REDEEMED BY JUSTICE

HOW TO *DEFY* STATISM AND *ESTABLISH* RIGHTEOUSNESS

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Foreword

As I write these words, Donald Trump is preparing to assume the office of U.S. President for a second time. A sense of relief and excitement is everywhere among conservatives. The victory of the MAGA ("Make America Great Again") movement has been decisive, and it promises to restore wealth, power, health, security, and, in a word, *greatness* to America. Yet a Christian must feel uneasy that MAGA proposes to accomplish all of this with very little, if any, concern for moral reformation.

Approximately 2,500 years ago the prophet Haggai spoke to people who had similar ideas. The people of God had returned from captivity in Babylon and were attempting the ambitious social project of restoring the nation of Israel and rebuilding the temple. Perhaps a marketing-minded Israelite even coined the phrase "Make Israel Great Again," although archeological evidence of this is scant. But when the political winds turned against

them, they abandoned the work on God's temple and became focused on their individual wealth and comfort. It was then that Haggai came to the people with this rebuke from God:

> "Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD." Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" (Hag. 1:2-4)

The people believed that they could have prosperity in their paneled houses while neglecting the work of God. Of course, they all agreed that the temple was important, but argued that it was not the right time to begin such a great work. God cursed them for their spiritual apathy. Haggai continued:

> "Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes." (Hag. 1:5-6)

By postponing their obedience to God in order to establish their own prosperity, they ended up being both *disobedient* and *impoverished*. Thus, promises of prosperity apart from repentance and obedience must end in failure. If we Christians sign on to such movements, we will only bring the curses of Haggai down on ourselves.

Instead, let's use our advantage. We already know that man-centered reforms will fail, and the people who are now devoted to them will soon be looking for something new. Let's build our own movement based on a radical commitment to God and His word.

What if we apply *Sola Scriptura* to civil government? What if we throw out all the man-made laws and use the civil code that God gave us in the Scriptures? While we are at it, why don't we throw out all the legislators too? They won't have anything left to do, and, let's be honest, nobody likes them anyway. The idea that government could consist of judges deciding matters from Scripture is terrifyingly simple. It probably sounds almost as crazy as Martin Luther suggesting that we don't need a Pope.

In *Redeemed by Justice*, Chris Hume and Luke Saint

present a vision for a new social movement. This movement makes obedience to God central instead of something that we postpone until a convenient time. The people of Haggai's day had it backwards. Obedience must come first. Individual and social prosperity come when we receive the blessing that God promises to those who repent and obey.

God used Haggai's words in a tremendous way: "And the LORD stirred up...the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God" (Hag. 1:14). If God stirs up the spirit of the people in our day, it will not look like MAGA. It will look like men and women transformed by the blood of Jesus Christ seeking to be radically obedient to Him in every area of life and society. Let's work for that!

Conrad S. Martin
November 2024
Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

Preface

In writing this book, our goal is to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ and love our neighbor as ourselves. Our hearts break because of the sin and injustice we see around us; our "eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep [God's] law" (Ps. 119:136). But we believe God "is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). And that includes establishing "justice in the earth" (Isa. 42:4).

We've titled this book *Redeemed by Justice* because of the following passage in the book of Isaiah:

> Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; *seek justice*, correct oppression; bring *justice* to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause…How the faithful city has become a whore, *she who was full of justice!* Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water. Your princes are rebels

> and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring *justice* to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them. Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: "Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes. I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. And I will restore your *judges as at the first*, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be *redeemed by justice*, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed. (Isaiah 1:16-17, 21-28)

While we affirm that sinners are "justified by [God's] grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24), the term "redeemed" can also be used to refer to a *societal redemption* that occurs when the principles of justice and righteousness are embraced. This too is a gift from God, through Jesus Christ – "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).

In his commentary on Isaiah 1, the Puritan

scholar Matthew Henry observed that Judah and Jerusalem had descended into a morass of injustice, with "the princes themselves [becoming] so cruel and oppressive that they had become no better than murderers." He lamented that whereas "justice was [once] duly administered upon the thrones of judgment," it had reached a point where "an innocent man might better guard himself against a troop of banditti or assassins than against a bench of such judges."

But God promises restoration: "And I will restore your *judges as at the first,* and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city" (Isa. 1:26). The promised restoration hearkens back to a time when the land had rest (Judg. 3:11, 30) and judges adjudicated according to God's Law – without a legislative branch or an overreaching government bureaucracy. Henry notes that God will bless the people with "good magistrates and good ministers of state" who will "put the laws in execution against evil-doers." The reformation of the people "will be the redemption of them and their converts, for sin is the worst captivity, the worst slavery."

We affirm that "sin is a reproach to *any* people"

(Prov. 14:34) and the need for justice is no less acute today than it was in Isaiah's time. We maintain that the path to societal redemption will only be achieved through the advance of the kingdom of Christ, yet we recognize that God employs various means to accomplish this, most significantly the proclamation of his Word. As Henry pointed out, God will restore justice among a people by "restoring judgment and righteousness among them (Isa. 1:27), by planting in men's minds principles of justice and governing their lives by those principles." This process will not be easy, as it will necessitate a laying aside of "every weight and sin which clings so closely" (Heb. 12:1) and a removal of "the evil of [our] deeds from before [God's] eyes" (Isa. 1:16). Nevertheless, by God's grace, this transformation will occur. And even if we are mere stepping-stones for future generations, may we remain faithful to Christ, pursuing justice according to his Law-Word.[1]

[1] William Bradford, commenting on the Pilgrims' purpose for coming to America, wrote: "[A] great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way hereunto, for the propagating and advancing the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work."

We have written this book primarily for our fellow Christians. Brethren, our Lord "loves justice" (Isa. 37:28). May we, and our children after us, love what he loves.

Chris Hume & Luke Saint

Pennsylvania, A.D. 2024

Introduction

"To scatter Roman darkness by this light,
The loss of land and life I'll reckon slight"

If you've ever read the Bible in English, you owe a debt of gratitude to William Tyndale.

Born in England at the close of the 15th century, Tyndale devoted his life to translating the Bible into the English language. He was a fugitive for over a decade because of that passion, ultimately losing his life as a martyr for the Christian faith, killed because he refused to submit to a man-made law forbidding him from translating the Bible without the approval of the authorities.

What was the cultural context in which Tyndale faced such opposition? It was a time when great "power" was vested in the Roman Catholic Church. The figurehead of that power was the pope in Rome, a position the Reformers (men like Tyndale, Martin

Luther, and John Knox) came to associate with the antichrist. From Rome extended an apparatus of man-made laws, punishments, and decrees about what constituted "righteousness" (or justice) in society. We refer to this apparatus, this *system*, as the papacy.[2]

Tyndale rejected this system and sent a clear message to not only his fellow Englishmen, but the entire world: The papacy needs to be rejected and defied. It is reported that on one occasion a supporter of the papacy told Tyndale: "We were better to be without God's laws than the pope's." John Foxe recounted Tyndale's response:

> Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied, "I defy the pope, and all his laws," and added, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy who drives a plough to know more of the Scriptures than you do."

For his defiance, Tyndale was hounded out of England, eventually captured while in Europe, held

[2] Noah Webster, in his 1828 dictionary, defined the word *papacy* as follows: "1. The office and dignity of the pope or bishop of Rome; popedom. 2. Papal authority."

in prison for over a year, and finally executed via strangulation. Though it might not have seemed like Tyndale was "winning" at the time, he played a vital role in undermining the unbiblical, unjust system of the papacy.

But Tyndale was not the first to defy the papacy. John Wycliffe, who lived over 100 years before Tyndale, was instrumental in laying the groundwork for men like Tyndale, Luther, and Calvin. Wycliffe taught that the "pope was the antichrist and his censures were not to be feared."[3] The English author John Milton believed that without the work of Wycliffe, the Protestant Reformation might not have happened. Milton wrote in his *Areopagitica* that had the prelates not suppressed and condemned Wycliffe "perhaps neither the Bohemian Huss and Jerome, no, nor the name of Luther or of Calvin, had ever been known." The papacy's treatment of Wycliffe backfired and led to more dissent. Yet even before Wycliffe there "was undoubtedly a good deal of secret dissent hidden below the surface."[4] However, we now turn our attention to the people

[3] W.H. Summers, *The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills: Glimpses of English Dissent in the Middle Ages* (Francis Griffiths, 1906), p. 54.
[4] Ibid., p. 39.

that arose after Wycliffe – the Lollards.

The Lollards were English Christians who rejected papal authority and believed that everyone should have access to the Bible in their own language. They were known for spreading their message of dissent throughout England:

> Clad in russet gowns, with bare feet, they travelled with staff in hand from town to town, preaching in the churches when allowed, or otherwise in the churchyard, street, or market-place, like Wesley's itinerants four centuries later.[5]

It was in reaction to Lollardy that the man-made law about Bible translations – the very law that led to Tyndale's death – was instituted in 1408. That man-made law forbade anyone from *translating* or *reading* the Bible in the language of the common people without the permission of the ecclesiastical authorities.[6] (This reminds us of many laws today: You cannot do *this*, unless you get our *permission*. But

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[5] Ibid, p. 52.

[6] One part of the law stated, "We therefore decree and ordain, that no man hereafter, by his own authority translate any text of Scripture into English or any other tongue…No man can read any such book…in part or in whole" (cited in Brian Moynahan, *God's Bestseller*, St. Martin's, 2002, p. 1).

more on that later.)

The response of the papacy against the Lollards – a response that included executions[7] for teaching children the Bible in English – reveals the threat these defiers posed. The Lollards undermined the people's trust in the man-made, papal system. Their words and actions encouraged people to defy the papacy and all its man-made laws and look to a higher standard – namely, Christ revealed in the Bible. When papal lackeys executed Lollards for reciting the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed in English, it wasn't so much because the content of their recitations were a threat to the papacy, but rather because they represented a fundamental *rejection* of the authority of the *system itself*. Nothing threatened the papacy more than the people coming to realize the system did not warrant their submission.

Anglican Archbishop Richard Chenevix Trench (b. 1807) wrote in his *Lectures on Medieval Church History* that the Lollards did not transform England at once but won "one convert after another." Following periods of marked persecution, the

[7] In 1519, seven Lollards were executed for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer in English.

Lollards continued to spread their message, albeit with slightly different tactics:

> Large and open gatherings for preaching of the Word were not indeed any more attempted. The itinerant preacher had given place to the itinerant reader, who was never more active than at the close of fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century. There were little assemblies or conventicles everywhere; and it might put to a wholesome shame our careless, unthankful use of Holy Scripture, to read how precious the Word in those days was; how men came together by night, at peril of their lives, in lonely houses, in barns, in stables, to hear some tract which should expound the Word…And so the Lollards lived on; and when the Reformation came at last, these humble men did much, as we may believe, to contribute to it that element of sincerity, truth, and uprightness, without which it never could have succeeded.[8]

We agree with Trench's assessment. The Lollards' faithfulness to Christ, and their rejection of man-made laws, undermined papal authority and drastically altered the world. We stand here today

[8] Richard Chenevix Trench, *Lectures on Medieval Church History*, cited in *The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills* (p. 83-84).

amidst *their* achievement, not the achievement of the papists.

