

THE ORIGIN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

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Civil government has its origin, from the mind and will of Almighty God. It did not originate in the mind of man. Its divine source is unequivocally stated in the Bible in such places as Romans 13:1-7 and I Peter 2:13-17. Men are the instruments through which God carries out his purposes in civil government, but civil government has its conception with God.

The Holy Spirit of God revealed to the apostle Paul that there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Rom 13:1). The Greek adverbial negative, *ou*, is idiomatically in the emphatic position in the foregoing phrase. Literally, the Greek phrase is, *ou gar estin exousia ei me hupo theou*. Literally translated that would read, "no, for there is authority except from God."

Further, the Greek verb, *tetagmenai*, translated "instituted" (RSV) in Romans 13:1, is a perfect tense participle. This participle is from the Greek root word *tasso* which means "arranged, set, appointed, ordered, framed, fixed." The Greek perfect tense means that the action has happened in the past and continues to happen. The participle *tetagmenai* is also in the passive mood. This means that God "ordered and fixed" the principle or axiom of civil government in the past with a continuity to the present, and it was God acting to establish government – not government acting to establish itself.

God acted, he did so in the past and he continues to do so in the present, to give birth to human civil government. The concept of civil government for the human race was not initiated out of the exigencies of human trial and error. It was in the mind of God from eternity and revealed to humanity by planting the need for order, law, structure and direction indigenously in the mind of man at creation.

Ordered social structure inheres in the very nature of Almighty God, the Ruler. He makes nothing disordered. When he created the world, he did not create it chaotic (cf. Isa 45:18,19). He is not a God of confusion (cf. I Cor 14:33). Created things and created beings were made to follow divine "laws" (cf. Jer 5:22). God made man a social being. Man was meant to exist companionably, or interpersonally, with other beings of like nature as himself. And since man is a contingent being (dependent) and not omnipotent himself, he is "programmed" to acknowledge his need for government. God, the Creator, planted that "need" within man when he created him.

Man's contingency and mortality, however, renders him incapable of originating on his own principles or axioms of sufficient wisdom to guide him in civil government. God revealed those axioms and guidelines in the "natural revelation" (in "nature," in human conscience, and human capacity to reason) and in his "special revelation" (the propositional revelation in human language which we call the Bible). The social essence of man logically or naturally necessitates control, order, or structure. Man is incapable of existing in absolute freedom. He is finite, not omnipotent or omniscient. His finitude and contingency proposes a necessary regimentation.

The most ancient form of human social relationship, the family – husband and wife and offspring – necessitated governmental structure. Each member of the civil unit called

"family" was intended by God to function within a divinely ordained order (see First Corinthians, by Butler, pp. 199-208). The first man, Adam, and his wife, Eve, were commanded, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion . . ." (Gen 1:28). Let the record show that Adam and Eve (and their progeny) have obeyed God in this commandment! We have approximately five billion descendants of these two now alive on this earth! This does not count the billions who have already lived and died on this planet. They did "multiply"!

Human multiplication demanded at least one more form of social government to secure the rights of the fundamental unity of humanity (the family) so people might reach the goal their Creator intended when he made them.

Dr. C.C. Crawford, in his book, *Commonsense Ethics*, pp. 360-361 declares:

11. Authority in Civil Society. The Natural Law (and Dr. Crawford means, the Divine Law, as the reader shall see in the following quotation) in ordaining the society and its proper end, thereby ordains the means necessary to the attainment of that end: civil authority is that necessary means. Indeed, without civil authority the state could not exist. Authority in itself must be distinguished from the form of administration or type of regime.

Authority is always present irrespective of the will of man, and cannot be abolished (any more than the law of gravity, or that of valence, for example, can be abrogated by humankind); the essence of authority is immutable, It is evident, from the fact of natural equality, that no human person has any authority per se over any other human person. Hence, not having this authority in the first place, that is, primary authority, it follows that no man or group of men can delegate authority to any other man or group of men. The people can determine their form of government and elect men to administer it, but they are powerless to confer authority on these men for the simple reason that they have no inherent authority to confer. (Nothing plus nothing equals nothing.) Sovereignty is in the people, to be sure, to determine the type of regime and the personnel of elected officialdom, but not to confer authority upon those elected to govern. The Biblical teaching is that primary authority comes directly from the Author of Nature, and that it is by His sufferance that the people exercise whatever measure of sovereignty they may have. Romans 13:1 – "There is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God." Authority is moral power, and this moral power carries with it the right to use physical power to maintain order. There are three basic rights of which the Author of Nature (or the Natural Law) is the sole efficient Cause, rights which need to be exercised by any national state: these are jus puniendi (the right to punish), the jus obligandi (the right to make and bind laws), and jus belli (the right to defend itself by war and force). These powers are necessary for any state to attain its natural and proper end. A state without authority is a joke; as a matter of fact it is inconceivable, human character being what it is, subject to every form of selfishness and greed.

