

## ET 2.1 – Introduction to Christian Ethics

### Governments – some things to consider

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## 1. The conceptual world

The use of the concept/word 'government' relates to mastery, dominion, power, rule, order, restraint, direction, sovereignty

## 2. Theocracy

How do we use the word?

In absolute terms these things (listed above) belong to God alone. The 'real world' is a theocracy. The foundation of all social order is God – not the state, the will of the majority, the King, the family, the church, economic activity or any other single human institution. Those who deny that God is the absolute sovereign are out of touch with reality – mad.

## 3. Christocracy

God has given all authority/rule/government to Jesus Christ. He is head of the church, rulers of the kings of the earth, head over all things, Lord of the living and the dead, King of kings and Lord of lords and takes precedence over and relativizes the claims of church, state and family.

## 4. Self-government

Image of God (natural, moral, relative).

Human governments begin with the self-government (self-control, restored dominion, control by the Spirit) of the individual human person renewed in union with Christ. Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2. This means that

- a) the classical claim, "he who has not learned to govern himself should not seek to govern others" has biblical warrant; (Do a word-study of 'self-control' in the pastoral epistles)
- b) many of the tasks of human governments will arise from the failure of (or the need to develop) self-government in those under their jurisdiction – punishing criminals, disciplining converts, nurturing children etc.

## 5. Institutional pluralism and ethical monism

The Bible describes a variety of governments, e.g., civil government, church government, family government. Each of these is subject to the rule of Christ, has a derived authority and is accountable to God. We have 'multiple hierarchies under the sovereignty of one God', 'many governments under the law of the one King of kings', 'institutional pluralism and ethical monism'.

"Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the Western legal tradition is the coexistence and competition within the same community of diverse jurisdictions and diverse legal systems. It is this plurality of jurisdictions and legal systems that makes the supremacy of law both necessary and possible. Legal pluralism originated in the differentiation of the ecclesiastical polity from secular politics. The church declared its freedom from secular control, its exclusive jurisdiction in some matters, and its concurrent jurisdiction in other matters." Harold J Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (1983, Pt II, p.10)

## 6. Subordination - a preliminary sketch

a) *The word – hypotasso* (see lexicon entries – Bauer/Gingrich; Kittel TDNT)

a) to subject, subordinate

b) to be subject, to subject oneself, to obey, to subordinate oneself, to submit.

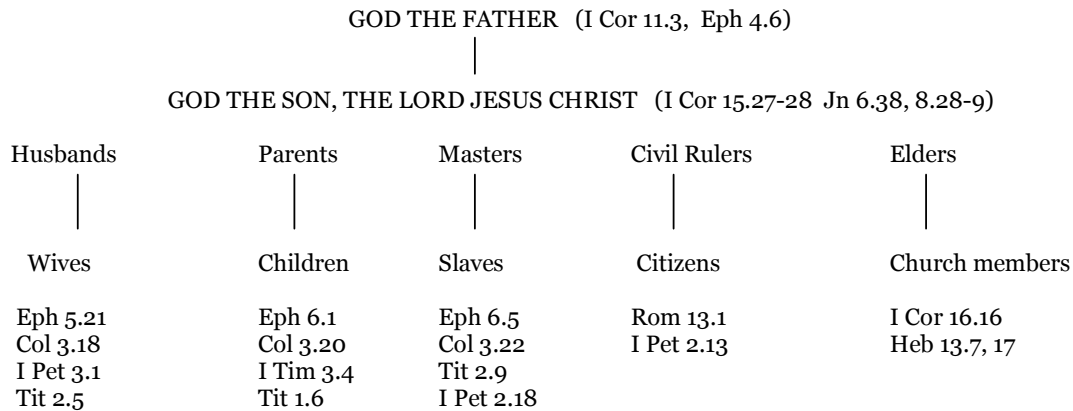
Luke 2.51 Rom 13.1, I Cor 15.27-8, 16.16 Eph 5.21, 22, 24, (note 1.21-23) Col 3.18  
I Tim 2.11, 3.4 Titus 2.5, 9, 3.1 Heb 12.9 James 4.7 I Peter 2.13, 18, 3.1, 5, 5.5

b) *The idea*

- associated ideas - rank, order, hierarchy, chain of command, authority structure, headship, primacy, recognition of that and response to it

- not-meaning - personal inferiority, difference of inherent worth, inequality before the law
- inevitability - Animal Farm, French Revolution, Russian Revolution, Democracy, Marriage, Church. The question is never, therefore whether there shall be rule, authority, order and hierarchy but who rules, takes authority and has higher rank, who does not, on what grounds, for what purposes, by what standards and why?

c) A representation of "Order"



d) Expanding on this ...

There are multiple authorities under God - not one simple chain of command. Civil rulers do not have authority over the church except as the church is composed of citizens - and in matters which bear upon citizenship. The state does not have authority over parents except as they are citizens - and matters which bear upon citizenship. Elders do not have authority over civil rulers except as they are church members - and in matters which bear upon church membership. Elders do not have authority over parents except as they are church members and in matters which bear upon church membership. ALL human authorities are under the authority of God in Christ, are accountable to him and are to exercise their derived authority in the matters and in the way that God lays down. There is no single person who is not under authority.

