

The Church and God's Law (21)

By Andrew McColl, 24/9/2013

If a man gives his neighbour a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for him, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, an oath before the Lord shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbour's property; and it's owner shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution. But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. If it is at all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn in pieces. If a man borrows anything from his neighbour, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution. If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire (Ex.22:10-15).

All of the case laws are founded in the Ten Commandments, the bedrock of Biblical ethics. Thus this command is a logical and consistent extension of the Eighth Commandment, dealing with theft.

The case laws governing safekeeping point to this important covenantal truth. Valuable property must be under someone's administration if it is to be protected. It must be cared for. The thief who finds an empty house is more likely to be able to commit his crime undetected. *Guarding private property is therefore an important aspect of the dominion covenant.* Since all property belongs to God, the steward is required to be faithful in caring for whatever property has been assigned to him by God to guard, just as Adam was to care for God's garden.¹

This case-law introduces us to the concept of shared responsibility.

*When a man accepts the task of guarding his neighbour's property, he thereby accepts a considerable degree of personal liability. Control is inescapably linked to ownership. Yet, in this case, the controller is not the legal owner. This places certain disadvantages on him.*²

Obligations are an aspect of a healthy community. No sense of obligation? No community. The modern city in particular, has reduced the notion of community severely. People have been beaten up, or even killed and left on the side of the road, with no one stopping to assist them. All of this will change with the influence of the gospel, as has happened in the past.

¹ Gary North, "Tools of Dominion," 1990, Vol.3, p.611.

² Gary North, "Tools..." p.613.

The Church and God's Law (22)

By Andrew McColl, 1/10/2013

If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her to be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins (Ex.22:16-17).

The Bible explicitly prohibits all forms of sexual activity outside of the marriage covenant. I refer to an excerpt from "The Importance of the Dowry," Appendix (III) from my book, "The Significance of the Godly Family," (2009).

A number of assumptions are implicit in this text:

1) God Himself acknowledged the legitimacy of a young woman being under the authority of her father:

The father was responsible with his wife to care for her, and oversee her marital future. A father's authority here is clearly indicated. "In the Biblical view, the approval of the girl's father is all important."³ Even Samson's father-in-law, though a Philistine, seemed to acknowledge this (Judges 15:1-2). See also Numbers 30, and I Corinthians 14:34. Rushdoony's comments here are helpful:

...the Hebrew word for bridegroom means 'the circumcised,' the Hebrew word for father-in-law means he who performed the operation of circumcision, and the Hebrew word for mother-in-law is similar. This obviously had no reference to the actual physical rite, since Hebrew males were circumcised on the eighth day. What it meant was that the father-in-law ensured the fact of spiritual circumcision, as did the mother-in-law, by making sure of the covenantal status of the groom. It was their duty to prevent a mixed marriage. A man could marry their daughter, and become a bridegroom, only when clearly a man under God.⁴

Whilst in Babylon, God commanded His people to "take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and **take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands**" (Jer.29:6). Clearly, this was a father's responsibility.

Where the family controls inheritance, it also controls marriage...when Jacob became the heir, his father Isaac "blessed him and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt

³ James Jordan, "The Law of the Covenant," 1984, p.150-151. Jordan adds: "This is not to say, of course, that there are no occasions when the officers of Church and/or state may have to intervene and restrict the authority of the father... human covenants and relationships are never absolute. Some men decide that their daughters will never marry, but will remain their servants forever. In such a case, the girls may appeal to the magistrates of Church and state, and be delivered from the abuse." In the absence or death of the father, the initial responsibility for overseeing the girl's welfare devolved to her mother, and the girl's brothers. When Dinah had been raped, her brothers determined the terms of her marriage to Shechem (Gen.34:12-18). In the case of Ruth, her faith in the God of Israel, along with the death of all of the men of Naomi's family led to Naomi's suggestion: "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may go well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were?" (Ruth 3:1-2)

⁴ Rousas Rushdoony, "The Institutes of Biblical Law," 1973, p.344.

not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan” (Gen.28:1). In other words, the father had the power to require a godly marriage; because Isaac was leaving a sizable inheritance, he had a stake in the future, and because he had a stake in that future, he had a right to control it by requiring a godly marriage. This was a legitimate and godly power. ⁵

It is essential to understand the Biblical notion of legal status. “Biblically, the daughter who is still living at home is not an independent legal agent. An unmarried daughter living at home is under her father’s covenantal administration.” ⁶ Even a betrothed woman, still living with her parents was considered by God to be married, while still under their authority (Deut. 22:23-27).