Dr. Crawford attributes the primary origin of government to God the Creator. Power is conferred upon the various forms of human government by divine fiat. Any human being who thinks and acts otherwise is self-deceived and is in rebellion against both reason and revelation.

This universe, and every part of it, even language, thought, ideating, or conceptualizing,

was created to function within law (government). This is an incontrovertible, irrefutable axiom communicated by both "nature" (the natural revelation) and "revelation" (the propositional revelation – the Bible). Human government is axiomatic. It is an absolute necessity. This is established idealistically, realistically, and pragmatically.

Alexander Campbell, in an essay entitled, *"Is Capital Punishment Sanctioned By Divine Authority?"* wrote:

Though neither Caesar nor Napoleon, Nicholas nor Victoria, were, "by the grace of God," king, emperor or queen; still the civil throne, the civil magistrate, and, therefore, civil government, are, by the grace of God, bestowed upon the world. Neither the church nor the world could exist without it. God himself has, therefore, benevolently ordained magistrates and judges. Men may call them kings, emperors or presidents but they are God's minister, executors of his will and of his vengeance, ordained to wait upon him and to execute his mandates. They are sort of viceroys – viceregents under law to God, and to govern according to his revealed will. The Bible is of right, and it ought to be, just as much a law to kings and governors and presidents, as it is to masters and servants, to husbands and wives, to parents and children. Those magistrates, therefore, who will not be governed and guided by it in the faithful execution of God's laws, God himself, in his own proper person, will judge and punish.

God is the author of law and order. The devil is the author of anarchy and nihilism. The devil is the enemy of government of any kind. He desires the destruction of all law. He is a liar and there is no truth in him at all (John 8:44). He wishes only to scatter" (Matt. 12:30). He apparently led in the rebellion against God's government when certain angels "did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling . . ." (Jude 6). The devil was an anarchist and nihilist in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3: 1ff).

Truth and order (government) are mutually dependent. God is the source of both. It is the truth of God that produces order, and it is order that sustains truth. Anything that contradicts the truth of God destroys order. When anarchy or disorder rules there is no way for truth to exist or be sustained. The truth of God is eternal (cf. Psa 119:80, 160; Isa. 40:8; Matt. 24:35; I Pet. 1:25). That is one of the great consolations in the Bible for the believer faced with what appears at times to be world-wide lawlessness. God will never allow complete disorder to exist in this world. We shall treat this at greater length in later chapters.

The scriptures teach emphatically that Jehovah will not allow lawlessness to be enthroned over the whole world. Even in the world of the Old Testament, when Satan's sphere of influence was much wider than at present, Jehovah often used "pagan" governments to bring relative law and order to society (cf. Isa. 10:5-19; 13:1-22; 45:1-25; Jer. 21:8-14; 27:1-15; 29:1-9).

America's "founding fathers" were, for the most part, Christians and God-fearing men (even those classified by some as "Deists") and they strongly believed that government, law and order, had its origin in the Divine Mind. They believed, further, that even when human beings were afforded the very rare privilege of "choosing" or "forming" the system of government by which they would be ruled, such a "choosing" was ordained by Divine Providence and should be constructed according to divinely revealed principles!

John Eidsmoe, in his book, *Christianity and The Constitution*, gives a brief biography of thirteen men he sees as "founding fathers": John Witherspoon, James Madison, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Governor Morris, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Patrick Henry, Roger Sherman, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. Citing documentary evidence, Eidsmoe proves that eight of these thirteen men were clearly Christians, and the other five certainly believed that God exists and that He is immanently involved in the affairs of men (especially in governments). Everyone of these "founding fathers" believed that human rights and the civil governments which secured them had their origin in Almighty God.

At the close of the American Revolution, George Washington responded to a compliment for his leadership by saying, "the praise is due to the Grand Architect of the Universe; who did not see fit to suffer his Superstructures and justice to be subjected to the ambition of the princes of the World, or to the rod of oppression, in the hands of any power upon Earth."

In his first Inaugural Address, Washington said,

"No People can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men more than the People of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an in-dependent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."