Recognition of God-given order and submission to those placed over you by God is the constant requirement of Scripture.

Both those who have AND those who are under authority have responsibilities.

- to refuse to obey those over us is **rebellion**
- to refuse to rule those over whom God has given us authority is **remissness**, abdication of responsibility.
- to claim or exercise authority in matters in which or over persons over whom God has not given us authority, is **tyranny**

e) Practice - I Peter 2.13 - for the Lord's sake; Ephesians 5-6 - in Christ

- (i) Our first and foremost subordination/submission is to God
  - the beginning of sin is insubordination against God and its essence is disobedience to his commands: Isaiah 14.12-15, Ezekiel 28.2, Obadiah 4, II Thess 2.4, Gen 3.5-6
  - the beginning of new life is recognition of the authority of God - with all that means for realizing that we are sinners and obeying his prime commands: 'repent and believe the gospel', 'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ', 'repent and be baptized'. James 4.7 'Jesus is Lord' Acts 2.32-36, Romans 10.9, I Cor 12.3, etc

(ii) We submit to God-given authorities because they are God-given Romans 13.1

(iii) In submitting to God-given authorities we ARE (and know ourselves to be) submitting to God - Eph 6.5-9 I Peter 2.13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20

We disobey when authorities command something which God has prohibited or prohibit something which God has commanded. But not if they command something which God has not commanded or prohibit something which God has not prohibited.

**7. The three main governments**

	<b>Civil Government</b>	<b>Household Government</b>	<b>Church Government</b>
Source of authority	God the Father through God the Son in God the Holy Spirit	God the Father through God the Son in God the Holy Spirit	God the Father through God the Son in God the Holy Spirit
Accountability	To Christ the King	To Christ the King	To Christ the King
Source of standards	Scripture	Scripture	Scripture
Responsibility	‘minister of vengeance’ – God’s agent for restraining and punishing evil-doers, ensuring strict equality before the law for all, and safeguarding the peace and quiet of those under its jurisdiction	God’s agent for nurture of the young, care of the poor and the initial unit for fulfilling the cultural mandate through ‘economic’ activity characterised by the division of labour	God’s agent for proclaiming the gospel to the world and discipling / shepherding the flock of God. Those appointed to church government will have first proved themselves in family government.
Sanction	Sword	Rod	Keys

Some notes on these three governments:

- a) The appropriateness of each government / the officers of each government acknowledging the supreme authority of Christ on appointment. What form would that take with each?
  - 1. coronation oaths / inauguration oath to uphold the constitution
  - 2. marriage covenant
  - 3. ordination vows / induction oaths
- b) The keys of the kingdom. The church’s peculiar sanction is the ‘keys’ of the kingdom, the power to pronounce that A or B is part of the household of God. This takes of the form either of the particularized Gospel announcement of blessing or curse, forgiveness or not, upon an individual according to that individual’s response to Christ (John 20) or, more narrowly, the power of excommunication (exclusion from the tree of life, the Lord’s Supper, and judicial transfer to Satan’s power – Matt 18, I Cor 5 etc).

*Narrowing our attention to civil governments we find:*

The political nature of the Gospel – it is about rule, about the Lordship of Jesus; Romans 5.1, Acts 17; Jn 18/19 etc

**8. The impossibility of neutrality**

“It is our duty, as far as lies in our power, immediately to organize human society and all its institutions and organs upon a distinctively Christian basis. Indifference or impartiality here between the law of the kingdom and the law of the world, or of its prince, the devil, is utter treason to the King of Righteousness. The Bible, the great statute-book of the kingdom, explicitly lays down principles which, when candidly applied, will regulate the action of every human being in all relations. There can be no compromise. The King said, with regard to all descriptions of moral agents in all spheres of activity, ‘He that is not with me is against me’.” A.A. Hodge (*Evangelical Theology*, p.283)

***The Christendom project / crown rights social order***

Muslims and Christendomites about the only people not playing the pluralist game. Christendom not an alternative answer to standard political questions but a a different way of setting the rules.

Of course we want a "Christian nation". We want a written constitution which starts, "In the name of the Father

and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. There is one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who is the maker, ruler, redeemer, and judge of the world. The Bible is his infallible and altogether authoritative Word. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is King of Kings and Lord of lords and has all authority in heaven and on earth."

This should be uncontroversial:

- Is Jesus Christ the ruler of the kings of the earth?
- Is it desirable that the kings of the earth should acknowledge this?
- Is it desirable that the kings of the earth *qua* kings should publicly confess this?

We want this not because we think it's the past but because we are confident it is the right of Jesus Christ and the clearly stated intention of his Father.

