

# BIBLICAL CIVIL GOVERNMENT VERSUS THE BEAST; AND, THE BASIS FOR CIVIL RESISTANCE

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Reformation is desperately needed in our languishing nations. In the past, not only did biblical reformation sweep the church in doctrine, worship, and government, but also reformation of biblical Christianity was promoted and accelerated by Christian magistrates who wholeheartedly supported and defended the ministry of the reformed churches. Reformation is never easy. The truth is no more fashionable today than it was at the time of our reformed and covenanted forefathers. If we would see reformation we must return to the old paths of our God and of our forefathers. What is presented in the following pages is not a novel view of civil magistracy, but one which is believed to be both biblical and representative of our reformed and presbyterian forefathers from the covenanted reformation at the time of the Westminster Assembly. Civil magistracy is a blessed ordinance of the living God, given to the human family in order that it might reflect the order in which God so much delights ("For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" 1 Cor. 14:33). This ordinance should be so cherished by God's people that when the ruling civil magistrate cannot be owned as "the ordinance of God" within a nation, the hearts of God's people both sadly bemoan that fact and earnestly pray that God would in His mercy remove His righteous anger from the land and grant nursing fathers to the church. May God be pleased to open the eyes of His people to the need for reformation in the divine ordinance of civil magistracy.

## **1. The Triune God is the supreme ruler of the universe ("The Lord God omnipotent reigneth" Rev. 19:6).**

- a. All civil, ecclesiastical, and domestic power (whether physical power or moral power) find their original source in God.
- b. Thus, all creaturely power and authority (in whatever sphere exercised) is **derivative from God** ("For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" Rom. 11:36) and **accountable to God** ("My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" Jms. 3:1).

## **2. Civil magistracy is a divine ordinance immediately derived from God as Creator ("Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" Rom. 13:1,2). Whereas ecclesiastical ministry is a divine ordinance immediately derived from Christ as Mediator ("And he [i.e. Christ--GLP] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors, and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" Eph. 4:11,12).**

- a. Thus, civil magistracy is a divine ordinance founded upon the law of nature (which law of nature was originally imprinted upon the conscience of Adam in his unfallen state, and was subsequently summarized in the decalogue, Ex. 20:3-17).

b. Even had Adam not fallen into sin, it seems unavoidable that there would have been a need for civil order among a sinless race of millions of human beings (albeit, civil order without the power of the sword). For angels though created without sin, were yet established according to a divinely ordered government from the beginning ("For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers" Col. 1:16). Likewise, angels since the fall are ordered according to a government, both wicked angels ("For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" Eph. 6:12) and holy angels ("But, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me" Dan. 10:13).

c. Thus, as Gillespie has correctly observed, magistracy as a divine ordinance is founded in the law of nature, and therefore all nations (whether Christian or non-Christian) are under its obligation:

But magistracy or civil government hath a foundation in the law of nature and nations (yea, might and should have had place, and been of use, though man had not sinned); therefore, the reason of the proposition is because the law of nature and nations, and the law which was written in man's heart, in his first creation, doth not flow from Christ as Mediator, but from God as Creator.<sup>1</sup>

[F]or the political or civil power is grounded upon the law of nature itself, and for that cause it is common to infidels with Christians; the power ecclesiastical dependeth immediately upon the positive law of Christ alone: that [i.e. civil power--GLP] belongeth to the universal dominion of God the Creator over all nations; but this [i.e. ecclesiastical power--GLP] unto the special and economical kingdom of Christ the Mediator, which he exerciseth in the church alone, and which is not of this world.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Civil magistracy is "the minister of God to thee for good" (Rom. 13:4).

a. Hence, civil government serves God (according to His moral law), and serves the people for their good (according to that same moral law).

b. The "good" which "the minister of God" administers on behalf of his subjects must be measured according to God's moral law in nature within a heathen nation ("For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts" Rom. 2:14,15) and according to God's moral law in Scripture within a Christian nation ("All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" 2 Tim. 3:16,17).

c. It is not merely that civil magistracy **should be** the minister of God to thee for good", but rather that civil magistracy **is** the minister of God to thee for good" (Rom. 13:4).

d. If it does not serve this end, then according to Paul it is not the divine ordinance of civil magistracy, "for the throne is established by righteousness" (Prov. 16:12).

**4. Though civil government is founded upon God as Creator, it is administered by Christ as Mediator.**

- a. God has put all things under the feet of Christ, so that Christ as mediatorial head might govern all things to the benefit of the church (Eph. 1:22; cf. Mt. 28:18; 1 Cor. 15:27).
- b. Civil government is pre-eminently included among the "all things" that God has given to Christ for the benefit of the church ("And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet" Is. 49:23; cf. Ps. 2:1-12; Ezra 1:1-4; Is. 60:1-22).
- c. Because God has ordained civil magistracy for the benefit of the church, prayer is to be made on behalf of "kings, and all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:2).

**5. Civil magistracy is "the ordinance of God" and "the minister of God to thee for good" by means of: (a) *institution* (i.e. meeting the qualifications for civil magistracy as found in God's moral law); and by means of (b) *constitution* (i.e. securing the consent of the people and the magistrate's investiture of power by means of a covenant between himself and the people).**

- a. Note the following biblical passages which confirm that civil magistracy is **instituted** upon the foundation of the moral law :

**(1) Exodus 18:21**

Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers.

**(2) Deuteronomy 17:14,15,18,19**

When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. . . . And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them. . . .

**(3) 2 Samuel 23:2,3**

The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

**(4) Job 34:17**

Shall even he that hateth right govern?

**(5) Psalm 94:20**

Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee [i.e with God--GLP], which

frameth mischief by a law?

**(6) Proverbs 16:12**

It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.

**(7) Isaiah 10:1**

Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed.

**(8) Romans 13:3,4**

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. . . . For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

b. Note the following historical quotations from our reformed forefathers and creeds which corroborate the Scriptures by declaring that civil magistracy is **instituted** to meet certain moral obligations:

**(1) John Calvin**

Yet civil government has as its appointed end, so long as we live among men, to cherish and protect the outward worship of God, to defend sound doctrine of piety and the position of the church, to adjust our life to the society of men, to form our social behavior to civil righteousness, to reconcile us with one another, and to promote general peace and tranquility. 3

It [i.e. civil government--GLP] does not, I repeat, look to this only, but also prevents idolatry, sacrilege against God's name, blasphemies against his truth, and other public offenses against religion from arising and spreading among the people; it prevents the public peace from being disturbed; it provides that each man may keep his property safe and sound; that men may carry on blameless intercourse among themselves; that honesty and modesty may be preserved among men. In short, it provides that a public manifestation of religion may exist among Christians, and that humanity be maintained among men. 4

Now in this place we ought to explain in passing the office of the magistrates, how it is described in the Word of God and the things in which it consists. If Scripture did not teach that it extends to both Tables of the Law, we could learn this from secular writers: for no one has discussed the office of magistrates, the making of laws, and public welfare, without beginning at religion and divine worship. . . . Since, therefore, among all philosophers religion takes first place, and since this fact has always been observed by universal consent of all nations, let Christian princes and magistrates be ashamed of their negligence if they do not apply themselves to this concern. And we have already shown that these duties are especially enjoined upon them by God; and it is fitting that they should labor to protect and assert the honor of him whose representatives they are, and by whose grace they govern. 5

**(2) John Knox**

Now, if the moral law is the constant and unchangeable will of God, to which the Gentile is no less bound than was the Jew; and if God wills, that amongst the Gentiles the ministers and executors of his law be now appointed, as sometimes they were appointed amongst the Jews; further, if the execution of justice is no less requisite in the policy of the Gentiles, than ever it was amongst the Jews; what man can be so foolish to suppose or believe, that God will now admit those persons to sit in judgment, or to reign over men in the commonwealth of the Gentiles, whom he by his expressed word and ordinance did before debar and exclude from the same? 6

No manifest idolater, nor notorious transgressor of God's holy precepts, ought to be promoted to any public regiment [i.e. government--GLP], honour, or dignity, in any realm, province, or city that has subjected itself to his blessed evangel. 7

### **(3) George Buchanan**

B.--Hence we shall find the voice of the king and of the law to be the same. But whence is their authority derived? The king's from the law or the law's from the king? M.--The king's from the law. B.--How do you come at that conclusion? M.--By considering that a king is not intended for restraining the law, but the law for restraining the king; and it is from the law that a king derives his quality of royalty; since without it he would be a tyrant. B.--The law then is paramount to the king, and serves to direct and moderate his passions and actions. 8

### **(4) Samuel Rutherford**

So, if the king be a living law by office, and the law put in execution which God hath commanded, then, as the moral law is by divine institution, so must the officer of God be . . . the keeper, preserver, and avenger of God's law. 9  
But then, this which they call perogative royal, is no more than a power to govern according to law . . . . 10

### **(5) George Gillespie**

41. The orthodox churches believe also, and do willingly acknowledge, that every lawful magistrate, being by God himself constituted the keeper and defender of both tables of the law, may and ought first and chiefly to take care of God's glory, and (according to his place, or in his manner and way) to preserve religion when pure, and to restore it when decayed and corrupted: and also to provide a learned and godly ministry, schools also and synods, as likewise to restrain and punish as well atheists, blasphemers, heretics and schismatics, as the violators of justice and civil peace. 11

### **(6) *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici or The Divine Right of Church Government, originally asserted by the Ministers of Sion College, London (1646)***

Nor is this only our private judgment, or the opinion of some few particular persons touching the granting or bounding of the magistrate's power about matters of religion; but with us we have the suffrage of many reformed churches, who, in their Confessions of Faith published to the world, do fully and clearly express themselves to the same effect.

**The Helvetian church** ["The First Confession of Helvetia" 1536--GLP] thus:

Since every magistrate is of God, it is (unless he would exercise tyranny) his chief duty, all blasphemy being repressed, to defend and provide for religion, and to execute this to his utmost strength, as the prophet teacheth out of the word; in which respect the pure and free preaching of God's word, a right, diligent, and well-instituted discipline of youth, citizens and scholars; a just and liberal maintenance of the ministers of the church, and a solicitous care of the poor, (whereunto all ecclesiastical means belong,) have the first place. After this, &c.

**The French churches** ["The Confession of France" 1559--GLP] thus: He also therefore committed the sword into the magistrates' hands, that they might repress faults committed not only against the second table, but also against the first. . . .

**The Belgic church** ["The Belgic Confession" 1566--GLP] thus: Therefore he hath armed the magistrates with a sword, that they may punish the bad and defend the good. Furthermore, it is their duty not only to be solicitous about preserving of civil polity, but also to give diligence that the sacred ministry may be preserved, all idolatry and adulterate worship of God may be taken out of the way, the kingdom of antichrist may be pulled down, but Christ's kingdom propagated. . . . 12

**(7) "The Confession of Saxony" (1551)**

First, God would that the magistrate without all doubt should sound forth the voice of the moral law among men touching discipline, according to the Ten Commandments, or the law natural; that is he would first, by the voice of the magistrate, have sovereign and immutable laws to be propounded, forbidding the worship of idols, blasphemies, perjuries, unjust murders, wandering lusts, breach of wedlock, thefts and frauds in bargains, in contracts, and in judgments. . . . And well hath it been said of old, 'The magistrate is the keeper of the law;' that is, of the First and Second Table, as concerning discipline and good order." 13

**(8) "The Confession of Faith" of Scotland (1560)**

Moreover, to kings, princes, rulers, and magistrates, we affirm that chiefly and most principally the conservation and purgation of the religion appertains; so that not only they are appointed for civil policy, but also for maintenance of the true religion, and for suppressing of idolatry and superstition whatsoever: as in David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and others, highly commended for their zeal in that case, may be espied. 14

**(9) "The National Covenant" of Scotland (1638)**

That all Kings and Princes at their coronation, and reception of their princely authority, shall make their faithful promise by their solemn oath, in the presence of the eternal God, that, enduring the whole time of their lives, they shall serve the same eternal God, to the uttermost of their power, according as he hath required in his most holy word, contained in the Old and New Testament; and according to the same word shall maintain the true religion of Christ Jesus, the preaching of his holy word, the due and right ministration of the sacraments now received and preached within this realm, (according to the Confession of Faith immediately preceding) and shall abolish and gainstand all false religion contrary to the same; and shall rule the people committed to their charge, according to the will and command of God revealed in his foresaid word, and according to the laudable laws and constitutions received in this realm, nowise repugnant to the said will of the

eternal God; and shall procure, to the uttermost of their power, to the kirk of God, and whole Christian people, true and perfect peace in all time coming: and that they shall be careful to root out of their empire all hereticks and enemies to the true worship of God, who shall be convicted by the true kirk of God of the foresaid crimes. 15

**(10) "The Solemn League and Covenant" Of The Three Kingdoms Of Scotland, England, And Ireland (1643)**

III. We shall, with the same sincerity, reality, and constancy, in our several avocations, endeavour, with our estates and lives, mutually to preserve the rights and privileges of the Parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms; and to preserve and defend the King's Majesty's person and authority, **in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and liberties of the kingdoms**; that the world may bear witness with our consciences of our loyalty, and that we have no thoughts or intentions to diminish his Majesty's just power and greatness. 16

**(11) "The Westminster Confession of Faith" (1647)**

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God. 17

**(12) The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1649)**

It doth therefore concerne all ranks and conditions of persons to be the more warie and circumspect, especially in that which concerns the National Covenant, and the Solemn League and Covenant, that before his Majestie [i.e. Charles II--GLP] be admitted to the exercise of his Royall Power, that by and attour the Oath of Coronation, he shall assure and declare by his Solemn Oath under his hand and seal his allowance of the National Covenant, and of the Solemn League and Covenant, and obligation to prosecute the ends thereof in his Station and Calling, and that he shall for himself and his successours, consent and agree to Acts of Parliament, injoyning the Solemn League and Covenant, and fully Establishing Presbyterial Government, the Directory of Worship, the Confession of Faith and Catechisme, as they are approven by the General Assembly of this Kirk and Parliament of this Kingdom, in all his Majesties Dominions, and that he shall never make opposition to any of these, nor endeavour any change thereof. 18

c. Civil magistracy is recognized and acknowledged to be "the ordinance of God" and "the minister of God to thee for good" not only by means of **institution** (i.e. meeting the qualifications for civil magistracy as found in God's moral law in nature and in Scripture), but also by means of **constitution** (i.e. securing the consent of the people and being invested with power by means of a covenant [whether explicit or implicit] between the magistrate and the people). Note the following biblical passages which confirm that the office of civil magistracy is ordained by God, but that the civil magistrate himself is **constituted** by consent of and covenant with the people.

**(1) Deuteronomy 17:14,15 (emphases added)**

When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, **I will set a king over me**, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee.

**(2) Judges 8:22 (emphases added)**

Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, **Rule thou over us**.

**(3) Judges 9:6 (emphases added)**

And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, **and made Abimelech king**.

**(4) Judges 11:11 (emphases added)**

Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, **and the people made him head and captain over them**.

**(5) 1 Samuel 11:15 (emphases added)**

And all the people went to Gilgal; **and there they made Saul king** before the LORD in Gilgal.

**(6) 1 Chronicles 12:38 (emphases added)**

All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, **to make David king over all Israel**: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart **to make David king**.

**(7) 2 Samuel 16:18 (emphases added)**

And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, **and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose**, his will I be, and with him will I abide.

**(8) 2 Kings 14:21 (emphases added)**

And all the people of Judah took Azariah, which was sixteen years old, **and made him king**.

**(9) 2 Chronicles 23:3 (emphases added)**

And all the congregation **made a covenant with the king** in the house of God.

d. Not only does God's Word establish that the civil magistrate is constituted and invested with power by the people, but this is confirmed by our reformed forefathers as well.

**(1) John Knox**

It is not birth only, nor propinquity [i.e. nearness--GLP] of blood, that makes a king lawfully to reign above a people professing Christ Jesus and his eternal verity; but **in his election** must the ordinance, which God has established in the election of inferior judges, be observed. 19

But if either rashly they have promoted any manifestly wicked, or yet ignorantly **have chosen such a one**, as after declares himself unworthy of regiment above the

people of God (and such be all idolaters and cruel persecutors), most justly may the same men depose and punish him, that unadvisedly before **they did nominate, appoint, and elect.** 20

**(2) Samuel Rutherford**

If God doth regulate his people in making this man king, not that man, then he thereby insinuateth that the people have a power to make this man king, and not that man. But God doth regulate his people in making a king; **therefore the people have a power to make this man, not that man king.** 21

Therefore it remaineth only that **the suffrages of the people of God is that just title** and divine calling that kings have now to their crowns. 22

**(3) The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1649)**

**It doth therefore concerne all ranks and conditions of persons to be the more warie and circumspect, especially in that which concerns the National Covenant, and the Solemn League and Covenant, that before his Majestie [i.e. Charles II] be admitted to the exercise of his Royall Power,** that by and attour the Oath of Coronation, he shall assure and declare by his Solemn Oath under his hand and seal his allowance of the National Covenant, and of the Solemn League and Covenant, and obligation to prosecute the ends thereof in his Station and Calling, and that he shall for himself and his successours, consent and agree to Acts of Parliament, injoyning the Solemn League and Covenant, and fully Establishing Presbyterial Government, the Directory of Worship, the Confession of Faith and Catechisme, as they are approven by the General Assembly of this Kirk and Parliament of this Kingdom, in all his Majesties Dominions, and that he shall never make opposition to any of these, nor endeavour any change thereof. 23

**6. Subjection for conscience sake, tribute, fear, and honor is wholeheartedly due to civil magistracy that can be identified as "the minister of God to thee for good" (Rom. 13:4). This alone is "the ordinance of God" (Rom. 13:2).**

a. It is a flagrant violation of God's moral law (the fifth commandment) to resist the ordinance of civil magistracy, for in so doing, one is resisting God ("Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" Rom. 13:2).

b. To submit to civil authority "for conscience sake" certainly implies that the civil magistracy in question is approved both by God's moral law and by the people within the kingdom.

c. **John Knox** establishes that only lawful magistrates (not tyrants) are "the ordinance of God", and therefore are to be given the submission required by the apostle Paul in Romans 13:

As the apostle in these words [i.e. Rom. 13:1-4--GLP] most straitly commanded obedience to be given to **lawful powers**, pronouncing God's wrath and vengeance against such as shall resist the ordinance of God. . . . And this one point I wish your wisdoms deeply to consider, that God has not placed you above your brethren to reign as tyrants without respect of their profit and commodity. You hear the Holy Ghost witness the contrary, affirming that all lawful powers are

God's ministers, ordained for the wealth [*well-being*--the editor has added this explanatory note], profit, and salvation of their subjects, and not for their destruction. Could it be said (I beseech you) that magistrates, enclosing their subjects in a city without all victuals, or giving unto them no other victuals but such as were poisoned, did rule for the profit of their subjects? I trust that none would be so foolish as so to affirm; but that rather every discreet person would boldly affirm, that such as did so were **tyrants unworthy of all regiment** [i.e. government--GLP].<sup>24</sup>

d. **Christopher Goodman** ( a contemporary of Knox), who received the wrath and threats of Mary Tudor of England for his uncompromising stance as to what constituted lawful civil magistracy, has written:

Otherwise, if without fear they [i.e. civil magistrates--GLP] transgress God's laws themselves and command others to do the like, **then have they lost that honor and obedience which otherwise their subjects did owe unto them:** and ought no more to be taken for magistrates: but punished as private transgressors. . . .<sup>25</sup>

e. "**The Confession of Saxony**" (1551) repeatedly draws the reader's attention to the word "lawful" in the article entitled "Of the Civil Magistrate" (thus recognizing that there is a necessary distinction to be drawn between a lawful and unlawful magistrate, and that conscientious subjection is due to the lawful magistrate alone).