Benjamin Franklin, when the first Constitutional Convention was on the verge of disintegrating, June 28, 1787, called for prayer to God, saying,

"I have lived, Sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men . . . We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that 'except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this; and I also believe that, without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel"

And Thomas Jefferson, while certainly not an orthodox Christian, said, (and these are the words engraved on the Jefferson Memorial)

"God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same rime. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed their only sure basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that those liberties are the gift of God?"

Penetrating insight into sources from which these "founding fathers" of our Republic drew their concepts of government is provided by John Eidsmoe in *Christianity and The Constitution*, p. 51:

Two professors, Donald S. Lutz and Charles S. Hyneman, have reviewed an estimated 15,000 items, and closely read 2200 books, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and monographs with explicitly political content printed between 1760 and 1805. They reduced this to 916 items, about one-third of all public political writings longer than 2000 words.

From these items, Lutz and Hyneman identified 3154 references to other sources. The source most often cited by the founding fathers was the Bible, which accounted for 34

percent of all citations. The fifth book of the Bible, Deuteronomy, because of its heavy emphasis on biblical law, was referred to frequently.

Eidsmoe cites further research showing that of the sources other than the Bible for these "founding fathers" the three most often referred to are Charles Louis Joseph de Secondat, the Baron Montesquieu of France (1689-1755); Sir William Blackstone (1732-1780), English barrister; and John Locke (1632-1704), the British philosopher and political theorist who inspired a generation of Americans in both politics and religion (including Alexander Campbell).

Montesquieu wrote a work he titled, *The Spirit of Laws*. At the beginning of this treatise he said, "God is related to the universe, as creator and Preserver; the laws by which He created all things are those by which He preserves them." He wrote in the same treatise:

Particular intelligent beings may have laws of their own making, but they likewise have some which they never made Before laws were made, there were relations of possible justice. To say that there is nothing just or unjust but what is commanded or for-bidden by positive laws, is the same as saying that before the describing of a circle all the radii were not equal."

In other words, Montesquieu's idea of the origin of government was Almighty God. Montesquieu embraced the Christian faith as a Roman Catholic.

Blackstone, in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, expressed his firm conviction that all law has its source in God through two instrumentalities:

Law of Nature . . . God, when He created matter, and endued it with a principle of mobility, established certain rules for the perpetual direction of that motion; so, when He created man, and endued him with free will to conduct himself in all parts of life, He laid down certain immutable laws of human nature, whereby that free will is in some degree regulated and restrained, and gave him also the faculty of reason to discover the purport of those laws This law of nature, being coeval with mankind and dictated by God Himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe in all countries, and at all times: no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this Revealed Law These precepts, when revealed, are found upon comparison to be really a part of the original law of nature But we are not from thence to conclude that the knowledge of these truths was attainable by reason . . . since we find that, until they were revealed, they were hid from the wisdom of the ages . . . the revealed law is of infinitely more authenticity than . . . the natural law.

Upon these two foundations, the law of nature and the law of revelation, depend all human laws; that is to say, no human law should be suffered to contradict these. John Locke had a powerful impact on the thinking of the architects of the American republic, as well as upon the patriarchs of the Restoration Movement.

Locke wrote in his, *Of Civil Government*, Book Two:

Human Laws are measures in respect of Men whose Actions they must direct, albeit such measures they are as have also their higher Rules to be measured by, which Rules are two, the Law of God, and the Law of Nature; so that Laws Human must be made according to the general Laws of Nature, and without contradiction to any positive Law

of Scripture, otherwise they are ill made.

We wish to cite two more writers who influenced American government through those 18th century founders – Grotius and Pufendorf. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), famous Dutch lawyer, theologian, statesman and poet, wrote in, *The Rights of War and Peace*: Among all good men one principle at any rate is established beyond controversy, that if the authorities issue any order that is contrary to the law of nature or to the commandments of God, the order should not be carried out. For when the Apostles said that obedience should be rendered to God rather, than men, they appealed to an infallible rule of action, which is written in the hearts of all men.

And Samuel de Pufendorf (1632-1694), the son of a Lutheran minister, who first studied theology then law, was a diplomat, university professor, and a historian. He was very influential in establishing "international law" as we know it today. He emphasized that God is the Creator of all in, *The Law of Nature and Nations*, and:

... exercises a Sovereignty not only over the whole World, or over mankind in general, but over every Individual Human Person: Whose Knowledge nothing can escape: Who by Virtue of his Imperial Right, hath enjoined Men such certain Duties by Natural Law...