Thus the Bible says that, “Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters...” (Gen.19:14). Jacob said to Laban concerning Rachel, before their wedding feast, “give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go into her” (Gen.29:21). This is consistent with the Biblical notion, that demonstrated responsibility should precede freedom and privilege.

2) A godly marriage is ideally preceded by inter-generational responsibility in the choice of a spouse:

This is certainly evident between Abraham and Isaac (Gen.24:1-9), and Isaac and Jacob (Gen.28:1-5). The young man in particular, is encouraged to “incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge; for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you...have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge...?” (Prov.22:17-20). He is also encouraged to “give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways” (Prov.23:26).

In violation of the Fifth Commandment given later to “honour your father and mother...” (Ex.20:12), Esau was indifferent or even contemptuous towards his parents and their views. One aspect of this was his determination to marry two Canaanite women, who only grieved his parents (Gen.26:34-35). He “despised his birthright” (Gen.25:34), and then hoped to murder his brother Jacob (Gen.27:41). But “implicit in the fifth commandment is that to dishonour one’s parents is to dishonour one’s self, and to invite death.” ⁷ The Bible speaks contemptuously of “a man who curses his father and does not bless his mother...who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness” (Prov.30:11-12). Prov.30:17 says, “the eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.”

Before Isaac commanded Jacob to go to Paddan-aram to take a wife, Rebekah complained to Isaac, “I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth [Esau’s wives]” (Gen.27:46). The Bible ultimately describes Esau as “a godless person” (Heb.12:16).

⁵ Rousas Rushdoony, “Law and Liberty,” 2009, p.96.

⁶ Gary North, “Tools of Dominion,” 1990, p.660. North adds that, “this principle also governs the covenantal obligation of anyone dispensing contraceptives to an unmarried male or female minor to receive written permission from the head of household first.”

⁷ Rousas Rushdoony, “The Institutes of Biblical Law,” 1973, p.174.

3) God acknowledged the legitimacy of a dowry payment, to be made to the bride's father-in law for a bride:

The dowry was a means of giving a woman a measure of financial security, in the event of her husband's incapacity through accident or illness, death, unfaithfulness, or abandonment of her. It was also a means to minimise needless exposure to interlopers and fornicators, who would only wish to use and abuse a young woman. In the context of the Corinthian church being the bride of Christ, the apostle Paul picks up this theme as he assumes the protective role of a bride's father: "... I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin" (II Cor.11:2).

*The dowry served as a kind of 'incompetence insurance.' What if her husband divorced her, and her father and brothers should lose their wealth at the same time? The wife could not easily return empty-handed to her father's household under such circumstances. With a dowry she would be protected from this sort of calamity.*⁸

4) Responsibility for pre-marital sexual intercourse lay primarily with the man.

If this occurred, he would be obliged to pay the woman a dowry, whether or not the woman's father permitted them to marry. Matthew Henry's commentary (written about 1710) on this passage is helpful:

*If the father [of the violated woman] refused her to him, he was to give satisfaction in money for the injury and disgrace he had done her. This law puts an honour upon marriage and shows likewise how improper a thing it is that children should marry without their parents' consent...there was an express reservation for the father's power; if he denied his consent, it must be no marriage.*⁹

One minister, whose views I respect, has written that "by far the majority of church families I know are not protective enough of their children."¹⁰ A dowry represents a statement of a girl's value to her father, and to God. On God's behalf, the father is saying to all possible suitors:

I see you are interested in my daughter. I can understand that. She's of great value to her mother and I, to our family, and to God. We've put a lot of time, money and effort into raising her: she's really special to us. If you are interested in marrying her, and being the father of our grand-children, you'll have to prove to me that you are really serious about this. You will need firstly to have proven yourself to us as a godly, responsible man, able to care for my daughter and our grandchildren. That could take some time. Secondly, you will need to have saved a sum of money that you will need to give to me to be held in trust for my daughter, before I will permit marriage to take place. Still interested?

The need to prepare a sizeable dowry, which one commentator estimates could have been as much as three years' wages,¹¹ would generally dampen a young man's enthusiasm for a hasty relationship. A young man who has planned long-term, and spent years saving up a dowry will

⁸ Gary North, "Tools of Dominion," 1990, p.258.