Thus the only place for "pluralism" (apart from institutional pluralism, of course - but that's a different use of the word) is as a short-term tactic. For the time being, given the mess that abandonment of the gospel has made of the country then, yes, let's be pragmatic, tactical, partial, short-term pluralists. But since political pluralism is actually polytheistic then the sooner it's eliminated by the (non-violent, multi-generational, servant-minded, prayerful and loving) advance of the gospel, the better. Unlikely to happen in the next 10 generations but that doesn't mean it's not the long-term goal. (I'm "unlikely," ha ha, to eradicate sin from my life before I see Jesus face to face but that doesn't stop it being a relevant goal.)

- R J Rushdoony: ***In any culture, the source of law is the god of that society ...*** There can be no tolerance in a law-system for another religion. Toleration is a device used to introduce a new law-system as a prelude to a new intolerance.
- Gary North: At best, ***pluralism is a political cease-fire until one side is ready to resume the fight to the death*** - which the Bible teaches is humanism's death.
- And - I can't locate the exact words at the moment although they ought to be rule number two of all political thinking (the first is "Jesus is Lord", of course) - ***all law is imposed morality.***

### ***Criticisms of the Christendomite project***

1. you can't proceed with this project until you're clear about Christian use of the OT
  - a) some things are clear – God-breathed, useful, points to Christ, equips for every good work; wise, just and beautiful laws which expressed God's characters for one particular social order ...
  - b) don't "get clear" and then proceed ... you get clear as you proceed
2. the Christendom project / crown rights social order fails fully to take into account our fallibility and ignorance – other voices must be heard
  - a) we know some things pretty clearly – the triune God is maker, ruler and judge of all things; Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth; the Bible is the infallible and sufficient word of God; civil government is God's servant, an avenger of his wrath on the evil-doer
  - b) were Adam and Eve (ignorant and fallible as they were) right to give the serpent a hearing?; did God not realize that his people were ignorant and fallible when he told them not to give a hearing to the idolater in Deut 13?
  - c) if there were never foreclosure / judgment / decision then there would be no laws or punishments at all; if there are laws or punishments at all then we have concluded that there are some things which our ignorance and fallibility does not prevent us acting on
3. the Christendom project / crown rights social order does not adhere to NT priorities / agenda
  - a) depends on what priority it is given – if a converted civil magistrate or parliament asks what would please the Lord then ... (O'D – Christendom as *response* to mission)
  - b) need to understand what time it is – Athens and Corinth in the 50s different from Scotland in the 1650s and then again from UK in 2005 and then again from US / Chile / Zambia 2005. SR addressing the powers may be more like an OT prophet's social context than a NT evangelist's
4. the Christendom project / crown rights social order does not adhere to NT methods for gospel growth / building the church / coming of the kingdom
  - a) but SR and like-minded assert the centrality of the church, the priority of the preaching of the Word by prayerful, suffering, servant-hearted, godly believers. When did they say either that reforming civil government was the salvation of the nation or that preaching of the gospel was not? Affirming the priority of gospel preaching and godly living does not require abandonment of concern that Christ be increasingly given first place in all things
5. the Christendom project / crown rights social order is triumphalist either in demeanour (arrogant) or in theology (over-realized eschatology)

- a) in demeanour – inexcusable and no doubt SR has been forgiven for any lapses
  - b) in theology – distinguish between what is desirable and what is possible and ask what you do with that in the case of the individual. Desirable is entire Christlikeness, possible is something short of that. The standard becomes the (within-history) unattainable but striven for goal and the measure of current faithfulness. Deut 4, Psalm 2, Isaiah 2, Matt 13, Matt 28, I Cor 15. What is possible is a moving target – same said about slavery, child labour, lower-class illiteracy etc.
6. the Christendom project / crown rights social order leads to theocracy / ecclesiocracy
    - a) theocracy – like the kingdom is already and not yet and altogether to be longed for
    - b) ecclesiocracy – not in SR – believed in plural institutions accountable to one Lord not that the church should rule the civil government
  7. establishment doesn't work
    - a) what does it mean? what is established - e.g. the four propositions of 2a) above or a particular denomination?
  8. the Christendom project / crown rights social order is unrealistic because it's too difficult or too late
    - a) too difficult? so is entire personal Christlikeness; but Christ is King and the Spirit omnipotent
    - b) too late? (post-Christendom, irrecoverable etc) do you know something about the date of Christ's return that I don't? global perspective ...