These men were only echoing what the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:18-20. Almighty God wills social order in a sinful world. God is the author of governmental regimentation. And God has revealed that in the "natural order." The "things that have been made" (Nature) reveal God's wrath against disorder, sin, and wickedness. Nature gives a clearly perceivable message that governments of some form must be instituted among men to check wickedness and suppression of the truth. It is inexcusable for the human race not to perceive that axiom. It is denied and overturned only by deliberately exchanging rational and moral truth for a lie.

Sovereignty is lordship, lordship is ownership, and ownership is control. If God is absolute Lord, then he has absolute ownership and absolute control over the universe. This is, to say the least, a rather extravagant claim. What ground or basis does God have for his claim to sovereignty? The answer is the fact that he has created all things from nothing. The fact of creation is the ground of divine sovereignty . . . The fact of creation means, of course, that God is the source of all things. "All things originate from God," says Paul (1 Cor. 11:12).

The fact of creation provides the ground for two elements essential to real sovereignty, namely authority and freedom . . . God's authority, his legitimate and deserved right to absolute Lordship, is his by virtue of creation. God has the right to do with his creation whatever he wishes because he owns it; and he owns it because he created it . . .

In this connection, we may note that if there is no Creator-God then there is no authority at all, for there is no other basis whereby one person may claim the right to tell another person what to do, or to do with another person what he thinks best. In an uncreated universe one personal being or group of personal beings may have the power to do these things, but not the right. Thus in such a universe absolute individual autonomy would be the only consistent viewpoint. But in a created universe, the Creator – and the Creator alone – has both the power and the right to rule in whatever way he desires. All authority resides ultimately in him. He may delegate a measure of

authority to some of his creatures if he chooses, as he has done to parents in the home, elders in the church, and civil rulers in the state. But such authority is not absolute; it is relative and derived. (*italics ours*). "For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" (Rom. 13:1). Thus we see how crucial is the divine sovereignty which includes the authority to rule as grounded in the fact of creation. Without this there re-main only the chaos and anarchy spawned by a blind commitment to "might makes right." These are the only consistent choices.

God the Ruler, by Jack Cottrell, pp. 269-271, College Press:

The fact of creation is "written" not only in "nature" (Rom 1:18ff), it is also written in the existence of human beings (Acts 17:24-31). The existence of God and his sovereignty is further "written in the rocks" (in the evidence of geological catastrophe—the universal flood of Noah's age) (see II Pet. 3:3-7). The fossil record proves that God rules. The only way to deny that is by deliberate, moral choice. No human being can plead ignorance before God by reason of insufficient evidence.

A.H. Strong says in his *Systematic Theology*,

"Physical science, in her very use of the word law implicitly confesses that a supreme Will has set general rules which control the processes of the universe."

God has also "written" his sovereign rule by moral law upon the inner being (conscience) of every human (Rom. 2:14-16). This, too, is factual, experiential, evidence that God is the source and originator of human government.

The Moral Law as actively considered, that is, as existing in the Mind and Will of the Divine Lawgiver, the Creator, is what is generally designated the Eternal Law. This is the Law which directs the motions of all created existents, both irrational and rational, to their appointed ends in the scheme of things; the Law which constitutes all things to be what they are, including human nature and human relationships. This Eternal Law, looked at passively, is embodied in the nature and relationships of man; in this sense it is called the Natural Moral Law, which is generally defined as "the participation in the Eternal Law by the rational creature."

This Eternal Law, manifestly considered, is said to be human reason itself; it is described by Aquinas as "the light of intellect given to us by God, in virtue of which we know what must be done and what must be avoided"; hence the under-current of unanimity among all peoples, prehistoric, primitive and historic, that certain human acts are good, and certain others bad (e.g., murder, incest, perjury, etc.) both for the individual and for society. Thus the Natural Moral Law is rightly defined as a "rule of action, mandatory in form, which reason itself discovers, as having been established by the Author of man's nature and promulgated by being embedded in the nature of man.

Commonsense Ethics, by C.C. Crawford, pp. 248-249, Brown

John Locke, English philosopher, in his treatise, *Of Civil Government* wrote:

The state of nature has a law to govern it, which obliges everyone; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or

possessions In transgressing the law of nature, the offender declares himself to live by another rule than that of reason and common equity, which is that measure God has set to the actions of men A criminal, who having renounced reason, the common rule and measure God hath given to mankind, hath, by the unjust violence and slaughter he hath committed on one, declared war against all mankind.

The American Declaration of Independence, conceived first, incidentally, by George Mason in his Virginia Bill of Rights, in May, 1776, and evidently copied by Jefferson, Madison and Franklin in the July 4th, 1776, document, shows that our "founding fathers" were guided by this concept of Almighty God as the sovereign source of human government:

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.

