

*What follows is an answer to Michael Daniels, a member of the RPCNA, on the controversy concerning the extent to which the U.S. Constitution reflects a Christian worldview, if at all. Nathaniel Darnell, J.D., weaves his responses into the original article text written by Michael Daniels. Michael's original words remain in **black text** below. Headlines and other structural guideposts have been inserted in **green text** to help the reader navigate through the document. Nathaniel's critiques as to the structure, grammar, and presentation of the article are in **red text** below. Nathaniel's substantive comments and replies are in **blue text** below.*

Michael Daniels' Opening

“This is in reply to Nathaniel Darnell. I finally had some time this morning to sit down and write a reply with regards to civil magistracy, the constitution, etc..

“Nathaniel, You do realize that the theonomist [sic] during the formation of our country heavily disagreed with you regarding the Constitution and our government?”

“In fact the first generation of Covenanters after the signing and ratification of our Constitution refused to swear loyalty and refused to even acknowledged the legitimacy of the government.. [sic] By doing so they could not have citizenship in this nation and remained aliens within this land- a land in which they were born in.. [sic]”

What historical documentation shows us that these people did not have the privileges of normal citizens?

Based on how the article by Michael Daniels reads, it appears it was begun with the purpose of being as a simple comment or post, but as the author continued to write it, it grew so long that it could really not be called a mere “post” but rather a 13-page, single-spaced article. The result is that the article, despite its length, is very informal in how it is written, providing, for example, no outline or roadmap to help the reader easily navigate through the article and discern the major points from the minor ones or the relationships between different points. In addition, there are several grammatical errors throughout that are probably merely typos due to the article being written in a hurry and without much proof-reading after the initial draft. Finally, many of the quotes and other claims of facts given in the article are not fully or properly cited.

I will not fault the author for failing to correct all the typos. But when it comes to the lack of an organized roadmap with which to navigate through the lengthy piece and the lack of

appropriate citation, I do fault him. This sloppiness of communication places an undue burden on the reader to dissect his material and practically “re-write it” in the reader’s mind so he can be able to interpret it organizationally, and this subjects the article in some cases to undue ambiguity or misinterpretation.

As to the citations, it has long been considered a *necessary* element of scholarship that thorough citations be included in all quotes to ensure the factual evidence presented is accurate. When a citation is incomplete or misplaced, it does not provide a clear means for verification. The very purpose of citations in a legal or theological treatise is procedural to the requirement in the Law of God for “two or three witnesses” to prove any factual claim. (See Deuteronomy 19:15.) No reader should be required to believe a factual assertion by a writer merely because the writer alone asserts it.

Because Michael Daniels’ article is so long and disorganized in its presentation, I will seek to provide more of an outline to the various parts of the document, so that the reader can more easily navigate through my responses to his various assertions, arguments, and claims.

I. Applications & Basic Thesis of Michael Daniels

Rather than beginning with the *thesis* first, and then moving to the proper application of that thesis, as do most authors, including the writers of the epistles in Scripture, Michael Daniels begins with what he believes to be the right *applications* of the conclusions he has reached about the federal constitution and then works backwards toward the thesis. It is effectively, a reverse *modus ponens* deductive approach to reasoning. This unusual approach gives the impression that the applications are of more primacy in importance than the thesis and principle tied to it. One is tempted to wonder if the thesis is not constructed to produce a desired application, rather than the application constructed to fit what is believed to be an appropriate Biblical principle. Is the tail wagging the dog?

However, we will not infer more into the motives of the author than is unambiguously apparent from his explicit writings, for God alone directly “looks on the heart” of man, while we mortals can only look on the fruit of a man’s heart. (See I Samuel 16:7; I

Corinthians 4:1-4.)¹ The purpose of this response article will be to address the overt points made by Michael Daniels, and not to speculate on his motives.

- On how Christians in America should live in light of the failure to have a proper national constitution:

- **Michael Daniel's general proposition:** "Yes [sic] their children born after the signing and ratification were de-factoed in as citizens but [sic] even they refuse to swear loyalty, acknowledge the legitimacy of the government/constitution, serve in the military, run for office, vote in elections, serve on juries, etc (all in which I agree with). Why? Because to due [sic] any of the above would be [sic] a recognition of something illegitimate and unlawful."

If Christians are duty-bound to respond this way to a civil government believed to be in rebellion to God in some way, and to reject their citizenship in such a nation, then why did the Apostle Paul have no such qualms with identifying himself as a *Roman* citizen (Acts 22:22-29), even though the civil government and Emperor of Rome at that time in no way acknowledged the authority of the God of the Scriptures over him?

- **On Military involvement:** "I could not be part of the military in a pagan nation or many of the things listed above. Regarding the Military, 1. Because the ruler would be a tyrant and thus unlawful. So in essence you would be a mercenary working for a tyrant robbing and pillaging and murdering on behalf of the tyrant in unlawful warfare. If you do not say anything and/or do something about what the tyrant is doing you become an accomplice in the crimes of that tyrant, Psalm 50:18 "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been

¹ We would also note the wisdom of Charles Spurgeon, who, when on preaching on Matthew 7:1-5, noted:

"[D]o not indulge the criticizing faculty upon others in a censorious manner, or as if you were set in authority, and had a right to dispense judgment among your fellows. If you impute motives, and pretend to read hearts, others will do the same towards you. A hard and censorious behavior is sure to provoke reprisals. Those around you will pick up the peck measure you have been using, and measure your corn with it. You do not object to men forming a fair opinion of your character, neither are you forbidden to do the same towards them; but as you would object to their sitting in judgment upon you, do not sit in judgment upon them. This is not the day of judgment, neither are we his Majesty's judges, and therefore we may not anticipate the time appointed for the final assize, nor usurp the prerogatives of the Judge of all the earth."

C.H. Spurgeon, Spurgeon's Verse Expositions of the Bible, Matthew 7, which can be seen at <http://www.study-light.org/com/spe/view.cgi?bk=mt&ch=7/> .

partaker with adulterers." The same is true for murder. This passage even replies to robbers and murderers who masquerade as magistrates in the high places, [sic] see Act, Declaration, and Testimony of 1761 on this from a confessional standpoint who quotes from Donald Cargill. My second problem would be taking an oath to an unlawful and anti-christian government and constitution and thus legitimatizing that government and constitution which is unlawful and sinful in the first place."

There have certainly been many periods in the United States' history in which it has chosen to engage in unjust warfare, particularly in modern times, and so for that reason I would also probably be generally disinclined to recommend military service to a Christian today. However, there are probably circumstances that could occur even modernly in which it may be needful and just for Christians to serve in our military to protect our nation, our churches, and our families. So I cannot agree with Michael here that military service is never something a Christian should do in the United States. But to address that subject exhaustively would require an entirely separate article.

- **On voting and running for office:** "Regarding running for office or voting. I could not conscientiously run for office because I would have to swear to uphold an ungodly and antichristian constitution. Nor could I vote for someone (even if they meet the essential qualifications of Scripture) because then I would be an accomplice in their unlawful oath taking to the constitution."

Again, was the Apostle Paul an "accomplice" to the rebellion of the Roman Empire because he employed his citizenship in the Empire? By Christians removing themselves from civil affairs, they essentially turn the civil government over to the pagans—to the destruction of all. Thus, while Michael Daniels may not believe in Two Kingdom Theology, he and others that believe as he does end up accomplishing the same objective as the Two Kingdom theologian: the abandonment of culture, particularly civil government, to the pagan. There are certainly sins of commission described in the Bible, but there are also sins of omission. If Christians are not to be involved in politics in America, then all evils in politics would go unrestrained. For example, babies would not only be allowed to be murdered without opposition through abortions, but these abortions would be fully subsidized by the civil government. Christian men have a responsibility to be "a salt and light" in all areas of life, including political affairs. They must be involved in politics, ever seeking to apply the principles of Law of God in that arena and encouraging other voters to do so as well.

- **Basis thesis:** “The Constitution is radically and willfully defective in that it does not recognize the existence of God, the supremacy of Christ the King of Nations, and the Word of God as the supreme law. On account of these radical defects, and the many immoralities which naturally flow from them, Reformed Presbyterians cannot recognize it as a scripturally constituted civil government, nor swear allegiance to it. The relation of Christ to the nation is that of a Sovereign to a moral subject—a moral person, upon whom the law of His Kingdom is binding.”