We contend, however, that there is a *new* "papacy" that needs to be undermined. It is not coming from Rome. The Roman Catholic Church, severely crippled by the Reformation, hobbles along, offering little opposition to the righteous, but instead seducing those still willing to fill her ranks. The greater threat to the kingdom of Christ is a *new* "papacy" – the modern state.

As was the case with the old papacy, an ancient foe lies behind the new papacy, seeking to work woe against God's people. All our striving would be losing against this foe were it not for the fact that the right Man is on our side. In the words of Martin Luther:

> *Dost ask who that may be?*
> *Christ Jesus, it is He;*
> *Lord Sabaoth His Name,*
> *From age to age the same,*
> *And He must win the battle.*

Jesus Christ, the redeemer, will win the battle. He redeems his people with his "precious blood" (1 Pet. 1:19). And then, through his people, he redeems the

world. Jesus is making "all things new" (Rev. 21:5). All authority in heaven *and* on earth resides with Christ, and he is currently putting all his enemies under his feet via his people's fulfillment of the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:18; 1 Cor 15:25).

Part of that mission includes establishing justice: "He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has *established justice in the earth*; and the coastlands wait for his law" (Isa. 42:4). The prophet Isaiah, after remarking that Zion had fallen into injustice and tyranny (Isa. 1:10-17), declared that she shall be "redeemed by justice" (Isa. 1:27). As the glorious kingdom of Christ expands, "nations shall come to [his] light, and kings to the brightness of [his] rising" (Isa. 60:3). In a societal sense, this world will be redeemed – but it will not happen via the injustice promoted by statist systems and man-made law.

We pray this book encourages you to take part in the advance of Christ's kingdom on earth. This world needs new Lollards, committed to the headship of Christ and the supremacy of God's Law-Word. Then, with enough time, dissent, and faithful plodding, our grandchildren after us might see the scattering of the statist darkness by the light of Christ.

Here's our plan for this book. In Chapter 1, we will discuss man's purpose – the necessary starting point in any discussion about justice. We argue that man's purpose – namely, to take *dominion* – has been restored by the gospel and revitalized in the Great Commission. Understanding our purpose on earth will allow us to recognize the great danger in man-made systems of "justice" – systems which ultimately fail to account for our purpose on earth and thus stymie the progress of the gospel and Christ's kingdom.

In Chapter 2 we introduce what we call *non-legislative theonomy* (or *Lancastrian theonomy*). That is just a fancy term for how the Bible tells us to do justice. *Theonomy* simply means God's Law – and God's Law is the standard for justice. *Non-legislative* refers to the fact that the Bible does not grant man the authority to create new laws.[9] We will show that

[9] We refer the reader to our longer works for a more thorough defense of non-legislative theonomy. Luke Saint's *The Sound Doctrine of Theocracy* and Chris Hume's *Seven Statist Sins* provide applications of the theonomic position to a variety of topics, including immigration, drugs, education, taxation, prisons, police, roads, regulations, and more. We also refer the reader to our podcasts: *Think & Reform* and *The Lancaster Patriot Podcast*. We sometimes prefer the phrase *Lancastrian theonomy* because the "non-legislative" prefix might give the impression that we do not believe in law – in fact, we believe God's law is sufficient.

the American acceptance of man-made law is at odds with biblical revelation and the mission of Christ to establish "justice in the earth" (Isa. 42:4).

In Chapter 3, we demonstrate that statism is the new papacy. Just as the old papacy had extended its reach to nearly every area of life during the Reformation era, hindering the progress of the gospel and binding man's conscience to man-made law, so too is modern statism suffocating the righteous and proving itself to be an enemy of all righteousness.

Finally, in Chapter 4 we focus on practical steps to defy the new papacy (statism) and establish justice in our communities. Having laid the biblical and philosophical foundation for understanding the problem with the new papacy, we provide practical ways you and your community can begin to defy injustice and lay the groundwork for a new reformation.

1

Man's Purpose

"Let them have dominion."
Genesis 1:26

Imagine yourself as a child, in the schoolyard or at a local park. A friend walks up to you and says, "Let's play a game." You respond, "Okay." He then lists several rules, "No running. No jumping. No shouting," and then declares: "Begin!"

Would you be able to play this game? Could you win? You know the rules of the game, but you don't know the goal of the game. You don't know the game's *purpose*.

Now imagine you are hired for a brand-new position with a prestigious company. On your first day on the job, your manager tells you all the things you *shouldn't* do, and then instructs you: "Get to

work." Could you possibly be successful without knowing *why* you are there? Could you work effectively without knowing your *purpose?* Furthermore, imagine your consternation when your manager constantly changes the rules and then issues penalties whenever you violate them!

Our world is filled with humanistic[10] civil governments instituting rules, regulations, laws, codes, acts, ordinances, fines, penalties, and punishments to populations of people who are constantly relearning the rules of the game without ever understanding its *purpose*. From democracies to autocracies to republics, all humanistic governments fail to account for the *purpose* of man here on earth.

All law and justice must be consistent with God's design for man. Without understanding our God-given purpose, we cannot establish a justice system that promotes righteousness. Any civil society that rejects God's purpose for man will inevitably produce an endless litany of confusing,

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[10] *Humanism* is a system of thought that attaches prime importance to the human will, rather than the will of God revealed in the Christian Scriptures. "Humanism substitutes man's law for God's law because its god is man. Humanism vilifies those who adhere to God's law because it is a threat to man's claims to sovereignty" (Rousas John Rushdoony, chalcedon.edu/resources/articles/dominion-3).

contradictory, and burdensome man-made rules. We must first learn man's *purpose*, then we can learn the proper rules of the game.

Our Task While He Tarries

God created mankind to take "dominion" (cf. Gen. 1:26). We are to take ownership of the earth as God's vice-regents. The name of the game is to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). Man does not exist for the earth, but rather the earth exists for man to subdue, conquer, and cultivate, for the good of his fellow image bearers.[11]

Without understanding our purpose, the rules of the game do not serve us. Oblivious to *why* we exist, the rules simply become a series of hoops we mindlessly jump through (or try to avoid) as we seek as much pleasure as possible on our way to a meaningless termination of our existence. The Christian message, however, provides redemption

[11] The Bible often uses the term "neighbor" to refer to our fellow image bearers, men and women created in the image of God. For example, the second greatest commandment is "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39). This book will often use the term "neighbor" to refer to other people in general (but beginning with those in closest proximity to us).

from this narcissistic vacuity.

Jesus Christ, by his atoning death on the cross, restores man to his original purpose. All those who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus are forgiven and welcomed into God's family. One day, at the end of this age, they will enter eternal glory – a new heavens and a new earth where the dominion mandate will continue without sin and death. This is a glorious truth and worthy of bold proclamation. The Christian knows that this current life is fleeting – our lives are mere vapors (James 4:14) – and our promised resurrection with Jesus should provide us with immeasurable comfort, hope, and joy as we live in a still imperfect world.[12]

However, despite the reality of the glorious eschaton that awaits believers, there is still work to do now. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ not only secured the eternal salvation of his people, but it also restored them to their *purpose* here on earth. Jesus once told a parable about the

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[12] "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

importance of being productive *while we wait* for the full manifestation of the kingdom of God:

> As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'" (Luke 19:11-14)

In the parable, the nobleman commends the servants who faithfully engaged in work while he was away (Luke 19:15-19). But the servant who sat on his hands, idly waiting for the nobleman's return, was chastised (Luke 19:20-26). Moreover, the citizens who did not want to take dominion as vice-regents to the nobleman received this message: "But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me" (Luke 19:27).

The unbelieving world rejects the "nobleman"

(i.e., Jesus Christ). They do not submit to him. They refuse to embrace the restored call to take dominion while we await the return of Jesus. Not only do they fail to advance the cause of righteousness, but they also hinder others from doing the same.[13] They not only prevent others from implementing justice, but they themselves institute injustice.

Our purpose here on earth is to fulfill the dominion mandate – namely, to bring God's kingdom to our world. Jesus taught us to pray like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, *on earth as it is in heaven*" (Matt. 6:9-10). Since Jesus taught us to *pray* for this, we can therefore be confident he expects us to *labor* (with God's grace) for it.

The Dominion Mandate of the New Testament

The dominion mandate was not abrogated with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was turbocharged. Following his victory over death, Jesus issued what

[13] Jesus' rebuke aimed at the Pharisees applies equally to those today – especially those in position of civil "power" – who reject man's purpose on earth and enact a thousand rules besides: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in" (Matt. 23:13).

we now call the Great Commission:

> All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:18-20)

Discipling the nations in the name of the risen Christ provides the dominion mandate with greater clarity and direction. The Great Commission also affirms the standard by which all dominion-taking is to operate – namely, according to "all that I have commanded you." Here we have both man's *purpose* (i.e., dominion) and the *rules* he is to follow in the pursuit thereof (i.e., Christ's commands).[14]

No law of God is at odds with Christ's command to love God, love neighbor, and disciple the nations (i.e., take dominion). However, every law that is created by man outside of God's Law-Word is an attack (intentional or not) on the dominion mandate/Great Commission. Every law that is not

[14] Christ's commands are not at odds with biblical law (cf. Matt. 15:4; Luke 4:4).

from God is an attack on our ability to be fruitful, take dominion, and preach the gospel throughout the world.

As we seek to fulfill the dominion mandate as followers of Jesus, we ought to desire to lead "tranquil and quiet" lives in "all godliness and dignity" (1 Tim. 2:2, NASB). Christians fill various stations in this world – some are parents, some are children; some are husbands, some are wives; some are employers, some are employees; some are pastors, some are parishioners – but we all work for the same *primary* goal. We all seek to advance God's kingdom and play a part in discipling "all nations" (cf. Matt. 28:19).

This dominion mandate encompasses more (but not less) than sharing the gospel.[15] It encompasses anything and everything necessary to serve neighbor and glorify God. The dominion mandate includes the following (and a million more things besides): marriage; childrearing; travel; work; art; recreation; health; construction; music; literature; cleaning; cooking; building; preaching; buying; selling. Man's

[15] When the righteous are free to take dominion, the proclamation of the gospel is empowered and enabled to a far greater degree than when the wicked rule and prevent the progress of the righteous.

purpose is to use every aspect of creation to take dominion for Christ. Taking dominion for Christ entails observing all of Christ's commands. And all of Christ's commands are summed up in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."[16] Speaking of the commands to love God and love neighbor, Christ said, "On these two commandments depend *all* the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:40). Therefore, the dominion mandate is *all about loving your neighbor as defined by God's Law*. If a man fulfills the law – namely, loving God and loving his neighbor – there is not a need for magisterial interference. Since "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10), any man or woman walking in the Law of the Lord only commits immorality in the *imagination* of a legislator.[17]

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[16] The Apostle Paul wrote: "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Gal. 5:14). And Christ said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40).

[17] Job serves as an example of a man who fulfilled the law in the civil realm. God commended him as "a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil" (Job 1:8). While not sinless, Job's life exhibited a biblically consistent testimony in the sight of both God and man, and none could find fault with him, not even his closest friends.

Justice, Injustice, and the Purpose of Man

Just as God has granted man the freedom to take dominion of this world, so too has Christ granted Christians the freedom to fulfill the Great Commission. Therefore, any man-made edict, law, regulation, or decree which interferes with man's obedience to Christ's commands is an affront to God's order; it is an assault on the dominion mandate and the Great Commission. It is a direct threat to the purpose of man and a menace to the flourishing of any community, society, or nation. This is why God warned his people to obey his commandments, *not* the commandments of the "other gods" of the nations (Deut. 8:1, 6, 11, 19-20).