We teach, therefore, that in the whole doctrine of God delivered by the Apostles and Prophets, the order and degrees of the civil state are avouched; and that magistrates, laws, judgments, and **the lawful society** of mankind, are not by chance sprung up among men: and that, although there be many horrible confusions, which grow from the devil, and the madness of men, yet that **the lawful government and society of men is ordained of God.** . . . This heavenly doctrine we propound unto the churches, which establisheth **lawful authority**, and the whole civil state. . . . His wisdom is declared by order; which consists in the discerning of virtues and vices, and in the associating of mankind under **lawful governments**, and by contracts arranged in marvellous wisdom.<sup>26</sup>

f. "**The Confession of Faith**" of Scotland (1560) affirms the duty of all men to be subject to the supreme authority as God's ordinance so long as the magistrate does that which belongs to his office:

So that whosoever goes about to take away or to confound the whole state of civil policies, now long established; we affirm the same men not only to be enemies to mankind, but also wickedly to fight against God's expressed will. . . . And therefore we confess and avow, that such as resist the supreme power (**doing that thing which appertains to his charge**), do resist God's ordinance, and therefore cannot be guiltless. <sup>27</sup>

g. "**The Belgic Confession**" (1566) was written in the heat of political upheaval within France, and likewise specifies that Christians are to be subject to lawful magistrates (for if the qualification "lawful" simply means any ruler, whether he be tyrant or nursing father, then the qualification is meaningless and unnecessary).

Moreover all men, of what dignity, condition, or state soever they be, ought to be subject to their **lawful magistrates**, and pay unto them subsidies and tributes, and obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the word of God. <sup>28</sup>

h. **"The Westminster Confession of Faith" (1647)**, acknowledged by many to be the most precise and faithful creed of orthodox Christianity, specifically states that only "lawful" civil power is not to be resisted as "the ordinance of God." Thus, it follows (from not just one reformed theologian, but from this entire assembly of reformed divines who met over a period of five years) that since only "lawful" civil power is "the ordinance of God", then only "lawful" civil magistracy is to be submitted to for conscience sake, and honored as "the minister of God to thee for good." The reformed divines of the Westminster Assembly manifestly acknowledged a necessary distinction between lawful and unlawful magistracy.

And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose **any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God.** 29

**7. "The ordinance of God" (Rom. 13:2) is not equivalent to every civil authority that God in His providence places upon a throne. That which God directs in history by His providence is not necessarily that which He orders by His moral precepts (and it is by His moral precepts that civil magistracy is instituted). Therefore, it must be maintained that "the ordinance of God" is determined by the moral and revealed will of God (rather than by His providential will). For if there is no distinction established between God's moral will and God's providential will in determining who is "the ordinance of God" the following errors will certainly result:**

a. If there is no distinction to be made between the preceptive will of God and the providential will of God, then providence is equally in all respects the rule of duty, as much as is the precept. Then no matter how evil a civil magistrate becomes he must be acknowledged to be "the ordinance of God" and "the minister of God to thee for good."

b. If there is no distinction to be made between the preceptive will of God and the providential will of God, then providence must express God's approbation and institution in civil government as much as His preceptive will. One must conclude then that anything God states in His moral law concerning civil government is merely a suggestion (rather than a moral commandment) from God which civil magistrates may take or leave at their own discretion.

c. If there is no difference between the providential will of God and the moral will of God, then why would only murderers and thieves who ascend to the civil throne be acknowledged as "the ministers of God to thee for good", and not the murderer or the thief who usurps the place of a father as head in his family, or who slaughters the elders of a church and claims authority to rule in the church? If one would not recognize the tyrant who usurps the leadership in a family or a church as "the ordinance of God", why should he recognize the tyrant who usurps the leadership in a nation?

d. If, in fact, we are to acknowledge as "the ordinance of God" whoever may sit upon a throne (and merely because he has gained the scepter to the throne in God's providence), then we must acknowledge as "the minister of God to thee for good" the beast of Revelation (i.e. the tyrannical civil power of anti-Christ Rome) who receives his power from Satan (Rev. 13:2,4), who is worshipped by all those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 13:4), who blasphemes God in his official capacity (Rev. 13:6), and who murders and

persecutes God's people. Furthermore, we must in all consistency acknowledge Satan as "the minister of God to thee for good", for he is the one who gives the beast his power and who is designated "the prince of this world" (Jn. 12:31; Jn. 14:30)

e. Such a fallacious view of civil magistracy would justify the very sin of resistance against a lawful civil government which Paul forbids ("Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" Rom. 13:2). For whoever could successfully gain the scepter to the throne by God's providential will (even if it was to remove the scepter from the hands of a righteous ruler) would become "the ordinance of God" to whom the people must submit for conscience sake and honor as "the minister of God to thee for good."

f. Or this erroneous view of civil magistracy could just as well forbid and renounce all resistance (under any condition) against the civil magistrate that is in power (regardless of his wicked tyranny), and in so doing denounce all revolutions against tyranny as wicked (e.g. the revolutions of righteous judges and kings against tyranny found in the pages of Scripture; or the revolutions against tyranny in history as in the case of the Dutch under William of Orange against the Spanish, or the resistance of Scotland against the tyranny of Charles I, or the U.S. war for independence against the tyranny of the king of England; or even the resistance of a Christian against Satan who gives to the beast his civil power to rule).

g. This unbiblical view of civil magistracy is contrary to the Word of God wherein the Spirit of God testifies that the actual possession of the throne, under **the providential power** of God, may be in the hands of one ruler, while **the moral power** and "ordinance of God" is in the hands of another.

(1) Though **Absalom** had won the hearts of the people of Israel and had removed **David** from the throne (2 Sam. 15-18), did he by his mere possession of the throne become "the ordinance of God?" If not, then mere possession of civil power does not institute nor constitute one as "the minister of God to thee for good." Furthermore, was David divested of his lawful authority to rule upon the throne of Israel because he was unseated by his son?

(2) Though wicked **Athaliah** had reached the throne of Judah (in God's providence) by murdering all her royal grandsons (except Joash who was hidden from her), she was not acknowledged to be "the ordinance of God." Rather she was an usurper of the throne, and was rightfully slain as a tyrant when **Joash** ("the ordinance of God") ascended to the throne (2 Chron. 22:10-23:15).

(3) Though **Jehoram** was by God's providence ruler of the northern kingdom of Israel, **Elisha** the prophet would not give to him the conscientious subjection or honor which was due "the ordinance of God" ("And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee" 2 Kgs. 3:14).

(4) **God** makes it abundantly clear in His word that He does not recognize as His "ordinance" or as His "minister" every magistrate that sits upon a throne, for in rebuking the northern kingdom of Israel for their wickedness, He declares: "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not" (Hos. 8:4). If these kings were not established according to God's moral law, then they were not given authority to rule

by God and cannot be "the minister of God to thee for good."

(5) Therefore, the "higher powers" (Rom. 13:1) to which Christians are to be subject for conscience sake, the "powers" that are ordained of God, the "powers" that are "the minister of God to thee for good", and the "powers" that are to be honored, are those who hold **a moral power** (according to God's moral law in nature and in Scripture) to the throne, not those who merely hold a military power or popular power to the throne (according to God's sovereign providence) .

### **8. Tyrants who claim regal authority to rule over a kingdom cannot receive the conscientious subjection of Christians.**

a. Christians can no more submit for conscience sake to a tyrant who sits upon the throne (by God's providence) than they can submit for conscience sake to the beast (Rev. 13:1-8) or to Satan who both rule by God's providential will.

b. In fact, tyrants ought to be actively resisted for conscience sake by the following means: not granting to them conscientious subjection, not acknowledging them to be the ordinance of God, not honoring them as the minister of God to thee for good, disobeying their unlawful commands, testifying against their wicked rule, praying for the demise of their throne which is established upon wickedness, fleeing their wrath when necessary, and as a last resort revolting against their tyrannical rule when force is necessary for self-defence.

c. This is not sedition, treason, nor revolutionary anarchy, unless one is also willing to condemn the approved testimony of saints in biblical history and in extra-biblical history of these crimes (yea even willing to condemn God Himself for approving such civil resistance), for such a view of lawful resistance against tyrants is neither foreign to Scripture nor to our reformed forefathers.

d. Consider the following incidents of lawful resistance against tyrants in Scripture (this list could easily be multiplied so as to include many more examples, but this should suffice to demonstrate the biblical warrant of lawful resistance against tyrants).

(1) **Abraham** resisted the wicked alliance of kings who had conquered Sodom and Gomorrah, and did not acknowledge them to be "the minister of God" merely because they had gained a military power to rule (in God's providence), but rather Abraham defeated them and rescued Lot from their clutches (Gen. 14:13-16).

(2) **Moses** did not recognize Pharaoh as "the ordinance of God", but resisted his tyranny and delivered Israel from servitude in Egypt (Ex. 7-14).

(3) Judges such as **Othniel** (Judg. 3:8-11), **Ehud** (Judg. 3:12-30), **Shamgar** (Judg. 3:31), **Deborah and Barak** (Judg. 4), **Gideon** (Judg. 6-8), **Jephthah** (Judg. 11-12), and **Samson** (Judg. 13-16) resisted tyrants who ruled over Israel rather than granting to them subjection for conscience sake.

(4) **David** did not subject himself for conscience sake to Absalom as a "higher power" to whom honor was due as "the ordinance of God", but resisted him even though Absalom had won the hearts of all the people of Israel and had gained military control of Israel (2

Sam. 16:15; 2 Sam. 18:6-8).

(5) **Elijah** did not honor Ahab as "the minister of God" for good, but resisted him by fleeing from him and his wicked queen (1 Kgs. 17:3; 1 Kgs. 19:3), and by taking the sword from the hands of Ahab so that he and the people slew the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs. 18:40).

(6) **Elijah** did not acknowledge the lawful authority of king Ahaziah to rule over Israel, for he resisted the king by not obeying the king's order to appear before him and even brought God's fiery judgment upon the representatives of Ahaziah's authority (2 Kgs. 1:9-13).

(7) **Jehoiada** did not subject himself for conscience sake to the tyrant Athaliah, but put her to death even though she accused all those who resisted her of treason (2 Chron. 23:12-15).

(8) **God** Himself resisted the idolatrous kings of Israel by not acknowledging them to be ministers whom He appointed (Hos. 8:4).

(9) **Jesus** instructed His disciples that when they were delivered up to gentile kings for Christ's sake, rather than acknowledging them to be "the ordinance of God", they were to testify against them (Mt. 10:18), and to flee their tyranny rather than submit to them for conscience sake (Mt. 10:23).

(10) God gives wings to **the church** to flee from the persecution which Satan brings against her by means of tyrannical civil and ecclesiastical government rather than commanding the church to render conscientious submission to such tyranny (Rev. 12:14).

(11) "The prince of this world" (Jn. 14:30) is to be resisted by **Christians** (Jms. 4:7). If Satan (who grants power to wicked tyrants to rule) is to be resisted, should not tyrants who rule by Satan's wicked power also be resisted? If we cannot be subject for conscience sake to Satan, how can we be subject for conscience sake to those who rule by his power?

b. The following quotations from reformed forefathers and creeds also confirm that habitual tyranny upon a throne is not "the ordinance of God", and must be resisted.

(1) **John Calvin**

For if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings . . . **I am so far from forbidding them to withstand**, in accordance with their duty, the fierce licentiousness of kings, that, if they wink at kings who violently fall upon and assault the lowly common folk, I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidy, because they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by God's ordinance. 30

**For earthly princes lay aside all their power** when they rise up against God, and are unworthy of being reckoned in the number of mankind. **We ought rather utterly to defy** than to obey them whenever they are so restive [i.e. obstinately disobedient--GLP] and wish to spoil God of his rights, and, as it were, to seize upon his throne and draw him down from heaven.<sup>31</sup>

(2) **John Ponet**

If a prince rob and spoil his subjects, it is theft, **and as a thief [he--GLP] ought to be punished.** If he kill and murder them contrary or without the laws of his country, it is murder, **and as a murderer he ought to be punished.** If he commit adultery, he is an adulterer **and ought to be punished with the same pains that others be.** If he violently ravish men's wives, daughters, or maidens, **the laws that are made against ravishers, ought to be executed on him.** If he go about to betray his country, and to bring the people under a foreign power: he is a traitor, **and as a traitor he ought to suffer.**<sup>32</sup>

(3) **John Knox**

3. **Neither can oath nor promise bind any such people to obey and maintain tyrants against God and against his truth known.**

4. But if either rashly they have promoted any manifest wicked person, or yet ignorantly have chosen such a one, as after declareth himself unworthy of regiment above the people of God (and such be all idolaters and cruel persecutors), most justly may the same men **depose and punish him,** that unadvisedly before they did nominate, appoint, and elect. <sup>33</sup>

(4) **Christopher Goodman**

Otherwise, if without fear they [i.e. civil magistrates--GLP] transgress God's laws themselves and command others to do the like, then have they lost that honor and obedience which otherwise their subjects did owe unto them: **and ought no more to be taken for magistrates: but punished as private transgressors.** . . .<sup>34</sup>  
[T]he apostle saith: There is no power but of God [Rom. 13:1--GLP]: yet doth he not here mean any other powers, but such as are orderly and lawfully institute of God. Either else should he approve all tyranny and oppression, which cometh to any commonwealth by means of wicked and ungodly rulers, which are to be called rightly disorders, and subversions in commonwealths, and not God's ordinance. **For he never ordained any laws to approve, but to reprove and punish tyrants, idolaters, papists and oppressors.** Then when they [i.e. rulers--GLP] are such, they are not God's ordinance. **And in disobeying and resisting such, we do not resist God's ordinance, but Satan, and our sin, which is the cause of such.** Or else, if we shall so conclude with the words of the Apostle [i.e. Paul in Rom. 13:1,2--GLP], that all powers whatsoever they be must be obeyed and not resisted, **then must we confess also, that Satan and all his infernal powers are to be obeyed.**<sup>35</sup>

But where as the kings or rulers are become altogether blasphemers of God, and oppressors and murderers of their subjects, **then ought they to be accounted [i.e. accounted--GLP] no more kings or lawful magistrates, but as private men: and to be examined, accused, condemned and punished by the law of God,** whereunto they are and ought to be subject, and being convicted and punished by that law, it is not man's but God's doing: who as he doth appoint such magistrates over his people by his law, so doth he condemn as well them as the people transgressing against the law. For with God there is no respect of persons. . . .<sup>36</sup>

(5) **Junius Brutus**

The question is , If it be lawful to resist a prince violating the law of God, or ruinating the church, or hindering the restoring of it? If we hold ourselves to the tenure of the Holy Scripture it will resolve us. For, if in this case it had been lawful to the Jewish people (the which may be easily gathered from the books of the Old Testament), yea, if it had been enjoined them, I believe it will not be denied, **that the same must be allowed to the whole people of any Christian kingdom or country whatsoever.** 37

**It is then lawful for Israel to resist the king**, who would overthrow the law of God and abolish His church; and not only so, but also they ought to know that in neglecting to perform this duty, they make themselves culpable of the same crime, and shall bear the like punishment with their king. 38

If their [i.e. the civil magistrate's--GLP] assaults be verbal, their defence must be likewise verbal; **if the sword be drawn against them, they may also take arms, and fight either with tongue or hand, as occasion is.** . . . 39

**(6) George Buchanan**

But those [i.e. civil magistrates--GLP] who openly exercise their power, not for the country, but for themselves, and pay no regard to the public interest, but to their own gratification; who reckon the weakness of their fellow-citizens the establishment of their own authority, and who imagine royalty to be, not a charge entrusted to them by God, but a prey offered to their rapacity, are not connected with us by any civil or human tie, **but ought to be put under an interdict [i.e. cut off from civil authority--GLP], as open enemies to God and man.** 40

**(7) Henry Bullinger**

So then, verily, **we ought not at any time to defend the tyrannical power**, and say that it is of God: for tyranny is not divine, but a devilish, kind of government; and tyrants themselves are properly the servants of the devil, and not of God. . . .41

**(8) Samuel Rutherford**

That power which is contrary to law, and is evil and tyrannical, can tie none to subjection, but is a mere tyrannical power and unlawful; and if it tie not to subjection, **it may lawfully be resisted.** 42

That to resist the king or parliament, is to resist them while as they are doing the thing that appertaineth to their charge, and while they vigilantly travel in the execution of their office. But while king and parliament do acts of tyranny against God's law, and all good laws of men, they do not the things that appertain to their charge and the execution of their office; therefore, by our Confession [i.e. the Scottish Confession of Faith, 1560--GLP], **to resist them in tyrannical acts is not to resist the ordinance of God.** 43