But the majority of “Reformed Presbyterians” have been recognizing it for several generations now, and have had no problem running for office, voting, or serving even as justices in the federal government.² What is really meant by the phrase “Reformed Presbyterians” appears to be *RPCNA Presbyterians* or perhaps so-called “Covenanter” Presbyterians. Throughout Michael Daniels’ article, there is an equivocation exercised between the terms “Reformed Presbyterian” and “Covenanter” that is not accurate. Another example of this occurs when Michael Daniels writes later in the document, “Reformed Presbyterians (Covenanters) have never voted at any of the elections, nor held office under the government. They have refused, to recognize the authority of the government, and its right to legislate.”

There is ample historical evidence to demonstrate that “Reformed Presbyterians” did in fact “vote” over the last 224 years of our country. Besides all the Presbyterians who served in the U.S. Supreme Court, which we have already mentioned, and the contemporary Reformed Presbyterians who testify each election year that they vote, we might point out from Dr. Cornelius Van Til’s biography that even this giant of a Reformed Presbyterian most certainly participated and voted during his lifetime. See John R. Muether, *Cornelius Van Til* at 218 (2008, P&R Publishing).

Also, these statements by Michael Daniels do not address *the standard* upon which they are based. He states forthrightly *the conclusion* reached, but does not appeal to any higher authority as the basis for his conclusion. By what standard in the Scriptures, for example, do we observe a necessity for a civil government particularly in its constitution to recognize “the supremacy of Christ the King of Nations, and the Word of God as the supreme law”? The reader is not given a clear road map to find the standard by which to measure whether the federal constitution should do all these things.

II. Michael Daniels’ Assertions about the U.S. Constitution

² See *Religious Affiliation of all U.S. Supreme Court Justices* at http://www.adherents.com/adh_sc.html

- **Asserting that the federal constitution is blasphemous:** “The document reads: ‘We, the people of the United States * * * do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.’ This declaration is historically, philosophically and scripturally untrue. I dare say Blasphemous.”

By What Standard Was This “Blasphemous”?

This is a very serious allegation to make against those who wrote and approved of the federal constitution, to claim that they were engaging in a statement of public, national *blasphemy*. In the Law of God, at least under the Old Testament, public blasphemy is classified not only as a sin but also as a *crime* worthy of capital punishment. (See Leviticus 24:16.) Given how serious the allegation is, why would the accuser not define, from the Law of God, what the definition of blasphemy is, compare that to what the founders did, and then explain how their actions match the definition of Biblical “blasphemy”? Instead of doing this, however, the author again presents the conclusion before any hint is made as to how the conclusion was reached.

It is not legally appropriate for one to make an indictment on another without first detailing the statute that was broken and defining the critical terms of that statute. By defining terms, preachers and theologians exposit the Scriptures so that we may properly apply them. In the context of legal argumentation, law schools have called this the “IRAC” approach to presenting a case. IRAC stands for “**I**ssue **R**ule **A**nalysis **C**onclusion.” At the very least, any accusation should consist of a “**R**ule” (a presentation of the **R**ule claimed to be broken, then an **A**nalysis that compares the elements of the rule to the facts involved, and then finally a **C**onclusion as to the guilt of the accused based upon the analysis. This is the approach to bringing an accusation described throughout the Scriptures in all cases where an accuser approaches an accused. (See, for example, Deuteronomy 19:16-18; Matthew 18:15-17.)

However, Michael Daniels presents no Scripture defining what blasphemy is so that we may examine carefully his allegation. He does assert correctly that “the God Yahovah [] is creator of all things and sovereign over all nations” but he does not say why failing to mention this truth in the constitution’s preamble constitutes “blasphemy.” Apparently, he expects the reader to simply accept this accusation without testing it by the Law of God found in the Scriptures.

Making sensational accusations against another may be the way of radio talk show hosts and ESPN commentators on television because the audiences of such media have short attention spans that crave drama. But careless sensational accusations should not be the

way of a Christian, especially one who calls himself a theonomist, when the Law of God outlines for us how we are to carefully bring an indictment against another.

- Asserting that the Constitution was essentially finalized before it was drafted.

“The Constitution in all its essential elements was in existence before the document thus called was penned; ...”

No historical evidence is cited for this factual claim. How are we to know with certainty that this factual claim is accurate? Apparently, again, we are supposed to simply accept the accusation without verifying it “by two or three witnesses” or the equivalent. (See Deuteronomy 19:15.)

- Asserting that the Constitution is “infidelity.”

He goes on: “... constitutions are not ordained of men, but grow; and the Scripture affirms that the powers that are legitimate powers at all, are ordained of God. These glaring defects, with the denial of any religious qualification, the absence of the name of God from the oath, and the license of immorality and crime upon which it sets its official seal, give the document, called the Constitution, such a character of infidelity and irreligion that no true Christian ought to give it his full sanction.”

In this stream of accusations, Michael Daniels again alleges various disobediences to God, but again provides no statute in Scripture that the founders allegedly violated to prove that they did disobey God. He adds to his list of complaints that the federal constitution has “the denial of any religious qualification” in it somewhere, but he does not cite nor quote that passage from the federal constitution in which this is done so that we may examine it. We might presume that he is referencing Article VI, paragraph 3 of the U.S. Constitution since that is the portion that appears to come the closest to resembling the alleged facts of his accusation, and yet even they do not actually fit the bill.

But Michael Daniels also does not provide any historical guide as to what the original intent was behind what the founders meant by key words in Article VI, paragraph 3 such as the word “religious.” Later in this document, I will answer from historical evidence what the founding fathers meant by Article VI, paragraph 3 of the U.S. Constitution, demonstrating that no disobedience to God’s Law was committed in that portion of the federal constitution.

- The Proposed Re-write of the Preamble to the Constitution

At least, Michael does quote the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution:

“The preamble is, ‘We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure tranquility, provide for the common defense, 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.’ ”

Then, however, Michael Daniels asserts what the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution *should* be, quoting from an issue of *The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter*.

“ ‘It should be — We, the people of the United States, acknowledging the being and authority of God, and our obligation to submit to his Son Jesus Christ as King of nations, for the glory of God, to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do adopt, sanction and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.’
- The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter, Vol. I. MARCH, 1863. No. 3.”

1) An Improvement, but Essential?

Compared to the actual Preamble that was approved and adopted for the U.S. Constitution, this alternative is certainly an improvement. It is good that this Preamble includes a more explicit reference to the authority of Jesus Christ as the King of nations. While it would have definitely been better for the U.S. Constitution to be more vivid in its expression, there are two primary objections to evaluating the current preamble by the standard of *this* alternative preamble.

First, by what standard *in the Scriptures* is such a block of text *required* in order for the civil government to be considered “Christian”? Michael Daniels provides no argument from Scripture to support this alternative as mandatory, nor does he quote a portion of *The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* here to argue from Scripture that such a statement is mandatory. He provides no Scriptural basis for requiring this statement at all.

If no one can prove from Scripture that this additional phrase in the Preamble is necessary for it to have been considered a “Christian document,” then it should not be asserted that the Preamble in its current form is not in any way Christian. When considered in the context of other portions of that document and complimentary

documents to the founding of our nation, as well as the Biblical presuppositions ungrounding the laws of the document, the U.S. Constitution demonstrates its Christianity at a more than minimal level.³

2) If Explicitness is the Measure, then This Improvement Is Also Inadequate

Second, although this revision to the Preamble may be an improvement upon the current text of the Preamble, it still falls short. For while it explicitly references “God” and “Jesus Christ” “as King of the nations,” and “the glory of God,” it nowhere makes reference to the *Law of God* nor to the *Trinity*.

What good is it to reference the authority of Christ without making reference to His revealed will in His Law? For it is by this revealed will that mankind knows how to submit to His authority.

Moreover, what good is it to make reference to “God” without specifying whether this “God” is the Father and/or the Holy Spirit, and without specifying that the “Jesus Christ” referenced is also “God”? The proposed alternative Preamble submitted by *The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* is still so open-ended as to allow for numerous heresies such as Unitarianism, Mormonism, Jehovah Witness theology, and many other deviations from Christian orthodoxy.