Given their focus on the purpose of man, the biblical authors refer often to injustice. For example:

> You shall do no *injustice* in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. (Lev. 19:15)

> The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through *injustice.* (Prov. 13:23)

> Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by *injustice*, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages. (Jer. 22:13)
>
> You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped *injustice*; you have eaten the fruit of lies. (Hosea 10:13)

As you read the Bible, you will find few things that God hates so much as injustice. Consider this scathing indictment, delivered by the prophet Amos:

> I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let *justice* roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:21-24)[18]

[18] "Here is a picture of a religion that is going nowhere. Pilgrims rolled into the festivals, but justice and righteousness failed to roll out in the irrigation channels of daily life and relationships. Therefore their religion stank as far as God was concerned" (J. Alec Moyer, *The Day of the Lion*).

God's hatred of their religious ceremonies reminds us that the purpose of man is *not* to attend a worship service. That activity can *edify* him for his purpose of dominion, but it is not why he exists. He exists to take dominion (serve God and serve neighbor). This is true *worship*, or true religion (James 1:27).

God is opposed to injustice because it prevents us from fulfilling our purpose. In the harmony of the dominion mandate and the Great Commission, we see that Christ's purpose in this world is man's purpose. The new man, united to Jesus Christ, exists to serve his risen Lord. No matter how insignificant he or she might seem, the Christian's purpose is to expand the rule of Jesus Christ over all the earth. Therefore, anything that opposes this purpose is opposed to Christ and his kingdom. God despises injustice because it hampers the righteous and encourages the wicked. Justice, on the other hand, punishes the wicked and leaves the righteous *free* to take dominion.

Injustice primarily occurs when force is used to punish the righteous for taking dominion. Injustice also occurs when the wicked are *not* punished according to biblical law. (When the wicked are not punished per biblical law, the righteous are not free

to take dominion.) Both aspects of injustice are evident in the following passage:

> Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins – you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate. (Amos 5:11-12)

Forced taxation ("exact taxes of grain") is an injustice *against* the righteous, robbing them of their ability to take dominion. This is a prime example of "afflict[ing] the righteous." Taking bribes and turning away those in need of justice is an example of *failing* to punish evildoers according to biblical law.[19]

Most Americans understand the purpose of a baseball game. The team's goal, or purpose, is to score more runs than the other team. Every baseball

[19] The Bible speaks of the danger in refusing to institute justice: "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil" (Eccles. 8:11).

rule exists, in some form or fashion, to facilitate that purpose. The rules exist so both teams know *how* to pursue their goal. But, in the end, only one team can win. The beautiful thing about the "game" of life is that it is *not* a zero-sum game. We are not ultimately competing *against* each other in taking dominion. We are working together to advance God's kingdom on earth. But there still are rules to follow. And now that we understand the game (dominion), the rules make sense. When it comes to justice in the public realm, God has not left us to grope in the dark for the right set of rules. The rules of the game are revealed in the Bible.

God has told us (1) our purpose and (2) the judicial system that protects and prospers that purpose. We cannot hope to look to man for answers to questions that have already been addressed in the Bible. We cannot expect man to make better rules for God's game.

In the next chapter, we will consider God's rules – both his *laws* and his *judicial system* – that we must follow if we are to "seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:17, NASB).

2

Justice and Only Justice

"Practice justice between a man and his neighbor."
Jeremiah 7:5 (NASB)

Biblical law is consistent with man's purpose on earth; it does not hinder the righteous from taking dominion. This is why biblical law is surprisingly succinct to modern minds.[20] God gave man a summary of his rules for dominion (i.e., the Ten Commandments) and a handful of laws applying those commandments to the civil realm. Beyond that, he has given man freedom. God's way, starting

[20] The Law of God is simple (Ps. 119:130). It is purposefully simple. It is so simple that children can understand it (Deut. 6:7). It is so simple that a people wandering in the wilderness were able to be successfully governed by it (Deut. 2:7). It is so simple that you don't need lawyers. You can successfully represent yourself in court. There is no court ruling or obscure law back in 1928 that will blindside you.

in the Garden of Eden, places a premium on freedom (required for dominion-taking) and does not multiply rules and regulations. Man's way is the opposite.[21]

Civil government must be submitted to man's purpose (dominion). Civil government is therefore not meant to "order" society for "the common good." Nor is it meant to "protect" our "rights." The Bible tells us the role of the civil authority in society by designating him as an "avenger" who "carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer" (Rom. 13:4). When this function is applied biblically and faithfully, it *yields* order. But this is not the primary objective of the magistrate; rather it is a *byproduct* of his fidelity to his divinely ordained role. We see this played out in the early chapters of Judges (when Israel had no legislature), as order, protection, and prosperity come together in the land having *rest* for 40 years, 80 years, 40 years, then 40 years again (Judg. 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28). Not even America can claim this accolade. The active "positive" aspect of

[21] According to one source, 88,899 federal rules and regulations and 4,312 laws were passed in America between 1995 and 2016. Despite the bounty of laws, American legislators (on both sides of the aisle) continue to covet their indispensable role: making even more laws.

the civil government is to "praise those who do good" (1 Pet. 2:14). A man who is taking dominion is, by definition, fulfilling the Law of God and *doing good*. The extent of the government's involvement with such a man must be limited to *praising* him.[22]

It must be noted that dominion-taking and being "dangerous" are not mutually exclusive. The feminized Western world has embraced a risk-averse mindset, leading to regulations in the name of safety. This distorted vision of civil government results in legislators acting as maternal overlords telling us *how* to "safely" fulfill our purpose, instead of leaving us free to obey God and love neighbor. However, it is possible for a righteous man to take dominion while also taking risks (and breaking man-made laws).[23] We submit that breaking a speed limit is not immoral, but carelessly jeopardizing the life of another is. Most Westerners would consider this

[22] The righteous, dominion-taking man does not seek subsidies, support, or grants from the government. He only asks that the magistrate fulfills his role as an avenger on the wrongdoer, as defined by God's Law. The only thing the government is to "give" him is *praise*.

[23] This fact at one time was a point of pride among men. The more dangerous the job, the more respect it garnered. To be consistent in our statism, we must denounce dangerous professions such as logging and commercial fishing, as we erroneously equate danger with immorality.

statement a contradiction. Yet, we maintain that breaking arbitrary speed limits imposed by bureaucrats does not automatically equate to immoral behavior. As of this writing, the civil governments of the West often praise those who do evil and punish those who do good, a situation we argue is the inevitable consequence of establishing a legislative body. The greatest hindrance to the dominion mandate is not the lack of governmental regulations, but the establishment of *injustice*. Only God's Law establishes justice and facilitates the implementation of the Golden Rule.

There are two biblical building blocks for understanding and implementing justice:

1) God's rules
2) God's structure

Let's examine both.

God's Rules: The Law

The rulebook for justice is the Bible. It provides man with everything he needs; it equips him "for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). One such good work is doing "justice and righteousness" (Jer. 22:3).

The Lord requires of us that we "do justice" (Micah 6:8) and he has told us how: "For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off" (Deut. 30:11).

We know that the Law of God is good, if one uses it lawfully. The Law is not to be used *against* the righteous. It is laid down for "the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane" (1 Tim. 1:9). When it comes to the "civil use,"[24] the law has a negative function. It does not primarily *order* society or *regulate* affairs. It punishes the wicked. The civil magistrate bears the sword in order to execute *God's wrath* on the *evildoer* – namely, the one who has violated God's Law in the civil realm (cf. Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2:14).

The Bible applies the moral law (Ten Commandments) in the civil realm via what are sometimes called *judicial* laws.[25] For example, the

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[24] The civil use of the law "is to restrain evil. Though the law cannot change the heart, it can to some extent inhibit lawlessness by its threats of judgment, especially when backed by a civil code that administers punishment for proven offenses (Deut. 13:6-11; 19:16-21; Rom. 13:3-4)" (*The Reformation Study Bible*, P & R Publishing, 2005, p. 264).

[25] The 17th century Swiss theologian Johannes Wollebius noted that when the political (judicial) law "is in harmony with the moral law and with ordinary justice, it is binding upon us."

moral law says, "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13). The judicial law, which is an application of that moral law, tells us what should happen when someone does murder – namely, the murderer should be executed (Ex. 21:12). The moral law says, "You shall not steal" (Ex. 20:15). The judicial law tells us what should happen when someone does steal – namely, the thief must make restitution (Ex. 22:1). The moral law says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). The judicial law tells us that a malicious witness is to be punished with the same punishment the one he falsely accused would have received (Deut. 19:16-19). Greg Bahnsen wrote that these

> civil precepts of the Old Testament (standing "judicial laws") are a model of perfect social justice for all cultures, even in the punishment of criminals. Outside of those areas where God's law prescribes their intervention and application of penal redress, civil rulers are not authorized to legislate or use coercion (e.g., the economic marketplace).[26]

The repeated biblical demands for man to establish

[26] Greg Bahnsen, "The Theonomic Position." *God and Politics*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1989, p. 24.

justice (cf. Jer. 22:3; Amos 5:24), coupled with the prohibition against creating any new laws (cf. Deut. 4:2; 12:32), reveals that God has given us all the laws we need to do justice.

Even the king was not authorized to create new laws. He was instructed to "write for himself a *copy of this law* on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests" (Deut. 17:18). He could not add to it, nor take away from it (Deut. 4:2). His task was *not* to legislate (i.e., create new laws), but to "execute *justice* and righteousness" (2 Chron. 9:8). God gave this requirement so that the king's "heart may not be lifted up above his brothers" (Deut. 17:20). Pride and man-made law go hand in hand.

God in his wisdom and mercy has limited the legislative function to himself (Deut. 4:2; Ps. 94:20; James 4:12; Isa. 33:22), and man must never usurp it. God has closed the canon of justice in his word, the Bible (1 Tim. 1:8-12; Isa. 33:22; Ps. 119). Christ has told us that we usher in the kingdom of heaven when we follow his laws (Matt. 5:17-19). In establishing justice, man is called to study God's Law-Word (Deut. 17:18; 2 Tim. 3:16) in order to judiciously adjudicate between disputants. He is never called to create new laws. The very presence

of a legislative body in a nation indicates that man believes the whole counsel of God misses some key judicial elements that a group of legislators need to provide to "enlighten" the population.

God's Structure: Adjudication Between Men

The Bible not only provides us with *laws* for the civil realm, but it also gives us a *structure* from which to apply them – namely, judges (magistrates or "ministers of justice") adjudicating between disputants. Central to God's structure is adjudication.[27] Instead of authorizing men to create new laws, God calls on men to "establish justice in the gate" (Amos 5:15) by judging *between* a man and his neighbor *when* a dispute arises. The theme of adjudication is conspicuous in the Bible:

> If there is a dispute between men and they come into court and the judges decide *between them*, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty… (Deut. 25:1)

> For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice *between a man and his neighbor*… (Jer. 7:5)

[27] Noah Webster defined *adjudication* as follows: "the act or process of trying and determining judicially."