### ***The Christendom project / crown rights social order – going on the attack***

1. So many of the available models communicate acquiescence in the expansion of the state – it's not a different foundation which is the key problem to address but a different understanding of the role of the civil magistrate altogether and especially in relation to the gospel and to other institutions such as church and family
  2. The Christendom project / crown rights social order is the only proper foundation for human freedom and maturity.
    - a) Distinguish between the basis of civil order and the substance of it – between the constitution and the statute-book.
    - b) Neither pluralists nor Christendomites believe in an empty statute-book; neither pluralists nor Christendomites believe that the statute-book should cover every single human action
    - c) So both pluralists and Christendomites believe in the criminalization of some activities and in the toleration of some activities – and that many sins will be amongst the tolerated actions
    - d) What pluralists and Christendomites disagree about, then, is how to determine which activities should be criminal and which should be tolerated
    - e) And the criterion which they apply and the authority to which they appeal is, in effect, what they write in their constitution
    - f) The ultimate constitutional pluralist would write “everyone is right and no-one is right and none of us can ever know for sure” in his constitution. Obviously this would mean that the statute-book would be empty too.
    - g) The intermediate constitutional pluralist would write “we will not take a view upon whether Jesus is Lord and the Bible is sufficient, nor upon Allah and Muhammed, nor upon ... but we will proceed on the basis of ...” What? Either something is said to ground what is then written in the statute-book or the whole exercise is building castles in the air.
    - h) If something is said then the pluralist is not a constitutional pluralist any longer – he has declared some basis, some authority, some standard – pluralism is unstable at the constitutional level
    - i) Or if the pluralist decides to keep his constitution blank then he has no grounds upon which to write something in his statute-book – his criminalization of some activities and toleration of others is unstable
    - j) On the other hand, the Christendomite may declare in his constitution, “the Triune God is maker, ruler and judge of all things, the Bible is his infallible and sufficient Word, the Lord Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth and the civil government is God's servant, an avenger of his wrath on the evil-doer ..” and then proceed to say, “and look, the Bible tells us that murder should be criminalized and that pride, though sinful, should not ...”
    - k) Thus, constitutional pluralism is unstable and any statute-book pluralism founded upon it is arbitrary.
    - l) Whereas constitutional Christendom is stable and (ironically, in view of the hatred some have for it) provides a sure foundation for toleration
    - m) Which may leave you with 50,000 exegetical questions but at least you have a place to stand ...
- Imagine that the constitution sets out the principles by which a society determines what is to be tolerated and what to be criminalized, that is, what should be placed on the statute book. A full pluralist constitution will say

something like “everyone is right and no-one is right and none of us can ever know for sure.” This makes any toleration which is offered “out there” in the public square or on the statute-book either arbitrary or unfounded. In contrast – and somewhat ironically - a commitment at the level of the constitution to the recognition of the authority of Christ provides solid grounds for extending toleration exactly as far as he commands. The constitution will read, “Jesus Christ is Kings of Kings and we are to do what he says”. The statute-book can then say with a proper basis in the constitution, “The King says that behaviours X and Y are to be tolerated (with respect to sanctions from the magistrate) and that behaviours A and B are to be punished.” And, depending on answers to a multitude of exegetical questions, it is a distinct possibility that X and Y will include “belief in a false god”. Toleration has a foundation in a “Christendomite” constitution which it does not have in a pluralist constitution.

- If the “Christendom project” could be distilled, illustratively, to writing “Jesus Christ is ruler of the kings of the earth” as the first line of the constitution and over the doors of parliament then at what point in the argument do you depart from such a project? Is Jesus Christ the ruler of the kings of the earth? Is it desirable that the kings of the earth should acknowledge this? Is it desirable that the kings of the earth *qua* kings should publicly confess this? Since you wish for Christ to have first place in all things, why do you exclude national constitutions from these “all things”?
- Two sorts of “**principled pluralism**”:
  - 1) theologically grounded wide toleration
  - 2) polytheism
- Indicative and imperative: God rules the family, and the government of my family should reflect this fact. God also rules the church and the government of my church is supposed to reflect this fact. I know that God rules all civil governments too. So why should it be wrong for Christians to work hard to see to it that the civil government reflects this fact too?
- Universal lordship of Jesus; totality of great commandment; etc
- The Bible is authoritative on everything of which it speaks. And it speaks of everything. Van Til
- No ‘empty public square’. The question is not ‘shall we or shall we not have a religious view underpinning the philosophy and activity of the civil government?’ It is rather, ‘which religious view – atheistic, secular humanist, Buddhist, Islamic, Christian – will underpin the philosophy and activity of the civil government?’
- Not to recognise the sovereignty of Christ at the foundation of civil government is not to be neutral. It is to deny the legitimate claims of Christ and to put something else in their place – ‘the will of the majority’, ‘human reason’, ‘relativism’ etc.
- Historical questions around often cluster around consideration of the Constantinian and Cromwellian ‘establishments’, the relationship between religion and the state in the continental reformation, the Christian (or masonic or pluralist or deist?) foundation of the United States.
  - i. Is it possible to have a Christian nation?
  - ii. Is it possible to have a Christian family? What would that mean? A certain percentage of the family professing faith? A certain declared basis for family life?
  - iii. Is it possible to have an Islamic nation, atheist nation, secular nation? What would that mean for the constitution, for the source of law, for matters of citizenship?
  - iv. How does this relate to the relativizing power of the ‘international nation’ of the church?

#### **Matthew Henry on the Great Commission (extract):**

“*Secondly*, That salvation by Christ should be offered to all, and none excluded that did not by their unbelief and impenitence exclude themselves. The salvation they were to preach is a *common salvation*; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit of the *act of indemnity*; for there is no difference of Jew or Greek in Christ Jesus. *Thirdly*, That Christianity should be twisted in with national constitutions, that the kingdoms of the world should become Christ’s kingdoms, and their kings the church’s nursing-fathers.