One may ask: Why should we be so concerned about Unitarianism, for example, in our federal government? Because history shows that in the decline of our civil leaders’ theology and worldview, the abandonment of the Trinity was the first to go. While all elected officials in America in 1776 initially made public professions to orthodox Christian theology such as the Trinity, by 1810-1820, we observe that many of these same officials, even many of the founding fathers themselves, began to deny the Trinity and embrace Unitarianism.⁴ By 1830 it was common for federal officials to speak of Christianity in Unitarian terms.

This delusion from Trinitarian orthodox Christianity to Unitarian pseudo-Christianity was a critical link in the decline of the United States during the nineteenth century. It also paved the way for such cults as Mormonism and the Jehovah Witness movement. Nothing in the alternative Preamble provided by *The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* would have operated to contradict these theological and worldview

³ These will be examined more thoroughly later in this response.

⁴ See, for example, statements by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams on the Trinity in Dr. Joel McDurmon’s article “Evil Revisionism: Did Barton’s Jefferson get fair treatment?” at [this link](#).

heresies. It would have been completely palatable to them. So for a group of Reformed Christians claiming to be against the dangers of pluralism, these omissions in the “Covenanters” own revisions fall far short.

This should lead us to question, then, what it is that determines whether a founding political document is adequately “Christian”? How explicit does a founding document need to be to be good enough? Why is it not acceptable to have a Preamble that omits mention of “God” or Jesus Christ as “King of the nations,” but it *is* considered acceptable to have a Preamble that makes no assertion of the divinity of Christ, nor mentions the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, or the Law-Word of God? Michael Daniels and the “Covenanters” he quotes set an arbitrary standard in their proposed alternative drafting of the Preamble. In a later portion of this essay, I will address what the appropriate standard should be in evaluating whether a founding document is “Christian.”

However, while the alternative Preamble provided by *The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* may be a genuine improvement, it is not Biblically mandatory, nor is it adequate to have protected the United States from the intrusion of apostate civil leaders into our federal government.

III. How Other “Covenanters” Evaluated the Constitution

Michael Daniels goes on to quote a series of statements by various theologians (we would assume) who are unfamiliar to many readers and without citing where these quotes originated:

“ ‘NO consideration will justify the framers of the Federal Constitution and the administration of the Government, in withholding a recognition of the Lord and His anointed from the grand charter of the nation.’ — Rev. Alexander McLeod, D. D.”

“ ‘IN the United States the refusal to acknowledge God in the Constitution has probably been more explicit than it ever was in any other nation.’ — Rev. James R. Willson, D. D.”

This quote by James Wilson runs completely contrary to the assessment of nations given by Reformed minister and statesman Abraham Kuyper when he spoke before the students of Princeton in his visit from the Netherlands. In that speech Kuyper asserted that the United States was beautifully expressive of Christianity and it was rather France that has been more “explicit” in denying God than any other nation. Among other things, Kuyper said about our founding documents: “God is there honored as 'the Sovereign Ruler,' and the 'Legislator of the Universe' and it is there specifically admitted, that from God alone the people received ‘the right to choose their own form of government.’ ... There is no

question, as in your Constitution, of a sovereignty derived from God, which He, under certain conditions, implants in the people.”⁵

“ ‘THE Federal Constitution of the United States does not recognize the existence of God, the King of Nations; * * and shall a nation act as if independent of the God of the Universe, and expect to be guiltless? * * The principles of reformation are not fashionable. They were once, however, considered as the glory of Presbyterians. For civil and ecclesiastical reformation, for a glorious covenanted cause, thousands bled and died. * * I have endeavored to advocate that cause because I thought it the doctrine of the Bible, and the cause of Christ.’ — Rev. Samuel B. Wylie, D. D.”

Michael Daniels goes on: “For constitutions religious test [sic] as well as recognizing God, Christ as king of the nations and His law as the supreme laws of the land are essential for legitimate authority at ALL levels of government. State constitutions, Federal constitutions, confederacies of nations as well as treaties between nations. I believe in a civil type presbytery [sic] system in the same way as the church presbytery is setup. Ex. 18 is where the civil presbytery is ordained. From the local level to the highest level in the land.”

Is it only necessary to recognize Jesus Christ as “king of the earth” but not to recognize Him as God? Because the alternative preamble proposed earlier did not assert Christ’s deity in any way. How can it be necessary in the preamble to acknowledge Christ’s kingship but not His deity?

“The Act, Declaration and Testimony of 1761 a Covenanter Confessional work states:

“ ‘And further we maintain, that a due measure of those qualifications which God, the great lawgiver requires in his word, together with what other stipulations according to the same unerring rule, a christian people, who are blessed with the light of divine revelation, have made the fundamental conditions of civil government among them, are essentially necessary to the constitution and investiture of lawful authority over such people. No other but such a constitution or investiture, can either be approves of by God, or answer the ends, ultimate or subordinate, of this ordinance, unto the honor of the great institutor, appears from Prov. 7:15,16; Psa. 142:19,20, and 149:6,7,8,9; Isa. 49:28; Rom. 13:1,2,8,4; Deut.. 17:14,15; 2 Sam 23:2,3,4; Exod. 18:21.’ ”

Where is the citation to this passage in the document?

⁵ See Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* 52-53 (1898) at [this link](#).

Michael Daniels goes on: “When it comes to Magistrates themselves [sic] they are required to have a due measure of those qualifications which God has ordained in His Word and they are essentially necessary to the constitution and investiture of any lawful authority over a people. What are these essential qualifications?

“The New Testament gives a definitive statement of civil government in Romans ch. 13 v. 1-9 and 1 Timothy ch. 2 v. 1-2; which is a summary of the pattern also found in the Old Testament. We shall first take in review these Old Testament passages where we have the epitome of kingship delineated. Thus the qualifications of those who exercise civil rule are that, They must be men of truth, fearing God and hating covetousness (Ex. 18.21); they must be just, and not deceitful, false or oppressive: He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God (2 Sam. 23.2-3); they must be men of understanding, they must be of the same nation, and not strangers (Deut. 13 v. 1 & 17; Jer. 30 v. 21). They are to be elected by all the people, that is, by the adult men among whom they are to rule: The men of Judah made David king (2 Sam. 2 v. 4) or again: The people made Saul King (1 Sam. 11.15) and as also in the words of Hushai: Whom the Lord and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be (2 Sam. 16.18). Any perversion of this order by those who thrust in upon the people however they accomplish it, is usurpation; as in Hos. 8.4: 'They made kings but not by me; that is, strictly and only in the way appointed by God, and which is said to be "by" him as if God himself had actually done it.' -Alexander Shield, *A Hind Let Loose*, 1638

Full citation? Page number? Edition number? Publisher? Web link?

Michael Daniels goes on: “Legitimate Governments are established by God under His theocratic kingdom. They are one of the two sons of oil that serve the Lord of all the Earth (Zech. 4:14) They are to submit themselves to His rule or be dashed into pieces (Ps. 2) Magistrates are ordained civil minister of God (Romans 13) and they must rule according to His laws and permission (Ps. 2). If they violate His laws and permissions they disqualify themselves as being ordained of God. If men who are not qualified sit in the seats of magistrates they are robbers and thieves (Isa. 42:24) and not ordained magistrates. They are usurpers as in Hos. 8.4: 'They made kings but not by me; that is, strictly and only in the way appointed by God. So we have now seen what is required as essential for nations and constitutions as well as what is essential for magistrates for lawful legitimate rulers who are ordained of God but what about duties?’”

No disagreement with these statements, but how do we get from here to a state-church?

IV. Michael Daniels' Insistence on a State Church

A. Arguing for State Interference in Ecclesiology from Historical Accounts of Israel's Apostasy & Rule Under Pagan Monarchs.

Michael Daniels goes on: “Seven duties of civil magistrates outlined [sic] in Scripture and enforced in the Westminster Standards:

“1. Nationally eradicate idolatry and false religion (cf. 2 Chron. 34:3-7; 2 Chron. 31:1; 2 Chron. 15:8; 2 Chron. 15:16, etc.).”