> [A righteous man] does not lend at interest or take any profit, withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice *between man and man*. (Eze. 18:8)

The following passage provides an overview of the *judiciary structure* that enables man to pursue "justice, and only justice" in the civil realm:

> You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you. (Deut. 16:18-20)

The structure is a system of judges. The standing body of civil law is provided in the Bible. The general equity of these laws is applied in *adjudication* between disputants, *not* in creating new laws.[28]

[28] Rousas John Rushdoony noted how this system of adjudication was applied in the early church: "Very early on, the church set up a government which adjudicated all controversies between members. Before long, pagans were coming to those

The Superiority of God's Law

The Law of God is unique in its perfection (Ps. 19:7). When used *lawfully*, it will never institute injustice. The Pharisees tried to use God's Law to condemn Christ, the most innocent of all victims. But Christ could not be convicted by a law system that is designed to punish evildoers. The Law was useless against Jesus. It is only effective against sin. The Pharisees had to appeal to the godless state of Rome, known for its inclination to persecute innocent people. Man-made law was the only way for Christ to be convicted and executed. The Law of God could not convict him. Christ, while on earth, operated with complete freedom under the Law, never breaking it once, and only violating man-made rules.

The Law of God is also unique in its finality. The mandate that "you shall not add to it or take from it." (Deut. 12:32) means that no one should create a

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courts until, by the time of the fall of Rome, because Rome had become so corrupt, the effectual government was the Christian court. The effective government of Europe, for three centuries almost entirely, and for six centuries to a large extent, was by church courts, and, I would submit, the best government it ever had…There were courts to deal with ecclesiastical matters, family matters, civil matters, criminal matters, and so on" (*The "Atheism" of the Early Church*).

new sin, a new crime, or a new penalty for either. These dangerous and short-sighted ideas (read: man's law) inevitably descend into tyranny. No good idea concerning justice has its origins outside of Scripture; all correct ideas concerning the definition and application of justice are to be found in the Bible, and man's wicked heart is naturally at odds with it.

When applying God's Law to modern society, it must be first noted what is a sin *and* what has a penalty attached to it. For example, in Leviticus 19:19, God says, "You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material." Or…what? There is no penalty listed. Therefore, to create a new one for any of these offenses is wrong. If God wanted a penalty, then he would have listed one, as he did in the previous chapter: "For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people" (Lev. 18:29).

In the same way that the church has no active body designated to determine new sins, a nation should not have a body to determine "new" justice or injustice. "The law is good if one uses it lawfully"

(1 Tim. 1:8) and that means that any break from it is to use the law *unlawfully*. What is a sin must remain a sin, and what is a crime must remain a crime, unless specified by the Bible itself. Conversely, those areas where the Bible allows freedom or simply remains silent should not be breached by the state. All that needs to be known about justice is found in the Bible. It is the rock, the foundation upon which we build, with Christ as the chief Cornerstone. Any other foundation is unable to support the weight of true justice.

The Wisdom of Theonomy

The following chart contrasts man-made law with (non-legislative/Lancastrian) theonomy.

Man-Made Law	Theonomy (God's Law)
People punished prior to doing evil.	People only punished after committing evil.
Judges bound by man-made law.	Judges use wisdom to adjudicate based on God's Law.
Man can never truly know if he is living correctly.	Man can know what it means to live justly in society.

The biblical blueprint for justice is a judicial

structure without a legislative branch. This structure prevents man from instituting injustice via legislation, provides a framework for wisdom to be applied, and conduces to people knowing how to live righteously in the present age.

Man-made law often leads to people being punished for non-evil acts, as it seeks to manage risk and "prevent harm." It promises to "order" society and "protect" the people. These concepts are foreign to biblical law. Biblical civil law is meant to be a terror to evildoers. It is not meant to be a nuisance to the righteous who are to be self-governing, managing their own risks.

Man-made law multiplies regulations, restrictions, permits, and ordinances where God's Law places none. When man-made law is established as the standard for society, it will eventually be used against the righteous. Just as the Pharisees turned to man-made law to condemn Christ, today the wicked turn to man-made law to persecute the righteous. Even legislation created under the guise of helping the righteous will be turned against the dominion mandate. When well-intentioned Christians seek to use man-made law, they are unleashing a dangerous boomerang that will

come back and hit their children in the face.

Man-made law shreds the biblical concept of a judge. The judge's refrain in the modern courtroom is this: "I am bound by the law. If you have a problem with the law, take it up with the legislators." Under a system of man-made law, judges are neutered in terms of justice. They cannot consider a case, consult the Law of God, and adjudicate between a man and his neighbor. They are prevented from establishing justice *by the very laws instituted* to keep us "safe." If man-made law forbids a mother from reading the Bible in English to her children, the judge's hands are tied. If man-made law prohibits a farmer from selling milk without the approval of the state, the judge can do nothing. If man-made law requires a man get permission to sell his neighbor a gun, the judge is powerless to say otherwise. Wisdom and prudence are integral to the administration of biblical justice, as the magistrate must carefully examine each case and then apply God's Law accordingly. In contrast, under a system of man-made law, codified legislation becomes the benchmark for "justice," and the need for prudence is greatly diminished, if not entirely disregarded, as a judge defers to the "wisdom" of legislators to define

justice.

But it gets worse. Man-made law frequently *protects* the wicked. It is laden with loopholes, creating nearly endless avenues of escape for someone who has broken God's Law and truly warrants punishment. The judge is forced to follow man-made law and thus is party to justice being "turned back" and "righteousness stand[ing] far away" (Isa. 59:14). The judge in the man-made system is a far cry from Job, a model of a righteous judge:

> When the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it approved, because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and made him drop his prey from his teeth. (Job 29:11-17)

What politician, police officer, or government employee can honestly make this claim today?

Finally, the nearly endless volumes of man-made law are notoriously enigmatic, confusing, and contradictory. In the man-made system, we must labor to keep up with the never-ending mire of man-made law pouring forth from legislatures. A man can never know if he is following the law or breaking the latest edition of his state's regulations. Man is ever at the mercy of the next legislative session to know what is good and what his pagan lords require of him.

The tyranny of man-made law is revealed in the never-ending creation of new laws. Man-made law and a humanistic worldview make it virtually impossible for Proverbs 17:26 to be comprehended: "To impose a fine on a righteous man is not good, nor to strike the noble for their uprightness." How do we know what it means to be the "righteous man" if we cannot keep up with the man-made laws coming from state legislatures across this nation?

California has at least 390,000 regulatory restrictions. A California resident would need to study ten laws per day, seven days a week, for 106 years just to cover the state's *current* edicts, not to mention township, county and federal mandates. Despite what some misguided preachers may have

said about Romans 13, you can rest assured that God will *not* be opening the federal register or the California codebook on the Day of Judgment. God will *not* judge people based on their compliance with man-made laws.

At most, the Bible contains around 1,400 laws. The Old Testament contains approximately 613 laws, and the New Testament contains about 800 laws (*including* repetitions). Many of the Old Testament laws related to the ceremonial requirements have been fulfilled in Christ (Mark 7:19; Heb. 7:12). But even without subtracting the ceremonial laws, if a person studied ten laws per day, he would have covered all the biblical laws *in less than five months*. That is *105 years* before the Californian student will have learned his state's useless laws. An elementary student can learn the basics of biblical law in a single semester. A man must simply understand the Ten Commandments to know how to live in this world. Every other moral commandment in the Bible can be traced back to the Ten Words that God wrote on the heart of man at creation and carved in stone at Sinai. In a well-ordered society, a man simply needs to know the Bible to know whether he is doing right.

God's Law is not an enigma, and presenting it as a complicated, confusing mystery plays into the hands of a society of ever-increasing legislation, litigation, and regulation. Diligent study of the Bible can equip a man for every good work, including understanding civil matters. The religious leaders in the Old Testament were certainly expected to be able to understand and apply biblical law to society – indeed the priests were to be experts in all of God's Law, including those laws pertaining to the civil realm (Deut. 17:8-9; Mal. 2:7).

Two Objections Answered

Some will object that leaving the application of God's Law to a local judge's understanding will result in arbitrary governance. What if the judge ignores biblical law? William Aspinwall (b. 1605) addressed this objection to non-legislative theonomy nearly half a millennium ago:

> I answer, there is less cause of fear, that men in whom the fear of God dwells (having the promise of assistance from God, 2 Chr. 19:11) should mistake the perfect laws of God, than that Students at Law and Judges should mistake the imperfect Laws and dictates of men, which have not the like promise of

> Divine assistance. But suppose a sincere-hearted man, in some obscure and difficult cases should misapply the rule of Judgment [from God's law]; or which is worse, suppose the Judge through corruption pervert judgment, either of which may possibly fall out, yet that will not argue the government arbitrary. For who knows not that Judges can mistake, and through corruption pervert the laws of men, and yet the government is not counted arbitrary, because it hath bounds and limits, even so is it in the other case. Besides, the danger pretended is far less if we be regulated by God's book of Statutes, then if we follow our own.

God's Law and God's structure are perfect. Sinful man is the problem. A magistrate can err and thus "pervert justice" (Deut. 16:19), but in God's structure it is not possible for him to *legislate* or *codify* injustice. In man's system, the magistrate is not only liable to pervert justice, but he is often found to be *in conformity* with the man-made "law of the land" when he does so. The biblical system limits injustice to one man at a time; man-made law allows for the institutionalization and codification of injustice and tyranny. Aspinwall emphasized this point:

> For if the Judge be corrupt, he is punishable; and if

> he [errs], it is but the Judge's personal failing, and that of ignorance, and such sins God doth not charge upon the Nation. But if a Nation, or the Representative of a Nation, make Laws dissonant to God's Law, or make misinterpretation of God's Law, and enact the same for Laws, it will turn to sin to the Nation, and Christ will visit it as an encroachment upon his royalty.

Just as a cake recipe can be disregarded by a foolish baker, so too can God's Law be ignored by a wicked magistrate.[29] Such abuse is not an argument to destroy the recipe.

Another objection centers on the idea that non-legislative theonomy does not account for the "many," but rather focuses on the individual in a "Libertarian" manner. However, the philosophical conflict of the *one versus the many* cannot be resolved

[29] In the biblical system, there are further safeguards against injustice – for example, the people themselves are the ones who institute justice as directed by the magistrates. If the magistrates mandate things contrary to God's Law, the people are responsible to *nullify* such mandates. The Genevan reformers, commenting on Deuteronomy 17:12, noted that the people are required to hearken unto the judge "so long as he is the true minister of God, and pronounceth according to his word." Were this not the case, God would not have indicted the people for keeping "the statutes of Omri, and all the works of the house of Ahab," and walking "in their counsels" (Micah 6:16).

by any man-made political system, as we lack the ontological nature of the Trinity. Consequently, we are incapable of crafting a government that can simultaneously cater to the needs of both the individual and the multitude, especially when these needs appear to be in opposition. Humanity will invariably either indulge the individual at the expense of the many or appease the masses while persecuting the individual.[30] Only the civil structure provided by a Trinitarian God can strike a balance and accommodate the needs of these entities, resulting in justice and righteousness (Ps. 89:14; 99:4; 106:3; Prov. 2:9; 8:20; Isa. 9:7). Only God's Law establishes justice for the individual *and* provides the framework for communal flourishing.