It is nothing short of shocking and frightening, however, to read from some American jurists, politicians, philosophers and educationalists their militant disdain of these concepts so clearly enunciated by our founding fathers.

For example, note what former President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson said in his book, *The New Freedom*, pp. 44-48:

... government . . . falls, not under the theory of the universe, but under the theory of organic life. It is accountable to Darwin, not to Newton. It is modified by its environment, necessitated by its tasks, shaped to its functions by the sheer pressure of life Living political constitutions must be Darwinian in structure and in practice. Society is a living organism and must obey the laws of Life, not of mechanics; it must develop.

All that progressives ask or desire is permission – in an era when "development," "evolution," is the scientific word – to interpret the Constitution according to the Darwinian principle;

What Woodrow Wilson was saying directly contradicts the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration holds there are "certain unalienable Rights . . ."rights that are divine in origin, everlasting and unchangeable. Woodrow Wilson held that those unchangeable rights elucidated in the U.S. Constitution and its amendments (The Bill of Rights) were not unchangeable but were to be subjected to the Darwinian principle of evolution. They could be changed, according to Wilson, indeed, they must be changed as truth evolves. The fundamental doctrine of evolutionism is that truth is always changing, always evolving, never eternal. Therefore, Wilson sought to construct human government on the basis of principles and "laws" that were alterable because they had no divine origin.

Another example of this "evolution" of the principles of civil government is the ruling of former Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Earl Warren, in the case, *Trop v. Dulles*, 356 U.S. 86. Chief Justice Warren ruled concerning the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: ". . . the words of the Amendment are not precise, and . . . their scope is not static . . . The Amendment must draw its meaning from the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society" (italics ours).

Other U.S. jurists have since applied the ruling of Warren to the statute concerning capital punishment, declaring it to be "cruel and unusual punishment." Capital punishment for capital crime is a principle and precept whose origin is divine, eternal and unalienable. It is in the Bible (Gen. 9:6; Ex 21:12; Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:1-7, etc.).

Contrast the foregoing "evolutionists" with this statement of U.S. District Judge Robert N. Wilkin in the *Saturday Review*, April 26, 1958:

Our most eminent legal historian and philosopher, Roscoe Pound, in a book just recently published, has correctly criticized the all-too-common impression that the "rights of man" were created by famous documents of legal history like Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution. Milestones these great charters certainly are, but they did not, and could not, create rights. They are, on the contrary, only formal acknowledgments of rights that have always existed by virtue of a Higher Law – what we may term "true" law.

True law exists without legislation. Men did not create it; they were created subject to it. It is law, as was said twenty centuries ago, "which we were not taught, but to which we were made, which we were not trained in but which is ingrained in us." This idea of a universal, "true" law was advanced by the early Greek philosophers. They accepted human nature as a part of universal nature. It followed that the law and justice on which social life and trade depend exist by nature, not by convention or promulgation. The Romans called it *vera lex*, true law, or *ius naturae*, natural law. And their rule over many different countries, and their administration of justice for foreigners in Rome, led to the discovery of law common to different peoples, which they called *ius gentium*. Some jurists and publicists refer to it as "common right and reason" or "equity and good conscience."

True law is necessarily stated in broad and general terms. To apply it to the varying circumstances of life, it must be supplemented and restated more specifically. Its practical application is established first by custom, then by decision (judgment in special cases), and subsequently by promulgation or legislation.

The most important and immediate need (in our time) is that the people and their leaders understand that sovereignty is not in any man or party or nation, but in True Law. That is so because the Creator made the Universe according and subject to law, and endowed mankind with the ability to learn and apply the law.

Another pertinent statement is from the pen of Dorothy L. Sayers in *The Mind of the Maker*, pp. 20-26, Meridian Books, 1956:

There is a universal moral law, as distinct from a moral code, which consists of certain statements of fact about the nature of man, and by behaving in conformity with which, man enjoys his true freedom. This is what the Christian Church calls "the natural law." The more closely the moral code agrees with the natural law, the more it makes for

freedom in human behavior; the more widely it departs from the natural law, the more it tends to enslave mankind and to produce the catastrophes called "judgments of God." The universal moral law (or natural law of humanity) is discoverable, like any other law of nature, by experience. It can-not be promulgated, it can only be ascertained, because it is a question not of opinion but of fact (*italics ours*). When it has been ascertained, a moral code can be drawn up to direct human behavior and prevent men, as far as possible, from doing violence to their own nature. No code is necessary to control the behavior of matter, since matter is apparently not tempted to contradict its own nature, but obeys the law of its being in perfect freedom. Man, however, does continually suffer this temptation and frequently yields to it. This contradiction within his own nature is peculiar to man, and is called by the Church "sinfulness"; other psychologists have other names for it Defy the commandments of the natural law, and the race will perish in a few generations; cooperate with them, and the race will flourish for ages to come. That is the fact; whether we like it or not, the universe is made that way. This commandment (Ex 20:5,6 for example) is interesting because it specifically puts forward the moral law as the basis of the moral code; because God has made the world like this and will not alter it, therefore, you must not worship your own fantasies, but pay allegiance to the truth.