1) These civil punishments are not enforcements of ecclesiastical affairs, but rather enforcements of the more general theological commands of the Word of God. It is equivocation to confuse theology and worldview with ecclesiology. While the Law of God does prescribe civil penalties for things such as public blasphemy, it does not authorize the civil magistrate to civilly punish ecclesiastical procedures, particularly under New Testament conditions. These two should not be confused. The equivocation often occurs as different writers use different definitions to the word “religion.”

James Madison, who is often called the “Father of the Constitution,” defined the word “religion” in his *Memorial and Remonstrance* very differently from the way that various Reformed Christians such as Henry Van Til have used that word. Madison defined “religion” as duties only pertaining to ecclesiastical matters, whereas others often use the word to refer to all the duties of man under God. That Madison understood the term “religion” this way is evidenced in how we defined religion as only “the duties we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging them.”⁶ So, according to Madison, unless something specified *both* the duties that one owes only to His Creator *and* the manner of discharging those duties, it was not a matter of “religion.” Such a definition describes ecclesiastical duties, the duties of the church, as opposed to duties before God pertaining to the civil arena. Duties in the civil arena involve other people besides the Creator and the Scriptures usually do not go to the same level of specificity in describing the manner in which civil responsibilities are to be discharged as the ecclesiastical duties do.

Madison, furthermore, asserted in that legislation that these kinds of ecclesiastical duties “can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence.”

2) May we logically assume the actions of the kings of Israel were procedural to the Law of God?

II Chronicles 34:3-7 is written just before King Josiah discovers the lost book of

⁶ See Virginia's *Memorial and Remonstrance* (1785) written by James Madison at [this link](#).

the Law of God and reads it, so we have no reason to believe that his actions committed prior to actually reading the Law was procedural to the Law. II Kings 23 is a parallel historical account to II Chronicles 34, and it tells us in verse 22, for example, that the Passover had not been kept in Israel since the time of the judges many generations before even though the Law of God commanded it to be kept.

Deuteronomy 31:9-13 requires that the king is supposed to read the Law of God every seven years (not some commentary by the ecclesiastical leaders on the Law, but the Law of God itself) before the people. Deuteronomy 17:18-20 says that in addition to this, the king is to read and even transcribe a copy of the Law himself. In II Kings 22 we find that this command had not been obeyed for several generations of kings. In fact, II Kings 23:22 shows that the Law had not been faithfully followed with respect to the Passover since the time of the Judges, hundreds of years earlier—long preceding David. That means that all of the kings of Israel, even the ones who God commended in many ways, violated this explicit command and were likely very ignorant as to what the Law said. So we cannot make the Israelite kings the standard for what God approves. They obviously were not consulting with God's Law in what they did because they had not even read it as God commanded.

I might add that the same thing was true during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Others who promote the neo-Covenanter position have cited passages such as Ezra 7 and what the pagan king of Persia did on behalf of Israel as a justification for their view. It's interesting what they did historically in Ezra's day, but the question was where in the Law of God itself does it say that penalties such as banishment may be permitted? I don't see it in there. What was quoted was authorization from the pagan king of the Medes and Persians, not what God's Law authorized. Unless we find it in the Law of God itself, we really have no basis for knowing that what they did in Ezra's day was actually approved by God. We see plenty of examples where they deviated from the law of God in one way or another historically after the kings of Israel..

But the whole book of the Law was read for the first time in generations in Nehemiah 8 before the people. The account of these times shows that the Jews were largely ignorant of what the Law had taught since they had been in bondage for many years, and before than had neglected the Law for generations. It is very likely that Ezra himself was not familiar with all the Law of God until this time—well after his assistance from the pagan king of Persia.

Also, how can one criticize the American founding fathers while simultaneously appealing to the actions of an overtly pagan totalitarian emperor of Persia?

3) Even if this activity by the kings of Israel was appropriate for the Old Covenant, would it necessarily be appropriate under the New Covenant? (More on that question to follow.)

“2. Nationally promote the true worship, discipline, and doctrine of the church of Christ (2 Chron. 29:11-30:6; 2 Chron. 30:12-27; Ezra 10:10vv.; Neh. 10:31-32, etc.).”

It is clear from reading the historical account of Scripture that there were *many* times the Lord *allowed* His people to do things that were not what He wanted. We see that, for example, in how God allowed Israel to set up a king even while telling them that it was wrong, and Israel paid the consequences for their mistake. (See I Samuel 8.) Jesus revealed that something similar happened with the allowance for divorce. (See Matthew 19:8.) King David committed polygamy without God condemning him for it (indeed God blessed him in spite of it), and yet David's actions were contrary to God's principles and commands throughout the Word for the purpose of marriage and "two becoming one flesh," and David appears to have contracted a venereal disease near the end of his life due to this. (See I Kings i:i-1; Psalm 38:7.) We could cite example after example after example of God often blessing his servants **in spite** of many of their deviations from His Law—and these blessings in spite of deviation should not be translated as authorization. When God authorizes something, He does it explicitly.

As to the 2 Chron. 29:11-30:6 reference specifically, we observe King Hezekiah providing some direction to the Levites in reference to their performance of an aspect of the ceremonial law in performing a ceremony in conjunction with an animal sacrifice. As this aspect of the ceremonial law is not applicable under New Testament conditions, no application of it would be applicable to our day. This only provides us with the historical facts of what King Hezekiah did. It does not specify that his actions were completely lawful.

“3. Nationally establish the one true religion and church (cf. 2 Chron. 34:8- 17; 2 Chron. 29:3-5; 2 Chron. 31:2-3; 2 Chron. 31:20-21; 2 Chron. 32:12, etc.).”

Here, again, Michael Daniels points to the historical account and not to the explicit commands of the Law found in the Pentateuch. Hermeneutically, examples of what people did historically are the weakest way to attempt to dogmatically prove an idea from Scripture. These historical accounts can only be a guide if they were done procedural to a statute or statutes in the actual Law of God. Otherwise, they could have been the arbitrary acts of monarchs who, like the disciples of Jesus centuries later, did not have a clear understanding for how God intended to establish His Kingdom on this earth. (See Acts 1:6-8; John 18:36; Matthew 26:51-52.)

“4. Nationally confess their own sins and the sins of their fathers (2 Chron. 34:21; 2 Chron. 29:6-7; 2 Chron. 30:7-9; Ezra 9:6-10:2; Neh. 9:2-37, etc.).

“5. Nationally publish the truth (2 Chron. 34:30; Ezra 10:7-8, etc.).

“6. Nationally renew covenant with God and set the state upon a fully covenanted biblical pattern, agreeing to nationally obey the law of God (2 Chron. 34:31; 2 Chron. 29:10; 2 Chron. 15:12-15; Ezra 10:3-4; Neh. 9:38-10:31, etc.).

“7. Nationally cause (by civil power) the inhabitants of the nation to stand to the covenant (2 Chron. 34:32-33; 2 Chron. 15:12-13; Ezra 10:5, etc.).

Michael Daniels repeats many of the same references to make multiple points in this list. I have already written some general responses to the list and its references. But let us examine these particular Bible references he cites here a little more closely.

- 2 Chron. 34:32-33 - This is simply an example of the civil magistrate addressing public idolatry, not the civil magistrate ordering the nuances of ecclesiastical practice.

- 2 Chron. 15:12-13 - It is good for people to seek the Lord, not merely outwardly but inwardly and genuinely. But there is no basis seen in the actual Law of God for the civil magistrate to kill people who would not believe in the Lord. The phrase “seek the Lord” is somewhat ambiguous as well, and it could mean merely those who gathered to participate in this activity even if they did not believe in it in their hearts. Going from a state of aggressive apostasy, the king may have felt that he needed to take drastic action, but nothing in the Scriptures show that this action was authorized.

- Ezra 10:5 - Ezra was a member of the “priesthood” (Ezra 10:10) not of the civil sphere, so it would be appropriate for him to order the other priests. This is not a proof of any power of the civil magistrate over the church because Ezra was not a civil magistrate.

B. Arguing for State Interference in Ecclesiology from an Ambiguous Prophetic Text.

Michael Daniels goes on: “Isaiah 49:22-23 is very clear that Magistrates are to be nursing fathers to the church and that their duty is not minimized in the New testament times [sic]”

It is significant to note that Michael Daniels does not cite *a single precept* from the actual Law of God in the above section to argue that the civil magistrate is authorized by God to civilly punish ecclesiastical deviances. Having examined some examples set by various kings of Judah during a time of apostasy, he now turns to a passage from one of the prophets.