[2.] What is the principal intention of this commission; to *disciple* all nations. *Matheteusate*--"Admit them *disciples*; do your utmost to make the nations Christian nations;" not, "Go to the nations, and denounce the judgments of God against them, as Jonah against Nineveh, and as the other Old-Testament prophets" (though they had reason enough to expect it for their wickedness), "but go, and *disciple them*." Christ the Mediator is setting up a kingdom in the world, bring the nations to be his subjects; setting up a school, bring the nations to be his scholars; raising an army for the carrying on of the war against the powers of darkness, enlist the nations

of the earth under his banner. The work which the apostles had to do, was, to set up the Christian religion in all places, and it was honourable work; the achievements of the mighty heroes of the world were nothing to it. They conquered the nations for themselves, and made them miserable; the apostles conquered them for Christ, and made them happy.”

## **9. Constitutions / constitutive statements ... two examples**

### **A. Words from the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II - Tuesday 2 June 1953**

The oath required of Queen Elizabeth II stated:

“Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law? Will you maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, as by law established in England? And will you preserve unto the Bishops, and Clergy of England, and to the Churches there committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges, as by law do and shall appertain to them or any of them?”

After this oath, the moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland brought to the queen the Bible, saying:

“Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God.”

After the anointing, which cited the anointing of Solomon, the Presentation of the Sword of State followed, with the archbishop of York, receiving it from the lord great chamberlain, presenting it to the queen with these words:

“Receive this kingly sword, brought from the Altar of God, and delivered to you by the hands of us the Bishops and servants of God, though unworthy. With this sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order: that doing these things you may be glorious in all virtue; and so faithfully serve our Lord Jesus Christ in this life, that you may reign for ever with him in the life which is to come.” R. “Amen”

When the Orb with the Cross was given to the queen, the archbishop declared:

“Receive this Orb set under the Cross, and remember that the whole world is subject to the Power and Empire of Christ our Redeemer.”

## **B. Charter of the United Nations**

### **Preamble**

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

- to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS

- to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and
- to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and
- to ensure by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and
- to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS

Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.

## **Chapter I - Purposes and Principles**

### **Article 1**

The **Purposes** of the United Nations are:

1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;
2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;
3. To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and
4. To be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

### **Article 2**

The Organization and its Members, in pursuit of the Purposes stated in Article 1, shall act in accordance with the following **Principles**.

1. The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.
2. All Members, in order to ensure to all of them the rights and benefits resulting from membership, shall fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the present Charter.
3. All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.
4. All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.
5. All Members shall give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes in accordance with the present Charter, and shall refrain from giving assistance to any state against which the United Nations is taking preventive or enforcement action.
6. The Organization shall ensure that states which are not Members of the United Nations act in accordance with these Principles so far as may be necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security.
7. Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.

## Chapter XV - The Secretariat

### **Article 100**

1. In the performance of their duties the Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the Organization. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organization.
2. Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities.

## Chapter XVI - Miscellaneous Provisions

### **Article 103**

In the event of a conflict between the obligations of the Members of the United Nations under the present Charter and their obligations under any other international agreement, their obligations under the present Charter shall prevail.

#### **Article 104**

The Organization shall enjoy in the territory of each of its Members such legal capacity as may be necessary for the exercise of its functions and the fulfillment of its purposes.

#### **Article 105**

1. The Organization shall enjoy in the territory of each of its Members such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the fulfillment of its purposes.
2. Representatives of the Members of the United Nations and officials of the Organization shall similarly enjoy such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the independent exercise of their functions in connection with the Organization.
3. The General Assembly may make recommendations with a view to determining the details of the application of paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article or may propose conventions to the Members of the United Nations for this purpose.

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/aunchart.htm>

20 March 2007

*Does God care about the constitutions and statute books of nation-states in the NT era? And if so ...*

#### **10. What can be learned from OT Israel?**

##### a. Separation of church and state in OT Israel?

Kings and priests separate

1. kings not allowed to be involved with cult – exceptions of David and Solomon; I Samuel 13.11-13; II Chron 19.5-11; II Chron 26.16-21
2. temple – palace; temple money; different officers, treasuries, regulations etc

Prophetic independence of the court

Moses – Aaron; Ezra – Nehemiah; Joshua – Zerubbabel

Church and state not co-terminous – sojourners, e.g. were under the same civil laws but were not permitted to take the passover unless they ‘religiously’ converted by circumcision (Leviticus 24.22, Lev 19.33-4, Ex 12.43, 45, 48)

Levites an interesting case. A priestly function and yet consulted in by magistrates in difficult cases of law - Dt 17.9, 12, 19.17, 21.5

This is *relative*. Of course, as a nation Israel was uniquely privileged and the organisation of her civil and religious life was to communicate important truths to the nations.