**(9) John Brown of Wamphray**

There is great difference to be put betwixt actual disobeying of, rebelling against, and violently, with force of arms, resisting the lawful magistrate's doing his duty, and commanding just things, warranted by the laws of God and the land, and [on the other hand--GLP] disobeying his unjust acts, and resisting his violent,

tyrannical, oppressing, plundering, spoiling and killing armies. The former is a resisting of the very ordinance of God, forbidden [in--GLP] Rom. xiii., where the Apostle is speaking of the civil magistrate doing his duty, and, in his place, as God's deputy, exercising his office; but, in the other case, the magistrate is out of his function and calling; for God giveth no command to do evil, nor to tyrannise. **He is not God's vicegerent when he playeth the tyrant, and therefore he may be resisted and opposed without any violence done to the office or ordinance of God.** . . . for it is only powers that are ordained of God that must not be resisted; and tyrants, or magistrates turning tyrants, and exercising tyranny, cannot be called the ordinance of God. . . **and so there is no danger in resisting such acts of tyranny;** for tyrants exercising tyranny are no terror to evil-doers, but, on the contrary, they are a terror to good works; and therefore that place, Rom. xiii., cannot be understood of tyrants. It is a true and a worthy saying of famous Mr. Knox, in his *History of Scotland*, lib. 2, p. 141, "There is a great difference betwixt the authority which is God's ordinance and the persons of those who are placed in authority. The authority and God's ordinance can never do wrong, but the corrupt person placed in authority may offend: so that the king, as king, is one thing, and the king acting in tyranny is another thing" . . . . Tyranny is one thing and the office of the king is another thing. . . . 44

(10) **Alexander Shields**

**So that in conscience, we are no more free to prostitute our loyalty and liberty absolutely, in owning every possessor of the magistracy;** than we are free to prostitute our religion and faith implicitly, in owning every pretender to the ministry. 45

But now when tyrants go for magistrates, lest my plea against owning tyranny, should be mistaken, as if it were a pleading for anarchy, I must assert, that I and all those I am vindicating, are for magistracy, as being of divine original, institute for the common good of human and Christian societies, whereunto every soul must be subject. . . and not only for wrath but also for conscience sake. . . which whosoever resisteth, resisteth the ordinance of God, and against which rebellion is a damnable sin. . . . We would give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's; **but to tyrants, that usurp and pervert both the things of God and of Caesar, and of the peoples liberties, we can render none of them, neither God's, nor Caesar's, nor our own: nor can we from conscience give him any other deference, but as an enemy to all, even to God, to Caesar, and the people.** 46

It is not any one or two acts contrary to the royal covenant or office, that doth denude a man of the royal dignity, that God and the people gave him. . . . There is a great difference between a tyrant in act, and a tyrant in habit; the first does not cease to be a king. But on the other hand, as every thing will not make a magistrate a tyrant; **so nothing will make a tyrant by habit a magistrate.** 47

(11) **"The First Helvetic Confession" (1536)**

Seeing that every magistrate is of God, his chief duty (**except it please him to exercise a tyranny**) consisteth in this: to defend and protect religion from all blasphemy . . . .48

(12) **"The Confession of Faith" of Scotland (1560)**

[Addressing sin which God finds "most odious, which always displeases him, and provokes him to anger" is the following sin--GLP] to disobey or resist any that God has placed in authority (**while they pass not over the bounds of their office**).<sup>49</sup>

And therefore we confess and avow, that such as resist the supreme power (**doing that which appertains to his charge**), do resist God's ordinance, and therefore cannot be guiltless. <sup>50</sup>

(13) **"The Belgic Confession" (1566)**

Moreover all men, of what dignity, condition, or state soever they be, ought to be subject **to their lawful magistrates**, and pay unto them subsidies and tributes, and obey them in all things **which are not repugnant to the word of God**.<sup>51</sup>

(14) **"The Westminster Confession of Faith" (1647)**

And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; **they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God**.<sup>52</sup>

If it is the duty of Christians not to resist "lawful" civil authority (as clearly affirmed in "The Confession of Faith", then it is also the duty of Christians to resist "unlawful" civil authority in as much as "where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, **where a sin is forbidden [e.g. as when the Word of God forbids resisting lawful civil magistracy in Rom. 13:2--GLP] the contrary duty is commanded [e.g. resisting unlawful civil magistracy--GLP]."** <sup>53</sup>

(15) **The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland**

But if his Majesty [Charles II--GLP], or any having, or pretending power and Commission from him, shall invade this Kingdom, upon pretext of establishing him in the exercise of Royal power, as it will be an high provocation against God to be accessory or assisting thereto, **so will it be a necessary duty to resist and oppose the same**. . . . That as Magistrates and their power is ordained of God, so are they in the exercise thereof, not to walk according to their owne will, but according to the Law of equity and righteousness, as being the Ministers of GOD for the safety of his People; Therefore a boundless and illimited power is to be acknowledged in no King nor Magistrate; **Neither is Our King to be admitted to the exercise of his power** as long as he refuses to walk in the Administration of the same according to this rule, and the established Laws of the Kingdom, that his Subjects may live under him a quiet and peaceable life in all Godliness and honestie. . . . In the League and Covenant which hath been so solemnly sworne and renewed by this Kingdom, the Dutie of defending and preserving the Kings Person and Authority is joyned with, and subordinat unto the dutie of preserving and defending the true Religion and Liberties of the Kingdoms: And therefore his Majestie standing in opposition to the just and necessary publick desires concerning Religion and Liberties, it were a manifest Breach of Covenant, and a preferring of the Kings interest to the interest of *Jesus Christ*, **to bring him to the exercise of his Royal power**. . . . <sup>54</sup>

**9. Therefore, it is affirmed that the habitual tyrant who flagrantly violates the moral law of God is not "the ordinance of God", but rather "the ordinance of God" and "the minister of God to thee for good" is he who upholds God's moral law.**

**10. Furthermore, it is the moral duty of all Christians to resist civil governments which rule by tyranny and establish their thrones by wickedness. The habitual tyranny of unlawful civil governments against God's moral law and against His Christ is manifested in their framing "mischief by law" (Ps. 94:20). The following are just a few of the many notorious and habitual violations of God's moral law which are legally protected by national constitutions and civil ordinances in nations today.**

a. Legal protection of idolatry and false worship within a nation that has been enlightened by the gospel, together with a refusal to establish the true reformed religion as the only established religion within that nation.

b. Refusal to affirm in constitutional documents that God's moral law is the supreme law of the land (within a nation enlightened by the gospel), but to the contrary, the legal declaration of an immoral constitution to be the supreme law of the land.

c. Refusal to nationally acknowledge Jesus Christ as the supreme Ruler of the nation whom all civil magistrates are obligated to "kiss" (i.e. to publicly honor) in their official functions (Ps. 2:12).

d. Legal protection of public blasphemy against the name of the Lord in all forms of media.

e. Refusal to prohibit all unnecessary work on the Lord's Day.

f. Tyranny exercised over families in prohibiting corporal discipline and home education without government certification.

g. Legal endorsement of the slaughter and murder of unborn children.

h. Legal protection of gross immorality, sexual perversion and heinous pornography.

i. Habitual theft through unjust and excessive taxes and through inflated paper currency.

j. Habitual covenant breaking.

(1) All nations, territories, and dominions that have descended from Great Britain are bound to uphold and to defend "The Solemn League and Covenant" (1643).<sup>55</sup>

(2) "The Solemn League and Covenant" is a civil covenant (it is also a personal covenant and an ecclesiastical covenant as well) which binds all those civil governments of nations that fall under it. The Westminster Assembly considered "all his Majesties dominions" bound by "The Solemn League and Covenant" (which included at that period in history the colonies in America and territories in Canada):

Those Winds which for a while do trouble the Aire, do withall purge and refine it:  
And our trust is that through the most wise Providence and blessing of God, the

Truth by our so long continued agitations, will be better cleared among us, and so our service will prove more acceptable to all the Churches of Christ, but more especially to you, while we have an intente eye to our peculiar Protestation, and to that publick Sacred Covenant [i.e. the Solemn League and Covenant--GLP] entered into by both the Kingdomes, for Uniformity in **all his Majesties Dominions.** 56

(3) Even as the lawful covenant of a father binds all his children presently living as well as those yet to be born ("Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, **by profaning the covenant of our fathers**?" Mal. 2:10, emphases added), likewise the lawful civil covenants of national parents bind their national progeny. If one is willing to grant that the lawful covenant of a father can bind any of his descendants, he must be willing to grant that the same lawful covenant binds all of his descendants, for the same moral obligation that rests upon any one descendant rests upon all descendants.

(4) The United States and Canada as nations (and all other national descendants of Great Britain) are children of Great Britain and are bound by the lawful covenant of their national father solemnly sworn with uplifted hands to the living God in 1643 and renewed on various occasions in Scotland and the United States by Reformed Christians.

(5) The passing of time, changing of national laws, constitutions, and boundaries cannot annul or alter the lawful covenants made with God, for it is God Himself who is the other party to "The Solemn League and Covenant", and He has not changed nor excused covenanted nations from their duties. This is confirmed by the Church of Scotland as it spoke officially through its General Assembly:

Albeit the League and Covenant [i.e. "The Solemn League and Covenant"--GLP] be despised by that prevailing party in England, and the Work of Uniformity, thorow [through--GLP] the retardements and obstructions that have come in the way, be almost forgotten by these Kingdoms, **yet the obligation of that Covenant is perpetual**, and all the duties contained therein are constantly to be minded, and prosecute by every one of us **and our posterity**, according to their place and stations. . . . 57

Although there were none in the one Kingdome who did adhere to the Covenant, yet thereby were not the other Kingdom nor any person in either of them absolved from the bond thereof, **since in it we have not only sworne by the Lord, but also covenanted with him. It is not the failing of one or more that can absolve others from their duty or tye to him; Besides, the duties therein contained, being in themselves lawfull, and the grounds of our tye thereunto moral, though others do forget their duty, yet doth not their defection free us from that obligation which lyes upon us by the Covenant in our places and stations.** And the Covenant being intended and entered into by these Kingdoms, as one of the best means of stedfastnesse, for guarding against declining times; It were strange to say that the back-sliding of any should absolve others from the tye thereof, especially seeing our engagement therein is not only nationall, but also personall, every one with uplifted hands swearing by himself, as it is evident by the tennor of the Covenant.. 58

**From these and other important reasons, it may appear that all these**

**Kingdoms joyning together to abolish that oath by law, yet could they not dispense therewith; Much lesse can any one of them, or any part of them doe the same.** The dispensing with oathes hath hitherto been abhorred as Antichristian, and never practiced and avowed by any, but by that man of sin [i.e. the papacy--GLP]; therefore those who take the same upon them, as they joyn with him in his sin, so must they expect to partake of his plagues. 59

(6) "The Solemn League and Covenant" was actually approved by and in the process of being adopted by the Reformed Church of the Netherlands as well as by other National Reformed Churches in Europe.

There was one great, even sublime idea, brought somewhat indefinitely before the Westminster Assembly, which has not been realized,--the idea of a Protestant union throughout Christendom, not merely for the purpose of counterbalancing Popery, but in order to purify, strengthen, and unite all true Christian Churches, so that with combined energy, and zeal they might go forth, in glad compliance with the Redeemer's commands, teaching all nations, and preaching the everlasting gospel to every creature under heaven. This truly magnificent, and also truly Christian idea, seems to have originated in the mind of that distinguished man, Alexander Henderson. It was suggested by him to the Scottish commissioners, and by them partially brought before the English Parliament, requesting them to direct the Assembly to write letters to the Protestant Churches in France, Holland, Switzerland, and other Reformed Churches. . . . [A]long with these letters were sent copies of the Solemn League and Covenant,--a document which might itself form the basis of such a Protestant union. The deep thinking divines of the Netherlands apprehended the idea, and in their answer, not only expressed their approbation of the Covenant, **but also desired to join in it with the British kingdoms. Nor did they content themselves with the mere expression of approval and willingness to join. A letter was soon afterwards sent to the Assembly from the Hague, written by Duraeus (the celebrated John Dury), offering to come to the Assembly, and containing a copy of a vow which he had prepared and tendered to the distinguished Oxenstiern, chancellor of Sweden, wherein he bound himself "to prosecute a reconciliation between Protestants in point of religion". . . .** But the intrigues of politicians, the delays caused by the conduct of the Independents, and the narrow-minded Erastianism of the English Parliament, all conspired to prevent the Assembly from entering farther into that truly glorious Christian enterprise. Days of trouble and darkness came; persecution wore out the great men of that remarkable period; pure and vital Christianity was stricken to the earth and trampled under foot. . . . 60

**11. Lawful resistance (not revolutionary anarchy) against habitual tyrants is the duty of all Christians, for subjection for conscience sake is due only to him who is "the ordinance of God" and "the minister of God to thee for good." Lawful resistance will most certainly involve the following particular convictions and actions.**

- a. The habitual tyrant must be refused the honor which "the ordinance of God" alone is to be given.
- b. The habitual tyrant must be refused subjection for conscience sake. Though the Christian should obey all the lawful commands of even an unlawful government (both

because the command is agreeable to the Word of God and because Christians ought to seek to maintain as much order as possible in a nation until biblical changes can be made; for "legalized" tyranny, i.e. tyranny that has the consent of the people, is ordinarily better than revolutionary anarchy), there can no more be conscientious subjection to a tyrant's authority as "the ordinance of God" than to a murderer's authority or to a thief's authority as 'the ordinance of God.'

c. An immoral national constitution which protects and defends the habitual and flagrant violation of God's moral law (in both tables) cannot be upheld and defended by solemn oaths nor can allegiance in any way be given to it. "The Westminster Confession of Faith" makes it exceedingly clear that to take an oath of allegiance to a constitution which protects and defends idolatry and immorality is an unlawful oath which a Christian cannot take.

I. A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth or promiseth; and to judge him **according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth.**

III. Whosoever taketh an oath, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and **therein to avouch [i.e. affirm--GLP] nothing but what he is fully persuaded is the truth. Neither may any man bind himself by oath to any thing but what is good and just, and what he believeth so to be,** and what he is able to perform.

IV. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation. **It cannot oblige to sin.** . . . 61

**A moral wrong can never be lawfully constituted as a civil right.** That which is contrary to God's moral law (or legally protects that which is contrary to God's moral law) can never be sworn to in an oath. When a national constitution protects idolatry and false worship rather than the true reformed religion, it has itself become a monument of idolatry. When a national constitution within a land that has been enlightened by the gospel omits any mention of the name of God or Christ, and defends the "right" of the atheist, the papist, the muslim, or the satanist to hold office, it is an anti-Christ document and cannot morally be the object of an oath of allegiance.

(1) "The Larger Catechism" (1648) declares that the duties required in the second commandment involve among others "the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, **according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.**" 62 It is the place and calling of the civil magistrate to destroy all monuments of idolatry and false worship within the nation (especially immoral constitutions and laws which grant "civil rights" to idolaters, blasphemers, sabbath profaners, murderers, and sodomites). It is the place and calling of Christians in general to resist all complicity in oaths and allegiance to documents that promote and defend the "civil rights" of idolaters, etc. All of the reformed creeds in their original form clearly maintained it was the duty of the civil magistrate in a nation enlightened by the gospel to remove all monuments of idolatry and false religion (i.e. to uphold and defend both tables of the law--in fact it was the Anabaptists, Socinians, and Quakers who opposed this universally held position of the Reformed Churches in Britain and in Europe).

(2) **Samuel Wylie**, a Reformed Presbyterian minister of the nineteenth century, has accurately sized up the glaring inconsistency with most reformed and presbyterian churches in this observation:

And I have never been able to satisfy myself, how it was consistent, in those who profess Presbyterianism, to swear an oath [e.g. when assuming a civil or military position--GLP], which involves the supporting of idolatry, &c., while, at the same time, in their creeds and church constitutions, they solemnly recognize their obligation, in their respective stations, to remove every monument and vestige of it from the land [as expounded in "The Larger Catechism", Q. 108--GLP]. 63

d. Since a Christian cannot take an oath of allegiance to an immoral national constitution, two consequences must necessarily follow:

(1) A Christian cannot serve in any civil capacity that would require him to give conscientious subjection to or to swear an oath of allegiance to an immoral civil government or its national constitution. However, this does not preclude Christians from seeking the reformation of an immoral civil government if conscientious subjection to it (as "the ordinance of God") and an oath of allegiance are not required. In fact, if the Christian were not required to take an oath of allegiance to an immoral civil government, he would be free to cooperate with an immoral government in bringing biblical reformation to that nation (and even in assuming positions of authority and administration within that nation as did Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai, and Nehemiah). **John Cunningham**, a Reformed Presbyterian minister from Scotland, made the following significant observation concerning the immoral British Constitution in 1843:

The friends of truth cannot justifiably persevere in supporting the British Constitution as the ordinance of God. . . . The friends of truth under the present government should say to it in such a manner as not to be misunderstood.--We will obey your good laws, because they are good; **but by oaths or otherwise we will not recognize your authority as of God.**--We will co-operate with you in doing what is good; **but so long as you continue to support evil, we cannot swear allegiance to you.** Abolish all oaths of allegiance, and we will act along with you in every right matter.--Were all those who hold the truth in the united kingdom to do so, would not the request extort regard? And might not rulers see the propriety of yielding? Were such oaths to the present government abolished, then those who love the truth might enter parliament, and act without being responsible for the evils of the civil constitution and of the administration, and at the same time lead to essential political reformation; and the people could with a clear conscience return to parliament such men as might be possessed of proper character, and be of known attachment to the truth. Were a door opened in this manner for men consistently uttering their voice in the councils of the nation, then means should be assiduously used, on the part of the people and on the part of their representatives, for scripturally reforming the State, and for giving to true religion that external countenance and support which is due it. 64

(2) The second consequence that must necessarily follow from a Christian's refusal to violate God's moral law by taking an oath of allegiance to an immoral national constitution is that he will not consent to (nor participate in) the sins of others by voting for and electing people to civil office who will be required to take an unlawful oath to an immoral national constitution.