As the Bible establishes the purpose of man, it also establishes the purpose of civil government: "let them judge the people at all times" (Ex. 18:22). God has authorized magistrates to adjudicate disputes between men, but he has not authorized

[30] Humanistic regimes often promise a utopian society for the masses, often at the expense of justice for the individuals who stand in their way: "The individual will be submerged in the collective and all privilege and alienation will forever be eradicated" (Waller R. Newell, *Tyrants: A History of Power, Injustice, and Terror*, Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 4).

legislative power, authority, or responsibility. And for good reason. Man-made law inevitably hinders the execution of the dominion mandate, terminates in fines being imposed on the righteous (Prov. 17:26), and codifies injustice (Isa. 10:1-2).

3

The New Papacy (Statism)

"Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."
Matthew 15:9

We do not argue that modern statism is identical to the papacy of the past. There are differences.[31] But we assert the two are analogous in important ways. The papacy was an apparatus of man-made laws, punishments, and decrees that dominated the minds and lives of the people. Statism is an apparatus of man-made laws, punishments, and decrees that dominates the minds and lives of the people. Modern statism does not (usually) claim *explicit* divine sanction, but proponents of the current

[31] During the Reformation era, the papacy was not necessarily identical to the civil government of a nation, but its influence ("power") over many such governments was immense.

system (just like those of the old) do call for unqualified submission to the current "vicar" of humanity. The old papacy declared that man (the pope) was head of the church. Statism declares that man is head of the state.

But *Jesus is Lord* of all spheres, including church and state. Such a claim strikes at the heart of all forms of man-made authority. The Reformers did not reject the idea that God *delegates* limited authority to mankind, but they did reject the idea that man could presume to sit higher than the risen Christ. The pope, instead of proclaiming the Law of God, made up his own rules.[32] The modern state, instead of submitting to Christ, makes up its own laws.

We describe statism as the new papacy. And we define statism as the *system of belief* prevalent in the American mind that leads people to *follow* and *enforce*

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[32] In addition to the papacy, we see other forms of tyranny and man-made law present in the pre-Reformation era. For example, in 14th century England, the authorities enforced "harsh and oppressive statutes regulating the rates of wages and the price of food" (Summers, *The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills*, p. 55). Dissenters had their horses and cattle confiscated, and their hand mills taken and used to pave the abbey cloisters. Some were punished for selling oxen without the license of the lord. Unsurprisingly, "maddened by the imposition of a poll-tax" and other injustices, some of the people revolted against the authorities. The Lollards, justifiably or not, were lumped in with the revolt.

man-made law, contra biblical justice. We do not seek to prove there is a hidden cabal of malevolent actors in musty, smoke-filled rooms who hold the keys to ending statism. The papacy's strength lay in the esteem paid to it by the common person in Christendom. Once that reverence was weakened, once men and women began to read the Bible themselves and teach it to their children, the papacy was all but defeated. The institution limped on, but the system no longer had the influence it needed to promote widespread injustice. Whether the Pope knew it or not, when his papal bulls calling for the execution of Martin Luther fell on deaf ears, the power of the papacy was gone.[33]

Modern statism leads to widespread injustice because of the grip it holds in the American mind. The "state" is the new Pope, and the average person (and pastor!) in Christendom is nearly mesmerized by the system. The "state" says you must register your children to homeschool. *Do it.* The "state" says you cannot drive down the road without paying to register your vehicle. *Trust and obey.* The "state" says

[33] Following the people's rejection of papal authority, the only recourse left for the papacy was physical violence. For example, the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic League besieged and plundered the city of Magdeburg during the Thirty Years' War.

you cannot buy butter from your neighbor. *Don't break the law!* The "state" tells the church to cease assembling.[34] *How long master?*

Worse still, the "state" then calls on the people to *punish* their neighbors for failing to follow the man-made law. During the Reformation era, the papacy's need for the *common man* to enforce its man-made law led to the authorities encouraging the people to *participate* in the execution of dissenters. Summers writes of a Lollard named Robert Cosin who was executed for "dissuading his neighbors from pilgrimages and the worship of saints."[35] At Cosin's execution "more than twenty persons were compelled to bear faggots [sticks] as a penance." The power of the old papacy was revealed when the people were willing to enforce edicts and decrees punishing their neighbors for defying man-made law. The power of the *new papacy* is revealed when "ordinary" Americans promote injustice by punishing their neighbors for non-evil acts.[36] The

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[34] See Chris Hume's book, *Scattering the Sheep: A Jeremiad Concerning the Closing of the American Church in 2020*, for further analysis of the American church's failure to obey God rather than man.

[35] Summers, *The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills*, p. 114.

[36] Examples include police officers issuing speeding tickets or fines for unregistered vehicles, and government employees

great injustices of forced taxation, imprisonment, and regulations hampering the dominion mandate are only possible because there are enough Americans *willing to enforce* man-made law and its penalties. Statism is a lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God. When it is cast down from its exalted place in the American mind, and replaced with the Christian worldview and biblical law, justice will be established.

Human Laws and Modern Pharisees

The German Reformer Martin Luther was not overly fond of the man-made law of his day:

> Again, it is intolerable that in the canon law so much importance is attached to the freedom, life and property of the clergy, as though the laity were not also as spiritual as good Christians as they or did not belong to the Church. Why are your life and limb, your property and honor so free, and mine not? We are all alike Christians, and have baptism, faith, [the] Spirit and all things alike. If a priest is killed, the land is laid under interdict, why not when a peasant is killed? Whence comes this great distinction between

seizing assets due to the failure to pay taxes.

those who are equally Christians?[37]

Luther answered the question emphatically: "Only from human laws and inventions!" Truly, there is nothing new under the sun (Eccles. 1:9). Man-made law has ever been the bane of the righteous.

Long before Luther, Christ upbraided the Pharisees for "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). The office of Pharisee was never instituted by God; it was a result of violating Deuteronomy 4:2 ("you shall not add" to the Law). Once that statute was ignored, thousands of new "laws" were unofficially added to the Law. Despite our token revulsion to the Pharisees, we have taken them out of the church and put them in our government, which has aided in the production of twice-fold sons of hell in both institutions. (And America's children are taught to *admire* these men, taking public school field trips to state capitols to learn about how these legislators are "working for us.") American Christians scorn the very thought of being a Pharisee while simultaneously upholding the concept of a legislature. Why do we believe such a system –

[37] Martin Luther, "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility."

established as a veritable factory of laws – will produce justice and righteousness outside of God's prescriptions? Indeed, all *institutional* injustice comes back to a human-ordained legislator.

The office of politician/legislator reveals itself to be precisely what the Pharisees were trying to create with their perverse ways. The Pharisees were constantly convincing the people that they needed them. Who else could interpret that complicated law (continuously and conspicuously expanding)? Without them, how could the people know it was unlawful to pull the heads off the grain during the Sabbath? Without them, who would be there to tell everyone how many steps they were allowed to take on the Sabbath? How could the people live without the Pharisees and their commandments? And then, years later, how could the people live without the pope and his laws? Indeed, how can Americans survive without Congress?

When man-made law exists, "experts" and "lawyers" are needed to navigate the legal fog. The law becomes too complicated for the common man to understand.[38] The presence of a legislative body

[38] Stephen Wolfe, author of *The Case for Christian Nationalism*, falls for this error when he writes that we "should recognize the

in a government structure ensures that a steady stream of new laws will inundate society and inevitably surpass any one person's ability to comprehend justice. In the same way that Christians rightly reject the Pharisees or the pope as authorities on righteousness, we must also reject the "state" as an authority on justice. The responsibility of all men is to completely submit their minds to the mind of God. To be a statist, therefore, is to commit to a type of secular popery. Only when the pope and the state are defied, and men reject their self-generated "authority," can we begin to properly establish justice as God calls us to.

'The Supreme Power'

Tyndale biographer David Teems writes that during the 16th century, "Revenues were flooding into the church from all compass points and from a variety

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inherent difficulty in determining whether a law is unjust" (p. 274). Wolfe places a comprehensive understanding of civil law not only beyond the reach of the common man, but even beyond the godly pastor: "[P]astors must not mistake their theological training or scriptural knowledge for expertise in jurisprudence" (p. 275). The Pharisees did the same thing, propagating the idea that the common man can't understand God's Law and stands in need of a unique class of legislators, and then, by necessity, a unique class of legal interpreters (enter the lawyer class).

of cleverly invented streams."[39] So too is the case with the new papacy. Revenues flood into the state from all compass points: income tax, property tax, estate tax, transfer tax, sales tax, capital gains taxes, license fees, registration fees, permit fees – not to mention fines and penalties for violating a plethora of laws or regulations. Teems' description of the corrupt clergy rings true of today's politicians:

> Ecclesiastical orders had amassed to themselves, in the name of God, enormous riches and a great proportion of the land, and on this they claimed to be exempt from taxation. Gigantic fortunes were built up by favored ecclesiastics while the poor people went unshepherded.[40]

History has shown that institutional injustice does not thrive without two things: forced taxation and a legislative body (e.g., pope, Congress). Government officials and bureaucrats (whether representing the "religious" papacy or the "secular" state) create problems by their desire for man-made law and then use that same vehicle to present themselves as the

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[39] David Teems, *Tyndale: The Man Who Gave God an English Voice* (Thomas Nelson, 2011).
[40] Ibid.

solution, all the while requiring the people to pay for it.

It might surprise some to learn that the foundation of our current American statism was laid at least as early as the founding of our nation in the 18th century. Enlightenment thinker John Locke, whose ideas played an important role in the formation of the system of government instituted in America, argued for the necessity of man-made law. In his *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, Locke wrote that making laws is "the great instrument and means" to bring about "peace and safety." He said that "the first and fundamental positive law of all commonwealths is the establishing of the legislative power." He further declared that the "legislative [power] is not only the supreme power of the commonwealth, but sacred and unalterable in the hands where the community have once placed it."[41] The writers of the U.S. Constitution embraced

[41] Contrast Locke's words with those of William Aspinwall: "Judicial power I find delegated unto Ministers of Justice…but Legislative power Christ hath not anywhere delegated to any person or persons that I find since the world began, but reserveth that as a peculiar Royalty to himself." (While some of Aspinwall's views on eschatology may be less than desirable, his points regarding jurisprudence are consistent with the biblical data.)

Locke's philosophy and laid the cornerstone for the new papacy with the following words: "All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States" (Article I, Section 1).

Locke and Thomas Paine were among the men who encouraged Americans to reject the authority of the king to make their laws. But rather than calling on the people to simply apply God's Law, they instructed them to shift the legislative authority from the king to "the people" (assembled in Congress). Gary Scott Smith explains that Christians in 18th century America

> failed to develop a distinctly biblical understanding of political thought that differed sharply with Enlightenment rationalism. Christian and Enlightenment world views, though resting upon very different presuppositions, combined to furnish principles that guided the development of the American political systems.[42]

This syncretism of biblical and Enlightenment thought did not establish justice. Rather, it simply shifted the injustice *from* the king *to* the people.

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[42] Gary Scott Smith, *God and Politics* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1989), p. 5.

Mather Byles (b. 1706), a descendant of New England Puritan Increase Mather, is reported to have asked: "Which is better – to be ruled by one tyrant three thousand miles away or by three thousand tyrants one mile away?" A pertinent question, especially given the exponential expansion of tyranny and man-made law in America following her war for "independence."