“Speaking of New Testament Times [sic] Isaiah says,

“ ‘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: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me. (Isaiah 49:22-23)’ ”

How does this phrase of about ‘nursing fathers’ lead one to conclude that the civil magistrate is authorized to force what he believes to be appropriate ecclesiology on everyone else? This phrase is very ambiguous and can hardly be the basis for something so concrete as authorizing the civil magistrate to force all to a particular type of ecclesiastical practice.

Dr. Greg Bahnsen does not understand this phrase from Scripture this way either. He writes:

It is necessary to distinguish between the object of someone’s *care* and the sphere of his *jurisdiction*; the former is an object in which he has interest and which he aims for (being “a nursing father” as the Scripture proof for this section, citing Isa. 49:23, says), while the latter is a realm where one has the right of authoritative interference. The civil magistrate may care for the church, but he has no jurisdiction therein; he is a nursing-father, but not an overlord. Those objects for which the magistrate is to aim according to section 3 [of the 1646 WCF] (viz., “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”) are the very matters which the Confession elsewhere puts within the *ecclesiastical jurisdiction*. Thus the Confession must be understood as saying that the civil ruler should conduct his office in such away that Christianity can prosper, yet without assuming to himself ecclesiastical functions or authority. These functions and authority belong, according to chapters 25, 30, and 31, to church office bearers; consequently, they

are not under civil control or direction, but are simply the things which the magistrate promotes by the godly execution of his own duties.”

Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* 530 (The Craig Press, 2nd Edition, 1984).

In other words, Bahnsen says that the civil magistrate may be a “nursing father” but that does not give him a blank check to achieve the end of godliness by whatever means he can fathom. He can only implement his goal within the confines of the jurisdiction God has delegated to him, and when he does so the goal will eventually be achieved in the providence of God.

Michael Daniels goes on: “William Symington says,

“ ‘The prophecy refers to New Testament times, when the Gentiles are to be gathered unto the Redeemer. A prominent feature of these times shall be the subserviency of civil rulers to the church, which surely supposes their subjection to Christ her Head. Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers is a similitude which imports the most tender care, the most endearing solicitude; not mere protection, but active and unwearied nourishment and support. If, according to the opinions of some, the best thing the state can do is to let her alone, to leave her to herself, to take no interest in her concerns, it is difficult to see how this view can be reconciled with the figure of a nurse, the duties of whose office would certainly be ill discharged by such a treatment of her feeble charge.’ -William Symington, *Messiah the prince or, the mediatorial [sic] dominion of Jesus Christ* (1839)”

Where is the full citation for this quote? Do we have a page number or an edition to be able to find it in a book? Do we have a link to a web site that has this quote? How can we verify it? Who was William Symington, and why should we find his quotation authoritative in any way?

“Westminster divine Samuel Rutherford says,

“ ‘But the Magistrate is fore-phanesied Isai. 49. 23. and 60. 10. Rev. 21. 26. to be a Nurse-father to the Church under the New Testament, to keep and guard both Tables of the Law, and to see that Pastors do their duty, to minister to the Church by his royal power, yea when the fountain shall be opened in David’s house, that is under the New Testament, he shall thrust through the false Prophet that speaketh lies in the Name of the Lord, Zach. 13. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Kings as Kings must confer some royal service to the Church, over which they are Nurse-fathers. But all the power that Kings have, is essentially co-active, and in order to rewarding or punishing, Rom. 13. 3, 4. therefore

they must confer coactive service. Piscator saith well, That the Prince is called the keeper of both Tables of the Law by our Divines, therefore he is to vindicate God's glory in both. He that hath the keeping of two pits, one more horrible and dark, another more mild and heartsome for two malefactors, a thief, and an adulterer, he must not cast the thief in such a dark dungeon as the adulterer: so if the Magistrate keep both Tables, he must not punish according to his own will, but according to the rule and prescript of God." Samuel Rutherford, *A Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience*, Chapter XXV, Arg. 4' ”

This quote does not make clear whether Rutherford was arguing for a state church or simply a national theology. He is at least arguing for a national theology, but it is not clear, from this quote, whether he believes the civil magistrate should enforce church affairs.

“John Calvin speaking on Psalm 2 and Isaiah 49:23,

“ ‘...without a doubt he is speaking of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus. He admonishes all kings and authorities to be wise and to take heed to themselves. What is this wisdom? What is the lesson He gives them? To abdicate it all? Hardly! But to fear God and give homage to His Son...Furthermore, Isaiah prophesies that the kings will become the foster fathers of the Christian church and that queens will nurse it with their breasts (Isa. 49:23). I beg of you, how do you reconcile the fact that kings will be protectors of the Christian Church if their vocation is inconsistent with Christianity?’ -Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Libertines*, p. 79Libertines, [sic] p. 79” - Hurrah! A full citation!

This quote is again another defense of the civil magistrate's role in enforcing a national *theology* and *worldview*, not a national *ecclesiology*. Nothing in this quote from Calvin argues for the civil magistrate to enforce particular church practices.

Michael Daniels goes on: “Pastor James M Willson speaking on Isaiah 49:23

“ ‘Prophecy speaks in the plainest terms, and manifestly expresses the divine approval of that which it foretells. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles, shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts," Ps. 72:10. "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers and their queens thy nursing mothers," Is. 49:23. The preceding verse fixes both the person referred to in this prophecy, and its application to New Testament times. The sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, abounds with similar prophecies. The language of the sixteenth verse is very explicit, "thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings." Under these figurative expressions it is intimated, that when the nations are brought to

submit to the sceptre of Christ, their allegiance will be manifested by efforts to aid the church in promoting the great designs of the Redeemer's mission. Happy, indeed, will such nations be, while "the nation and kingdom that will not serve Christ and the church shall perish." Christ's Dominion Over The Nations, Chapter 3 'The Duty of Nations, 1842'

Michael Daniels goes on: "They are to rule according to the civil laws of God as they pertain to the nations. They are even required to suppress heresy..[sic]"

"Westminster divine George Gillespie (one of the most brilliant men on the assembly) [and one of the only six actual Scottish Covenanters in the assembly out of 157 members who contributed to the drafting of the Westminster Confession] ⁷ said,

'Things immutable, and common to all Nations are the laws concerning Moral trespasses, Sins against the Moral law, as murder, adultery, theft, enticing away from God, blasphemy, striking of Parents. Now that the Christian Magistrate is bound to observe these Judicial laws of Moses which appoint the punishments of sins against the Moral law ... 1. If it were not so, then it is free and arbitrary to the Magistrate to appoint what punishments himself pleaseth. But this is not arbitrary to him, for he is the Minister of God, Rom. 13.4. and the judgment is the Lord's, Deut. 1.7; 2 Chron. 19.6. And if the Magistrate be Keeper of both Tables, he must keep them in such manner as God hath delivered them to him. 2. Christ's words, Matt. 5.17, Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill, are comprehensive of the Judicial law, it being a part of the law of Moses ...' " Citation?

"Gillespie continued,

'Though we have clear and full scriptures in the New Testament for abolishing the Ceremonial law, yet we nowhere read in all the new Testament of the abolishing of the Judicial law, so far as it did concern the punishing of sins against the Moral law, of which Heresy and seducing of souls is one, and a great one. Once God did reveal his will for punishing those sins by such and such punishments. He who will hold that the Christian Magistrate is not bound to inflict such punishments for such sins, is bound to prove that those former laws of God are abolished, and to

⁷ The Long Parliament's ordinance creating the Westminster Assembly appointed 121 ministers of the Church of England to the Assembly, and 30 lay assessors (10 nobles and 20 commoners), but only six Commissioners representing the Church of Scotland. Thus, the overwhelming consensus of those participating was not Presbyterian but a mix of Anglican and Puritan. See William Maxwell Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* Chapter 2 (1853, CRTA); cf. Wikipedia entry for "List of the Westminster Divines at [this link](#).

shew some scripture for it.’ -George Gillespie, Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty, 1644

Where is the full citation for this quote? Do we have a page number or an edition to be able to find it in a book? Do we have a link to a web site that has this quote? How can we verify it? How can we know the context of the quote?

