

## The Relation of Church and State

### 1) Basic Principles:

**Matthew 22:15-22:** *Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.*

a) Functioning within, or subjection to, a government (i.e., Caesar's domain) is not necessarily opposed to obedience to God. In fact, government is due its proper respect as it orders society enabling society to transact business in a peaceful way (the symbolic value of the denarius, i.e., money).

**Mark 15:43** *Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God; Luke 8:3* *Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; John 3:1* *a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; Acts 13:1* *Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch; Romans 16:23* *Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you; Philippians 4:22* *All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.*

**Luke 3:12-14:** *Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to [John], "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."*

b) Christians can serve in good conscience in a variety of civil jobs according to the precepts of the Gospel (e.g., with honesty, sincerity, and humility, etc.).

**Matthew 26:50-56:** *Then [a great multitude with swords and clubs from the chief priests and elders] came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you not think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled,*

*that it must happen thus?" In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.*

**John 18:33-37:** *Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."*

c) The royal power, or dominion (Gk., *vasileia*; "kingdom"), of Christ and His disciples does not originate from, or consist of, worldly trappings, that is, material security, adornment, and power. Accordingly, Christ and His disciples do not defend themselves using worldly weapons but instead rely upon the power of God to work His will even through suffering unjustly at the hands of the governing authorities.

**John 19:7-12:** *The Jews answered [Pilate], "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."*

d) Government authority should recognize Christ as God because government has authority from God who is Christ.

**Acts 4:18-20:** *So [the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees] called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."*

**Acts 5:26-32:** *Then the captain went with the officers and brought [the apostles] without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" But Peter and the other apostles answered and said, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

e) Christians must do the commands of God even when forbidden by governing authorities to do so.

**Acts 12:20-23:** *Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country. So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.*

f) Governing authorities will be held accountable before God for not acknowledging Him.

**Acts 22:25-29:** *And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.*

**Acts 25:7-12:** *When [Festus] had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all." But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?" So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender, or have*

*committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.” Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!”*

g) Christians are free to use the lawful system of governing authority (e.g., citizenship, legal due process, etc.) for their advantage when bearing witness to the truth of the Gospel.

**Romans 13:1-7:** *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*

h) Governing authority is a gift appointed by God to serve, fostering good in society and preventing evil. Therefore the governing authority must be supported in its service to God through financing its work, by general respect for those employed to keep order, and in honor shown to governing officials.

**Philippians 3:17-21:** *Brethren, join in following my [i.e., Paul’s] example, and note those who so walk, as you have [the apostles] for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthy things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

i) The ordering of Christian lives (Gk., *politevma*; “citizenship, government”) always has a heavenly goal in mind, not an earthly one. Therefore Christians are characterized by the cross of Christ – the death of earthly passions and desires which separate a person from God – not the gratification of earthly life.

**1 Timothy 2:1-2:** *Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*

j) The Church asks God to bless governing authorities in their God-given work for the unimpeded progress of our life in Christ.

**1 Peter 2:13-17:** *Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men – as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

k) Christians must be subject to governing authorities according to the various levels and constructs of their organization, not because these various arrangements are instituted specifically by God (e.g., kings, governors, etc.), but because the very concept of governing authority itself comes from God, once again for preventing evil in society and fostering good. Christians freely subject themselves to this humanly organized authority as it exercises its God-given task in order to acknowledge the very Source of governing authority, namely, God.

**Luke 19:41-44:** *Now as [Jesus] drew near, He saw the city [i.e., Jerusalem] and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*

**Hebrews 11:15-16; 12:22-24:** *And truly if the [faithful] had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them...But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

**Revelation 21:1-1-4; 22:14-16:** *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."; "Blessed are those who do [the Son of God's] commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."*

1) The Church is that holy society participating by faith and imaging the eternal, heavenly kingdom of God to which all are called by God's grace in Christ.

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## 2) Essential Questions (to be answered in progressive order)

- a. **What is the origin of the Church?**
- b. **What is the purpose of the Church?**
- c. **How is the Church created, sustained, and ordered toward its purpose?**
- d. **What is the origin of the State (governing authority)?**
- e. **What is the purpose of the State?**
- f. **How is the State created, sustained, and ordered toward its purpose?**
- g. **Do the Church and State have the same, similar, or different origins?**
- h. **Do the Church and State have the same, similar, or different purposes?**
- i. **Can the Church and State be created, sustained, and ordered toward their respective purposes in the same, similar, or different ways?**
- j. **How much of the activities of creating, sustaining, and ordering the Church and State derives from obedience to the revelation of God, and how much derives from the free exercise of the opinions of human beings? Are these activities the same, cooperative, or antagonistic?**