**Those who, directly or indirectly, consent to the evil deeds of others are partakers in their criminality.** Ps. 50:18: "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him," which God severely reprehends. If, therefore, the constitution be essentially at war with the religion of Jesus, an homologation [i.e.

an approval or ratification--GLP] of it is striking hands with his enemies. No oath of allegiance, therefore, can we swear, because we believe the constitution [i.e. the national constitution of the United States--GLP] to be contrary to the moral law, and our covenant engagements. Farther, we cannot elect public functionaries to fill the various offices in the state; for, between the *elector* and the *elected*, there is a representative oneness; so that every official act, done constitutionally by the latter [i.e. the elected official--GLP], is *virtually* done by the former [i.e. the one who elected the official--GLP], through his representative organ. He must, also, be introduced to office by an oath, homologating [i.e. approving and ratifying-- GLP] the constitution. **Whatever, therefore, we cannot do ourselves, on account of its immorality, we ought not to employ others to perform.** 65

e. A Christian must resist all unlawful commands of the civil magistrate (whether the one issuing the command is a lawful king or an unlawful tyrant): "We ought to obey God rather than men" Acts 5:29.

f. It is the duty of Christians both to testify against tyrannical civil government and to affirm the moral duties of civil magistracy and subjects under God's law. Civil reformation within a nation cannot occur without a faithful proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For it is the truth of Jesus Christ that sets people free from sin, from ignorance, and from tyranny. Thus, the position of civil government espoused and defended herein strongly affirms that the primary resistance offered by Christians against tyranny in civil government is by means of moral persuasion accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(1) **Mark 13:9** (emphases added)

But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, **for a testimony against them.**

(2) **Revelation 11:7** (emphases added)

And when they shall have **finished their testimony**, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

(3) **Matthew 28:19,20** (emphases added)

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.** . . .

g. Christians should resist tyrannical civil governments by earnestly praying that God would destroy the throne established by wickedness, that He would be pleased to convert unlawful magistrates who presently are His enemies, and that He would hasten the day when righteousness would shine forth from the scepter of the civil magistrate.

(1) According to "The Larger Catechism" it is the duty of Christians in the first petition of the Lord's Prayer to pray "that he [i.e. God--GLP] would prevent and **remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaneness, and whatsoever is dishonorable to him.** . . ." 66 Such a prayer must necessarily involve removing all constitutional protection of such blasphemous violations of God's moral law in a nation that has been enlightened by the gospel.

(2) Furthermore, "The Larger Catechism" declares it is the duty of Christians in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer to pray "that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed" and that the gospel ordinances may be "purged from corruption, **countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate**. . . ." 67 We are only to pray for that which is agreeable to the revealed will of God. Thus, the Westminster divines (as well as all Reformed Churches at that time) believed it to be in conformity to God's revealed will to pray that thrones "established by wickedness" and which framed "mischief by a law" be destroyed and that God would be pleased to establish thrones by righteousness which countenance and maintain the purity of the gospel ordinances against all atheism, idolatry, and false religion.

h. It is the duty of Christians to flee the unlawful authority of the tyrant when his opposition to the faithful testimony of truth brings persecution to the Christian. It is necessary to make clear that Christians are not to suffer for error or for wicked behavior. If a Christian must suffer, it must be for the testimony of the truth in Jesus Christ alone.

(1) **Matthew 5:10-12** (emphases added)

Blessed are they which are persecuted **for righteousness' sake**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, **for my sake**. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

(2) **1 Peter 3:14,17** (emphases added)

[I]f ye suffer **for righteousness' sake**, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. . . . For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer **for well doing**, than for evil doing.

(3) **1 Peter 4:14-16** (emphases added)

If ye be reproached **for the name of Christ**, happy are ye. . . . But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer **as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

When persecution for the sake of the truth becomes the providential lot of Christians, they must resist the tyrant by fleeing from his unlawful authority and pretended jurisdiction. Fleeing the unlawful authority and unjust sentences of a tyrant is not passive subjection; to the contrary, it is active resistance against tyranny. **Samuel Rutherford** (one of the Scottish delegates to the Westminster Assembly) states clearly the duty of Christians in such circumstances:

**Flying [i.e. fleeing--GLP] from the tyranny of abused authority, is a plain resisting of rulers in their unlawful oppression and perverting of judgment.**

68

As the king is under God's law both in commanding and in exacting active obedience, so is he under the same regulating law of God, in punishing or demanding of us passive subjection, and as he may not command what he will, but what the King of kings warranteth him to command, so may he not punish as he

will, but by warrant also of the Supreme Judge of all the earth; and therefore it is not dishonourable to the majesty of the ruler, that we deny passive subjection to him when he punisheth beside his warrant, more than it is against his majesty and honour that we deny active obedience when he commandeth illegally; **else I see not how it is lawful to fly [i.e. flee--GLP] from a tyrannous king, as Elias [i.e. Elijah--GLP], Christ, and other of the witnesses of our Lord have done;** and, therefore, what royalists say here is a great untruth, namely, that in things lawful we must be subject actively,--in things unlawful, passively. **For as we are in things lawful to be subject actively, so there is no duty in point of conscience, laying on us to be subject passively, because I may lawfully fly [i.e. flee--GLP], and so lawfully deny passive subjection to the king's will, punishing unjustly.** 69

i. As a last resort against tyrannical civil government which embarks upon a reign of terror against its own people, Christians may use force in self-defence to subdue the violent rage of the civil magistrate. It has been previously demonstrated both from Scripture (cf. pp. 19,20) and from history (cf. pp. 20-26) that tyrants may be subdued by force. The intensity with which such resistance should be maintained against a tyrant is appropriately stated by Junius Brutus:

If their [i.e. the civil magistrate's--GLP] assaults be verbal, their defence must be likewise verbal; if the sword be drawn against them, they may also take arms, and fight either with tongue or hand, as occasion is. . . .70

j. It is affirmed by our reformed forefathers that resistance by means of force in cases of self-defence is not contrary to biblical commands which call Christians to be subject to lawful magistrates (and not to resist them), or biblical commands which call Christians to suffer patiently under harsh rulers. **Samuel Rutherford** has faithfully expounded such biblical passages (as those found in Romans 13:1,2 and 1 Peter 2:13-20), and clearly demonstrates that these passages cannot be made to contradict the rest of God's Word (where resistance by means of force in self-defence is approved), and that these texts themselves do not contradict biblical resistance (whether resistance without force or resistance by means of force). Rutherford reasons:

(1) Patient suffering under wicked men and resisting them by means of force are not incompatible, but may very well stand together.

One act of grace and virtue is not contrary to another; resistance is in the children of God an innocent act of self-preservation, as is patient suffering, and **therefore they may well subsist in one.** . . . The scope of the place (1 Pet. ii.) is not to forbid all violent resisting, as is clear he speaketh nothing of violent resisting either one way or other, **but only he forbiddeth revengeful resisting of repaying one wrong with another,** from the example of Christ, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not;" therefore, the argument is a falacy. . . therefore, the servant who should violently resist his master in the aforesaid case [i.e. when his master should seek to kill him--GLP] should, **and might patiently suffer and violently resist.** . . . 71

(2) Suffering while under wicked tyranny and yet offering a passive non-resistance is nowhere found to be the moral duty of a Christian, except under two extraordinary conditions: 1. The passive obedience of Christ in which He was commanded to lay down His life for His people, and thus could not resist tyranny; 2. The positive command of God

not to resist while suffering as in the extraordinary cases of Christ and the Israelites under Nebuchadnezzar (where the Israelites are commanded to serve the king of Babylon for seventy years as just recompense for their flagrant sin against God, Jer. 27:12) .

All these places of God's word, that recommendeth suffering to the followers of Christ, do not command formally that we suffer; therefore, suffering falleth not formally under any commandment of God. . . . **they prove only that comparatively we are to choose rather to suffer than to deny Christ before men** . . . . and therefore neither Rom. xiii., nor 1 Pet. ii., nor any other place in God's word, any common divine, natural, national or any municipal law, commandeth formally obedience passive, or subjection passive, or non-resistance under the notion of passive obedience. . . . 72

(3) The passage in 1 Peter 2:18 calls a Christian servant not to retaliate against his master by doing to the master as the master has done to him, and in so doing the Christian is to suffer after the example of his Lord who when he was reviled, did not revile in return. However, the passage does not imply that resistance by means of force is unlawful in cases of self-defence.

(4) When resistance (by means of force) is necessary in self-defence against the violence of an unlawful civil magistrate, it is not the lawful office or the lawful power of the civil magistrate that is being resisted (Rutherford refers to the lawful office of the magistrate as "the king *in abstracto* "), rather it is the abuse of office or the tyranny in the man who is in office that is resisted (Rutherford refers to this abuse of power as "the king *in concreto*"). Thus, Rutherford explains:

We must needs be subject to the royal office for conscience, by reason of the fifth commandment; but we must not needs be subject to the man who is king, if he command things unlawful. . . but Paul (Rom. xiii.) forbiddeth us to resist the power, *in abstract*; therefore, it must be the man, *in concreto*, that we must resist.<sup>73</sup>

k. It can be easily demonstrated from the various struggles of reformed Christians in resisting tyrannical rulers that they did not understand Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 (or Titus 3:1) either to refer to a tyrant as "the ordinance of God" to whom Christians must subject themselves for conscience sake, nor to forbid active resistance for conscience sake against a tyrant who happens to call himself a civil magistrate.

(1) **The German princes of the Reformed Church** levied war against a tyrannical emperor and concluded after mature deliberation:

Unjust violence is not God's ordinance; neither are we bound to him by any other reason than if he kept the conditions on which he was created emperor. By the laws themselves it is provided that the superior magistrate shall not infringe the right of the inferior, and if the superior magistrate exceed the limits of his power, and command that which is wicked, not only [do--GLP] we need not obey him, but, if he offer force, we may resist him. 74

(2) **The Reformed Church in France** many times resisted the tyranny of kings as in the following example:

So in the reign of Charles IX., when all acts of pacification were broken, after many fruitless petitions, and vain promises, they take up arms, whereupon a bloody

civil war ensued; and when this king, contrary to his oath, 1572, caused that massacre at Paris, the Protestants in Languedoc, Rochelle, and other parts, took up arms in their own defence. 75

(3) **The Reformed Church of Geneva** (under the leadership of Calvin, Beza, Viret, etc.) was actively involved in supporting (by means of finances, ministers, soldiers, arms, ammunition, and sanctuary) the resistance of the Huguenots against the popish tyrants who reigned in France.

These leaders of the French nobility were soon joined in Orleans [in March 1562--GLP] by leaders of the French Protestant ministry, most prominent among them **Beza**. . . . These ecclesiastical leaders constituted a war party around Conde. They were opposed to any negotiations or military maneuvers that, in the interest of strategy or a peaceful settlement, would sacrifice Protestant congregations or their legal right to worship. **Beza**, as noted, had opposed the abandonment of Paris in March, and he later proposed an armed seizure of Paris. 76

**Calvin**, himself, did not stop at indirect pressure in fund raising for the war. In a general letter to the churches of Languedoc, he appealed specifically for money to pay for the German mercenaries whom d'Andelot was at the moment trying to recruit in Germany. . . . By no means pacifist, he accepted and supported religious war in exceedingly realistic ways.77

[T]he most important Genevan man-power contribution to the Huguenot cause was the organization of a cavalry escort under local officership to accompany a large troop of Swiss and Bernese soldiers which the Bernese government finally decided to organize, part of the way into France in July, 1562. The escort was organized at **Calvin's** suggestion in response to rather firm hints from Berne and certain local people that the Genevans should contribute something to the Swiss armies marching "to the Service of the Church of Lyons". . . . It is clear that Geneva contributed in material ways to the Huguenot armies in France. Though the appearance of neutrality was maintained, the government allowed and at times encouraged the sending of small groups of men, large sums of money, and substantial quantities of gunpowder to the forces fighting for the Calvinist faith. And the spiritual leaders of the city were involved in more or less positive ways in these activities. Geneva became a veritable arsenal of Calvinism.78

The ecclesiastical and political influence of Geneva continued strong for decades. In the years preceding the Thirty Years War[,] groups of Calvinist noblemen from Holland, Germany, Bohemia, and other nations, planned co-ordinated political action. The strength of Calvinism, wherever the doctrine was oppressed, seemed to find outlet in breeding social change to the actual point of social revolution. And the organizing center for many of these revolutions was unquestionably Geneva. . . . It was the prime source of ecclesiastical leaders and the outpouring of printed propaganda; it was a staging-base for conspiracies, a negotiating point for loans, and a producer and distributor of armament. 79

(4) **The Reformed Church of the Netherlands** united with the prince of Orange in 1572 and entered into a solemn covenant to defend religion, lives, and liberties by force of arms against the tyrannical rule of the Romish Spaniards. In a solemn protestation they declared the reasons for their resistance:

For zeal to the country, for the glory of God, because of the inhumanities and oppressions, and more than barbarous and insupportable tyranny and encroachments upon their privileges, liberties, and freedom. 80

(5) **The Waldenses in Piedmont**, (in 1558, 1561) having undergone much persecution from popish magistrates,

assembled together to consult how they might prevent danger; and, after long prayer and calling upon God, they concluded to enter into a solemn mutual covenant for defence of themselves and their religion, and did so with success, obtaining many notable victories against their persecutors. . . . 81

(6) **The Church of Scotland** resisted Charles I and counseled Parliament not to allow him back upon the throne nor allow him to exercise his royal power until he gave them the assurances they demanded of him (namely subscribing the Solemn League and Covenant):

That before his Majesties restitution to the exercise of his Royall power assurance be had from his Majesty by his solemn Oath under his hand and seal for settling Religion according to the Covenant [i.e. the Solemn League and Covenant-- GLP].  
82

**12. In conclusion, it is affirmed that God requires of the Christian subjection for conscience sake to the office of civil magistracy and to those who hold the office so long as they fulfil the moral duties of a civil magistrate. This and this alone is "the ordinance of God." However, it is denied that the Christian owes conscientious subjection or honor to a tyrant who forsakes the moral duties of his office.** The Christian should be thankful for the measure of freedom he may yet enjoy under a tyrant, but he cannot say that the emperor is clothed in lawful authority just because everyone says he is. The Christian must fear the Lord his God, and stand with the cloud of faithful witnesses and courageously declare, "The king has no clothes" (i.e. no lawful authority). The Christian who testifies to this truth may be falsely accused of treason, sedition, and revolutionary anarchy, but so were Christ, Paul, and Christians throughout history. If it can justly be termed "treason" to actively resist tyranny, then far better to be charged with treason against a tyrant than to be charged with treason against the Son of God for not actively resisting Christ's enemies when it is the Christian's duty to do so. The eminent Scottish divine, **Samuel Rutherford**, well stated the duty of the Christian who stands for the truth in the face of false allegations of treason:

Christ, the prophets, and apostles of our Lord, went to heaven with the note of traitors, seditious men, and such as turned the world upside down: calumnies [i.e. slanders--GLP] of treason to Caesar were an ingredient in Christ's cup, and therefore the author [i.e. Mr. Rutherford--GLP] is the more willing to drink of that cup that touched his lip, who is our glorious Forerunner: what, if conscience toward God, and credit with men, cannot both go to heaven with the saints, the author is satisfied with the former companion, and is willing to dismiss the other.

**Truth to Christ cannot be treason to Caesar. . . . 83**

There is coming a day when magistracy and ministry will both fulfil their ordained duties to the glory of Christ, then the church of Jesus Christ will see the full realization of God's promise: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers" (Is. 49:22,23).

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## Endnotes

1. George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1646] 1985), p. 113.
2. George Gillespie, *The Works Of George Gillespie* , "One Hundred and Eleven Propositions Concerning the Ministry and Government of the Church" (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books, [1642] 1991), 1:13.
3. John Calvin, *Institutes Of The Christian Religion*, IV:XX:2 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, [1536] 1960), 2:1487.
4. Ibid. p. 1488.
5. Ibid. p. 1495.
6. John Knox, *Works Of John Knox*, "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women" (Edinburgh: Printed For The Bannatyne Club, [1558] 1855), IV:399.
7. John Knox, *Works Of John Knox*, "Summary of the Proposed Second Blast of the Trumpet" (Edinburgh: Printed For The Bannatyne Club, [1558] 1855), IV:539,540.
8. George Buchanan, *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning The Rights Of The Crown In Scotland* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1579] 1982), p. 276.
9. Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex; or The Law And The Prince* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1644] 1982), p. 4.
10. Ibid. p. 218.
11. George Gillespie, *The Works Of George Gillespie* , "One Hundred and Eleven Propositions Concerning the Ministry and Government of the Church" (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books, [1642] 1991), 1:12.
12. David W. Hall, ed., *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici; The Divine Right Of Church Government*, (Dallas,Texas: Naphtali Press [1646] 1995), pp. 79-80. Emphases added.
13. "The Confession of Saxony", *The Harmony Of Protestant Confessions* , Peter Hall, ed. (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books [1536] 1992), p. 487.
14. "The Confession of Faith" of Scotland, Chapter 24, *The Scottish Confession Of Faith*, (Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, [1560] 1993), p. 42.
15. "The National Covenant," *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1638] 1983), pp. 351,352.
- 16 "The Solemn League And Covenant," *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1643] 1983), p. 359. Emphases added.
17. "The Confession of Faith," Chapter XXIII, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1647] 1983), pp. 101,102.
18. *The Acts Of The General Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, "A seasonable and necessary Warning and Declaration, concerning Present and Imminent dangers, and concerning duties relating thereto; from the Generall Assembly of this Kirk, unto all the Members thereof", 27 July 1649, Session 27, p. 460. Emphases added. The original spelling and capitalization have been retained.
19. John Knox, *Works Of John Knox*, "Summary of the Proposed Second Blast of the Trumpet" (Edinburgh: Printed For The Bannatyne Club, [1558] 1855), IV:539. Emphases added.
20. Ibid. p. 540. Emphases added.
21. Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex; or The Law And The Prince* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1644] 1982), p. 7. Emphases added.