These two quotes from Gillespie are again another defense of the civil magistrate’s role in enforcing a national *theology* and *worldview*, not a national *ecclesiology*. Nothing in this quote from Gillespie argues for the civil magistrate to enforce church practices.

We thus do not observe anything from the Law of God that insists a nation’s founding document must allow a church to dictate to the civil government what other churches must do in their ecclesiastic activity.

V. Michael Daniels’ Denial of the Christian Acknowledgements in the U.S. Constitution

A. The Constitutional Reference to the Lord’s Day

Michael Daniels goes on: “Nathaniel, you have frequently said because Rushdoony and others have said that the Constitution recognizes God because of the Date and mention of a Sabbath day off [sic]. But these were already answered a century before by able Reformed Theologians.. [sic]

“The Testimony against the Moral Evil's of the U,S, [sic] Constitution states regarding the Sabbath day off,

“ ‘In reply to all this, it has been urged that Sunday is mentioned in the constitution. True, it is so. But in what connection? "If any bill shall not be returned by the President within ten days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the same shall be a law." (Art. I. Sec. vii. specification 2.) Is it a violation of the tenets of a Jew, Deist, Mahometan, or Hindoo, to retain a bill, in some cases, eleven or twelve days, instead of ten? Does he thereby acknowledge the Sabbath to be a divine institution? Were two merchants to enter into partnership, on condition that their store should not be opened on Sabbath, a deistical partner would not violate the contract by spending the whole of that day in some other secular employment—as many Presidents have done, their oath of office notwithstanding....’ ”

The purpose of the provision in the U.S. Constitution addressing how bills would become law was not to micro-manage the President's activity on every matter related to the Lord's Day. It was simply to ensure that that federal Constitution would not *require* the President to violate the Lord's Day by requiring him to review legislation passed by Congress on that day. But the document leaves to the president's jurisdictional prerogative how he would choose to honor the Lord's Day in the other duties of his office. The point is simply that the Constitution itself would not force anyone to work on the Lord's Day.

“ ‘The mention of the Sabbath, and by its pagan name too, is no more a recognition of that day as set apart by God in his word for devotion, than the naming of Thursday for any transaction by christians, is a recognition of the worship of the pagan idol Thor, to whom, among the heathen, that day was sacred. ...’ ”

“Sunday” has been the name for the first day of the week used by virtually all of the Western world for thousands of years. Christians have yet to propose and adopt any new designation for that day. So how can the name used for that day in the U.S. Constitution be called “pagan” when there is no other name for the day? It is simply the commonly accepted only name for the day and no popular Christian alternative has been proposed. (This is different from the calendar dating system because Christians *did* propose, and the U.S. Constitution specifically adopted, the proposed new Christian dating system that changed the center of history from the life of Julius Caesar to the advent of Jesus Christ.)

“ ‘—Besides, it was not the intention of those who framed the constitution, to exclude christians from the office of President. They intended to put all on an equal footing. Had they not excepted the Sabbath, an advantage would have been given to an infidel President, over a christian, who might entertain conscientious scruples as to the examining of bills on the Lord's day. After all, were there, as there is not, a recognition of one precept of the law of God, ...’ ”

These last two phrases actually go so far as to assert that there “is not” “a recognition of one precept of the law of God” in the entire U.S. Constitution. That is certainly an extreme assertion. It is one thing to say that the Constitution does not adequately acknowledge God, but it is quite another to assert that the Constitution in no way operates in obedience to a single precept of the Law of God. Does this extreme assertion not betray the unreasonableness and close-mindedness of this writer? The assertion is even contrary to Romans 2:14-16 which shows us that even lost men have the Law of God written on their hearts and thus often obey God's Law from their conscience. This truth is

what Abraham Kuyper called “common grace” and what Dr. R.J. Rushdoony called “creation grace.” But it reveals to us that all people submit themselves at various point to the Law of God.

The primary argument that Dr. Rushdoony made about the U.S. Constitution in his books on the subject was that it *did* implicitly apply precepts and principles from the Law of God. For example, he wrote: “The Constitution presupposes sin with its checks and balances, expressed powers, and the Bill of Rights[.]”⁸

But it is interesting to note that the writer of the above phrases critiquing the Constitution stresses the importance of the actual “precepts” of the Law of God because none of the precepts of the Law of God have been cited or quoted in this entire article to make the case that the U.S. Constitution violates the actual Law of God. Only historical examples from times of apostasy and ambiguous prophetic texts have been cited. If the actual statutes, the actual precepts, the actual explicit commands of the Law of God are so important, then why cannot they not be cited to address this issue?

But let us back up a little and see the more from this quotation.

“ ‘After all, were there, as there is not, a recognition of one precept of the law of God, would that be an acknowledgment of the whole law? It might as well be pled that the punishment of theft, by the government of China, is a recognition of the Christian religion, and proves that government {45} to be Christian, because one commandment of the Bible is—“Thou shalt not steal.” By this argument, all the governments of the world might be proved to recognize christianity, and to acknowledge Messiah as their prince! The advocates of the christianity of the United States' government must be hard pressed in the field of argument, when they are compelled to rear the superstructure of their advocacy on so narrow a basis.’ ”

Citation? Who wrote this document? Why is the quote authoritative in any way? What scholarship does it represent?

As we have already alluded from Romans 2, there is a sense in which the command “Thou shalt not steal” *is* uniquely Christian because it comes only from the Christian God and is only explainable in light of the revealed nature of that God. To the extent that pagans see the wisdom of that precept, it is because they have the Law of God written on their hearts. Humanistic man, if he attempts to be utterly consistent with his theological

⁸ Rushdoony, *Sovereignty* 54 (2007, Ross House Books).

presuppositions, must reject the precept “Thou shalt not steal” because it makes no sense under a humanistic worldview. So, indeed, there is a sense in which such laws from the Chinese do reflect Christian thinking and demonstrate the inconsistency of the Chinese humanism.

However, the founders of the Chinese civil government in no way historically sought to acknowledge the authority of the God of the Bible over their civil institutions. Meanwhile, the founders of the U.S. government acknowledged God not only implicitly but explicitly many times from before the break from Britain through the founding of the federal republic. As Abraham Kuyper chronicled and documented:

“The three great revolutions in the Calvinistic world left untouched the glory of God, nay, they even proceeded from the acknowledgement of His majesty. ... [I]t is equally true of your own [American] Revolution. It is expressed in so many words in the Declaration of Independence, by John Hancock, that the Americans asserted themselves by virtue - ‘of the law of nature and of nature's God’; that they acted - ‘as endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights’; that they appealed to ‘the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intention’; [9] and that they sent forth their ‘declaration of Independence’ - ‘With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence.’ [10] in the ‘Articles of Confederation’ it is confessed in the preamble, - ‘that it hath pleased the great Governor of the world to incline the hearts of the legislators.’ [11] It is also declared in the preamble of the Constitution of many of the States: - ‘Grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political and religious liberty, which He has so long permitted us to enjoy and looking unto Him, for a blessing upon our endeavors.’ [12] God is there honored as ‘the Sovereign Ruler,’ [13] and the ‘Legislator of the Universe’ [14] and it is there specifically admitted, that from God alone the people received ‘the right to choose their own form of government.’ [15] In one of the meetings of the [Constitutional] Convention, Franklin proposed, in a moment of supreme anxiety, that they should ask wisdom from God in prayer. And

⁹ See Franklin B. Hugh, *American Constitutions* Vol. 1, 5 (Albany; Weed, Parsons & Co, 1872).

¹⁰ *Ibid* at 8.

¹¹ *Ibid* at 19.

¹² *Ibid*, II at 549.