⁹ Dr. S. M. Davis, "Changing the Heart of a Rebel," 1998, p.1.

¹⁰ Dr. S. M. Davis, "Changing the Heart of a Rebel," 1998, p.1.

¹¹ Rousas Rushdoony, "The Institutes of Biblical Law," 1973, p.177.

be more likely to be prayerful, cautious and circumspect in his consideration of a wife, as he surrenders this capital for the new family to her father, before marriage.¹²

There was a covenantal reason for this economic obligation on the part of the bridegroom. The father of the prospective bride represented God to his daughter. This covenantal authority before God-this position as God's representative to his daughter-had to be lawfully transferred from the father to the bridegroom. By paying the bride price to her father, the bridegroom ritually swore to a lifetime of faithfulness to his wife as God's representative to her, faithfulness comparable to what her father's faithfulness to her had been. This is precisely what Jesus swore to God the Father in His role as the cosmic Bridegroom. He paid the price at Calvary. God then transferred all authority over heaven and earth to Christ as His lawful representative (Mat.28:18-20).¹³

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ North, *ibid.*, p.252.

The Church and God's Law (23)

By Andrew McColl, 8/10/2013

You shall not allow a sorceress to live (Ex.22:18).

One of the signal failures of the church of the modern era has been to take passages such as this one seriously. The Bible does not teach that societies must tolerate in a legal sense, all of the religious views of people. This text commands capital punishment for a person who commits what is clearly a religious act of hostility to God, in violation of the First Commandment.

But if a nation's laws require religious toleration, than all religious views and behaviours could theoretically be equally acceptable. That means that religiously motivated cannibalism, honour killings, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and a host of other despicable activities must become legally acceptable. A more confused muddle it would be difficult to imagine.

The Bible does not teach religious toleration, it teaches religious freedom. But that freedom is always within the context of Christian law, and that freedom is with a view to godly service and dominion. We are to "...offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb.12:28-29).

This is why every society must choose its law-base, and this itself will always be at heart religious.

The fact is that all law is 'religious.' All law is based on some ultimate standard of morality and ethics. Every law system is founded on the ultimate value of that system, and that ultimate value is the god of that system. The source of law for a society is the god of that society. This means that a theocracy is inescapable. All societies are theocracies. The difference is that a society that is not explicitly Christian is a theocracy of a false god.¹⁴

If the State (according to Romans 13:1-5) is to be given the sword to punish evil-doers, than there will be times when this will include what is clearly religious behaviour.

The sorceress is a rebel against God, endeavouring to introduce a rival religion to a community. God in commanding that "you shall not allow a sorceress to live," requires us to identify with Him not only in our religious beliefs, but our legal structures and sanctions as well, because all law is religiously motivated and constructed.

Other passages confirm this. He later commanded that,

If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or your daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods" (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, of the gods of the peoples

¹⁴ David Chilton, "Paradise Restored," 1999, p.219.

who are around you, from one end of the earth to the other end), you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the Lord your God... (Deut.13:6-10).

What are we to do? Well, we either obey the Word, or we don't, and both have consequences. When Saul failed to obey God in wiping out all of the Amalekites (I Sam.15) and then consulted with a witch (I Sam.28), he brought himself under God's judgment, forfeiting the kingship of Israel. In fact, he was killed by an Amalekite (II Sam.1). His failure to enforce God's capital punishment brought destruction on his own head.

Jehoshaphat was a lot better than Saul, but he too made mistakes. After one of them, he was confronted by a prophet:

Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord and so bring down wrath on yourself from the Lord? (II Chron.19:2).

When Elijah confronted Israel and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18), he didn't tread quietly. He knew there needed to be a national renewal, and that would require the rejection of Baal worship, which had compromised the nation. And when God confirmed his word (v.36-38), Elijah then dealt with the 400 prophets of Baal (v.40).

Obviously, this requires that we re-think the role of civil government. What's it here for?

*The civil government's primary function is to protect the community against the wrath of God by enforcing His laws against public acts that threaten the survival of the community.*¹⁵

Jesus, speaking of Himself, told a parable of a nobleman, who "went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return" (Luke 19:12). But he encountered resistance from some who were unwilling to follow instructions. His final statement in the parable?

But those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence (Luke 19:27).