22. Ibid. p. 9. Emphases added.
23. *The Acts Of The General Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, "A seasonable and necessary Warning and Declaration, concerning Present and Imminent dangers, and concerning duties relating thereto; from the Generall Assembly of this Kirk, unto all the Members thereof", 27 July 1649, Session 27, p. 460. Emphases added. The original spelling and capitalization have been retained.
24. John Knox, "The Appellation from the Sentence Pronounced by the Bishops and Clergy: Addressed to the Nobility and Estates of Scotland", *The Selected Writings Of John Knox* (Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications [1558] 1995), pp. 490,491. Emphases added.
25. Christopher Goodman, *How Superior Powers Ought To Be Obeyed* (Geneva: John Crispin, 1558), pp. 118,119. Emphases added. The spelling in this excerpt has been edited from the original document.
26. "The Confession of Saxony", *The Harmony Of Protestant Confessions* , Peter Hall, ed. (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books [1536] 1992), p. 486. Emphases added.
27. "The Confession Of Faith" of Scotland, Chapter 24, *The Scottish Confession Of Faith* (Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, [1560] 1993), pp. 41,42. Emphases added. The parenthetical qualification is in the original document, and significantly limits non-resistance to the civil magistrate so long as he is "doing that thing which appertains to his charge." Similarly, in "The Confession Of Faith" of Scotland, Chapter 14, one of the sins which displeases God and "provokes him to anger" is "to disobey or resist any that God has placed in authority (while they pass not over the bounds of their office)." Again, the parenthetical limitation is original and is intended to make clear that when the civil magistrate does pass over the lawful bounds of his office, he may be lawfully resisted.
28. "The Belgic Confession", Article 36, *The Harmony Of Protestant Confessions* , Peter Hall, ed. (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books [1566] 1992), p. 483. Emphases added.
29. "The Confession of Faith," Chapter XX, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1647] 1983), pp. 87. Emphases added.
30. John Calvin, *Institutes Of The Christian Religion*, IV:XX:31 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, [1536] 1960), 2:1519. Emphases added.
31. John Calvin, "Commentaries On The Prophet Daniel", *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, [1561] 1979), XII:382. Emphases added.
32. John Ponet, *A Short Treatise Of Politic Power, And Of The True Obedience Which Subjects Owe To Kings And Other Civil Governors, With An Exhortation To All True Natural English Men* (The publisher is cited as D.I.P.B.R.W.: 1556), p. 57. Emphases added. The spelling and capitalization have been edited from the original document.
33. John Knox, *Works Of John Knox*, "Summary of the Proposed Second Blast of the Trumpet" (Edinburgh: Printed For The Bannatyne Club, [1558] 1855), IV:540. Emphases added.
34. Christopher Goodman, *How Superior Powers Ought To Be Obeyed* (Geneva: John Crispin, 1558), pp. 118,119. Emphases added. The spelling has been edited from the original document.
35. Ibid. p. 110. Emphases added. The spelling has been edited from the original document.
36. Ibid. p. 139. Emphases added. The spelling has been edited from the original document.
37. Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos; A Defence of Liberty Against Tyrants* (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books [1579] 1989), p. 22. Emphases added.

38. Ibid. p. 31. Emphases added.
39. Ibid. Emphases added.
40. George Buchanan, *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning The Rights Of The Crown In Scotland* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1579] 1982), p. 261. Emphases added.
41. Henry Bullinger, "Henry Bullinger On The Duties Of Rulers And Subjects", *Puritan Political Ideas 1558-1794*, ed. Edmund Morgan (New York: The Bobbs-Merill Co., Inc. [1587] 1965), p. 19. Emphases added.
42. Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex; or The Law And The Prince* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1644] 1982), p. 141. Emphases added.
43. Ibid. p. 220. Emphases added.
44. John Brown of Wamphray, *An Apologetical Relation Of The Particular Sufferings Of The Faithful Ministers And Professors Of The Church Of Scotland, Since August 1660*, (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd [1665] 1845), p. 86. Emphases added.
45. Alexander Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, (Glasgow: John Kirk, Calton [1688] 1797), p. 313. Emphases added.
46. Ibid. pp. 325-326. Emphases added.
47. Ibid. pp. 326-327. Emphases added.
48. "The First Helvetic Confession", *The Harmony Of Protestant Confessions*, Peter Hall, ed. (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books [1536] 1992), p. 475. Emphases added. The parenthetical qualification is in the original document and indicates that only he is a magistrate of God who does not exercise tyranny. Thus, conscientious submission to a tyrant is not solicited by this confessional statement.
49. "The Confession of Faith" of Scotland, Chapter 14, *The Scottish Confession Of Faith* (Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, [1560] 1993), p. 25. The parenthetical limitation is in the original document and is intended to make clear that when the civil magistrate passes over the lawful bounds of his office, he is no longer acting as "the ordinance of God" and therefore is to be lawfully resisted.
50. "The Confession Of Faith" of Scotland, Chapter 24, *The Scottish Confession Of Faith* (Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, [1560] 1993), p. 42. The parenthetical qualification is in the original document, and limits non-resistance to the civil magistrate so long as he is "doing that thing which appertains to his charge." Otherwise he must be resisted.
51. "The Belgic Confession", Article 36, *The Harmony Of Protestant Confessions*, Peter Hall, ed. (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books [1566] 1992), p. 483. Emphases added. This reformed confession states that all men ought to be subject to "lawful magistrates" and ought to obey only in matters that "are not repugnant to the word of God." It is plainly to be inferred that unlawful tyrants cannot have a Christian's subjection for conscience sake (thus they must be resisted). Thus, conscientious submission to a tyrant is not solicited by this confessional statement.
52. "The Confession of Faith", Chapter XX, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1647] 1983), pp. 87. Emphases added.
53. "The Larger Catechism," Question 99, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1648] 1983), p. 183. Emphases added.
54. *The Acts Of The General Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, "A seasonable and necessary Warning and Declaration, concerning Present and Imminent dangers, and concerning duties relating thereto; from the Generall Assembly of this Kirk, unto all the Members thereof", 27 July 1649, Session 27, pp. 456-458. Emphases added. The original spelling and capitalization have been retained.
55. For more information concerning the matter of covenanting, cf. Appendix C in this

book, as well as *The Duty And Perpetual Obligation of Social Covenanting* produced by the Session of Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton, available through Still Waters Revival Books.

56. *The Acts Of The Generall Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, 4 June 1644, Session 7, "The Letter from the Synod of Divines in the Kirk of England, to the General Assembly", pp. 231,232. Emphases added.

57. *The Acts Of The Generall Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, 27 July 1649, Session 27, "A seasonable and necessary Waring and Declaration, concerning Present and Imminent dangers, and concerning duties relating thereto; from the Generall Assembly of this Kirk, unto all the Members thereof", p. 460. Emphases added. The original spelling and capitalization have been retained.

58. *The Acts Of The General Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, 6 August 1649, Session Ultimate, "A Brotherly Exhortation from the Generall Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to their Brethren in England", pp. 474,475. Emphases added. The original spelling and capitalization have been retained.

59. Ibid. p. 475. Emphases added. The original spelling and capitalization have been retained.

60 William M. Hetherington, *History Of The Westminster Assembly Of Divines*, (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books [1856] 1993), pp. 337-339. Emphases added.

61. "The Confession of Faith," Chapter XXII, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1647] 1983), pp. 96-98. Emphases added.

62. "The Larger Catechism," Question 108, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1648] 1983), p. 193. Emphases added.

63. Samuel Wylie, *Two Sons Of Oil; or, The Faithful Witness For Magistracy And Ministry Upon A Scriptural Basis* (Pottstown, Pennsylvania: Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Publishing [1803] 1995), pp. 36,37.

64. John Cunningham, *The Ordinance of Covenanting*, (Glasgow: William Marshall, 1843), p. 392. Emphases added.

65. Samuel Wylie, *Two Sons Of Oil; or, The Faithful Witness For Magistracy And Ministry Upon A Scriptural Basis* (Pottstown, Pennsylvania: Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Publishing [1803] 1995), pp. 43,44. The *italics* are original, the **bold** has been added for emphases.

66. "The Larger Catechism," Question 190, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1648] 1983), p. 273. Emphases added.

67. "The Larger Catechism," Question 191, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1648] 1983), pp. 274,275. Emphases added.

68. Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex; or The Law And The Prince* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1644] 1982), p. 159. Emphases added.

69. Ibid. p. 232. Emphases added.

70. Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos; A Defence of Liberty Against Tyrants* (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books [1579] 1989), p. 31.

71. Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex, or The Law And The Prince* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1644] 1982), p. 153. Emphases added.

72. Ibid. p. 155.

73. Ibid. p. 145. The *italics* are in the original document.

74. John Brown of Wamphray, *An Apologetical Relation Of The Particular Sufferings Of The Faithful Ministers And Professors Of The Church Of Scotland, Since August 1660*, (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd [1665] 1845), p. 82.

75. Ibid.
76. Robert M. Kingdom, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France 1555-1563* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1956), pp. 108,109. Emphases added.
77. Ibid. pp. 111,112. Emphasis added.
78. Ibid. pp. 117, 124. Emphasis added.
79. Ibid. pp. 128,129.
80. John Brown of Wamphray, *An Apologetical Relation Of The Particular Sufferings Of The Faithful Ministers And Professors Of The Church Of Scotland, Since August 1660*, (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd [1665] 1845), p. 82.
81. Ibid.
82. *The Acts Of The General Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, 25 July 1648, Session 14, "The Assemblies Answer to the Paper sent from the Committee of Estates of the 24 July", p. 374.
83. Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex, or The Law And The Prince* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1644] 1982), p. xxi. Emphases added.

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## Appendix A

### Objections

Several objections to the position of civil magistracy affirmed and defended in this book will be briefly considered.

#### **1. What about biblical characters who served in civil governments or in the military in which biblical religion was not the established religion of the state?**

**Answer:** Whether it is Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai, Nehemiah, or Cornelius the centurion, we may conclude, either first, that the civil power was lawful; or second, that offices may be held under unlawful civil governments; or third, that they sinned in accepting those civil offices. The second response is affirmed to be true while the other two responses are denied to be true. Neither directly nor indirectly were they required to consent to the idolatries of those nations or to sanction any acts of oppression. Nor does the Scripture indicate that they were required to take an oath of allegiance to an immoral constitution or swear allegiance to an immoral magistrate.

Any office may be held, or service engaged in, upon the three following conditions:  
 1st. That the duties belonging to it be right in themselves. 2d. That they be regulated by a just law. 3d. That there be no other oath of office required, but faithfully to execute official duties.

Let these be the stipulations, and an office may be held under any power, howsoever immorally constituted, without an homologation [i.e. approving] of its immorality. . . . If it be pleaded that the monarch's will was the constitution, this, even if admitted, makes no difference. The office was either such as required allegiance to this constitution, or it did not. If the *latter*, it is the thing contended for, *viz.* that there was no immoral obligation connected with this office. If the *former*, he was perjured, not only by breaking it in several instances, but in taking it also, for he swore to a *blank*, i.e. to perform he knew not what. But there is no

account of Daniel's coming under any such obligation.<sup>84</sup>

**2. Does not Christ confirm the lawful authority of the beast of Rome when He says, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mt. 22:21)?**

**Answer:** This question was proposed by the enemies of Christ (the Pharisees and the Herodians) in order to "entangle him" (Mt. 22:15). If Christ were to answer, "Render the tribute to Caesar", the Pharisees (who strongly opposed Roman complicity) would have slandered Christ as a Roman sympathizer. However, if Christ were to answer, "Render not the tribute to Caesar", the Herodians (who strongly supported Roman alliances) would have slandered him as being an avowed enemy to Caesar. But the Lord Jesus "perceived their wickedness" and essentially gave them a non-answer to their question. Since it was not an honest question, Christ did not play into their trap by answering their question. In fact, "they could not take hold of his words before the people" (Lk. 20:26). Even they could not clearly understand what He had said about the issue of paying tribute to Caesar. Thus, if the enemies of Christ couldn't pin Him to an answer one way or the other (though they would have loved to), neither can any one living today conclude whether Christ condemned paying tribute to Caesar or commended it from His answer. Such evasion to entrapment was used by Christ on other occasions as well (cf. Mk. 11:27-33; Jn. 8:1-11). Even if Christ did endorse the paying of tribute to Caesar, that is not an oath of allegiance paid to Caesar, nor a declaration concerning the lawfulness of Caesar's authority. For tribute exacted by an unlawful government is simply extortion required by a thief who threatens to take all your property if you don't pay him part of your property. Furthermore, even foreigners and aliens pay taxes to nations in which they work without declaring any allegiance to the civil government of that nation. Thus, the payment of taxes is not an oath of allegiance.

**3. Did not Paul's appeal to Caesar acknowledge the lawfulness of Caesar's courts (Acts 25:11)?**

**Answer:** Paul's appeal to Caesar is no declaration on Paul's part that he recognized the lawfulness of Caesar's court. Because the Lord had revealed to him that he would give testimony of Christ in Rome, and because Paul knew the Jews had plotted to murder him if he returned to Jerusalem as planned, he prudently appealed to Caesar as a means of self-defence as well as a means of taking the truth to Rome. In fact, it might be argued that Paul in another text describes the Roman magistrates in their courts as being unjust (1 Cor. 6:1-8). The following summary from *Plain Reasons For Presbyterians Dissenting From The Revolution Church In Scotland* will suffice:

As, (1.) He was brought before the Seat of Judicature, he did not voluntarily come to them, Acts 23:23; (2.) He being threatened to be murdered by his Country Men, who lay in wait by the Way for him, Acts 23. 14. Chap. 25. 11. as though one should appeal to a Thief, to save his life from the Murderer. (3.) His Appeal to Caesar might be, to get an Opportunity to testify of Christ, and to preach the Gospel at Rome, as the Lord had declared to him he should, Chap. 23. 11, and as he accordingly did. 85

**4. Is not Cyrus designated as God's "anointed" and God's "shepherd" (Is. 44:28; Is. 45:1)?**

**Answer:** These terms may indicate that Cyrus was a lawful magistrate under the light of moral law which he had been granted. He uses the knowledge of God and civil authority which he has been given in order to: (1) release God's people from captivity; (2) charge

God's people with the task of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem; (3) provide all the materials needed for the job. He may be an historical fulfillment of the prophecy made by Isaiah (49:23) that Gentile rulers would become nursing fathers to God's people. However, there are times in which God anoints rulers not because they are lawful magistrates, but as a means of setting them apart to be "the rod of his anger" against individuals or nations. For example, heathen nations like the Assyrians, Medes, and Persians are called God's "sanctified ones" (Is. 13:3) because they were to be used by God to pour forth His righteous anger on rebellious Israel and Judah. Furthermore, God commands Elijah to anoint Hazael king of Syria (1 Kgs. 19:15) not because Hazael was a righteous king, but because Hazael was commissioned by God's providential will to judge Israel ("their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child" 2 Kgs. 8:12).

**5. If the Israelites were specifically commanded by God not to resist the military conquest of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:12), how can it be the duty of Christians to resist the tyranny of rulers today?**

**Answer:** First, this is a positive command of the Lord which is unique to the circumstances of Israel at that period of history. A universal, moral principle of non-resistance against tyrants cannot be drawn from this text without attributing to God contradictory moral principles. For God clearly approves of and even commands resistance against tyrants in many cases:

- (1) **Abraham** resisted the wicked alliance of kings who had conquered Sodom and Gomorrah, and did not acknowledge them to be "the minister of God" merely because they had gained a military power to rule (in God's providence), but rather Abraham defeated them and rescued Lot from their clutches (Gen. 14:13-16).
- (2) **Moses** did not recognize Pharaoh as "the ordinance of God", but resisted his tyranny and delivered Israel from servitude in Egypt (Ex. 7-14).
- (3) Judges such as **Othniel** (Judg. 3:8-11), **Ehud** (Judg. 12-30), **Shamgar** (Judg. 3:31), **Deborah and Barak** (Judg. 4), **Gideon** (Judg. 6-8), **Jephthah** (Judg. 11-12), and **Samson** (Judg. 13-16) resisted tyrants who ruled over Israel rather than granting to them subjection for conscience sake.
- (4) **David** did not honor Absalom as a "higher power" whom he was obligated to honor as "the ordinance of God", but resisted him even though Absalom had won the hearts of all the people of Israel and had gained military control of Israel (2 Sam. 16:15; 2 Sam. 18:6-8).
- (5) **Elijah** did not honor Ahab as "the minister of God" for good, but resisted him by fleeing from him and his wicked queen (1 Kgs. 17:3; 1 Kgs. 19:3), and by taking the sword from the hands of Ahab so that he and the people slew the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs. 18:40).
- (6) **Elijah** did not acknowledge the lawful authority of king Ahaziah to rule over Israel, for he resisted the king by not obeying the king's order to appear before him and even brought God's fiery judgment upon the representatives of Ahaziah's authority (2 Kgs. 1:9-13).

(7) **Jehoiada** did not subject himself for conscience sake to the tyrant Athaliah, but put her to death even though she accused all those who resisted her of treason (2 Chron. 23:12-15).

(8) **God** Himself resisted the idolatrous kings of Israel by not acknowledging them to be ministers whom He appointed (Hos. 8:4).

(9) **Jesus** instructed His disciples that when they were delivered up to gentile kings for Christ's sake, rather than acknowledging them to be "the ordinance of God", they were to testify against them (Mt. 10:18), and to flee their tyranny rather than submit to them for conscience sake (Mt. 10:23).

(10) God gives wings to **the church** to flee from the persecution which Satan brings against her by means of tyrannical civil and ecclesiastical government rather than commanding the church to render conscientious subjection to such tyranny (Rev. 12:14).

(11) "The prince of this world" (Jn. 14:30) is to be resisted by **Christians** (Jms. 4:7). If Satan (who grants power to wicked tyrants to rule) is to be resisted, should not tyrants who rule by Satan's wicked power also be resisted?

Thus, it is evident that the command from God to the Israelites ("Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live" Jer. 27:12) is an extraordinary exception to what God in the above mentioned passages approves. Second, this Babylonian king was sent as God's scourge and sword (and in that sense he was God's servant, Jer. 27:6; 25:29; Is. 10:5) upon Judah for their flagrant backsliding and sinning against God's covenant. The length of their subjection to the king of Babylon is even specified by God: "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jer. 25:11). However, later in the prophecy of Jeremiah, the Lord condemns Nebuchadnezzar for his role in scattering and breaking the bones of His people, and He promises to punish the king of Babylon even as He punished the king of Assyria (Jer. 50:16,17). Third, even though Judah is commanded to serve the king of Babylon, there is nothing necessarily indicated in the word "serve" that would require a subjection for conscience sake (or honoring him as the lawful ordinance of God) on the part of God's people. As Christopher Goodman states: "They were made subjects to the king of Babylon to serve him with their bodies and goods"<sup>86</sup> (not with their consciences). The service of Judah to the king of Babylon has the same kind of bodily service in view as the service of Israel to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Neither the service to the Pharaoh of Egypt nor the service to the king of Babylon require an owning of the tyrant as "the minister of God to thee for good."