¹³ *Ibid*. at 555.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁵ *Ibid*. at 549.

if any one should still doubt whether or not the American revolution was homogeneous with that of Paris, this doubt is fully set at rest by the bitter fight in 1793 between Jefferson and Hamilton. Therefore it remains as the German historian Von Holtz stated it: ‘*Es ware Thorheit zu sagen dass die Rousseauschen Schriften einen Einfluss auf die Entwicklung in America ausgeubt haben.*’^[16] (‘Mere madness would it be to say that the American revolution borrowed its impelling energy from Rousseau and his writings.’) Or as Hamilton himself expressed it, that he considered ‘the French Revolution to be no more akin to the American Revolution than the faithless wife in a French novel is like the Puritan matron in New England.’^[17]

“The French Revolution is in principle distinct from all these national revolutions, which were undertaken with praying lips and with trust in the help of God. The French Revolution ignores God. It opposes God. It refuses to recognize a deeper ground of political life than that which is found in nature, that is, in this instance, in man himself. Here the first article of the confession of the most absolute infidelity is ‘ni Dieu ni maitre.’ The sovereign God is dethroned and man with his free will is placed on the vacant seat. It is the will of man which determines all things. All power, all authority proceeds from man. Thus one comes from the individual man to the many men; and in those many men conceived as the people, there is thus hidden the deepest fountain of all sovereignty. There is no question, as in your Constitution, of a sovereignty derived from God, which He, under certain conditions, implants in the people. Here an original sovereignty asserts itself, which everywhere and in ail states can only proceed from the people itself, having no deeper root than in the human will. It is a sovereignty of the people therefore, which is perfectly identical with atheism. And herein lies its self-abasement. In the sphere of Calvinism, as also in your Declaration, the knee is bowed to God, while over against man the head is proudly lifted up.”

Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* 52-53 (1898), which can be read at [this link](#).

Thus, we observe that Kuyper saw the establishment of radical government “by the people” in France as representing genuine “blasphemy”—not the establishment of the United States. The founding of the U.S., from its early pioneers and pilgrim colonizers all the way through the establishing of the federal Constitution was presuppositionally

¹⁶ Von Holz, *Verfassung und Democratie der Vereinigten Staten von America*, Vol. I 96 (Dusseldorf, 1873).

¹⁷ See John F. Morse, *Thomas Jefferson* 147 (Boston, 1883).

Christian, even if they were not always perfectly consistent in how they applied their Christianity.

B. The Constitutional Reference to the “Year of our Lord”

Michael Daniels goes on: “Regarding the Date ‘in the Year of our Lord’ [sic] Bible Magistracy Christ Dominion over the Nations by James Willson answers this objection in 1842,

“ ‘Now there is no reference to the Messiah in the Constitution. Neither in the phraseology of that instrument, nor in any of its provisions, would any alteration be required, were there no such person as the Saviour of sinners. The only allusion to Christ, is in the date appended to it; it is dated "in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the twelfth." If this be a profession of subjection to the Messiah, or even an acknowledgment of his being, then will it be exceedingly difficult to find man or woman in all western Europe, or in the greater part of this western world, who is not a disciple of Jesus Christ, not in profession only, but in reality, for all date their deeds, their correspondence, their ages, &c., in the same form.”

Actually, we are now observing how humanists, wishing to be more consistent with their worldview, have begun rejecting the use of the phrase “in the Year of our Lord” for the alternative designation “in the Common Era” or “C.E.” Instead of using, “Before Christ” or “B.C.” they use “Before the Common Era” or “B.C.E.” They are not unlike the French of the French Revolution (who were largely contemporaries of the American founding fathers of 1787) and who proposed changing the week from a seven-day week as the book of Genesis patterns to a ten-day week. Throughout history, rebels of God have sought to show their rebellion by their efforts to alter anything that would point to the truth of God’s revelation. But the founding fathers did not do that in how they signed the U.S. Constitution. They did not even attempt to try to obscure the reference to the Lordship of Christ by using the commonly accepted Latin “Anno Domini” or “A.D.,” but explicitly kept the wording as “in the year of our Lord.”

“ ‘Then would Socinians, Infidels, and even Atheists, be every day of their lives, and every time they write "Anno Domini," acknowledging that the Saviour of sinners is their Lord and Saviour!

As I just mentioned, the founders did not obscure the Lordship of Christ by putting the phrase in Latin.

“ ‘The truth is, that the prevalence of the Christian religion in Europe has introduced there, and among the descendants of Europeans, the custom of reckoning the lapse of time, and of marking its intervals, from the incarnation of Christ. It is utterly absurd to suppose that the use of this era makes all who do so, Christians.

Are we addressing whether all the men who signed the U.S. Constitution were Christians or whether the document itself reflects a Christian worldview? I do not argue that all the men who signed the Constitution were genuine orthodox Christians. But the document they signed gives homage here to Christ and even in this quotation the author is forced to recognize that the reason it was so signed is because Christians had influenced the culture so that the document would be signed in a way consistent with a Christian worldview.

“ ‘To return to our argument. Did any one ever think of charging an Infidel with inconsistency in swearing to support the Constitution?

Actually, yes, there have been many instances where professing Christians accused elected officials of being false in their oath of office because they were not considered genuine in their Christianity—from Thomas Jefferson to William Jefferson Clinton.¹⁸

“ ‘Could such a person be rejected if offering to swear the oath? Could an officer be impeached for blaspheming the Saviour? None of all these were ever thought of. Indeed, those very persons who endeavour, on the one hand, to make us believe that the United States as a nation acknowledge Christ, are as clamorous, on the other, against any arrangement which would exclude from office Socinians, Infidels, &c. "The legs of the lame are not equal." Would Infidels, be eligible to office, provided this nation had made in its constitutional arrangements an acknowledgment of Christ? Decidedly not. The conclusion is manifest. The nation has made no such acknowledgment.’ ”

The title, author, and date for this quotation was mentioned above, but do we have a publication with a page number where we can find it and read its context, or a web site to go to so we can verify it and see its full context?

This writer is naive indeed. The grounds for impeachment and removal from office under the Constitution are largely left to the discretion of the representatives of the people in Congress, and the Constitution does not prevent them from removing an elected official from office for infidelity. But he asks, “Would Infidels, be eligible to office, provided this

¹⁸ See Gary DeMar’s article “Religion and the Presidency - Thomas Jefferson, Part 1” at [this link](#).

nation had made in its constitutional arrangements an acknowledgment of Christ?” Even in matters where the Constitution is more explicit, history shows that the explicitness of a condemned evil in the Constitution ultimately does not determine whether an elected official will be removed or not permitted to hold the office. Perjury, for example, is flatly condemned in the Constitution, and yet the Congress did not have the gumption to remove Bill Clinton from the presidency even after it was proved that he had committed that federal crime.

In the end of the day, it is always what the people and their representatives value that is going to determine how the civil government runs, not what is explicitly included in the founding civil documents.

VI. Michael Daniel's Concluding Evaluations

“Ultimately, the issue here is Historical theonomy vs. Neotheonomy. Bahnsen, Rushdoony, Demar, etc were a new type of theonomist that deviated from the historical theonomic views. ...”

For the record, it should be noted that while the concept of “theonomy” may have existed for centuries, the word itself did not fall into vogue, as a term meant to express the application of the the Law of God as revealed in the Bible to all cultures, until theologians such as Rushdoony, Bahnsen, and Demar began writing on the subject beginning in the 1960s.

“That is not to say that they were not good men. I respect these men greatly but I do disagree with them on numerous points. I believe the historic covenanter theonomy is the most biblical and most consistent principle regarding the issue of civil magistracy. Is. 8:12, “Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy.”

The word that is translated “confederacy” in this passage is in other versions of the Bible translated as “conspiracy.” See, for example, the New King James and the English Standard Version.

“ ‘the [sic] kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.’ Dan. 7:27.”

And yet what does the Scripture say is the nature of this Kingdom?

Luke 17:20-21 says that the Kingdom does not proceed by human authorities exercising the coercive police power. It is not instituted visibly by the decrees of men. “And when [Jesus] was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall men say, Lo here, or lo there: for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:20-21 (GNV).

The kingdom of God is *within* you, said Jesus. It is in our *hearts*—an area that no outside human authority can effectively govern. That is how the Kingdom of God is advanced, that is how a nation should be evaluated to see whether it is truly Christian and in the “covenant.” The test should be whether “the people” of that nation from their hearts acknowledge the authority of Christ and seek to obey Him.

Christ came to set up the New Testament for the very purpose of establishing this Kingdom in the hearts of men. The writer of the epistle of Hebrews quotes from the prophet Jeremiah when he says in Hebrews 8:6-10 (NKJV),

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws *in their mind* and *write them on their hearts*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (emphasis added).”