I wouldn't want to face my day of accountability before Jesus Christ, having failed to stand my ground, or to tolerate something as basic as disobedience to His case laws, given through Moses.

Would you?

¹⁵ Gary North, "Tools of Dominion," 1990, Vol. 3, p.679.

The Church and God's Law (24)

By Andrew McColl, 15/10/2013

Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death (Ex.22:19).

God made us to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen.1:28). Biblical reproduction necessitates sexual intercourse, within marriage.

Bestiality represents a reversal of this. It puts us amongst the animals we were supposed to be differentiated from. But as servants of God, we are not given the luxury of reversing God's plan for us by living like animals. We have meaning, dignity and purpose, living unto God.

Bestiality was one of the sins God identified amongst the Canaanites. It wasn't just that Israel was given the land. They were given the land, partially because of the disgusting practices prevalent there.

God said,

the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants. But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you...(Lev.18:25-26).

Turning to depravity is common for those people and cultures that do not know God. The rejection of God meant historically that men “worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator...” (Ro.1:25). Bestiality represents a form of this.

But God's people are to behave differently. As servants of Christ, we are to keep His statutes and judgments.

The Church and God's Law (25)

By Andrew McColl, 22/10/2013

He who sacrifices to any other god, other than the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed (Ex.22:20)

This text testifies to a number of things. Firstly, God is a jealous God, Who requires the totality of our heart affections, manifested in our obedience in everything. The notion of polytheism is abhorrent to God. Many religions means many, conflicting laws (for religion and law are closely related), and this then leads to the justification of many behaviours that are also abhorrent to God.

People are really never irreligious. Paul observed of the Athenians, "...that you are very religious in all respects" (Acts 17:22). The real question is, is our religion based on faithfulness and obedience to God and His Word? If not, it is a destructive, false religion bringing us under God's curse, and ultimately hell.

I have quoted North in this context earlier, and will remind the reader of his statement again:

*The civil government's primary function is to protect the community against the wrath of God by enforcing His laws against public acts that threaten the survival of the community.*¹⁶

This text also requires that God's people are faithful in opposing false religion. It is insufficient to merely claim that "I have been faithful to God," if we know of social practices taking place (especially public ones) that are abhorrent to God. God made this very clear to Israel: they were obligated to take action against all forms of social idolatry in the land (see Deut.13). The authority and dominance of the Church as an influential institution in the community, will lead to greater responsibility in this regard.

What people do secretly we cannot comment on, but known public behaviour, we can and must act upon. Furthermore, a godly law base will reflect this responsibility.

This text is also a reminder of the First Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex.20:3) A Christian society and law-base will reflect this.

¹⁶ Gary North, "Tools of Dominion," 1990, Vol.3, p.679.

The Church and God's Law (26)

By Andrew McColl, 29/10/2013

(This is taken from my book, "The Great Christian Revolution," Chapter X, "Christianity and Immigration.")

You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Ex.22:21).

From time immemorial, people have wanted to move. International trade and its twin, immigration, have roots going back to the beginning of time. We may think that "in 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue," but there was movement between Europe and North America, and possibly around the whole world for two and possibly three thousand years before Columbus. The Los Lunas stone, found in New Mexico, contained an inscription of the Ten Commandments, and probably dates from Solomon's era.¹⁷ Noah and his sons had the requisite skills to successfully build an ocean-going boat that they occupied for six months without seeing land (Gen. 8:1-4) around 2,300 B.C. There is no reason to believe that those skills suddenly disappeared.

Friedrich Heer, in The Medieval World (1962) writes of the "open Europe" of 1100; men travelled freely from England through Russia, from Europe to Byzantium, and from Europe to the Islamic world. Trade routes were well travelled, and inter-marriages were common. Even in Spain, despite the combat, marriages between Islamic, Jewish, and Hispano-Christian families, especially among the aristocracy and merchant classes, were common. In addition to the commercial travel, there was a great deal of movement across frontiers by pilgrims.¹⁸

Why do people want to immigrate? Very commonly, it is because they are suffering racial, religious or political persecution: they want a place to escape to. This was very common during the twentieth century, a time of unprecedented institutionalised bloodshed.