Nathaniel Micklem, former Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, England, wrote in his book, *The Theology of Politics*, p. 60:

The Source of our being and the Artificer of our nature is God Himself. That "law of nature," which, as the Apostle (Paul, in Rom 2: 14-16) held, is written on the hearts even of the heathen, is an expression of the Reason which of itself is a reflection of the wisdom and "eternal law" of God. First, then, comes the "eternal law" of God; second, as reflecting it, the "law of nature," and, third, the customary and statute law of men, which has no validity except as an approximation to the "law of nature."

Experience and conscience both demand that we admit there is a law of higher obligatory power than the law of the state; a law superior to the will of one man, or of a few men, or even of a majority of men. There is a law that must be binding alike on the ruler and on the ruled; otherwise, a human ruler could never do wrong, the majority could never be unjust, and all human rights would be fantasies. The Bible teaches this by precept and gives documentation of human beings, both believers and unbelievers, who have discovered it and admitted it. Government and law have their origin from Jehovah-God.

In Deuteronomy 17:18-20, anticipating the time when Israel would demand a monarchical form of government, God decreed that kings of Israel would not be absolute sovereigns but would be simply administrators of the higher, Divine law, and would, in fact, be subject to the Divine law themselves. David, king of Israel and Psalmist, wrote: "For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations" (Psa 22:28); and, "For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne" (Psa. 47:7,8). Solomon (king of Israel) wrote of the Wisdom of God, "By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles govern the earth" (Prov 8:15,16) and believed what he preached (II Chron 1:8-10). There was no doubt in David's mind or Solomon's that human government had its origin in Jehovah.

Isaiah the prophet clearly reveals that all human government, even pagan government, originates from and exists by the sovereign authority of Almighty God. The king of Assyria had his throne only by God's permission, his governing powers were used by God

for divine purposes, and he was deposed precisely when and how God decreed it (see Isa 10:5-34; 37:33-38). Isaiah said the same about the king of Babylon (Isa. 13:1-14:32). And Isaiah is even more specific about the government of Persia, calling Cyrus, king of Persia, God's "anointed" (messiah) (Isa. 41:2-4; 44:24-28; 45:1-13).

Jeremiah wrote pointedly that God "plucks up and breaks down" nations and kingdoms and also "builds them up and plants them" (Jer 18:5-11). And the Lord spoke to Jeremiah plainly about the origin of civil government:

It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomsoever it seems right to me (Jeremiah 27:5).

In this same passage (Jer. 27: 1-11), the Lord calls Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan emperor, "My servant . . .", declaring that the Babylonian king received his governing position and his government by God's sovereign providence.

The Bible goes so far as to represent God as the One who "stirs up the spirits" of heathen rulers to fulfill divine purposes (see II Chron. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1; Jer. 51:11; Rev. 17:17). The book of Daniel is our richest source of Biblical revelation showing the acknowledgment of God as the source of and authority over civil government.

First, the inspired prophet says:

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings . . ." (Dan. 2:20,21). Then Daniel records that king Nebuchadnezzar, impressed with the prophet's demonstration of supernatural wisdom, uttered, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries . . ." (Dan. 2:47). After Nebuchadnezzar witnessed the miraculous salvation from the fiery furnace of the three Hebrew men and the fourth in the furnace, "like a son of the gods", the heathen emperor said: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set at nought the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God" (Dan. 3:28). Notice, Nebuchadnezzar admitted that the Hebrew God had "set at nought" the machinations of unjust civil government! Next, Nebuchadnezzar prefaces the account of his egoistic dream with the statement: "It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has wrought toward me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation" (Dan. 4:2,3). In the middle of the account the king relates the message from God's angel: "The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men" (Dan. 4:17).

At the end of the account, the Babylonian despot now humbled and perhaps even a "believer" states:

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives for ever; for his dominion and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the

inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing; and he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What doest thou?" . . . Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; for all his works are right and his ways are just and those who walk in pride he is able to abase (Dan. 4:34-37).