##### b. Were the pagan nations accountable to God in the OT era?

Nations which have not been selected by God for special care and which do not possess a special written transcript of God’s law are nevertheless accountable to God for obedience to his law.

Sodom; Nineveh; Canaanite nations ousted – Lev 18.24-27

Prophecies against the nations: Amos 1-2; Isaiah 10, 13-23 (e.g. 14.4-11), Jeremiah 25.12, 49-51, Ezekiel 25-29 (e.g. 28.1-10), Obadiah etc

Rulers of other nations were called upon to submit to the reign of Yahweh – Psalm 2, 119.46, Proverbs 16.12

Israel had international responsibility to promulgate, exemplify and implement the ethical norms specially revealed to her by God: Deuteronomy 4.5-8, 7.5-6, 16, 25, 8.9-20, 9.4-5, 12.1-4, 29-32 14.1-2, 18. 9, 12 20.18, 20.17-18

The nations were to recognise that the laws given to Israel were wise and good – Deut 4.5-8.

Ethical norms specially revealed to Israel were nonetheless moral standards for all the nations. Genesis 19.5-9, Deut 4.5-8, 12.29-31, Lev 18.24-27, Ezra 7.25-26, Psalm 2, Psalm 119.46, Isaiah 2, 24.5, 51.4, Amos 1-2, Nahum, 3.4, Hab 2.6, 18-19, Matthew 5.17-20, 15.3-5, 19.19, Mark 6.14-29, John 8.1-11, Acts

c. Are the standards and sanctions applied to pagan nations in the OT era now discontinued, or continued the same or higher or lower?

Is it possible to say that in the OT era God used to care about what the nations did and held them accountable for it but that in the NT era he no longer cares?

Does righteousness no longer 'exalt a nation'?

Would Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel have nothing to say to the nations now?

Does God no longer have dealings with 'nations' as such?

Were the 'civil' laws dependent upon a particular relationship between church and state? Is there, e.g., one set of laws regarding rape when the relationship between church and state is X and a different set laws re rape when rel bw church and state is Y? See below ...

In discussing the (directness of the) applicability of some law given to OT Israel it is right and proper to raise the question of 'Israel as a theocracy'. However, we need to be somewhat more precise.

Plenty of things were uniquely true of Israel but any claim of the in-applicability of OT law X on the basis of 'Israel as theocracy' needs go further. Bahnsen:

"Critics who aim to disprove the validity of some portion of the law by appealing to some special feature (F) about OT Israel must (1) define clearly what is meant by F, (2) delineate on principle the intended segment of the law, (3) show that F was actually and uniquely the case, and especially (4) demonstrate that the validity of this portion of the law rested solely on F." (Greg Bahnsen, *Theonomy and Christian Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. p.xxiii)

We can see that the following argument does not work:

1. God gave a law to Israel. 'you shall not murder'
2. Israel was a 'theocracy'
3. We are not in a 'theocracy' in the same way as Israel
4. So the law 'you shall not murder' does not apply to us

And yet this is the basic structure of the argument against the (relatively direct) applicability of many of OT laws.

Just because Israel had a unique status as a redemptive type and holy nation does not necessarily mean a discontinuity of ethical norms between her and other nations, past or present.

d. Bahnsen again – Biblical material on the 'civil magistrate':

Bahnsen suggests seven propositions which he claims can be biblically demonstrated as applying to the civil magistrate in a) OT Israel b) other nations in the OT era and c) rulers in the NT era. The argument is pursued on pp.317-433 of *Theonomy*)

- God sovereignly appoints and removes rulers
- Rulers, as God's appointees are not to be resisted
- Rulers bear religious titles
- Hence rulers are God's vicegerents, avengers of his wrath
- The magistrate must deter evil but honour the good
- The magistrate must rule according to God's law
- Therefore the magistrate is subject to criticism and judgment for lawlessness

## 11. The 'sovereign-saviour' state and the myth of political salvation

"The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth ... the manifestation of the Divine on earth ... the State is the march of God through the world". Hegel. (q.178 Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, Crossway, 1990 ed. See pp.177-231 – stunning stuff)

Tendency of the state to get above itself – (is this because humanism is about power (raw power/knowledge/magic)?) –

self-absolutization? All humans want “power” over others. The state has the legal monopoly of force and so the temptation for sinners will always be the “political means” – i.e. coercion – rather than voluntary means (persuasion, argument, trade, education). But force is subhuman. As Simone Weil says, it “turns a person into a thing – either corpse or slave.” It may sometimes be required, in a fallen world where people’s sins have already made them subhuman. It is not an evil in itself but a means of dealing with evil which, in the hands of sinners, has huge potential for being turned to more evil.

Mussolini’s motto: “tutto nello Stato, niente al fuori dello Stato, nulla contro lo Stato,” or, everything within the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State. And “The foundation of Fascism is the conception of the State, its character, its duty, and its aim. Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State. The conception of the Liberal State is not that of a directing force, guiding the play and development, both material and spiritual, of a collective body, but merely a force limited to the function of recording results: on the other hand, the Fascist State is itself conscious and has itself a will and a personality – thus it may be called the “ethic” State.”