This was also the context of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, under Moses. The people were enslaved, they groaned under their oppression and their male babies were liable to be killed by the Egyptians (Ex.1:15-16).¹⁹

Similarly, when Joseph and Mary with Jesus fled to Egypt, it was because Herod was a murderous tyrannical ruler who killed even children in his rage (Mat.2:16-18). It was an angel who commanded Joseph to immediately take Mary and Jesus on an international journey to protect Jesus (Mat.2:13-23). In both examples, the opportunity for quick immigration for either a family or a whole nation, facilitated by God's sovereign help, proved to be a means of remarkable deliverance.

Furthermore, people have always wanted to go where they believe they may find sanctuary, enjoy a better climate, have better economic opportunities, and provide a future for their family. These are just

¹⁷ See B. Fell, "Bronze Age America," 1982.

¹⁸ Rousas Rushdoony, "Roots of Reconstruction," 1991, p.823.

¹⁹ For more on this, see Gary North, "Moses and Pharaoh," 1985.

some of the more obvious reasons. A free country will want to provide sanctuary and opportunity for people who are fleeing evil regimes. This was the context of much of the immigration to the United States in the 2nd half of the nineteenth century.

One mark of a free society is that strangers can flourish economically. The encouragement of immigration is part of Biblical law. The problem comes when the national civil covenant establishes citizenship apart from a confession of faith, i.e., a covenantal oath of allegiance to the God of the Bible and His law. When inheritance is by mere physical presence, or by a pledge of allegiance to a secular State, immigration becomes a covenantal threat to those who are already dwelling in the land. When the State is used as a means of coercive wealth distribution - e.g., the modern welfare State -- then the immigrant becomes an economic threat: a potential drain on the wealth of present residents.²⁰

The passport is a relatively new invention in international affairs.²¹ It was only introduced during World War I to prevent the entrance of spies to warring nations, and the League of Nations encouraged a continuation of the process after the War. It is a means of governmental control, determining who can enter a nation. Before the passport's introduction, people had almost complete travel opportunities anywhere around the world. It is no accident that the century that witnessed the introduction of restrictions to international movement, was also the one with the greatest bloodshed of human history.

When a nation declares to its people, "you have to have permission to leave," they are saying in effect, "you are our slaves." This was the attitude of many Eastern Bloc countries up until about 1990, and is reminiscent of the oppression of the Israelites under Pharaoh.

Being unable to control who leaves, any tyrannical government would face a population exodus, while a free nation offering perceived opportunities internationally would probably experience a sharp increase in population, as refugees and others voted with their feet and flocked to its shores. To many this would be an unsettling thought, but there is another way of looking at this:

This open invitation to immigrate to Israel was a means of increasing Israel's wealth. Attracting productive people is even better than discovering valuable raw materials. Human creativity is more valuable in the long run than raw materials are, whose prices tend to fall in relationship to the price of labour in a growing economy.²²

God's law applied internationally to immigration is a means of tremendous hope and relief for an oppressed individual or family, or even a whole nation under political oppression. It is also a means for vulnerable people such as widows, orphans and the poor to find deliverance and protection.

Moses warned Israel to deal justly with orphans, widows, and strangers. Yet if Israel did this, resident aliens would flourish economically according to their talents and their work ethic. If Israelites resented their success, as Egyptians had resented Israel's success, and began dishonouring God's law by perverting justice to strangers, then the days of [God's] vengeance would come. On the other hand, Israel's covenantal success would be manifested by the economic success of resident aliens. The Mosaic law even

²⁰ Gary North, "Inheritance and Dominion," 1999, ch.25.

²¹ See Gary North, "Trespassing for Dear Life," 1989, p.15.

²² See "Inheritance..." ch.25.

*provided for the sale of poor Israelites into household servitude to resident aliens (Lev. 25:47-52). The sign of God's blessing would be rich strangers in the land. To attempt to tear them down through judicial discrimination would call forth God's judgment against the nation.*²³

Does this mean that we are obligated to say to anybody who wants to enter a Christian nation, that there are no obligations or restrictions? No. The Gospel of Jesus Christ requires that there be one fundamental rule for those wishing to enter a Christian nation: the Trinitarian confession.²⁴ This does not prevent immigrants of a hostile religious faith making a deceptive confession in order to gain entry, but it is a means of demanding accountability. Anyone who enters the nation under false pretences, and then seeks to publicly practice an alien faith, risks deportation.