After king Belshazzar (son or grandson of Nebuchadnezzar) saw the handwriting on the wall, he called for Daniel's "interpretation." Daniel told him:

"O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty; and because of the greatness of the glory that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him . . . But when his heart was lifted up . . . so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him . . . until he knew that the Most High God rules over the kingdom of men, and sets over it whom he will . . . And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this. . . but the God in whose hand is your breath . . . you have not honored . . ." (Dan. 5:17-23).

Daniel also documents for all generations of mankind the decree of Darius, king of Persia, who wrote after witnessing Daniel's miraculous deliverance from the lion's den:

I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions (Dan. 6:26,27).

The rest of the book of Daniel, chapters seven through twelve, is one prophecy after another detailing how God will exert his sovereign, providential creation and administration of successive human governments (Persian, Greek, Syrian, Ptolemaic, and Roman) (see Daniel, Bible Study Textbook, 3rd ed. by Paul T. Butler, College Press). Daniel is not the final word of the Old Testament on this matter. The "minor" prophet Hosea contributes further to the revelation that God is the source of civil government (Hosea 8:4; 13:11); so does Amos (Amos 1:1-2:16); Jonah's book makes it plain that God expects obedience from even the most heathen of civil governments (Nineveh – Assyria) and honors such obedience when it occurs; Micah pronounces God's judgment upon unjust and wicked civil rulers (Micah 3:1-4; 3:9-11); the book of Nahum is God's wrath predicted against the civil government of Assyria for its arrogance, cruelty and wickedness; Habakkuk is a prediction of God's use of Babylon's civil ruler to execute God's judgment upon Israel-Judah. A search of the Old Testament prophets would uncover some teaching from each of them about civil government.

The New Testament, while not as prolific as the Old, categorically and clearly declares that not only is God the source and origin of civil government, but it also reveals that, since Jesus Christ is co-equal with God (John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:19; 2:9, etc.), he, too, is the origin of civil government.

Jesus refused to succumb to the lie of the devil when that arch-enemy claimed all the kingdoms of the world had been delivered unto his satanic sovereignty (Luke 4:5-7). Jesus knew who was sovereign over civil governments – God is to be worshipped as

Sovereign, not the devil. Jesus taught Simon Peter that he, Jesus, really did not need to pay taxes to civil authorities because he, Jesus, was "prince" over them; but Jesus paid the tax rather than have anyone offended and misunderstand their duty to civil governments (Matt. 17:24-27). Jesus taught that while "Caesar" (civil government) has his place in this world, God is sovereign and must have priority and sovereignty (Matt. 22:15-22). Jesus also taught that God exercises sovereign providence over all civil governments and over history (Matt. 24; Mark. 13; Luke 21).

Jesus intended that his apostles believe his sovereignty over all civil situations, whether just or unjust, for when the mob came to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane and the apostles drew their swords, Jesus said: "Put your sword back into its place . . . Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legion of angels . . . ? (Matt. 26:52,53). But the classic statement of Jesus Christ concerning God as the source of civil power came when Pilate, Roman procurator said, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" and Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above . . ." (John 19: 10,11).

John the Baptist, prophet of God, confronted Herod Antipas, king of the Jews, with God's sovereignty in even the "personal" affairs of civil rulers when he said to Herod about the king's illicit marriage to Herodias (Herod's sister-in-law and niece), "It is not lawful for you to have her" (Matt. 14:4). John told Herod that God's law was higher than any civil rule or ruler. John told other civil servants the same (Luke 3:10-14).

When Peter and John were arraigned before the Jewish civil and religious authorities and charged to stop preaching the resurrection of Christ, their answer was: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19). Clearly, the apostles believed civil rulers and governments were to be subservient to the higher laws and commandments of God and his Son. They expressed this even more firmly when they reported this incident to their friends and joined them in prayer (Acts 4:23-31). Gamaliel, celebrated Hebrew rabbi of the first century A.D., also believed that all government was from God and was to be subject to God (Acts 5:33-39).

Paul, missionary to the Gentiles, preached this concept before the Greek philosophers at Athens (Acts 17:26); he preached it to the governor Felix (Acts 24:25); he preached it to king Agrippa (Acts 26:27-29).

In the New Testament epistles there are two categorical statements declaring that the principle of civil government is ordained, originated and sustained by God. The apostle Paul's statement in Romans 13:1-7 has been analyzed in the opening paragraph of this chapter. The apostle Peter wrote, similarly:

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor (I Pet. 2:13-17).