The Problem with Man-Made Law

Before concluding this chapter, we will provide some practical examples of the perniciousness of man-made law in the new papacy.

Banning Substances

Despite America's disastrous experience with prohibition in the early 20th century, we still seem to think the civil government should be in the business of banning substances. God's Law, however, never sanctions a punishment for the possession (or use) of a substance. Why is this? Because, as we have demonstrated in Chapter 1, the purpose of man is to take dominion. This dominion mandate is not limited to the things the "state" says we are allowed to utilize. In God's Law, the

righteous are free to take dominion of *any* substance (milk, butter, chemicals, drugs, etc.).[43]

The Bible does not outlaw or criminalize drugs. This absence of legislation alone should be enough for Christians to understand the folly of trying to ban something that cannot be fought with decrees. The fight belongs to the church and the family, as God has not given the civil magistrate authority to combat drugs in any capacity. The only thing that the magistrate can do is punish poisoners (Ex. 22:18), which ostensibly will involve drugs at some point.[44] However, this does not mean that anyone can create a law banning a substance.

The catastrophic "war on drugs" is illustrative of the folly of man-made law. The amount of money expended in America to enforce the man-made drug laws is staggering. Some estimates put the total at over a trillion dollars. This money was stolen from

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[43] Drug *abuse*, just like drunkenness, is unbecoming of a righteous people (Eph. 5:18), but there is no civil penalty authorized in Scripture for possessing or using a substance.

[44] For example, a wise judge would be able to apply this biblical law to the case of a corrupter/poisoner of youth who induces children to become addicted to drugs (see also Deut. 21:18-21 for the case of a reprobate who is wantonly destructive). Creating a "new" law outlawing drug possession in order to "protect" children might be well-intentioned but will do little to establish justice.

the people via forced taxation (or government manipulation of the money supply). What productivity has been lost due to this useless campaign to outlaw substances! The man-made system, in rejecting God's judicial structure and opting for a legislature and a body of "law enforcers," is a productivity destroyer. Moreover, millions of innocent people have been persecuted by arbitrary laws, statutes, and penalties, and have spent lifetimes in prison simply for possessing a substance.

A common argument justifying the presence of anti-drug legislation is that people cause damage and abuse when under their influence. But God's Law never *preemptively* punishes *potential* criminals; it only allows for their prosecution after a crime has been committed. God's Law does not discriminate. Whether under the influence of drugs or not, violators of God's Law are treated the same way. There is no excuse for wickedness.

The banning (or regulating) of substances proves to be a hindrance to the righteous taking dominion and developing new and helpful uses for the resources God has given us. Substances that are currently "illegal" no doubt can be used for some good purpose in the furtherance of the kingdom of

Christ. However, the man-made law hamstrings the godly from doing so. The great irony of the man-made system is that it fails miserably to deal with evil and at the same time is very efficient at preventing the self-disciplined and productive from taking dominion and serving neighbor.

Other "substances" regulated by man-made law include food products. America is a land flowing with milk and honey and yet the righteous are prevented from making healthy food choices because the legislatures have enacted myriad "food safety" acts to keep us "healthy." The laws vary by state, but some farmers are prevented from selling raw milk, butter, or cheese to their neighbors. These man-made laws – whether they outright prohibit the sale of the item *or* require money to be paid to the "state" for the privilege of fulfilling the dominion mandate – are contrary to biblical justice. Other regulations, backed by large corporations, serve as barriers to entry for the smaller, "mom-and-pop" farmers, preventing them from serving their neighbors.

Entrenched in man-made law for generations, we have become an undisciplined and weak people, relying on the government to make our choices for

us. We are told that we need the state to determine which chemicals, additives, or products are safe for consumption. However, this mindset rejects our purpose in this world. Taking dominion requires that *we* embrace self-governance and self-responsibility. The godly are more than capable of evaluating whether a particular food item will contribute to a health crisis in their lives. Without government interference in our food choices, we would have even more options for healthy, organic, or raw food products. Ironically, the foods that are often restricted are the very ones that promote wellness and vitality.

However, as illustrated with the example of the war on drugs, we ought not to ask the civil government to determine what additives should be allowed in our food. If a person does not want a specific substance, they don't have to purchase products containing it. The government's job is *not* to keep us safe from our own choices. When regulations abound, the righteous are prevented from taking dominion and using every substance for a good purpose. It is not loving my neighbor to ask the legislature to control what they can eat or possess. It is not establishing justice.

Man-Made Law Begets Man-Made Law

In the biblical system, civil law is consistent with man's purpose. A biblical civil structure is rather limited and exists to facilitate the dominion mandate. Therefore, safety and security are not *primary* functions of the magistrate.[45] Justice and only justice is the purview of biblical law in the civil realm (Deut. 16:20).

In the man-made system, dominion is rejected as man's purpose. Having abandoned the Bible, man's purpose becomes serving the modern gods and advancing *man's* kingdom. Naturally, man-made law is not a hindrance to *this* purpose, but rather a tool to further establish man's kingdom here on earth. These laws are often presented as being established for the "common good" or the "wellbeing" or the people, but they are opposed to man's purpose and thus bring about misery and destruction. They also birth *more* and *more* man-made laws.

Let's consider one example to demonstrate that man-made law is inexorable in its multiplication. Biblical law does not require man, in the course of

[45] Safety and security are *by-products* of justice being established (Eccles. 8:11). The people are required to take ownership for their own safety and security.

taking dominion, to get permission from the state to travel (or emigrate/immigrate). However, at some point in our nation's illustrious history, the legislatures decided that man must get permission (and pay a fee) in order to travel in a vehicle. Thus, the creation of one man-made law. But this single law is not enough. We need at least two more components to support it. First, a bureaucratic institution is required to regulate *how* we obtain travel permission, collect our money initially, and follow up to ensure we pay for the renewal of our "privilege" to travel in a vehicle. All of this necessitates more laws governing *that* institution and it demands funding, so we must enforce taxation laws to maintain these departments.

But we also need something more. It is not enough to have the stationary institution requiring submission to the man-made travel laws. What if individuals choose not to follow these laws? Consequently, man-made law necessitates a body of "law enforcers" to patrol roadways and punish those who fail to obtain permission to operate a vehicle. These "law enforcers" require additional funding and regulation, paving the way for countless additional acts, codes, and laws. Man-made laws are

like Pringles: "Once you pop, you can't stop." God's Law does not allow this spigot to be opened; adjudication is the only recourse for civil offenses.

Punishing People for Non-Evil Acts

Man-made systems of "justice" frequently result in the punishment of people for non-evil acts. One example will suffice. In 2023, an Amish farmer in Pennsylvania was convicted for selling firearms without a license. Agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) raided Reuben King's farm and confiscated over 600 weapons (rifles and shotguns). King was eventually sentenced to 36 months of probation and a $35,000 fine. He was robbed and punished for taking dominion and serving his neighbor, all with the approval of man-made law.

King's selling of firearms is a classic example of a non-evil act that the government is bent on penalizing. The civil government's purpose is to "punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good" (1 Pet. 2:14). Buying or selling firearms is not evil. However, man-made law, ostensibly enacted to protect the public, results in the punishment of non-evil acts. The King case

illustrates a common occurrence in man-made law: a judicial system that diminishes the desire for righteousness and amplifies the potential for justice to be perverted. The judge in the King case showed no concern for justice; his only interest was in determining whether King adhered to the arbitrary rules established by a man-made, bureaucratic system. This is the fruit of man-made law.

If King had shot his neighbor with a firearm, a judge could have adjudicated the case to determine if the action was justified. However, God's Law provides sufficient guidance for establishing justice in such situations (Ex. 21:12-14, 18-19). What John Owen said about private revelations can be modified to apply to man-made laws: *If man-made laws agree with Scripture, then they are useless; if they disagree with Scripture, then they are false.*

The problems with man-made law are as numerous as the laws themselves. We have established man's purpose (dominion), presented the standard for promoting the conditions to fulfill that purpose (justice via God's laws and God's structure) and pointed out the obstacle standing in the way (statism). The remaining question is: How do we move forward?

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Practical Steps

"Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:19

We open this chapter with a parable.

In a city once renowned for its tranquility and justice, a code was etched upon a granite hill, guiding the people in their responsibilities. Over time, however, the citizens deemed this chiseled code inadequate. Some voices insisted that it fell short of ensuring the city's safety and security. Others claimed it was old-fashioned. In the end, the people of the city determined that new codes were needed. Sure, the chiseled code could still be referenced, but something new was needed.

The idea of a billboard was promoted. Pamphlets were written and distributed throughout the city, and impassioned speeches were made on street corners, all extolling the significance of the billboard and its indispensable role in the city's functioning. The people were inundated with messages emphasizing the necessity of the billboard.

A handful of men voiced their opposition to the billboard. One man, his visage weathered and worn, rose to his feet in the public square and cautioned the populace about the perils of accepting the billboard. "The founder of this city entrusted us with the chiseled code to uphold justice amongst ourselves," the man said. "But he never granted us the power to draft a new code. That authority, my fellow citizens, is reserved for him alone."

Many townspeople scoffed at the man, arguing that the city's founder, having been absent for centuries, would surely understand if the chiseled code no longer met the needs of their society. They dismissed his concerns, convinced that the billboard symbolized progress and adaptability.

And so, the first billboard was constructed, and all citizens were directed to cast their gaze upon it. The chiseled code gradually faded into the recesses

of memory, and in its stead, an intricate system of erecting billboards and selecting the messages to be emblazoned upon them took root throughout the city. This new order became the focal point of civic life, shaping the thoughts and actions of the populace.

The city's youth were instilled with the belief that their most paramount duty was no longer to understand the chiseled code, but rather to actively partake in the billboard system, casting their votes on the messages to be showcased. The billboards became the epicenter of their education and the guiding light of their civic responsibilities. Above all else, the people were instilled with the notion that, regardless of whether they engaged in the billboarding process, they bore the ultimate responsibility of unwavering submission to the messages currently displayed on the billboards. This unconditional obedience became the bedrock of their civil existence. Above all else, trust the authority of the billboard.

Emblems and banners were crafted, proclaiming the solemn duty of each individual to cast their vote for the subsequent billboard author. Tome upon tome was penned, extolling the significance of

billboards and expounding upon the impossibility of functioning through any alternative means. Those who dared to propose a return to the chiseled code were ridiculed and labeled as antiquated and out of touch with the modern world.

As generations passed, the edicts inscribed upon the billboards underwent frequent transformations. One year, a billboard proclaimed that individuals clothed in scarlet should be fined and subjected to public humiliation. The following year, those draped in blue were condemned to prison. At times, the messages emblazoned on the billboards sowed seeds of chaos and perplexity, and the city found itself bereft of the tranquility it once cherished. Amidst the burgeoning frustration, factions emerged within the city, each vying for the authority to alter the message of billboards. Some years witnessed the entire city engrossed in the selection of new scribes for the billboards, harboring the expectation that the freshly penned maxims would stave off the city's cultural decline.

Despite years of tireless efforts to modify the billboards, the citizens never questioned their sacred duty to obey the billboards and enforce the prescribed penalties against their neighbors, as

dictated by the messages on the billboard. Their unwavering allegiance to the billboards remained an unshakable tenet of their lives.

The city's judges, once revered for their wisdom and knowledge of the chiseled code, became servants to the billboards, scurrying to decipher each new message. The citizens became so dependent on the billboards that they could no longer imagine life without them. They believed that without the billboards, the city would be plunged into chaos.