Membership [in church and State] is open to all comers on the original terms of the covenant. In neither church nor State are officers allowed by God to discriminate against anyone who seeks membership through covenant oath. A racist Trinitarian church has violated God's law. So has an anti-immigration Trinitarian State. So has anyone who seeks to substitute a covenantal oath in either institution that denies the theology of the Athanasian creed. Sonship is by oath. Public sonship is by public Trinitarian oath. To substitute a new oath is to substitute a new covenant.

*This does not mean that Christians' opposition to immigration is illegitimate when the State has adopted a non-Trinitarian confession. Christians may legitimately seek to substitute a Trinitarian covenant, which will require votes. If they see that certain immigrants who confess a rival and highly aggressive religion are becoming eligible for citizenship, then as a defensive political strategy for the sake of the extension of the kingdom of God, they may legitimately seek to work politically to cut off such immigration as part of their goal of establishing a Trinitarian confession for the nation. But for those Christians who deny the legitimacy of a Christian nation -- the vast majority of Protestant Christians today -- any opposition to immigration is made in terms of non-confessional considerations. This constitutes discrimination based on economic, racial, or other considerations. The Bible condemns all such judicial discrimination except against citizens of enemy nations during a declared war, which would in effect constitute an invasion, or against immigrants afflicted with contagious deadly diseases, which would also constitute an invasion.*²⁵

Conclusion:

Liberty in relation to immigration is a radical concept to the modern mind, because it requires a level of liberty unheard of, except of course in the Bible. We have become conditioned to levels of control over populations that are frequently oppressive and tyrannical in nature. Acceptance of the Gospel means that this must change.

The Messianic promises of Isaiah 61:1-3, which Jesus Christ applied to Himself when He preached the Gospel in Nazareth (Luke 4:14-21), have plain application to people wanting to immigrate.

²³See "Inheritance...", ch.25.

²⁴North comments, "because Western nations impose only secular oaths on their citizens, immigrants who retain their alien religious oaths undermine the remnants of the Christian social order that created the West. They are allowed to impose political sanctions in terms of religious worldviews hostile to Christianity. The experiment in secular civil government is not yet completed. It will end badly." (See "Inheritance and Dominion," ch.25, footnote16).

²⁵ibid.

The freedom that Jesus Christ promised His disciples (Jn.8:31-32) has many manifestations. The Church must understand this and teach accordingly, spreading the leaven of the kingdom of God, so that the Gospel brings deliverance from bondage, leading to much greater international freedom of movement.

I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor (Ps.140:12).

The Church and God's Law (27)

By Andrew McColl, 5/11/2013

“Here I am; bear witness against me before the Lord and His anointed. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? I will restore it to you.” They said, “You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand” (I Sam.12:3-4).

We can generally gain some idea of the importance of a Biblical doctrine, from the number of times it is mentioned in the Bible. 38 words are used in the Bible in Hebrew and Greek which are translated 115 times to give us the root word “oppress” (or derived words such as “oppressor” or “oppressive”) in English. Clearly, the issue of oppression is of great significance to God.

Oppression historically has had many forms. It may be economic, political, judicial, religious or racial. Whichever form, oppression is always condemned by God, and brings His judgment.

God specifically commanded, “The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you” (Ex.12:49). He also stipulated that “you shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbour fairly” (Lev.19:15). Partiality is therefore often a component of oppression.

Graduated taxation is one means of partiality utilised by governments today. It is unbiblical and evil, for it discriminates against people on the basis of how much they earn. It is not that the rich must pay more that is evil, it is that they must pay *a greater percentage of what they earn*. God's law is turned on its head.

Oppression is generally related to a misuse of authority, and this may take place in the family, in the work-place, in church (see James 2:5-9), or in nations. The scripture says that “like a roaring lion and a rushing bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people” (Prov.28:15). When Asa was in rebellion against the Lord, he “oppressed some of the people at the same time” (II Chron.16:10).

God always confronts oppression. Before the Exodus, He said that “Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression which the Egyptians are oppressing them” (Ex.3:9). When Pharaoh refused to accept God's plan to free the children of Israel from his slavery, he drowned in the Red Sea (Ex.15:4).

Tyrants would do well to heed the lessons from the Exodus, but they don't. Why? Their attitude concerning the Lord and His Anointed, is “Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us” (Ps.2:3).

Peter explained to Cornelius' household: “You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38).

The human heart has no conception of the proper use of authority, apart from God's Word. Man needs objective standards from outside of him to do right. Thus oppression always results from a refusal of those in authority to submit to God. This is why the Bible has always been the key to liberty. The Psalmist says, "I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts" (Ps.119:45), while James commands us to "...speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12).