**6. The Westminster Confession of Faith (23:4) states, "that infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him." Isn't this contrary to the position affirmed in this book?**

**Answer:** No, it is not. Some of the men quoted throughout this book (e.g. George Gillespie and Samuel Rutherford) were Scottish delegates to the Westminster Assembly, and knew very well the position endorsed concerning the civil magistrate in the Confession of Faith. Rutherford's classic treatment of civil magistracy, *Lex, Rex* agrees with the Confession's position concerning the civil magistrate. The following explanation summarizes well the meaning and intent of the Westminster divines.

They distinguished between reformed and enlightened lands, and those that were unreformed and unenlightened. In the latter [i.e. in unreformed and unenlightened lands--GLP], many things may be borne with, which ought not to be suffered in the former [i.e. in reformed and enlightened lands--GLP]; particularly, when by a solemn national act, they have made scriptural qualifications essential to the civil constitution. This our ancestors did in their Covenants National and Solemn League. All ranks and conditions in the realm solemnly swore to use every lawful endeavour to extirpate [i.e. uproot--GLP] popery, prelacy, &c. . . . Let the authority of the magistrate be just and legal, we will then hold ourselves conscientiously bound to yield obedience. No authority can be just and legal, with which a contradiction to the moral law is essentially incorporated. Simple infidelity will not render it unjust, either in a heathen country, or in one emerging from Pagan darkness. Neither will simple difference in religion make it void, when the nation have not, by their own solemn act and deed, made conformity [of the religion of the magistrate--GLP] an essential article of their constitution. There may be many defects in a civil constitution, and yet [it--GLP] is morally binding upon a nation: but where plain immorality, or a solemn obligation to support what the Legislator of the universe prohibits under the severest penalties, is essentially incorporated therewith, it cannot bind the conscience.<sup>87</sup>

**7. Did not Christ Himself forbid his disciples from using violent resistance against magistrates when He was taken into custody by them in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:52; Jn. 18:11)?**

**Answer:** First of all, the Lord Jesus prohibited Peter from using violent resistance in the Garden of Gethsemane because He was appointed as the Lamb of God to voluntarily lay down His life for His people ("Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Jn. 18:12). He was no ordinary person in an ordinary situation of tyranny. Christ was uniquely suffering for His people. Peter could not stand in the way (as he tried to do earlier in Mt. 16:22,23). Just as Christ could not resist the unjust suffering He bore upon the cross, so He could not resist the unjust arrest he endured in the Garden. The Lord's remarks to Peter certainly indicate that He could have been rescued from this unjust arrest by more than twelve legions of angels had He desired them. Furthermore, it is evident that Christ was willingly enduring this unjust arrest on behalf of His people (and therefore this was an extraordinary kind of suffering) . For what He commanded of His disciples in such a situation (namely, that they flee, Mt. 10:23), He Himself would not use (though He knew what was coming and could have fled, Jn. 18:4). Second, Jesus commands Peter to put away his sword. Why? If Peter were foolishly to take up his sword against the multitudes of armed soldiers in the garden (Mt. 26:47), he would indeed perish by the sword (right on the spot). Jesus is not giving Christians a universal, moral principle that they must never take up arms to defend themselves or to resist a tyrant, but rather He is calling to the attention of Peter and all the disciples that if they take up the sword in that particular situation, they will all perish by the sword. For otherwise, Jesus would be contradicting what the rest of Scripture teaches concerning God's approval of resisting tyranny by means of force in appropriate circumstances. Thirdly, it is not Christ's passive resistance in suffering that Christians are to emulate (for "The Larger Catechism" actually declares that the duties required in the sixth commandment are "all careful studies, and lawful endeavours, to preserve the life of ourselves and others. . . by just defence thereof against violence"<sup>88</sup>), but rather it is the Lord's refusal to seek personal revenge or verbal retaliation against His persecutors that Christians are bound to follow:

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:21- 23).

**8. Briefly summarize your position in light of Romans 13:1-7.**

**Answer:** The following is an introduction by George Buchanan to his discussion of Romans 13, and is consistent with the biblical position maintained by the reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Paul, therefore, does not here treat of the magistrate, but of the magistracy--that is, of the function and duty of the person who presides over others, nor of this nor of that species of magistracy, but of every possible form of government. Nor does he contend against those who maintained that bad magistrates ought to be punished, but against persons who renounced every kind of authority; who, by an absurd interpretation of Christian liberty, affirmed that it was an indignity to men emancipated by the Son of God, and directed by God's Spirit, to be controlled by any human power. To refute this erroneous opinion, Paul shows that magistracy is not only a good, but a sacred and divine ordinance. . . . 89

(v. 1) Conscientious and active subjection to **lawful** civil government is required of every person, for all **lawful** governments find their origin in God as Creator, and have their institution from God and His moral law.

(v. 2) Therefore, since **lawful** civil government is God's institution, whoever resists it and refuses to submit to it , fights against God and His institution. All those who resist God's ordinance of **lawful** civil magistracy will receive judgment from God.

(v. 3) **lawful** civil magistracy is characterized by terrorizing the wicked and immoral, not the righteous and godly.

(v. 4) Furthermore, **lawful** civil magistracy is God's servant in bringing the blessings of God's good law to Christians. It is also God's servant in bringing God's holy wrath upon those who flagrantly violate His moral law.

(v. 5) Because **lawful** civil magistracy is "the ordinance of God", "the minister of God to thee for good", and "the minister of God. . . to avenge wrath upon him that doeth evil", it is necessary to be subject not simply because of the sword which he bears, but especially because it is a moral duty before God to do so.

(v. 6) Thus, the **lawful** civil magistrate should receive compensation as God's minister of justice.

(v. 7) Not only should the **lawful** civil magistrate receive financial compensation, but also he should receive both reverence and honor from his subjects.<sup>90</sup>

In the mind of many Reformed theologians Romans 13 (and other passages like it) is so far from enjoining obedience to **unlawful** civil magistrates that, in fact, David Steele comments that the mark of the beast (Rev.13:16-17) actually refers to those *who show open and avowed allegiance to and cooperate with antichristian or immoral civil powers.*

Steele writes,

But it will be asked, "What are we to understand by the 'mark?'" This question is easily answered from history. The heathen idolater gloried in his devotion to his imaginary god; as the ivy leaf was the token of the worshippers of Bacchus: soldiers bore the initials of the names of their commanders; and slaves, of their masters. These *characters* were impressed on the foreheads or other part of the persons of individuals. The general idea suggested by the "mark" was subjection or *property*. In short, **the mark of the beast signifies open and avowed allegiance to Antichristian or immoral civil power, when in the "forehead;" and active co-operation with the same, when in the "hand."**

It is at once a pitiable and culpable error, to suppose, as many preposterously do, that this "mark of the beast" is *Popery!* And as the "mark" is the recognized badge of loyalty to civil rule, of course, the prohibition to "buy or sell," must signify civil disabilities -- *disenfranchisement*. Men who suffer, necessarily feel. Christ's witnesses, as they only have the *scriptural* conception of the rights of man, have long been familiar with the deprivation of their rights, both civil and ecclesiastical. The moral evils incorporated in the constitutions of church and state, throughout all the streets of mystic Babylon, have effectually excluded the two witness, and left them in the "wilderness." Here is their destined "place," and here they are to be "nourished from the face of the serpent" for 1260 years. Christ's promise -- "I will not leave you comfortless" (orphans) -- is all along verified in their soul-satisfying experience.<sup>91</sup>

**9. If we did not personally subscribe the covenants of our ancestors (e.g. the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant), how can they obligate us to obedience?**

**Answer:** First, only the **lawful** covenants of ancestors can bind their descendants (i.e. covenants that bind us to perform the moral law of God or duties that flow from the Ten Commandments). Unlawful covenants (covenants contrary to God's Word) of ancestors have no obligating tie upon descendants (e.g. if we bound our descendants to worship God by means of images, they would not be bound because such a covenant is contrary to the Second Commandment). Thus, if the content of the covenant is of moral obligation (if it is biblical), then a descendant is bound by the authority of God to perform it. Second, the people of God throughout history in their social or corporate capacity are viewed by God as **one moral person** (rather than as hundreds of thousands of individuals). That is, God does not have two or more peoples, two or more brides, two or more churches in history. There is one church, one bride, and one people of God with different administrations under the Old Covenant and the New Covenant (e.g. there is one olive tree with different branches in Rom. 11:13-24; one person at different stages of development in Gal. 4:1-7; and one commonwealth of Israel with citizens from different nationalities in Eph. 2:11-22). Those moral obligations of the law that bind the people of God at one point in history, bind the people of God in all subsequent points in history. Since one of the moral obligations placed upon God's people is social covenanting,<sup>92</sup> all lawful covenants sworn by our ancestors do morally bind us for we are one person with them (even if they were in a different nation, even if every person on earth has abjured or renounced that covenant, even if civil magistrates or church officers say we are not bound by that covenant). Are we bound by the covenants of God's people (as to the moral duty) in Deut. 5:3; 2 Chron. 34:30,31 etc.? Why? Because we are one moral person with them. Listen to the words of the General Assembly of Scotland to this effect.

Albeit the League and Covenant be despised by that prevailing party in England ,

and the Work of Uniformity, thorow [through--GLP] the retardements and obstructions that have come in the way, be almost forgotten by these Kingdoms, yet **the obligation of that Covenant is perpetual**, and all the duties contained therein are constantly to be minded, and prosecute **by every one of us and our posterity, according to their place and stations**: And therefore we are no lesse zealously to endeavour, that his Majestie may Establish, and swear, and subscribe the same, then if it were unanimously regarded and stuck unto by all the Kingdom of England, for his Majestie swearing and subscribing the League and Covenant, will much contribute for the Security of Religion, his Majesties happinesse, and the Peace of his Kingdoms.<sup>93</sup>

Although there were none in the one Kingdome who did adhere to the Covenant, [i.e. the Solemn League and Covenant--GLP] yet thereby were not the other Kingdom nor any person in either of them absolved from the bond thereof, since in it we have not only sworne by the Lord, but also covenanted with him. It is not the failing of one or more that can absolve others from their duty or tye to him; Besides, the duties therein contained, being in themselves lawfull, and the grounds of our tye thereunto moral, though others do forget their duty, yet doth not their defection free us from that obligation which lyes upon us by the Covenant in our places and stations. And the Covenant being intended and entered into by these Kingdoms, as one of the best means of stedfastnesse, for guarding against declining times; **It were strange to say that the back-sliding of any should absolve others from the tye thereof**, especially seeing our engagement therein is not only nationall, but also personall, every one with uplifted hands swearing by himself, as it is evident by the tennor of the Covenant. <sup>94</sup>

**From these and other important reasons, it may appear that all these Kingdomes joyning together to abolish that oath by law, yet could they not dispense therewith; Much lesse can any one of them, or any part of them doe the same.** The dispensing with oathes hath hitherto been abhorred as Antichristian, and never practiced and avowed by any, but by that man of sin; therefore those who take the same upon them, as they joyn with him in his sin, so must they expect to partake of his plagues. <sup>95</sup>

**10. Your view seems to imply that all present civil governments (where the light of the gospel has shone forth) are presently unlawful. Is this correct?**

**Answer:** Yes, it is correct. The eschatology of the Protestant Reformation, known as historicism, places us in the time of the great apostasy, in which the nations of the Earth (for the most part) will be "wondering after the beast." No nation is presently covenanted to Christ (as a nation) or seeking to obey His law as the supreme law of the land. In light of this, regarding those nations which have had knowledge of the gospel of Christ, the Reformed Presbytery notes,

The nations throughout Christendom, continue in league with Antichrist and give their strength to the beast. They still refuse to profess and defend the true religion in doctrine, worship, government and discipline, contrary to the example of the kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland in the seventeenth century. Some of them have waged wars of conquest, under pretence of opening a way for the spread of the gospel; and disregarding international law, have violated solemn treaties among themselves, and all of them practically disregard divine authority; habitually profaning the Christian Sabbath, by carrying mail, by commercial traffic,

and parties of pleasure on land and water.

Acknowledging the righteousness of divine judgement upon ourselves and others for manifold violations of God's law and breaches of our own and our fathers' solemn vows in our domestic, ecclesiastical, and civil relations; we desire to humble ourselves before God for these sins, and for others not contained in this enumeration. Seeing that God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hath left us a small remnant in his sovereign mercy, our prayer to him is that he may enable us by his grace to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, to the glory of his great and holy name, and the commendation of his pardoning mercy.<sup>96</sup>

**11. Do any of the writings of the church fathers indicate that they were moving in the direction of the later (or more mature) thought, concerning civil magistracy, that developed and peaked at the height of the second Reformation?**

**Answer:** Yes, there are several church fathers, theologians, and authors who were moving conspicuously in the same direction.

**a. Augustine**

Indeed, without justice, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit together by the pact of the confederacy; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. If, by the admittance of abandoned men, this evil increases to such a degree that it holds places, fixes abodes, takes possession of cities, and subdues peoples, it assumes the more plainly the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now manifestly conferred on it, not by the removal of covetousness, but by the addition of impunity. Indeed, that was an apt and true reply which was given to Alexander the Great by a pirate who had been seized. For when that king had asked the man what he meant by keeping hostile possession of the sea, he answered with bold pride, "**What thou meanest by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, whilst thou who dost it with a great fleet art styled emperor.**"<sup>97</sup>

**b. Chrysostom**

For these passages of Paul's [i.e. Rom. 13:1-7--GLP]. . . relate not to a tyrant, but to a real and **legitimate sovereign**, who personates a genuine god upon earth, and to whom resistance is certainly resistance to the ordinance of God. <sup>98</sup>

**c. Theophylact**

[The apostle speaks not in Rom. 13:1-7--GLP] concerning the power of rulers, but concerning his office. <sup>99</sup>

**d. Manegold of Lautenbach**

Writing in the context of the investiture controversy, the eleventh-century author Manegold of Lautenbach **distinguished (as Knox essentially did later) between the office of the king, which was sacred, and an individual sovereign who could justly forfeit his authority.** A king does this when he becomes a tyrant, that is, when he destroys justice, overthrows the peace, and breaks faith. Subjects are not bound to obey a tyrannical ruler. Manegold also foreshadowed Knox in propounding **the idea of a contract (pactum) between king and people** which was equally binding on both parties. <sup>100</sup>

e. **John of Salisbury**

In the following century [i.e. the twelfth century--GLP] John of Salisbury stated a **doctrine of tyrannicide [i.e. execution of a tyrant--GLP] on the grounds that tyranny abused the power granted to man by God.** He cited biblical and classical precedents. . . . The essence of his position was virtually the same as that enunciated by Knox in 1558: the unjust ruler who violates the laws and customs of his land no longer can claim the obedience of his subjects, who may justly resist him and, if necessary, depose and execute him. 101

f. **Thomas Aquinas**

In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas opposed tyrannicide, but nevertheless **avored active resistance against a tyrannical ruler**, aimed at abolishing his tyranny in a manner that would not do more harm than the tyranny itself. Consequently, in a manner akin to Knox, Aquinas cautioned that "action against a tyrant should not be taken by the private presumption of individuals but rather by public authority." **Because the contract between king and people is no longer binding if the king acts in a tyrannical fashion, public authority, "the multitude," may depose him.** 102

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**Endnotes for Appendix A**

84. Samuel Wylie, *Two Sons Of Oil; or, The Faithful Witness For Magistracy And Ministry Upon A Scriptural Basis* (Pottstown, Pennsylvania: Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Publishing [1803] 1995), pp. 51,52. The italics are in the original document.

85. Andrew Clarkson, *Plain Reasons For Presbyterians Dissenting From The Revolution Church In Scotland* (no publisher cited, 1731), p. 262. This is one of the best treatments on biblical presbyterianism as it was believed and practiced by our reformed and covenanted forefathers of the Second Reformation in Scotland (1638-1649).

86. Christopher Goodman, *How Superior Powers Ought To Be Obeyed* (Geneva: John Crispin, 1558), p. 136. The spelling has been edited from the original document.

87. Samuel Wylie, *Two Sons Of Oil; or, The Faithful Witness For Magistracy And Ministry Upon A Scriptural Basis* (Pottstown, Pennsylvania: Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Publishing [1803] 1995), pp. 59,60.

88. "The Larger Catechism," Question 135, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Invernes: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1648] 1983), pp. 217,218.

89. George Buchanan, *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning The Rights Of The Crown In Scotland* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1579] 1982), p. 269.

90. For an extended treatment of Romans 13:1-7 defending the position set forth in this book see James M. Willson's *Civil Government: An Exposition of Romans 13:1-7* (1853).

91. David Steele, *Notes on the Apocalypse* (forthcoming from Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Publishing), p. 189-190. The italics are in the original document. The bold are added for emphases.

92. Cf. *The Duty and Perpetual Obligation of Social Covenanting* available through Still Waters Revival Books.

93. *The Acts Of The General Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, 27 July 1649, Session 27, "A seasonable and necessary Warning and Declaration, concerning Present and Imminent dangers, and concerning duties relating thereto; from the Generall Assembly of this Kirk, unto all the Members

thereof", p. 460. Emphases added.

94. *The Acts Of The General Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, 6 August 1649, Session Ultimate, "A Brotherly Exhortation from the Generall Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to their Brethren in England", pp. 474,475. Emphases added.

95. Ibid. p. 475. Emphases added.

96. The Reformed Presbytery, *The Auchensaugh Renovation of the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, etc.* (Still Waters Revival Books "rare bound photocopy reprint", 1880 edition), p. 136.

97. Augustine, cited in *St. Augustine, The Political Writings* (Regnery Gateway, 1962), pp. 29,30. Emphases added.

98. Chrysostom, cited in *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; or, The Rights Of The Crown In Scotland* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1579] 1982), p. 269. Emphases added.

99. Theophylact, cited in *Lex, Rex; or The Law And The Prince* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, [1644] 1982), p. 147. Emphases added.