The billboard writers understood their messages held no intrinsic power. The only avenue through which they could derive benefit from their inscriptions was if the city's populace remained convinced that adherence to, and enforcement of, the billboard's dictates was their bounden duty. On occasion, the emergence of a new billboard writer, one who vowed to compose messages that would purportedly aid the people, posed a minor concern for the incumbent scribes. However, as long as the citizens persisted in their unwavering faith in the sanctity of the billboard itself, new messages could always be crafted, and, with time, the people could be manipulated into acquiescing to virtually any demand made in the name of the city's welfare. The

billboard writers understood that their hold over the city was ultimately contingent not on the content of their messages, but on the people's unshakable *belief* in the billboard's *authority*.

And so, the billboards continued to be constructed, their proliferation an inexorable force. Centuries slipped by, and the city was engulfed in a forest of billboards, their presence permeating every corner and crevice.

Finally, a small group of people, overwhelmed by the sheer volume of rules and the futility of their hopes for establishing justice, reached a breaking point. They turned their gaze away from the billboards and began to scour the rock walls, now obscured by the creeping tendrils of ivy, in search of the long-forgotten chiseled code. As time passed, an ever-increasing number of people joined the ranks of those who had turned their backs on the billboards. No longer focused on the futile pursuit of electing new billboard writers, they devoted themselves to educating their fellow city dwellers about the chiseled code, urging them to turn away from the billboards and defy their mandates.

Many of these dissenters suffered greatly for their convictions. They were subjected to fines,

imprisonment, the lash, and even the ultimate punishment: execution. Their most egregious transgression, in the eyes of the billboard adherents, was not the violation of any specific billboard decree, but rather their audacious rejection of the entire billboard system. They were viewed by most people as unpractical idealists. But the dissenters endured in their belief that true justice could only be achieved by adhering to the ancient, unchanging wisdom of the chiseled code. The billboard system had to be rejected.

The dissenters never gave up, and they slowly grew in number. Eventually, a critical mass was reached, and the people collectively turned their attention away from the billboards, focusing instead on the pursuit of justice as defined by the timeless wisdom of the chiseled code. No longer did the citizens look to the lofty billboard writers to solve all their problems. Instead, they took it upon themselves to teach their children the chiseled code, ensuring that future generations would be guided by its timeless wisdom. The billboards' once-iron grip on society finally began to loosen, and the city returned to its former name, the City of Righteousness.

Should you find yourself wandering through this city today, you might chance upon the occasional billboard, still standing as a silent sentinel of a forgotten time when men believed that the panacea for the city's ills lay in the proliferation of man-made rules. The first billboard, now a mere curiosity, still bears the faded remnants of its once-revered message, a stark contrast to the chiseled code that once again guides the city's populace. Though its edict has long since been rejected, one can still discern the words that sparked a thousand years of turmoil. The billboard says: "All powers herein granted shall be vested in a group of billboard writers and messages made on subsequent billboards are and shall be the supreme Law of the City."

Undermining the Modern 'Billboard System'

We question whether the Reformation would have occurred if the people of that era had the option to vote for a "better" pope. While some might have initially believed that the Roman Catholic Church could be reformed, the common people, including groups like the Lollards, had already begun to defy papal *authority* long before Luther or Calvin

emerged. The following description of calls for changing the papal system from within echo modern efforts to "reform" our man-made system:

> There had been councils calling for reform long before Luther, but reform in the church meant that the popes thought that the cardinals needed reform, and the cardinals the bishops, and the bishops the popes, and so on. Reform was merely a medication, a salve of words to ease a troubled conscience. And as long as popes and priests were unwilling to give up their revenue streams, their privileges, and their monopolies, the attempts at reform went nowhere.[46]

Likewise, attempts to reform our man-made system by voting for different candidates to write "better" man-made laws will go nowhere. We need to stop looking to the billboards.

It has been said that John Wycliffe was "perhaps the first to see the importance of influencing the common people."[47] Well-known leaders played a role, but the power of the papacy was broken by the *common* man. So too will the power of statism be

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[46] Teems, *Tyndale*. This reminds us of the modern blame game: Congress blames the President, the President blames the Supreme Court, and the Court blames the President.
[47] Summers, *The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills*, p. 53.

broken. A people's strength resides in their faith in Christ and his Law-Word: "Kings can do but little towards changing the faith of the classes in which the real strength of a country's religion lies."[48]

In the very early days of the Reformation, it would have been easy to critique the Lollards for being "purists" or "unpragmatic." Their efforts to undermine the papacy – a system that was entrenched in nearly every aspect of human affairs – might have seemed unrealistic or inconsequential. And yet they consistently chipped away with the same fundamental message: Jesus Christ, not the pope, is Head of the Church. God's laws, not the man-made laws of the pope, are our standard.

Man-made law erodes a godly culture and undermines faith in Christ. Righteousness exalts a nation (Prov. 14:34). Our nation is crumbling under the weight of injustice and idolatry. Man-made half-measures to "stem the tide" or "slow down" the decay will backfire. The solution to the papacy was not more of the papacy. And the solution to statism is not more statism. The solution is to reject the system itself.

The fall of the papacy in the Reformation was

[48] Ibid., p. 43.

unprecedented and shocking. Few could have imagined it. But it happened, nonetheless. We believe the same will happen with statism. To conclude this book, we provide six practical steps to defy statism and establish righteousness.

1. Develop personal, familial, and ecclesiastical righteousness. We will not see a reformation in our nation if we are not faithful in the little things. God will not bless efforts at societal reformation if our homes and churches are not faithful to his commandments. Without holiness "no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14); without holiness we will not see societal transformation. But if we faithfully teach and apply the Law, we will be blessed (Matt. 5:19). "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much" (Luke 16:10), and a "faithful man will abound with blessing" (Prov. 28:20).

Righteous individuals, families, and churches are an absolute necessity for the reformation of society. Reformation will not spring from a people given to pornography, immorality, pride, bitterness, and greed. The Reformation undoubtedly brought challenges, and had the Bible not been established in the hearth and home of the common man, the

consequences of the papacy's fall would have been disastrous. The first complete translation of the Bible into English from the original languages, the Geneva Bible, was instrumental in transforming the world because of its place at the dinner table of the common man. "As the first Bible to be read by the common people in English, the Geneva Bible inspired those who championed self-government, free enterprise, education, civic virtue, protection of women and children, and godly culture."[49]

If we will not commit to uncompromising faithfulness to God's commands in our families and churches, we will not see blessing in the larger society. Furthermore, we must "have [our] powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil" (Heb. 5:14). If we are foolhardy enough to believe blessing will come to our families and churches by subverting God's commands or turning to man-made law, we will likely make the same mistake in seeking blessing for our nation – we will relegate uncompromising faithfulness to God for "a later time."

A new reformation will also need leaders who

[49] Marshall Foster, "The History and Impact of the Geneva Bible," *1599 Geneva Bible* (Tolle Lege Press, 2010), p. xiii.

will help people solve societal problems *without* turning to legislation or forced taxation. In our statist mindset, we can hardly fathom that a man could lead a society, and even build infrastructure, without the force of man-made law and the funding of compulsory taxation. But this is precisely what *true* leaders will do in a godly society.

2. Spread the message of God's Law-Word.

Throughout the history of the church, radical change has come by the principled proclamation of the Word of God as the supreme and authoritative standard to which all men must submit. This message radically altered the Greco-Roman world in the early centuries of the church. This message pushed back paganism as Christianity spread in the so-called "dark ages." And this message was central to the people's rejection of the papacy in the Reformation era. Perhaps the most important thing we can do is declare what the Bible says about the man-made systems we have set up (whether paganism in ancient Ireland, popery in 16th century Europe, or statism in modern America). Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4), and that faith rests upon the Christ revealed in Scripture.

One thing glaringly absent from the Christian political discourse in America is a definition of justice and an application of God's Law-Word in the civil realm. As we build for the future, we need to spend serious amounts of time training the next generation on this point. If we think this task is irrelevant or merely hypothetical, then we will never progress. We must take Tyndale's famous quote and modify it to fit our context: "We defy the statists and all their laws; and if God spare our life, ere many years, we will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of justice than thou dost!"

Evangelism and discipleship must not be minimized as "pietistic" efforts in the quest for civil justice. In the end, justice requires a people who know the Law-Word of God, desire to see its application, and have developed the resolve to face the consequences for faithfulness. If churches in a local township or county unite to disciple their region, it is not unreasonable that the people of that locale will come to love Christ and refuse to enforce man-made law against one another. In such a case, the tyranny could only come from the state or federal level. This local commitment to justice doesn't solve everything, but it sets us on a path in

the right direction and prepares us to address the higher level of tyranny.

Literature distribution was vital to the spread of the truth during the Reformation. The printing of tracts and books posed such a significant threat to the papacy that, in 1475, the Pope granted the University of Cologne a license to "punish the printers, publishers, and authors and readers of pernicious books."[50] Years later, a secret society of wealthy cloth merchants devoted to sponsoring and smuggling forbidden literature helped to finance and distribute Tyndale's work. Their success as businessmen made them a difficult target for the papists to neutralize. Martin Luther's writings are well-known to have spread throughout all of Europe, seriously undermining the papacy. Luther commented on the power of biblical literature:

> I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word; otherwise, I did nothing. And while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything.

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[50] Teems, *Tyndale.*

The same need exists today. Imagine if just one in ten American Christians began to defy the new papacy. The next reformation would be well on its way. Share the message of Christ's lordship with those around you. Get your church involved in promoting and distributing anti-statist and pro-biblical law literature.

Pastors, your duty is not only to *preach* the full counsel of God, but to *teach* it as well (Acts 20:27). Many congregants in America are unaware of the workings of God's judicial system, basing their conception of biblical law on Hollywood distortions and caricatures of Christianity. We beseech you: teach the Law of God faithfully to your flock. Do not leave them to wander in the political wastelands of man's opinions. Adopt the attitude of the Psalmist in Psalm 119 when he declares, "Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right." Lead not only a *righteous* congregation, but a *just* one as well.[51]

[51] The failure of Christian education in America is evident in the fact that while most believers can accurately describe the structure of the American government (legislature, executive, judiciary), nearly all are clueless when asked to explain the system of civil government prescribed by God's Law-Word.

3. Live consistently with the message we proclaim.
Saint Patrick didn't preach against druidism and then try to get new Christian converts to become druid priests. The separatists in England didn't defy King James' unjust edicts and then argue for other man-made laws requiring people to go to their church. Let us practice what we preach. May the charge of the Apostle Paul never be leveled against us: You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself (Rom. 2:21)?

The papacy was corrupted with spiritual dry rot. Once the people realized it was irredeemable, its days were numbered. And the sooner Christians today realize that our statist (and "constitutional") system of man-made law is unbiblical, the sooner progress can be made. The problem is not with any one man-made law, but with the systematic suppression of the dominion mandate. Tyndale could have acquiesced to the law about Bible translations, but he had something bigger in mind. He was committed to striking at the root and scattering the Roman darkness. Yes, we can put up with a man-made law here and there. We can turn the other cheek at times. But we must have something bigger in mind. And we must not find

ourselves endorsing the system we are committed to destroying.