When people turn away from God, they commonly encounter oppression, for God personally oversees the affairs of every person on the earth. This oppression can be personal (such as the Prodigal Son's experience as he finished up in a pig-pen), or in a family, a church, in a work-place, or even national, which was Israel's experience with King Saul (I Samuel 8).

You're running from God? God's promise to you is that you'll run into bondage, whether in this life, or the next.

Conclusion:

Choices always have consequences. God uses oppression to chastise a rebellious and godless people that they may learn His ways: "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now, I keep Thy Word" (Ps.119:67).

Those who prefer to be ruled by the laws of men rather than the laws of God shall be given their heart's desire: tyranny and high taxes (I Sam. 8).²⁶

Nations suffering from an oppressive government suffer for a reason; in their own way (that is, in their foolish and evil choices), they have sought out the very thing that now haunts them. As Samuel warned Israel when they wanted a king "like all the nations," "you will cry out in that day because of the king you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day" (I Sam.8:18).

²⁶ Gary North, "Tools of Dominion," 1990, Vol.3, p.672.

The Church and God's Law (28)

By Andrew McColl, 12/11/2013

You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless (Ex.22:22-24).

God here singles out widows and orphans as being central to His plan for welfare and social protection. Why is this? They are the most vulnerable people in the community, not being protected or presently provided for by their husband or father.

North's comments here are helpful;

Why does God single out the widow, the orphan and the resident alien? They must be representative of a general class of people. If we search for the distinguishing characteristic of all three-their representative feature-we find that there is only one: *their lack of covenant representation*. It is appropriate that this should be the focus of the law in the Book of Exodus, the premier book in the Bible and in the Pentateuch on hierarchical representation.²⁷

To afflict anyone is always wrong and evil, but to do so to a widow or orphan is especially evil, and will bring God's swift judgment.

The following is an excerpt from my book, "The Significance of the Godly Family," 2009, chapter VIII, "The Family and Welfare."

Old Testament Examples of Biblical Welfare:

1: **Job:** The Book of Job gives us an insight at an early period, into the attitude of a godly man towards the needy in his community. Job 29 shows that Job, a) was respected in the community (v.7-10), b) He delivered the poor and needy (v.12), c) he was blessed in gratitude by the needy, and made the widow's heart to sing (v.13), d) he was a father to the needy, and also a private investigator (v.16), e) a law enforcer (v.17), and f) he was revered in his local community (v.21-25).

Job 31 tells us that he a) fed the poor, and helped the widow (v.16), b) he shared with the orphan (v.17), c) He was a father to the orphans (v.18), d) he clothed the needy (v.19), and e) provided lodging for the alien and stranger (v.32). Furthermore, his employees never complained that they went without meat (v.31).

²⁷ Gary North, "Tools of Dominion," 1990, Vol.3, p.669-670.

In terms of charity, there isn't much left out, is there? Job was a remarkable man, but his community too, may have been remarkable, in its practical, efficient and *decentralised* care for its needy people.

2. **Mordecai:** Mordecai's adoption of Esther, is an excellent example of a godly Hebrew assuming a welfare responsibility for his extended family, at a time of great social stress. Mordecai was Esther's cousin, (she was his uncle's daughter) and when she was orphaned, he "took her as his own daughter" (Esther 2:5-7).

3. **Boaz:** In Ruth's day, the elders of Bethlehem also saw themselves as being subject to Biblical law. When Ruth came with Naomi to Bethlehem (both of them widowed and impoverished, and thus in financial crisis), the elders in this godly city determined (after Ruth's request to Boaz) who would marry Ruth and thus be responsible to raise up an inheritance for Elimelech, her first husband. One could argue that this establishes a scriptural precedent: the church, (under the supervision of the elders) must be available to function as a godly safety net, if Christian families (through sin or incapacity) are unable to cope in their circumstances.

Thus the Old Testament welfare system was a comprehensive and complete way of ministering to the needy in the community. As North writes,

The eldest son is entitled to a double portion of the family's estate (Deut. 21:17). This means that if a man has four children who are legally responsible for him, then he must divide the estate into five equal shares, with the eldest son receiving two-fifths. Why? Because it is the eldest son who has the primary responsibility for caring for aged parents. The child who is willing to bear this responsibility is treated as the eldest son, such as Isaac's position of favour before Abraham, not Ishmael, the firstborn, or Jacob's position before Isaac because of God's choosing of Jacob over Esau, the elder twin.

