:4)

##### The Bible condemns evil governments (Obadiah, Jonah 1, Nahum 2)

##### God condemns unjust laws and oppressive decrees. (Is. 10:1)

##### In sum, God approves the institution of human government, but does not approve of the evil it does.

#### God generally expects obedience to government (1 Pet. 3:5-6; Titus 3:1)

##### However, Obedience to Government is a Qualified Obedience.

###### Acts 4:19

###### Rev. 13

###### Exodus 1

###### Dan 3

###### Dan 6

##### In each of the above referenced instances of Civil Disobedience, the message is that government should be obeyed as long as it is under the rule of God. When it ceases to be under the rule of God and a conflict arises, disobedience is either permitted or commanded.

#### Obedience is necessary even to evil governments (Rom. 13:1, 4; Dan 4:32)

##### See Previous Section for instances of civil disobedience.

##### Christians can obey a government that permits evil, but not one that commands them to do evil.

### Biblical Submissionism

#### Definition: There are occasions where Christians can or should disobey the government.

#### ***The Antipromulgation View***

##### This view says Christians have the right to disobey the government when it promulgates laws that are contrary to the Word of God.

###### Thomas Jefferson, a Unitarian, said one may disobey “when it contradicts the moral law or the individual’s conscience.”

##### The Christian version of this doctrine was promulgated by Samuel Rutherford in *Lex Rex* (1644). Francis Schaeffer adopted and taught this view in the *Christian Manifesto* (1980). Schaeffer explains:

###### The power of government is not absolute.

The King’s power is limited by the Word of God.

###### The Law is above the government.

The Law is king. And if the government disobeys the law, the government is to be disobeyed.

Here, the true and ultimate law is the Law of God, the Law Above All Human Law.

###### Governments that rule contrary to the law of God are tyrannical.

Tyranny is defined as ruling apart from the sanction of God.

Thus, when a government rules against the Word of God, it has ruled tyrannically.

###### Citizens should resist tyrannical governments.

Citizens have a moral obligation to resist unjust and tyrannical governments.

The reason for resistance is that since all authority comes from God (Rom. 13:1), those that command contrary to the Word of God abrogate their authority and are not to be obeyed.

###### The two forms of resistance to tyranny are protest and force.

In this view, Christians should protest before resorting to force.

*Protest* means one should express disagreement (remonstration) and try to change the laws that are contrary to the Word of God.

*Force* means compulsion or constraint exerted upon a person, persons, or an entity such as the state.

Force can be used by local governments against a greater government, or even by a church against the state.

When a government commits illegitimate acts against a person or body of persons, they may use protest or force *in self defense.*

###### Contemporary Examples of Tyranny

Prohibiting the teaching of the truth of Creationism or Intelligent Design in the Public Schools. (Arkansas 1982)

Prohibiting the display of the 10 Commandments in the Rotunda of the Alabama Supreme Court Building. (Alabama 2003)

#### ***The Anticompulsion View***

##### This view is in accord with the antipromulgation view in that it recognizes there are times where Christians should disobey the government. It differs from the antipromulgation view in that the government should be disobeyed only when it commands or compels evil, negates freedom, or is religiously oppressive.

##### *Biblical Foundation for Anticompulsionism*

###### There are three elements present in all divinely approved cases of civil disobedience: (1) A command contrary to the Word of God, (2) and act of disobedience, (3) explicit or implicit divine approval of the act.

###### Biblical Examples:

Refusing to Kill Innocent babies (Ex. 1:15-21)

Rejecting Pharaoh’s command not to worship Yahweh (Ex. 5:1 cf. Ex. 7-12)

Refusing to allow the Prophets to be killed by Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 18:4-15

Refusing to Worship an Idol (Daniel 3)

Refusing to pray to the King (Daniel 6)

Refusing to Stop Proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 4:19)

Refusing to worship the Antichrist (Rev. 13:14 cf. 12:11)

#### **Illustrating the Difference between the Views**

##### Forbidding the teaching of Creationism & Intelligent Design

###### *Antipromulgation:* A Christian citizen should disobey the government when it forbids teaching creationism in the public schools, because the pronouncement is contrary to the Word of God.

###### *Anticompulsion:* A Christian should obey the law and not teach creationism in the public schools because it does not compel the Christian to believe or teach that creationism is false, nor does it negate the Christian’s freedom to teach it in the local church and at home.