100. Richard L. Greaves, *Theology & Revolution In The Scottish Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian University Press, 1980), p. 145. Emphases added.

101. Ibid. pp. 145,146. Emphases added.

102. Ibid. p. 146. Emphases added.

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## Appendix B

# The United States Constitution; and Classic Vs. Modern Reformed Teachings Concerning Magistracy and Religion

The following appendix was written by a friend of our covenanted reformation. I believe it will be helpful in briefly outlining our position respecting the civil magistrate, exposing the wickedness of the United States Constitution, and demonstrating that no Christian can take an oath to uphold and defend this Constitution (as is required, for example, by all military personnel in the United States), or submit to that government for conscience' sake, without denying his Lord. It also provides a sobering demonstration of the egregious defection, in their very creeds, of modern reformed denominations (e.g. the Presbyterian Church in America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America).--GLP

**Synopsis of a biblical view of the civil magistrate; including**

**I. an evaluation of any oath to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution in light of this, and**

**II. a brief comparison of the classic and American reformed views of the Christian magistrates' power and duty concerning matters of religion, exposing the defection of the latter.**

**by a friend of the covenanted reformation of religion**

## I. Synopsis of Scriptural magistracy and evaluation of the U. S. Constitution

1) The magistracy is an ordinance of God, and as such, is subject to him and exists for His glory (Rom. 13:1-2).

2) Since it exists by God's ordination, it derives both its ends and means from Him, and is not left to itself to determine either of these (Ps. 19; Is. 8:20; Rom. 2:14-15; 3:19, 29; II Tim. 3:16-17).

3) Its ends are, with respect to God, His glory; with respect to man, the punishment of evil-doers and the praise of those who act righteously (I Cor. 10:31; Rom. 13:1ff; I Pet. 2:14; I Tim. 2:2).

4) Since its ends are moral, its means must also be moral, and these means are revealed in the Law of Nature, and in the Scriptures, to which the former Law is subordinate (not that ultimately there is any contradiction between the two, but only because since the Fall our perception of the former has been greatly distorted) (Ps. 19; Is. 8:20; Matt. 5:17ff.; Rom. 2:14-15; 3:19, 29). It is a clear and self-evident teaching of the law of nature (whose author is God-- Rom. 1:19-20, 32; 2:14-15) that when the God of nature more clearly reveals Himself (as He does in the Scriptures), this clearer revelation should be embraced and obeyed.

5) In lands enlightened by the gospel, magistrates should only be such as fulfil biblical requirements for their high office (Ex. 18:21; Deut. 1:13; 17:14-15; 18,19).

6) Christian magistrates are required, in their official (as well as private) capacity, **by covenant** openly and willingly to acknowledge, submit to, support, and defend the cause of Jesus Christ, to whom all authority and power have been given. Thus, they must wholeheartedly support and nurture the true reformed church, as: doctrinally, this church has produced the purest expression of the form of sound words yet emitted by the church of Jesus Christ (e.g. the Westminster standards); in worship, she has made the greatest strides in returning to apostolical purity and simplicity; and in government and discipline, since the presbyterian form of church government is the only ecclesiastical government and discipline appointed by Christ in His Word (history having clearly shown the bloody and destructive results of unbiblical forms of government, such as episcopacy; Ps. 2:10-12; 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chr. 29:10; 34:31; Neh. 9:36-38; Ezra 9:13-14; Prov. 22:28; Phil. 3:16; Is. 49:23; 60:10,16).

7) As Christian magistrates (or magistrates to whom the gospel comes) are thus bound, in their official capacity, to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry", and to "serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2:11,12), so, too, should their laws and constitutions reflect this submission, reverence, and love (Pr. 14:34; Ezra 6:3,8,11,12; 7:13,21; 2 Chr. 34:31-33; Jer. 4:2; Ps. 94:20).

8) The U.S. Constitution, though it contains much that is salutary, does not meet the preceding biblical requirements, but rather opposes them. It does so largely by omission; five specifics are:

I. Its criminal omission of the Triune God and its derivation of any lawful authority from

Him; and its failure to acknowledge the Supremacy of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the prince of the Kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5).

II. Its failure to have the President swear, in his oath of office, to uphold the requirements of the Scriptures for the civil magistrate. It is profitable and enlightening here to compare an example of a biblical magisterial oath with what is found in the U.S. Constitution. The former is from the Scottish "National Covenant" of 1638 (pp. 345ff., in the Free Presbyterian Publications' edition of the Westminster Standards):

That all Kings and Princes at their coronation, and reception of their princely authority, shall make their faithful promise by their solemn oath, in the presence of the eternal God, that, enduring the whole time of their lives, they shall serve the same eternal God, to the uttermost of their power, according as he hath required in his most holy word, contained in the Old and New Testament; and according to the same word shall maintain the true religion of Christ Jesus, the preaching of his holy word, the due and right ministration of the sacraments now received and preached within this realm, (according to the Confession of Faith immediately preceding,) and shall abolish and gainstand all false religion contrary to the same; and shall rule the people committed to their charge, according to the will and command of God revealed in his foresaid word, and according to the laudable laws and constitutions received in this realm, nowise repugnant to the said will of the eternal God; and shall procure, to the uttermost of their power, to the kirk of God, and whole Christian people, true and perfect peace in all time coming: and that they shall be careful to root out of their empire all hereticks and enemies to the true worship of God, who shall be convicted by the true kirk of God of the foresaid crimes (351-352).

From the U.S. Constitution:

Article II, Section 1, paragraph 7:

Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the following Oath or Affirmation:-- "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

III. Its blasphemous assertion that it, laws pursuant thereof, and treaties made, "shall be the supreme Law of the Land" (Art. VI, p. 2), rather than the Law of Jehovah and of His Messiah. Though it may be true that the original intent, as per Hamilton (Federalist #33), was simply to say that in those areas where the federal government had been delegated authority, the federal Constitution stood as Supreme over all inferior constitutions or laws, the failure to make glad and explicit reference, in this crucial context, to the Law and the Testimony as being the ultimate standard and the source of illumination (Is. 8:20) stands as yet another criminal omission on the part of the Constitutional Convention, and an indictment that they, rather than having light, were without it to a substantial degree.

IV. Its violation of Deut. 1:13; 17:15; Ex. 18:21; Pr. 14:34; and many other Scriptures, by forbidding any religious test for office for Federal and State office holders; Article VI, paragraph 3:

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a

Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

V. Its wicked sanction of pluralism (if nothing else, "Christian" pluralism, if by "religion" is only meant any particular Christian denomination, and not "religion" in a broader sense) and toleration of error; 1st Amendment:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press. . . .

Compare this with the Scottish Confession of Faith (1560; co-authored by John Knox), and the Westminster Confession of Faith (and cf. the oath required of magistrates in the above cited National Covenant):

SCF, Ch. 24, "Of the Civil Magistrate":

Moreover, to kings, princes, rulers, and magistrates, we affirm that chiefly and most principally the conservation and purgation of the religion appertains; so that not only they are appointed for civil policy, but also for maintenance of the true religion, and for suppressing of idolatry and superstition whatsoever: as in David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and others, highly commended for their zeal in that case, may be espied.

WCF, Ch. 23, "Of the Civil Magistrate", Sect. 3:

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

9) Because it does not meet the biblical requirements for civil government in a land that has enjoyed much Gospel light, it therefore stands in opposition to the reformation, preservation, and propagation of the true religion. There is no possible neutrality here: to omit (and certainly this omission was intentional) glad reference and submission to the benevolent author of civil government, and to His King, is outright treason.

10) Since the U.S. Constitution thus stands opposed to the true religion, it is sinful for any to swear to uphold it, as this would be to take an oath obliging one to sin, which is clearly forbidden in the Word and by reason (cf. WCF XXII:IV); for the Scriptures teach, in the words of the Larger Catechism (Q. 108; cf. 109): "The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word. . . as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry." Since the Christian is covenantally bound to fulfill these duties, he cannot at the same time swear to that which opposes them; cf. WLC, Q. 113: "The sins forbidden in the third commandment are. . . fulfilling [oaths and vows], if of things unlawful."

Samuel Wylie, in *Two Sons of Oil* (published in 1850, now available from Still Waters Revival Books; pp. 36-37) bemoans, "And I have never been able to satisfy myself, how it

was consistent, in those who profess Presbyterianism, to swear an oath, which involves the supporting of idolatry, &c., while, at the same time, in their creeds and church constitutions, they solemnly recognize their obligation, in their respective stations, to remove every monument and vestige of it from the land."

11) Since the United States government does not meet the God-ordained ends of civil government, it is not a lawful civil government, but rather an establishment of tyranny and usurpation. God requires submission for conscience' sake only to lawful civil governments (Rom. 13:1-7); conversely, He forbids submission for conscience' sake to unlawful governments. Therefore, the Christian cannot submit to the United States government out of conscience (he can submit for wrath' sake, as one submits to a robber's demands), as to the ordinance of God; for the United States (and other immoral civil governments) derive their power and authority not from God, but from the Beast (Rev. 13:2,4).

Consider the following historical corroboration from *The Reformed Presbyterian Catechism*, by William Roberts, D.D., 1853, pp. 153-155 (all emphases in original):

Q. Upon what grounds do they [Reformed Presbyterians] state their dissent from the constitution of the United States?

A. In their testimony entitled, 'Reformation Principles,' they declare, 'There are moral evils essential to the constitution of the United States, which render it necessary to refuse allegiance to the whole system. In this remarkable instrument there is contained no acknowledgment of the being or authority of God. There is no acknowledgment of the Christian religion, or professed submission to the kingdom of Messiah. It gives support to the enemies of the Redeemer, and admits to its honors and emoluments, Jews, Mahometans, Deists, and Atheists....'

Q. Is it indeed true, that this famous constitution does not recognise the being or authority of God, or the regal authority of Jesus Christ, 'the prince of the kings of the earth?'

A. It does not. If it did, the acknowledgment would be found in the PREAMBLE, which is as follows:--'We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America.'

Q. Is there any recognition of the being and authority of God and his Christ in this part of this important instrument?

A. There is evidently not. *The supreme authority* is evidently that only of WE THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES: God and his Christ are not mentioned, nor the mediatorial supremacy recognised.

Q. But is not the being and authority of God recognised in the oath of office required of the President of the United States, in these words, 'I do solemnly swear (or affirm), that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States,' &c.?

A. Not necessarily of the TRUE GOD. Because, 1. We learn from a member of the convention that framed the constitution, LUTHER MARTIN, delegate from Maryland, that the subject was debated in the convention, and the recognition

refused. 'The part of the system which requires that *"no religious test"* shall ever be required as a qualification of any office or public trust under the United States, was adopted by a great majority of the convention, and without much debate. However, there were some members so unfashionable as to think that *a belief of the existence of a Deity, and of a state of future rewards and punishments*, would be some security for the good conduct of our rulers, and that in a Christian country it would be, at least, decent to hold out some distinction between the professors of Christianity, and downright infidelity and Paganism.'--*Genuine Information*, p. 87. From this information it appears that the president may be an *Atheist*, according to the constitution, and the oath of office is, therefore, not a recognition of the being of a God, as his name is not mentioned in the form of the oath, and contains *no appeal to Him*. 2. The Heathen swore by *their Gods*, but this was not a recognition OF GOD; nor is he pleased with such service. Jer. v.7. 'How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, *and sworn by them that are no gods*.' 3. As it was evidently intended that Atheists might hold office, by what God would they swear, *who deny the existence of a Deity*, and a future state of rewards and punishments?

Q. Does not the constitution recognise the Christian religion, and express its subjection to the kingdom of the Messiah?

A. It evidently does not. 1. From the above testimony of Luther Martin, that it was designed to hold out *'no distinction between the professors of Christianity and downright infidelity and Paganism.'* 2. From the 2d Sec. of Art. 6th, in which it is declared, 'This constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, *and all TREATIES made, or which shall be made*, under the authority of the United States, SHALL BE THE SUPREME LAW OF THE LAND.' In the treaty with 'TRIPOLI,' [1797] *Mahometanism* is declared to be as much the religion of this nation as Christianity. 'The Government,' says this *"supreme law,"* 'of the United States IS NOT IN ANY SENSE FOUNDED ON THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. It has in itself *no character of enmity against the laws or religion of Mussulmen* [Muslims]."-- *U. S. Laws, Vol. 4, Trip. Treat. Art.* 2. Christianity--the laws of the Bible, are in no sense an element of the constitution. The supreme law is, THE WILL of WE THE PEOPLE, expressed in the constitution, laws, and treaties with foreign powers. The nation, *as such*, is INFIDEL. Yea, it is a nation *without a God*. Is. lx. 12. And the '*justice*' which they would 'establish,' is not that which is founded upon *that attribute* of God, but that only which the *will* of 'we the people' shall *determine* to be justice.

Q. Does the constitution give support to the enemies of the Redeemer, and admit to its honours and emoluments those who are adverse to his authority, religion, and laws, even Mahometans, Deists, and Atheists?

A. This is manifestly so; as *a supreme law* declares it is not *in any sense* founded on the religion of the Bible, and refuses, as a qualification for office, that the office-bearer should believe *in the existence of a Deity, or a future state of rewards and punishments*; as a consequence, *infidels* have occupied, and Atheists may occupy the highest seat in the gift of *we the people*. In contrast, the scriptures require, *He that ruleth over men must be just, RULING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD*.

## II. Classic vs. modern reformed teachings concerning magistracy and religion

We turn now to several quotations from reformed creeds and eminent reformed writers, concerning the Christian magistrates' power and authority about (not *in*, as this is the domain of Christ and His delegated church officers alone) matters of religion. After these, appropriate sections from the original Westminster Confession are compared with the creedal standards of three prominent reformed denominations in our day, the Presbyterian Church in America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. Commentary by B. B. Warfield as to what these revisions entailed (he himself apparently favorable to them) concludes this outline. Apart from a consideration of which position is correct, it is immediately evident that these modern reformed denominations (and Warfield) take a position of the magistracy bearing much more resemblance to the pluralism of the United States Constitution, than to the citations from our reformed heritage. If, indeed, our forefathers in the faith were wrong, wherein lay their error, and why was their position held not by one or two isolated churches but by virtually all the reformed churches, spanning several countries, during times of great reformation?

It is this author's contention that the modern churches have let go of this important piece of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Thereby they have delivered the church, not to kings as nursing fathers, but to the cruel civil domination of the enemies of the true religion, their sheep being taught that they must submit passively to every pretended civil authority as the ordinance of God. By this defection, these leaders of the flock have also **undermined the magistracy**, allowing and even encouraging wicked men to remove this blessed ordinance from its foundation in God its creator, and from its subjection to Christ His King, thereby directly opposing God's benevolent ends in instituting civil government: "Thus have [they] made the commandment of God of none effect by [their] tradition. . . . teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:6, 9). Furthermore, by their false teaching regarding civil government, **they have made themselves guilty of the very sin of which we are often accused**: opposing the ordinance of God. If this wasn't enough, however, consider that their sin is worse than that of the garden variety rebel, inasmuch as their opposition to God's institution is not so much **practical** as it is **principal**; and because of their position as teachers and guides of the flock of God. "Be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. . . . For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (James 3:1; II Cor. 13:8)

### **Classic reformed citations**

**John Calvin**, the French Reformer, from *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, (1543), p. 146:

There is nothing in which all men ought to feel a deeper interest, nothing in which God wishes us to exhibit a more intense zeal, than in endeavoring that the glory of his name may remain unimpaired, his kingdom be advanced, and the pure doctrine, which alone can guide us to true worship, flourish in full vigor. How much more, therefore, does it become princes to make these things their care, to design, commence, and prosecute them to a close, seeing God has honored them with a communication of his name, that they may be on earth the guardians and vindicators of his glory.

**John Knox**, the Scottish Reformer, from *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment [government] of Women* 1558):

If any thinks that the fore written law [Deut. 17:14-15] did bind the Jews only, let the same man consider that the election of a king and appointing of judges did neither

appertain to the ceremonial law, neither yet was it merely judicial; but that it did flow from the moral law, as an ordinance having respect to the conservation of both the tables. For the office of the magistrate ought to have the first and chief respect to the glory of God, commanded and contained in the former table, as is evident by that which was enjoined to Joshua, what time he was accepted and admitted ruler and governor over his people, in these words [cf. Josh. 1:1-9]: 'Thou shalt divide the inheritance to this people, the which I have sworn to their fathers to give unto them; so that thou be valiant and strong, that thou mayest keep and do according to that holy law, which my servant Moses hast commanded thee. Thou shalt not decline from it, neither to the right hand, neither to the left hand, that thou mayest do prudently in all things that thou takest in hand. Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth; but meditate in it day and night, that thou mayest keep and do according to everything that is written in it. For then shall thy ways prosper, and then shalt thou do prudently,' etc.

And God gives the same precept by the mouth of Moses to kings, after they are elected, in these words [Deut. 17:18-20]: 'When he shall sit in the throne, or seat of his kingdom, he shall write to himself a copy of this law in a book. And that shall be with him, that he may read in it all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and all these statutes, that he may do them,' etc. Of these two places it is evident, that principally it appertains to the king, or to the chief magistrate, to know the will of God, to be instructed in his law and statutes, and to promote his glory with his whole heart and study, which are the chief points of the first table.

No man denies, but that the sword is committed to the magistrate, to the end that he should punish vice and maintain virtue. To punish vice, I say: not only that which troubles the tranquillity and quiet estate of the commonwealth (by adultery, theft, or murder committed), but also such vices as openly impugn the glory of God, as idolatry, blasphemy, and manifest heresy, taught and obstinately maintained, as the histories and notable acts of Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, and Josiah do plainly teach us; whose study and care was not only to glorify God in their own life and conversation, but also they unfeignedly did travail to bring their subjects to the true worshipping and honouring of God; and did destroy all monuments of idolatry, did punish to death the teachers of it, and removed from office and honours such as were maintainers of those abominations. Whereby, I suppose, that it is evident, that the office of the king, or supreme magistrate, has respect to the moral law, and to the conservation of both the tables.

Now, if the moral law is the constant and unchangeable will of God, to which the Gentile is no less bound than was the Jew; and if God wills, that amongst the Gentiles the ministers and executors of his law be now appointed, as sometimes they were appointed amongst the Jews; further, if the execution of justice is no less requisite in the policy of the Gentiles, than ever it was amongst the Jews; what man can be so foolish to suppose or believe, that God will now admit those persons to sit in judgment, or to reign over men in the commonwealth of the Gentiles, whom he by his expressed word and ordinance did before debar and exclude from the same?