There is a mutuality of service and blessings. Costs and benefits are more closely linked. Family disputes among the children are minimized.²⁸

4. *Elijah & Elisha: These two prophets both raised the sons of widows from the dead. This was not just a case of relieving a bereaved mother; it would prove to be an economic relief measure. These sons could now care for their mothers, in their old age.*

The warnings about the need to protect widows in Exodus 22:22-24 are extrapolated in the New Testament, when Paul instructs Timothy in the family and church responsibilities concerning widows (I Tim.5:3-16). The care of widows is firstly a family responsibility.

²⁸ Gary North, "Unconditional Surrender," 1994, p.186-87.

The Church and God's Law (29)

By Andrew McColl, 19/11/2013

If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. If you ever take your neighbour's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is the cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious (Ex.22:25-27).

Servitude is a fact of life. This is one of the themes of Exodus. But the children of Israel, having escaped the tyrannical control of Pharaoh in Egypt, were very slow to get the message: their new-found God-given freedom was given by Him, so they could worship and serve Him. This would be the basis of their future freedom.

People today frequently proclaim their desire for the forms of freedom, while they amass large, unwarranted amounts of debt on their credit card or property mortgage. Whether they acknowledge it or not, their debt has become the means of their servitude. So the question is never whether we will serve, or not. It is always, "Whom shall we serve?"

The poor person who needs to borrow for the basics of life is in a vulnerable position. God considers it a heinous thing to capitalise on this, by compelling someone to pay interest on a charitable loan. The Bible explains that "the rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave" (Prov.22:7).

Now the lender may self-righteously claim, "Well he owes me money, and I want to encourage him to pay it back, so I'll charge him interest while he owes me." But this text shows that God considers all lending and borrowing to be subject to His law. The very nature of a charitable loan means this: it is not to be with a view to making money from the borrower. Its motivation must be a love for God and His people, and to help someone in need.

This negative command to charitable lenders is matched by God's promises to them:

How blessed is he who considers the helpless; the Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble. The Lord will protect him and keep him alive, and he shall be called blessed upon the earth (Ps.41:1-2).

He who despises his neighbour sins, but happy is he who is gracious to the poor (Prov.14:21).

He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honours Him (Prov.14:31).

One who is gracious to the poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed (Prov.19:17).

He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses (Prov.28:27).

Notice too, that the text pictures lending and borrowing in an individual context: “*you shall not charge him...*” Welfare and “compassion” is never a task of civil government. According to the Bible, it is always an individual, family or church responsibility. The Bible never authorises any form of government initiated “welfare.”

As Ronald Reagan stated in 1985, “Government that is big enough to give you everything you want is more likely to simply take everything you’ve got.”

The Church and God's Law (30)

By Andrew McColl, 26/11/2013

You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people (Ex.22:28).

God has created and redeemed us, so that we are "...fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps.139:14). God said to Jeremiah, "before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer.1:5).

True, the Christian may not always understand the challenges of life that God graciously permits to come his way. Job certainly didn't. But we are obliged to trust Him in the midst of every circumstance, and to believe that He "causes all things to work together for good to those that love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Ro.8:28). As Anselm of Canterbury noted a millennium ago, we believe, in order that we may understand. Augustine added that understanding is the reward for obedience.

Because of God's creation of us as individuals, and His redemption of each of us through Christ, it is thus an act of blasphemy and hostility to God, to curse Him. As Paul warns, "Does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honourable use, and another for common use?" (Ro.9:21)

This same principle applies to our attitude towards rulers. Office-holders may adorn their office, winning the respect and appreciation of those governed, or they may be a blight upon it. Regardless of whether we appreciate them or not, they are to be respected as office-holders, and not to be cursed.

Nations do get the governments they deserve. If we are unhappy with the government of the day, we only have to ask ourselves, "Who put them there in the first place?" In democratic nations we have the opportunity to change governments, and Christians have the opportunities to participate in public debate in these matters, like anyone else.

Furthermore, Christians may pray the prayers of imprecation found in scripture (such as Psalms 79, 83, 94 and 109) asking God to remove evil-doers in high office and to judge the wicked. The scripture promises that "the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous, so that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong" (Ps.125:3).