‘Playing God’ = claims (implicit or explicit) to be

1. Saviour – rescuer, all-provider, source of joy
2. Lord – sovereign, source of law, above all other govts

Something of a history of this may be traceable from the Babel project, through the King of Babylon and the Prince of Tyre, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, Caesar (esp Nero?) etc to the sort of wording we saw in the UN Charter.

See e.g – Isaiah 14.4, 12-21, Ezekiel 28, Daniel 4, Matt 22.21, Acts 12.20-25, 2 Thess 2.3-4, Revelation 13

Varieties of totalitarianism:

1. by mode of operation – violence
2. by scope of claimed jurisdiction – all of life is our business and there must be rules for everything, permission for anything, officials for everything etc. That the state provides for children, educates, heals, feeds, houses. The state as father.

The myth of political salvation – that civil government can ‘solve the problems’ of a nation. State as idol. BUT

1. the real problems stem from the human guilt and corruption
2. civil government can neither atone for sin nor renew the human heart
3. the Lord whom we need must 1) rule with perfect righteousness and 2) rule with total control – only God can do this.

Political salvation says ‘Caesar is Lord’.

The Christian replies with political maxims flowing from the Lordship of Jesus

1. Caesar acts as Saviour or Caesar acts as servant.
2. Caesar recognizes Jesus as Lord or rivals Jesus as Lord.
3. If Caesar rivals the gospel then he is condemned; if he serves the gospel then his subordinate authority is secured, legitimated, clarified, dignified and empowered.
4. The option before Caesar is not “all or nothing”, “Lord or loser”. The option is “false all or true something”, “false claim to absolute authority or true claim to subordinate authority”.
5. The gospel is not rubbishing Caesar, it is relativizing him.
6. To say that Caesar is not the Saviour is not to say that Caesar is nothing, it is to say that Caesar is a servant.

In an over-politicized age such as ours (where 70% of headlines are about what civil government is doing and where it is assumed that if there is a problem it is ‘the government’s job’ to do something about it) the Christian voice in politics must AT LEAST say:

1. Politicians have got too big for their boots – they will all one day be on their knees in front of King Jesus and the sooner they recognise that the better and
2. Politics has got too big for its boots – in claiming both involvement and competence in far more than God has given it jurisdiction over.

There is a dangerous confusion of ‘state’ and ‘society’. ‘Society needs x’ is answered by ‘the state should provide it’.

NT Wright – KG as “doubly revolutionary” – are we doubly misunderstood – by pietists and by humanists?

## 12. Christian response to the threat of a 'sovereign-saviour state'

- a) emphasis on sinfulness of human beings. Nothing about being appointed to 'public' office suddenly bestows an integrity upon an individual which s/he did not previously possess. Rulers are sinners – they are lustful, power-hungry, selfish, greedy like the rest of us. (Caveat re motivations of government workers – as though salary by coercion. Hazlitt: "The 'private sector' of the economy is, in fact, the voluntary sector; and the 'public sector' is, in fact, the coercive sector.") To give too much power to any given individual or institution is to ask for trouble.
- b) Scriptural emphases would therefore include:
  - i. the importance of character in the selection of leaders  
Edmund Burke: "Men are qualified for freedom in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites. Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there is without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free."
  - ii. relativization of the nation state by the internationalism of the church – Matt 21, I Peter 2, 5
  - iii. recognition of institutional pluralism – see above – any given individual has multiple accountabilities; no one institution 'grants' power to others
  - iv. greatness is found in service. Kings, too, are to be humble.
  - v. warnings against centralisation – Deut 17.14-20, I Sam 8.10-22; decentralisation, checks and balances, democracy as the least bad system (but not the only Scriptural system? – monkeys running the zoo; tyranny of the majority; theft by majority vote; sovereignty of God, (and his law) not of the people), federalism etc
  - vi. endorsement of 'subsidiarity' / bottom-up government
  - vii. the equal ultimacy of the threeness and oneness of God implying a social theory in which neither individualism nor collectivism dominates. Personalism (implied localism?), relationism, equality before the law etc.

## 13. The Christian and the Civil Government / Church and State

- Neither the church rules the state nor the state rules the church. Christ rules, grants authority to, gives standards to, requires account from both.
- The church has a prophetic role to civil government – reminding, instructing, criticizing, exemplifying – OT prophets, Matt 14.1-2, Mk 6.18, Luke 13.32, John 18, 19
- Christians are to be involved in civil government – even in godless government – Joseph, Daniel. ('Active in government to limit and reform government')
- Christians are to honour and obey the civil government
- Christians are to disobey the civil government – Exodus 1, Josh 2, Dan 3, Acts 5.29
- The civil government is to recognise the authority of Christ
- The civil government is not to interfere in church government – employment law, church's physical property, church discipline for non-crimes etc

## **Appendix: Some of the more obvious Scriptures of particular relevance to consideration of civil government**

**Deut 4.5-8:** See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

**Psalms 2.7-12:** I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

**Ps 72.8-11:** He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. The desert tribes will bow before him and his enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts. All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him.