##### Permitting Abortion

###### Antipromulgation: There is a right to oppose abortion, because it is against the Word of God. The two camps in this view include the use of Violence v. Non-Violence for opposing abortion.

###### Anticompulsion: It is wrong to disobey the law because the law merely permits abortion, it does not compel abortion. Thus, one could protest the law, but not disobey the law.

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1. J. van Genderen, *Concise Reformed Dogmatics,* P & R (2008) 299-305. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *See* Rudolph A. Makkreel, “Wilhelm Dilthey,” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Second Edition, Robert Audi, General Editor, pp. 235-236 (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Note that Dilthey is credited with coining the term “worldview.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *See* Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict,* p. 16 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Id.* at 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *See* *generally* James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* pp. 21-119 (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1988). These ideas correspond respectively to the disciplines of theology, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and the various forms of anthropology—theological, biological, psychological, and others. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *See* Michael Jordan, *Encyclopedia of Gods*, New York: FOF, Inc., 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *See* *generally*, H.P. Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, New York: Herder & Herder, 1971. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *See* Nash, *supra*, at 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Id.* at 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *See* *generally*, Samuel Jackson, *The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), pp. 496-500; and *Eerdmans’ Handbook to the World Religions*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 110-113. Here, I am using the term “metaphysics” in its philosophical sense of the study of the nature, structure, and constitution of reality, not in its religious sense as it is used to designate groups such as Christian Science and other modern, Neo-Gnostic groups. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *See* Audi, *supra*, at pp. 563-566. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *See* *generally* D. W. Hamlyn, *Metaphysics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *See* Nash, *supra*, at 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *See generally*, Louis Pojam, *The Theory of Knowledge*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1993); and Robert Audi, *Belief, Justification, and Knowledge*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1988). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *See* Peter Angeles, *The Harper-Collins Dictionary of Philosophy*, (NY: Harper-Collins, 1992), pp. 307-308. This is also known as *tautological certainty*, meaning the proposition is true by definition. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *See Id*. at 280. Here, the skepticism of the Greek philosopher Sextus Empiricus, who maintained that we should be skeptical about the possibility of any kind of knowledge—that is, he knows we can know nothing. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *See* *generally* Pojman, *supra*, at 206-213. This is a type of epistemology that holds there are instances of knowledge that are non-inferential. The law of non-contradiction—A cannot be non-A at the same time and in the same sense—is an example of this kind of knowledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *See* Matthias Steup, “The Problem of the Criterion,” in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, *supra*, at p. 747. Particularism and Methodism are opposing camps in the epistemological debate regarding the need to formulate criteria for knowledge and determine the extent of it. David Hume was one of the most famous advocates of Methodism, which stated that one needs a criterion to recognize an instance of knowledge. His empirical criteria were what could be tested with the five senses. Particularists, on the other hand, argue that for one to know the criteria for knowledge, one must already be able to recognize instances of knowledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Here I am using the word “truth” in the sense of the Correspondence Theory of Truth, which holds that a proposition *p* is true if what it asserts actually corresponds to the real world. *See* Audi, *supra*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Here, I mean the application of moral principles to specific instances of conduct for the purpose of determining its rightness or wrongness, not the alternative denotative meaning of “sophistry.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *See* Angeles, *supra*, at pp. 69, 93. The terms “deontic” or “deontological” generally refers to concepts of necessity or duty. In ethics, it is the theory that the rightness or wrongness of a moral action is determined primarily by formal rules of conduct and that one is obliged to act in accordance with these rules. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *See Id.* at p. 96. This is the opposing theory to deontology, holding that the consequences or results of the moral act determine the act’s moral status. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *See* Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), Chs. 1-3.Often associated with deontological ethics—but not exclusively so—absolutism is usually manifests in one of three kinds of systems. Unqualified absolutism is the view that the moral absolute is always to be obeyed and there are not mitigating or balancing factors to consider. This view presumes there will never be a conflict of moral absolutes. Conflicting absolutism allows that there may a conflict between two opposing moral absolutes. Graded or hierarchical absolutism, as a system, holds that there are many moral absolutes, but the various mores are weighted to greater or lesser degree. Here, for example, one would be exempted from duty not to lie only to the degree necessary to obey a weightier matter of the law, such as protecting human life. These systems claim to present an objective approach to ethics. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *See* Walter Elwell, Ed., “Church and State” in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 233-238; *See Also*, John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Ch. 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. See David Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2009), 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *See* Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989) 239-255. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)