Therefore, we argue that investing energy in electing new presidents, governors, or legislators is neither strategic nor pragmatic. It fails to address the root problem and, in fact, perpetuates it. If Christians believe that voting for new individuals (to create and enforce man-made laws in our statist system) is the solution, progress will remain elusive. It would be more effective to strike directly at the foundation of statism with a single, targeted action, rather than launching a multitude of ineffective measures. Returning to the billboard parable, it would be more impactful to teach one person to defy the billboards than to elect ten new billboard writers.

So long as we teach (implicitly or explicitly) that change will come about by adhering to the statist system of man-made law, we will be working against ourselves. If the Lollards and other Christians had encouraged the people to just keep trying harder ("vote harder" in modern parlance) to reform the papacy, the Pope would have never felt threatened.

Man-made law has given us the office of the legislator. We have set up a breeding ground for

power-hungry politicians to enslave others. Humble people will, by nature, refuse to take these offices. They are naturally filled by wicked men. The solution is not to get godly men to do ungodly work. The solution is to defy the ungodly system.

Christians must consistently call on others to trust in Christ and *refuse* to enforce man-made law against their neighbors. We must practice what we preach. The faith in statism is strong in our land, and this task will not be easy, but it is the only way to end the injustice. Ultimately, "civil power" amounts to people willing to do what the "authorities" tell them to do. Widespread injustice has never occurred without the *people* willing to carry it out. God forbid that we tell others to do anything God does not authorize us to do.

4. Develop local coalitions that will defy man-made laws.
Every regulation carries with it an unseen train of abuses, poverty-inducing taxation, and the seeds of further legislation. Man-made laws beget more man-made laws. So, if we can start to systematically defy even one or two of these laws, we will be defying more than we can see.

Christians must work strategically to build

coalitions of people who will unite to defy man-made laws. None of this requires legislators "changing the law." Rather, this is a principled and biblical nullification of man-made laws. This is among the most powerful tools to bring about practical, strategic, and long-lasting change. This concept is foreign to many Americans, so we will briefly elaborate.

Let's take the example of food laws. In Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Amos Miller, a local Amish farmer drew national attention when a Trump-appointed, Republican attorney general prosecuted him in 2019 for selling meat outside of USDA regulations. Later, the state of Pennsylvania also went after Miller for selling milk without a license. Republican legislators in the state refused to speak up for Miller. Despite claims that the Amish rallied behind Miller and turned out in 2024 to vote for Donald Trump (the very man who appointed the chief prosecutor of Miller in the federal case), we submit that most of the Amish (and non-Amish) believe Miller should simply comply with the regulations and get the license. Biblical justice, however, unequivocally supports Miller's position. No law of God requires he get permission from the

state to obey God.

Instead of "getting out the vote," if the people reject these man-made laws and are willing to practice civil disobedience, the narrative will change. As a byproduct, spineless politicians might even stand with the self-governing people. This sort of cultural shift and practical dissent would do far more to advance defiance to statism than any number of Amish (or non-Amish) voter registrations ever could.

In the Reformation era, the growing dissent to popery and man-made law proved an uncontrollable fire at the grassroots that Rome could not extinguish. The same could happen today. Imagine one county successfully defying statism and man-made law. Their example would spread to neighboring counties and states; slowly, but surely, the narrative would be changed, and faith in the new papacy would be undermined.

There are thousands of man-made laws that need to be rejected. The question of when and how to do that is a question of strategy. In bringing up the term strategy, some will remonstrate and say, "Ah, see! You are not defying all the man-made laws at once, so you are not consistent with your own position!"

We will explain why this is not a valid critique.

Fleeing persecution is acceptable in the Christian worldview. It is also acceptable to submit to unjust edicts (a turning of the other cheek, as it were, to "flee" further persecution; cf. Matt. 5:39-40). This is fundamentally different from *promoting* persecution or *enforcing* man-made laws against our neighbors. We will unpack this briefly.

We equate a man who punishes someone for either (1) non-evil acts or (2) acts that the Bible does not authorize the magistrate to punish as a veritable bully in the civil realm. This bully could be someone enforcing man-made law against his neighbor for any number of things, including but not limited to failing to get a permit to sell cheese, not having a driver's license while driving on the road, or not registering their children with the state in order to homeschool. The men (and women) who punish people for not following these man-made laws are never justified in committing these injustices. Therefore, there is *never* an acceptable occasion for someone to act in such a manner or promote such a system.

However, letting the bully steal your lunch money or give you a wedgie, because you lack the

resources to stop him today, is justified. Those living under bullies in the past would often use prudence in determining when and where to preach the Bible. The Lollards were driven underground. The Apostle Paul fled Damascus (Acts 9:23-25). But, in each case, they continued, carefully and steadfastly, with their primary goal, knowing that it was impossible to eliminate all risk of personal harm or persecution. When the godly obey Christ, they will not compromise, they will not endorse injustice against their neighbors; but they may be willing to suffer wrong *themselves* at times. The path ahead will not be easy. Fidelity to Christ will likely require more effort and sacrifice than registering to vote or mailing in a ballot.

Local churches will need to come together to form coalitions to teach against man-made laws and coordinate dissent to these laws. This will take cooperation, but it is essential in order to begin to chip away at the false religion of statism (i.e., the new popery).

5. Create a parallel justice system.

Create a private Christian court in your county where disputes can be settled outside of institutions

funded via forced taxation. This would require humble beginnings, but it would allow Christians to begin to "flex the muscles" of biblical self-governance. It would require prudence, but it could also provide ample opportunities for teaching others how to be self-governed, under God's Law, and implement justice without forced taxation and man-made law.

Many Christians today are hesitant to call on men to be self-governed. This is similar to the Reformation era. Many argued that disregarding the man-made system of papal authority and allowing men to interpret the Bible for themselves would lead to chaos. Men cannot govern themselves, therefore we need the papacy. Or so the logic went. Did the demise of the papacy result in challenges? Yes. Will the fall of statism be a walk in the park? No. Therefore, let us begin to develop the resolve and experience for self-government (not anarchy).

6. Develop and promote local alternatives to every government program funded via forced taxation.

The most obvious target is the government school system, but there are dozens more. Attempting to rehabilitate or restore an institution funded via theft

(forced taxation) is not biblical, pragmatic, or strategic. Instead, we must work to convince people (Christians and non-Christians) to abandon these institutions. The end goal is social programs and institutions funded via private means or "voluntary" taxation. Once again, as a people we need to learn what it means to be self-governed and show others that it is possible to have a functioning community without government programs funded via forced taxation.

A Word on Elections and Defensive War

We concede that there is nothing wrong with "voting" if it is limited to selecting "able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe" (Ex. 18:21). The important question, however, is what are we selecting them to do? We reject and defy the idea that we should vote for "godly" men to create or enforce man-made laws. If, however, we select someone who will not enforce man-made law, but rather will "truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor" (Jer. 7:4, NASB), then we see no inconsistency with Scripture. If a man is willing to go to his state capitol and refuse to take a salary,

refuse to vote for any man-made bill, and instead calls on the people (and the judges) to reject man-made law and adjudicate based on God's Law-Word, he would have our attention.

Consider also a position such as a sheriff. A county might be able, after the application of steps 1-6, to elect a sheriff who refuses to punish his neighbors for not paying their property taxes, refuses to lock people in cages, and is committed to only enforcing biblical law and biblical penalties ("justice, and justice only"). Such a man, with the support of his people, might be willing to resist state or federal agents who would enter his county to punish people for non-evil acts (such as when Amos Miller was raided for selling milk, or Reuben King was raided for selling rifles). In such cases, there might arise the potential for a defensive war. Ideally, the state and federal agents will refrain from persecuting the people, and change can happen without defensive measures. But if the statists decide to enter the county and commit evil, and if the people have a *reasonable chance of success* in resisting (one of the principles of the Christian theory for just wars), then a defensive war would be justified. However, we hope for better things for our nation.

Regarding a Christian that is currently serving as a magistrate: we affirm that one can still serve God, as Esther, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did. The message for you, as John the Baptist said to the Roman soldiers, remains the same: "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14). Do not aid in the persecution of your neighbors as they fulfill the dominion mandate, even while violating man-made laws. Your purpose is to avenge the wrongdoer; it is not to order or protect the people. Recognize that the definition of a wrongdoer is not determined by you or your colleagues. If you have the opportunity, repeal laws that punish the righteous, but also refrain from attempting to help the righteous by punishing the wicked where God has not punished them (e.g., drug laws, pornography laws, traffic laws, immigration laws, etc.). Such laws only empower the wicked and ultimately cause the righteous to suffer as our freedom to take dominion dwindles. Establish justice between a man and his neighbor (Jer 7:5). All else, regardless of intention, leads to the establishment of tyranny. Set free the righteous to fight the cultural battles that the state cannot.

Conclusion: A Call for Unity

The next reformation will not occur if Christians cannot unite *under* the common banner of Christ's lordship and *against* the common enemy of statism and man-made law. We must be able to set aside secondary differences and work together toward a common goal. However, we must always ask the following question: *What* are we working for? For far too long Christians have been told that they must compromise their fundamental belief in the supremacy of God's Word to "win" in the political sphere. They have been told that if we want to "love our neighbor" we must neglect the application of God's Law-Word and settle for those who can defeat the current politicians. This is not wise. Coalition for the sake of coalition is not advisable (Ex. 23:2).

We ought to be willing to work with anyone who wants to establish biblical justice. We need coalitions, as "a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Eccles. 4:12). However, we need coalitions united in purpose. Thus, there is much work to do in planting and establishing local churches and networks working together towards the *same* end: "justice, and only justice" (Deut. 16:20).

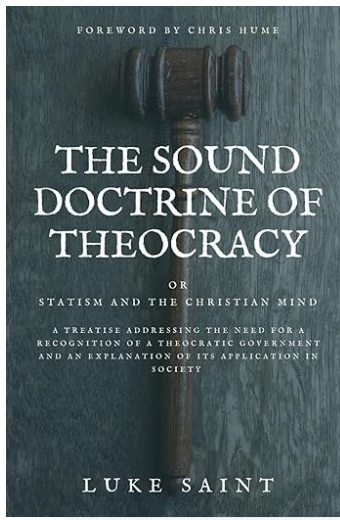
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Also from Future of Christendom:

The Sound Doctrine of Theocracy



If Christians were to be presented with an opportunity to create a new government, what would we create? Did those who came before us do everything perfectly, or are we suffering needlessly in areas where we have strayed from God's divine revelation? In other words, how can we fix the mistakes of our Founding Fathers? Did they make mistakes at all, and how would we know if they did? By what standard does a people look to establish justice in the land? (146 pages, published in 2022)



If you'd like to be part of Future of Christendom's mission to get this short book into the hands of Christians in all 50 states, including pastors, seminary professors, Sunday School teachers, homeschool parents, and students, visit **futureofchristendom.org/outreach.** You can purchase discounted copies to distribute yourself or sponsor an outreach bundle to help others without the funds to do the work of distributing.

We are working to develop coalitions to strengthen the resolve of Christians in standing for justice and defying sin. If you live in Pennsylvania and would like to get involved, visit **futureofchistendom.org/coalition**. There you will also find information about starting a coalition in your own region.

Future of Christendom has also developed a "theonomic court" to serve our region. For more information, visit **futureofchristendom.org/court**.

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