**Ps 119.46:** I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame,

**Daniel 4.24-27:** "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

**Matthew 22.21:** Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

**John 19.10-12:** "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

**Acts 12.19-24:** After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there a while. He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. Having secured the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply. On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God continued to increase and spread.

**Romans 13.1-8:** Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

**I Timothy 2.1-4:** I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

**I Peter 2.14-17:** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

**Revelation 1.5:** Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth

From pp.1-3 of *Bonds of Imperfection*

The essays collected here are explorations in 'the political' -in political agency, political action, political institutions, and political society - from a perspective formed by the Bible and the Latin theological tradition. All the essays engage at some level with contemporary understandings and issues, and all bring to bear in a critical and constructive manner the theological resources of the older tradition. There is, nevertheless, a shift of emphasis between Parts 1 and 2: from recovering significant theoretical moments and strands of the Christian political past to analyzing present thought and practice in their light. This collection forms an accompaniment to our compilation of texts, *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought* which intended to provide extensive access to the tradition with the aid of translations, introductions, and commentary. In that enterprise we were naturally constrained from undertaking more sustained analysis of individual thinkers and more developed arguments about specific issues. It is a selection of these that the following essays offer, with, we hope, a progressively unfolding coherence, even though their composition spanned more than a decade of our intellectual labor. It need hardly be said that the material in *From Irenaeus to Grotius* is capable of inspiring many other discussions than those we have taken up here.

The engagement with contemporary approaches, ideas, and institutions is pre-eminently but by no means exclusively critical, while that with the older tradition is largely constructive. If there is an imbalance here, it may be viewed as a corrective to a consensus within and without the church that regards the prevailing liberal-democratic institutions of the West as wholly normative for all times and occasions, even while it finds a continual source of vexation in their fallout. This consensus admits a variety of approaches to the older theo-political tradition, from the more flattering to the more dismissive, but hardly allows it to speak with its own voice. It is regarded complacently as the foundation, albeit inchoate, of future political progress, or disowned guiltily as the shadow cast by a theocratic civilization, and in either case it is denied its proper integrity and authority. Taking the tradition seriously implies a confrontational stance, not necessarily towards contemporary institutions but towards the commonplaces which are universally supposed to shore them up - the commonplaces of republican freedom and self-government, of popular sovereignty and the rights of individuals and communities.

The diversity of their subject matter should not obscure the ways in which these essays cohere, in respect both of the pre-modern and of the modern traditions. With respect to the former, they identify the political with the sphere of judgment, divine and human, that gives order to the human community in history. This judgment is demanded as a penultimate response to human waywardness, for the sake of preserving human society and creation against the ravages of sin, rather than to accomplish their redemption and restoration. At the same time, it is the sphere in which human rebellion against God achieves collective solidarity, definitively manifested in the crucifixion of Christ and the persecution of his witnesses. The political remains a morally ambiguous realm, an instrument of God's merciful dealings with humankind and an object of his wrath, subject to the risen Christ on both accounts. It is not insulated from the resurrection conquest of Christ and the signs of the coming kingdom, but it does not belong among them. The justice and peace achieved by earthly politics, while bound to God's law in nature and Scripture, is transient and tragically deficient. Only with the arrival of the heavenly kingdom can the political, purified of its earthly texture, be coterminous with redeemed society under the rule of Christ. Until then, it is not political action but the communion of the church that looks forward to the city of God.

The modern tradition, on the other hand, is portrayed as detaching the foundations of the political from the judgment of God, with one of two results: either the political is merely a *modus vivendi* among self-interested human beings, or, if human sinfulness is also suppressed, it is the powerhouse for collective self-perfection. In this last form it becomes the administrative agent of technological mastery and cultural expression. In either case the overriding political good is the enhancement of human freedom, individual and collective. But this is not the freedom which the older tradition knew as "evangelical freedom": it is no longer law-governed, obedient, and a fitting response to "what is" - to what the Father has made, the Son has redeemed and the Spirit is sanctifying. Projected as autonomous self-possession, freedom assaults the intrinsic forms of sharing and solidarity that comprise moral community: it assaults not only our communication in the created goods and structures by which we live well but also our solidarity as the object of God's condemnation, forgiveness, and renewal. These essays probe *sub specie libertatis* the intellectual and practical pitfalls of the modern political inheritance.

In their advocacy of the older theo-political tradition, the essays in this volume have not abandoned the constructive political task of the present. They do not recollect the tradition in an antiquarian mood of regret and nostalgia, but attempt to show its perennial relevance. And if this attempt is at all successful, it alters the horizons of present political understanding and opens up possibilities for action. All legitimate criticism illuminates the way forward. The most trenchant form of complacency is acquiescence in contemporary certainties as a *datum* of historical necessity. Only when criticism becomes totalized, as in postmodernist indifference, does it become a council of despair, self-defeating and without point.