The Greek verb *hupotagete* (translated "Be subject") is in the imperative mood, meaning it is not simply a suggestion but a command. The Christian is to "be subject" to every human "institution" "for the Lord's sake." The Christian obeys civil government (so long as that government does not order the Christian to disobey a clear command of God) in order to glorify the Lord. Just as a Christian glorifies the Lord by worship, stewardship, evangelism, personal holiness, he glorifies the Lord by obeying every human ordinance.

The Greek noun *ktisis* (translated "institution") is related to the Greek verb *ktizo* which describes the action of bringing or creating order in the place of disorder. *Ktisis* is translated "ordinance" in the KJV. The idea is that "human institutions" are the Lord's instrument for producing order within human society. Therefore, all men should obey them when they produce an ordered society. Emperors (Gr. *basileis*, "kings") and governors (Gr. *hegemosin* "leaders") are "sent" by God. The Greek participle *pempomenois* is present tense, passive. Emperors and governors are "continually being acted upon by God as he sends them" to accomplish his purpose. God continues to send "human institutions" and rulers. Their purpose is to "punish" (Gr. *ekdikēsē* "avenge") evildoers (Gr. *kakopoion*) and "praise" (Gr. *epainōn*, "strongly praise") evildoers (Gr. *agathopoion*).

When civil governments and governors fulfill the purpose for which God sends them, all men, and especially Christians, are to obey them. They are doing God's will. "Human institutions" are God's "embassies" (Gr. *pempomenois*, "ones being sent") in a sin-infested world of disorder to bring order. "Human institutions" are God's "servant" (Gr. *diakonos*, "deacon, minister") to carry out God's will (Rom. 13:4). Next, Peter says, "For it is God's will . . ." and the Greek phrase reads, *hoti houtos estin to thelema tou theou*, literally, "because so is the will of the God . . ." The emphasis in the Greek syntax is that Christian submission to human institutions is specifically the will of God. Christians who disobey civil governments which are fulfilling their appointed mission to punish evil and reward good, are disobeying the will of God! Furthermore, Peter says, Christians are to obey in order to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." The implication is that disobedience, and even verbal abuse, of properly functioning civil government is done by fools and ignoramuses. Finally, Peter says, "Fear God. Honor the emperor." When Peter wrote that, Nero (profligate, pervert, diabolical) was Roman emperor. Peter certainly does not mean one should merely "honor" the principle of human government. We should "honor" (Gr. *timate*, "pay homage to"; same word is used of "honoring" parents and "honoring" elders) the office or concept of human rulership so that social order may be maintained.

It is unequivocally the will of God that civil government be instituted. God ordains it and sustains it. Civil rule has its origin in God. Other New Testament passages declare it and/or imply it. Paul states that when the "end comes" (the final resurrection) God's sovereign power will "destroy every rule and every authority and power" (I Cor. 15:24). Human institutions rule only by God's permission.

Paul wrote that Christ has been exalted "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" and that God has "put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church . . ." (Eph 1:20-23). Civil government exists under the rule and for the purpose of Christ and his Church. God has highly exalted Jesus Christ, says Paul, so that at his name (under his authority) "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth . . ." (Phil. 2:9-11), and that would include every "human

institution" and every human "authority." Colossians 1:15-20, much like Ephesians 1:20-23, reveals that "in him (Christ) all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities – all things were created through him and for him." All civil governments and dominions originated with Christ and for Christ and they "hold together" by his sovereign power.

Paul told the young evangelist Timothy that one of the duties of his office was to "urge" godly men and women to prayers of "supplication, intercession and thanksgiving for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way." God is responsible for the origin of human governments and he holds their workings and their destinies in his hands. He will answer prayers on their behalf (I Tim. 2:1-4).

Another duty of the office of Christian evangelists is to "remind them (Christians) to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men" (Titus 3:1,2). It is the duty of Christian leaders to exhort the body of believers concerning their responsibility toward civil government because it is ordained by the will of God.

Finally, the entire book of Revelation (and specifically Rev. 1:5; 4:11; 11:15-18; 18:1-24; 19:1-3; 20:1-15) shows that civil governments have their origin from God. The book also teaches that a civil government (in this case the Roman empire) which perverts and prostitutes its divinely decreed purpose – when it rewards evil and punishes good – will be chastened by God and eventually, if it does not repent, destroyed.

The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise thy great and terrible name! Holy is he! Mighty King, lover of justice, thou hast established equity; thou hast executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Extol the Lord our God; worship at his footstool. Holy is he! (Psa. 99:1-5).

The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all (Psa. 103:19).

By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles govern the earth (Prov. 8:15,16).