From his "Summary of the Proposed Second Blast of the Trumpet" (1558):

1. It is not birth only, nor propinquity of blood, that makes a king lawfully to reign above a people professing Christ Jesus and his eternal verity; but in his election must the ordinance, which God has established in the election of inferior judges, be observed.
2. No manifest idolater, nor notorious transgressor of God's holy precepts, ought to be

promoted to any public regiment [*government*] honour, or dignity, in any realm, province, or city that has subjected itself to his blessed evangel.

3. Neither can oath nor promise bind any such people to obey and maintain tyrants against God and against his truth known.

4. But if either rashly they have promoted any manifestly wicked, or yet ignorantly have chosen such a one, as after declares himself unworthy of regiment above the people of God (and such be all idolaters and cruel persecutors), most justly may the same men depose and punish him, that unadvisedly before they did nominate, appoint, and elect.

**Scottish Confession of Faith** (1560-- co-authored by Scottish reformer, **John Knox**), ch. 24, "Of the Civil Magistrate":

Moreover, to kings, princes, rulers, and magistrates, we affirm that chiefly and most principally the conservation and purgation of the religion appertains; so that not only they are appointed for civil policy, but also for maintenance of the true religion, and for suppressing of idolatry and superstition whatsoever: as in David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and others, highly commended for their zeal in that case, may be espied.

**Scottish National Covenant** (1580, 1581, 1590, 1638-40, 1650, 1651):

That all Kings and Princes at their coronation, and reception of their princely authority, shall make their faithful promise by their solemn oath, in the presence of the eternal God, that, enduring the whole time of their lives, they shall serve the same eternal God, to the uttermost of their power, according as he hath required in his most holy word, contained in the Old and New Testament; and according to the same word shall maintain the true religion of Christ Jesus, the preaching of his holy word, the due and right ministration of the sacraments now received and preached within this realm, (according to the Confession of Faith immediately preceding [that is, the Scottish Confession of Faith of 1560],) and shall abolish and gainstand all false religion contrary to the same; and shall rule the people committed to their charge, according to the will and command of God revealed in his foresaid word, and according to the laudable laws and constitutions received in this realm, nowise repugnant to the said will of the eternal God; and shall procure, to the uttermost of their power, to the kirk of God, and whole Christian people, true and perfect peace in all time coming: and that they shall be careful to root out of their empire all hereticks and enemies to the true worship of God, who shall be convicted by the true kirk of God of the foresaid crimes.

**Solemn League and Covenant** (1643-44; 1648, 1650, 1651):

That we shall in like manner, without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, . . . superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness, lest we partake in other men's sins, and thereby be in danger to receive of their plagues. . . . We shall also, with all faithfulness, endeavour the discovery of all such as have been or shall be incendiaries, malignants, or evil instruments, by hindering the reformation of religion. . . or making any faction or parties amongst the people, contrary to this League and Covenant; that they may be brought to publick trial, and receive condign punishment, as the degree of their offences shall require or deserve, or the supreme judicatories of both kingdoms respectively, or others having power from them for that effect, shall judge convenient. . . . that justice may be done upon the wilful opposers thereof, in manner expressed in the precedent article [that is, article IV].

**Westminster Confession of Faith (1647):** *found below, to allow immediate*

*comparison with the modern reformed creeds.*

**Westminster Larger Catechism** (1648), Questions 108, 109, 113; *compare these with the duties of the civil magistrate concerning Christ's church as found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, cited below:*

The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word. . . as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry. . . . The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion. . . corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever. . . all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed. . . . The sins forbidden in the third commandment [include]. . . fulfilling [our oaths and vows] if of things unlawful [that is, if the content is inherently sinful]. . . .

**George Gillespie** (1640's); Scottish minister and eminent Scottish delegate to the Westminster Assembly:

*One Hundred and Eleven Propositions Concerning the Ministry and Government of the Church* (1642):

41. The orthodox churches believe also, and do willingly acknowledge, that every lawful magistrate, being by God himself constituted the keeper and defender of both tables of the law, may and ought first and chiefly to take care of God's glory, and (according to his place, or in his manner and way) to preserve religion when pure, and to restore it when decayed and corrupted: and also to provide a learned and godly ministry, schools also and synods, as likewise to restrain and punish as well atheists, blasphemers, heretics and schismatics, as the violaters of justice and civil peace.

42. Wherefore the opinion of those sectaries of this age is altogether to be disallowed, who, though otherwise insinuating themselves craftily into the magistrate's favour, do deny unto him the authority and right of restraining heretics and schismatics, and do hold and maintain that such persons, how much soever hurtful and pernicious enemies to true religion and to the church, yet are to be tolerated by the magistrate, if so be he conceive them to be such as no way violate the laws of the commonwealth, and in nowise disturb the civil peace.

*Wholesome Severity Reconciled With Christian Liberty* (mid-1640's):

And lest it be thought that this is but the opinion of some few, that the magistrate ought thus by a strong hand, and by civil punishments suppress heretics and sectaries: let it be observed what is held forth and professed concerning this business, by the Reformed Churches in their public confessions of faith. In the latter Confession of Helvetia (*cap. 30*), it is said that the magistrate ought to 'root out lies and all superstition, with all impiety and idolatry.' And after, 'Let him suppress stubborn heretics.' In the French Confession (*art. 39*), 'Therefore he hath also delivered the sword into the hands of Magistrates, to wit, that offenses may be repressed, not only those which are committed against the second table, but also against the first.' In the Belgic Confession (*art. 36*), 'Therefore hath he armed the Magistrate with the sword for punishing them that do evil, and for defending such as do

well. Moreover it is their duty not only to be careful and watchful for the preservation of the civil government, but also to defend the holy ministry, and to abolish and overthrow all idolatry, and counterfeit worship of God.' Beza (*De Hareticis*), tells us in the beginning, that the ministers of Helvetia had declared themselves to be of the same judgment, in a book published of that argument. And toward the end he cites the Saxon Confession, Luther, Melancthon, Brentius, Bucerus, Wolfgangus Capito, and Bullinger. The Synod of Dordt (*ses. 138*), in their sentence against the Remonstrants does not only interdict them of all their ecclesiastical and academical functions, but [does] also beseech the States General by their secular power to suppress and restrain them.

***Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici (The Divine Right of Church Government)***, by Sundry Ministers of Christ Within the City of London (1646):

Nor is this only our private judgment, or the opinion of some few particular persons touching the granting or bounding of the magistrate's power about matters of religion; but with us we have the suffrage of many reformed churches, who, in their Confessions of Faith published to the world, do fully and clearly express themselves to the same effect. The Helvetian church thus: Since every magistrate is of God, it is (unless he would exercise tyranny) his chief duty, all blasphemy being repressed, to defend and provide for religion, and to execute this to his utmost strength, as the prophet teacheth out of the word; in which respect the pure and free preaching of God's word, a right, diligent, and well-instituted discipline of youth, citizens and scholars; a just and liberal maintenance of the ministers of the church, and a solicitous care of the poor, (whereunto all ecclesiastical means belong,) have the first place. After this, &c.

The French churches thus: He also therefore committed the sword into the magistrates' hands, that they might repress faults committed not only against the second table, but also against the first; therefore we affirm, that their laws and statutes ought to be obeyed, tribute to be paid, and other burdens to be borne, the yoke of subjection voluntarily to be undergone, yea, though the magistrates should be infidels, so long as the supreme government of God remains perfect and untouched, Matt. xxiv.; Acts iv. 17, and v. 19; Jude verse 8.

The church of Scotland thus: Moreover we affirm, that the purging and conserving of religion is the first and most especial duty of kings, princes, governors, and magistrates. So that they are ordained of God not only for civil polity, but also for the conservation of true religion, and that all idolatry and superstition may be suppressed: as is evident in David, Jehoshaphat, Josiah, Hezekiah, and others, adorned with high praises for their singular zeal.

The Belgic church thus: Therefore he hath armed the magistrates with a sword, that they may punish the bad and defend the good. Furthermore, it is their duty not only to be solicitous about preserving of civil polity, but also to give diligence that the sacred ministry may be preserved, all idolatry and adulterate worship of God may be taken out of the way, the kingdom of antichrist may be pulled down, but Christ's kingdom propagated. Finally, it is their part to take course, that the holy word of the gospel be preached on every side, that all may freely and purely serve and worship God according to the precept of his word. And all men, of whatsoever dignity, condition, or state they be, ought to be subject to lawful magistrates, to pay them tribute and subsidies, to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the word of God; to pour out prayers for them, that God would vouchsafe to direct them in all their actions, *and that we may under them lead a*

*quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* Wherefore we detest the Anabaptists and all turbulent men who cast off superior dominions and magistrates, pervert laws and judgments, make all goods common, and finally abolish or confound all orders and degrees which God hath constituted for honesty's sake among men. The church in Bohemia thus: They teach also that it is commanded in the word of God that *all should be subject to the higher powers* in all things, yet in those things only which are not repugnant to God and his word. But as touching those things which concern men's souls, faith, and salvation, they teach that men should hearken only to God's word, &c., his ministers, as Christ himself saith, *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God those things that are God's.* But if any would compel them to those things which are against God, and fight and strive against his word, which abideth forever; they teach them to make use of the apostle's example, who thus answered the magistrate at Jerusalem: *It is meet (say they) to obey God rather than men.*

Finally, the church in Saxony hath expressed herself notably in this point, saying, among many other passages, God will have all men, yea, even unregenerate men, to be ruled and restrained by political government. And in this government the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God to mankind do shine forth. His wisdom, order declares, which is the difference of virtues and vices, and the consociation of men by lawful governments and contracts ordained in wonderful wisdom. God's justice also is seen in political government, who will have manifest wickednesses to be punished by magistrates; and when they that rule punish not the guilty, God himself wonderfully draws them to punishment, and regularly punishes heinous faults with heinous penalties in this life, as it is said, *He that takes the sword shall perish by the sword; and, Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* God will have in these punishments the difference of vices and virtues to be seen; and will have us learn that God is wise, just, true, chaste. God's goodness also to mankind is beheld, because by this means he preserves the society of men, and therefore he preserves in that thence the Church may be gathered, and will have polities to be the Church's inns. Of these divine and immoveable laws, which are testimonies of God, and the chief rule of manners, the magistrate is to be keeper in punishing all that violate them. For the voice of the law, without punishment and execution, is of small avail to bridle and restrain men; therefore it is said by Paul, *The power should be a terror to evil works, and an honor to the good.* And antiquity rightly said, *The magistrate is the keeper of the law, both of the first and second table,* so far as appertains to good order. And though many in their governments neglect the glory of God, yet this ought to be their chief care, to hear and embrace the true doctrine touching the Son of God, and to foster the churches, as the psalm saith, *And now understand, ye kings, and be instructed, ye judges of the earth.* Again, *Open your gates, ye princes,* i.e., Open your empires to the gospel, and afford harbor to the Son of God. And Isa. xlix.: *And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and queens,* i.e. commonwealths, *shall be thy nursing-mothers,* i.e., of the Church, they shall afford lodgings to churches and pious studies. And kings and princes themselves shall be members of the Church, and shall rightly understand doctrine, shall not help those that establish false doctrine, and exercise unjust cruelty, but shall be mindful of this saying, "I will glorify them that glorify me." And Daniel exhorteth the king of Babylon unto the acknowledgment of God's wrath, and to clemency towards the exiled Church, when he saith, "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." And since they are among the chief members of the Church, they should see that judgment be rightly exercised in the Church, as Constantine, Theodosius, Arcadius, Marcianus, Charles the Great, and many pious kings, took care that the judgments of the Church should be rightly exercised, &c.

**The following are a comparison of the original Westminster Confession of Faith and the revisions of it held by modern reformed churches. Included as well are some remarkable quotations from a modern presbyterian on the nature and degree of these revisions, the eminent B. B. Warfield, himself (judging at very least by his denominational affiliation) a supporter of the revisions. The following abbreviations will be used:**

**WCF-- original Confession of Faith emitted by the Westminster Assembly, and adopted by the Church of Scotland, 1647.**

**PCA/OPC-- revision of the 1647 Westminster Confession, adopted by the Presbyterian Church in America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, printed by Great Commissions Publications (which revisions they erroneously title "The Westminster Standards").**

**RPCNA-- revision of the 1647 Westminster Confession, adopted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. It should be noted that this church once held to the original 1647 Confession and so has defected from its own standards, making its departure from the truth that much more heinous than the PCA and OPC.**

**Chapter 20, "Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience", section 4:**

**WCF:** And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation; or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church; they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate.

**PCA/OPC:** And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, they who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And, for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity (whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation), or to the power of godliness; or, such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against, by the censures of the church.

**Chapter 22, "Of lawful Oaths and Vows", section 3**

**WCF:** Whosoever taketh an oath, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing but what he is fully persuaded is the truth. Neither may any man bind himself by oath to any thing but what is good and just, and what he believeth

so to be, and what he is able and resolved to perform. Yet it is a sin to refuse an oath touching any thing that is good and just, being imposed by lawful authority.

**PCA/OPC:** Whosoever taketh an oath, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing but what he is fully persuaded is the truth: neither may any man bind himself by oath to anything but what is good and just, and what he believeth so to be, and what he is able and resolved to perform.

### **Chapter 23, "Of the Civil Magistrate", section 3:**

**WCF:** The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

**PCA/OPC:** Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of *any* [emphasis original] denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretense of religion or of infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.

**RPCNA:** Confession: 3. The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed; all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

Testimony: 18. *We reject* [emphasis original] the portion of the paragraph 3 after the colon [viz. after, "the kingdom of heaven:"]

### **Chapter 31, "Of Synods and Councils", sections 1 and 2:**

**WCF:** I. For the better government, and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called Synods or Councils.

II. As magistrates may lawfully call a synod of ministers, and other fit persons, to consult and advise with about matters of religion; so if magistrates be open enemies to the church,

the ministers of Christ, of themselves, by virtue of their office, or they, with other fit persons upon delegation from their churches, may meet together in such assemblies.  
III. It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith, etc.

**PCA/OPC:** I. For the better government, and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called *synods* or *councils* [emphases original]: and it belongeth to the overseers and other rulers of the particular churches, by virtue of their office, and the power which Christ hath given them for edification and not for destruction, to appoint such assemblies; and to convene together in them, as often as they shall judge it expedient for the good of the church.

II. It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith, etc.

**RPCNA: Confession:** 1. I. For the better government, and further edification of the Church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils.  
2. As magistrates may lawfully call a synod of ministers, and other fit persons, to consult and advise with, about matters of religion; so if magistrates be open enemies to the Church, the ministers of Christ of themselves, by virtue of their office, or they, with other fit persons, upon delegation from their Churches, may meet together in such assemblies.  
3. It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith, etc.

Testimony: 3. *We reject paragraph 2 of the Confession of Faith* [italics original].

**Warfield:** These are excerpted from, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, article 4: "The Printing of the Confession", Section IV: "In Modification", pp. 368-376. Emphases have been added.

The chief bone of contention here [speaking of the Parliamentary version of the Confession, "acting in the Independent interest," published at the end of June, 1648] concerned, of course, the organization of the churches into a Church, provided with a series of courts clothed with authoritative jurisdiction. With this was involved the whole subject of Church discipline. And more remotely there came to be connected with it the question of a limited *toleration*, not so much of divergencies in doctrine as of *differences in Church organization, government, and forms of worship*. To meet the case thus raised the Parliament simply struck out of the document the whole series of sections treating of Church government and discipline."--p. 371

[Note: the remarkable preceding statement must be compared with the wording of the Solemn League and Covenant, wherein is stated the covenanted intent of the Westminster Assembly: ". . . and shall endeavour to bring the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church-government, directory for worship and catechising; that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us." What are we supposed to think the Westminster delegates, all of whom swore this covenant, would have said of Warfield's idea that two of the four stated ends of that Assembly were not central to the Confession, and did not constitute "divergencies of doctrine"?)

But **only** in the two points of Church government and "discipline" and of "toleration" did they modify greatly its teaching.

It was reserved to Presbyterians, after all, to make the 'intolerant' teaching of the Westminster Confession a really constraining ground for modifying the document.--p. 372  
The fact is that in the seventeenth century 'toleration' was rather a sentiment of the oppressed than a reasoned principle of Christian ethics: while unrestricted 'religious liberty' had scarcely risen on the horizon of men's thoughts. Whatever was done toward freeing the Westminster Confession from 'intolerant principles' in that age was therefore fitful and unstable, and rather a measure of self-protection than the consistent enunciation of a thoroughly grasped fundamental principle. Thus it happened that the American Presbyterians were the first to prepare modifications of the Westminster Confession which turned on the precise point of **the duty of universal toleration, or rather of the fundamental right of unrestricted religious liberty**. The first modifications in the interests of the principle of religious freedom and the **equality of all forms of religious faith before the law**, was that made by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1789. The Associate Reformed church followed in the same pathway in 1799; and the United Presbyterian Church has continued this testimony in its own way ever since its formation in 1858. *Thus it has come about that practically the whole body of American Presbyterians has cleansed the Westminster Confession from every phrase which could by any form of interpretation be made to favor intolerance and has substituted the broadest assertion of religious liberty.*--p. 373

The Independents, Baptists, American Presbyterians alike gave the heartiest assent to the Reformed faith as set forth in this Confession; and it was only because they recognized in its form of sound words the expression of their fundamental belief that they busied themselves with adjusting it in **minor** matters to their opinions and practices. --p. 374  
In the course of the two hundred and fifty years that have elapsed since its formulation the Westminster Confession has thus been sent out into the world in some half-dozen modifications. Some of these modifications concern **so small a portion** and **so subordinate an element** in the document that it becomes doubtful whether the publications in which they are embodied *should not be rather treated as **editions** than as **modifications** of it*. The Parliamentary edition of 1648 [of Independent persuasion] and *the Confessions of the American Presbyterian Churches belong to this class. . . .*" -- p.375

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## Appendix C

### The Solemn League and Covenant

See Westminster Standards or Internet sources