It is the putting of the Law of God into the hearts of those living in the New Covenant under the Kingdom of God that this revelation tells us is one of the distinguishing characteristics between the Old and New Testaments. Unlike the old kingdom of Israel, the new Kingdom of God would rule the people *from their hearts*.

Thus, the Kingdom of God will not be advanced by Christians taking over the civil institutions and forcing others to believe as we do or to follow the same ecclesiastical rites that we believe in, but by God transforming their hearts so that they willingly desire to follow these things from their own hearts.

As Dr. Rushdoony explained it,

“Where man and society are concerned, God’s total government and predestination works to sanctify man and society by working from within, transforming the regenerated man and His world through the Holy Spirit. Where non-Biblical faith seeks to gain control, the result is totalitarianism. The alternative to government by God’s law and Spirit working through the inner man is the totalitarian state.”

Rushdoony, *Sovereignty* 8 (Ross House Books, 2007).

Michael Daniels begins to wrap his article with some links: “Links for further reading, Highly recommended,

“The Act, Declaration and Testimony of 1761 (First two parts are historical and can be avoided, The Meat is in Part 3 with a Confessional Summary in Part 4)

“Act, Declaration and Testimony of 1761 Part 3

<http://www.covenanter.org/RefPres/actdeclarationandtestimony/actpart3.htm#part3>

“Act, Declaration and Testimony of 1761 Part 4

<http://www.covenanter.org/RefPres/actdeclarationandtestimony/actpart4.htm>

“Testimony Against the Moral Evil's of the U.S. Constitution, 1839

http://www.truecovenanter.com/reformedpresbyterian/rpcna_testimony_against_constitution_of_usa_corrected.html

“Bible Magistracy Christ's Dominion Over the Nations by James Willson, 1842

<http://www.covenanter.org/JMWillson/Magistracy/biblemagistracy.htm>

“Wholesome Severity Reconciled with christian Liberty by George Gillespie, 1644

http://www.covenanter.org/GGillespie/wholesome_severity.html

Additional Quotes,

“American Covenanter James Willson declared the following in a sermon 32 years after the U.S. Constitution was ratified by the USA the following:

‘Britain and the United States are colonies within Jehovah’s government; and if they refuse to acknowledge the authority of Messiah, he will treat them as rebel provinces of his empire. In the United States, the refusal to acknowledge God, has probably been more explicit than it ever was in any other nation. Soon after we

had obtained, through the beneficent providence of God, liberation from the dominion of a foreign power; soon after the most eminent displays of Jehovah's goodness to our land; the convention, elected to form articles of fundamental law for the commonwealth, rejected the government of God, and with a degree of ingratitude, perhaps without a parallel, formed a constitution in which there is not the slightest hint of homage to the God of heaven; in which God receives no more honor than the devil. They force all within their territories to bow before them, but they refuse to bow before the throne of God. This is a species of national atheism, almost as enormous as that of the French republic, whose representatives voted, that there is no God. It is to all intents practical atheism; and we cannot doubt that those who planned such rebellion against the King of kings and Lord of lords, were practical atheists and professed infidels.'

“_ [sic] The Subjection of Kings and Nations to Messiah_, p. 65 in _Political Danger_ published by Crown and Covenant Publications.” **Does this citation belong to the former quote? It is unclear.**

“[T]he convention ... rejected the government of God”? “[T]here is not the slightest hint of homage to the God of heaven; in which God receives no more honor than the devil”? In what passage of the U.S. Constitution does it “reject” God’s government? How can this be asserted when the Constitution has an explicit reference to Christ as “Lord” in its closing paragraph, when it honors the Lord’s Day, and when it incorporates so many principles and precepts into its content?

The criticism of these calling themselves “Covenanters” throws the baby out with the bathwater. It would seem to them better to have the Lord acknowledged more explicitly in the U.S. Constitution and to have that explicit reference be a mere taking of the name of the Lord God in vain, than for the Constitution to make its institutions subservient to the commands and principles of civil government that God’s Law requires.

Michael Daniels continues: “That all nations are to be subject to King Jesus, even in the OT is evident. That the Church and State were ALWAYS separate is also evident, even if modern day PhDs say nay...nay them...they are in error trying to out smart the Truth...”

What modern “PhDs” say “nay, nay”? Who said that “all nations” were not subject to King Jesus, in His deity as the second Person in the Trinity, even in the Old Testament? The question is whether Jesus in His *humanity* had all nations subject to Him in the Old Testament, and it is clear from the chronology of history that Christ became not King of all nations *in His humanity* until after the incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection. Christ had to become the link between the Godhead and the human race by serving

victoriously as the second Adam first. Only at that point was He seated at the “right hand of the Father” until He had made all nations His footstool.

Michael Daniels goes on: "The command is to all—to states, republics, kingdoms, and empires, in whatever quarter of the world they may be found, from whatever branch of the human family they may be descended, and whatever may be their local peculiarities and pursuits—let all bow down before the Mediator and serve him. But we must be more particular.

Amen. I have no disagreement with this statement.

Michael Daniels goes on: “1. It is their duty to bind themselves to him by covenant engagement, consecrating themselves to him, swearing allegiance to him as their King and Lord, binding themselves to one another, and, as united together in social compact, to seek the protection and the blessings of Messiah, Heaven’s Almighty Vicegerent. ’

“ ...

“The subjection of Israel to the government of God, was to him in the mediatorial person and character; for the relation in which he stood to them, and they to him, was a gracious covenant relation—a relation which God, absolutely considered, cannot sustain to any of the guilty race of Adam, either individually or nationally. Whatever may be said of their national polity, of the connexion, or rather as some ignorantly assert, of the perfect sameness of their church and civil state, still it is abundantly evident, that they had a civil government, a national territory and property, and civil relations and rights; and that all these were completely subjected to the government of the Son of God, in his character of Mediator.

Is this series of text written by Michael Daniels or is he quoting someone else? It is unclear. He does not provide quotation marks, so it is not clear, whether any of what is above belongs as part of the quote below—where the quotation marks start. Did he accidentally omit the quotation marks?

“ ‘Is there any intimation in the whole volume of inspiration, that other nations should not copy after the example set them in Judea? Any hint that the honors there claimed by Messiah, and conceded to him, were peculiar to that territory, and that he does not demand them in other quarters of the world?

The answer to this question depends very much on what this writer means by “the example set in Judea,” for one cannot disregard the very significant changes that occurred

in history with the advent of the New Covenant. The implications of the New Covenant mean that things cannot be identical to the way they were under the Old Covenant. It does not mean that everything is different, but it also does not mean that everything is the same. There were many things in the Old Covenant that were foreshadows of something yet to come in the New Covenant. (See Colossians 2:16-17.) As Dr. Ken Gentry and Dr. Greg Bahnsen often said, theonomy involves “the application of *Old Testament Law* to *New Testament* conditions.”¹⁹ The “New Testament conditions” have great affect and implication on how “the honors” claimed by Messiah were to be particularly applied from ancient Israel under the Old Covenant to other nations under the New Covenant. While the conditions of the Old Covenant would have required, for example, the on-going practice of animal sacrifices, the Levitical system, and other parts of the ceremonial law, under the New Covenant these commands need no longer be followed by God’s people because Christ has become our final sacrifice and our high priest. Thus, it appears that the greatest changes that have occurred between the Old and New Testaments pertain to the Church—both the universal Church (the “Body of Christ”) as well as the ecclesiastical “church.”

“ ‘Nothing like it; but quite the reverse. ‘The uttermost parts of the earth are given to him for inheritance;’ ‘he is the governor among the nations;’ ‘Sheba’s and Seba’s kings shall offer gifts, yea all kings shall fall down before him;’ ‘the isles shall wait for his law;’ ‘the gathering of the people shall be to him.’ The lion of the tribe of Judah has the volume of providence committed to him, and he prevails to open the seals of the book in which the destiny of the nations is recorded: ‘he is prince of the kings of the earth;’ and ‘hath on his vesture and on his thigh written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.’ Indeed, is not easy to conceive, how God could have expressed his will more plainly, or have more fully and distinctly asserted the claims of his Son to universal dominion, and the duty of nations to acknowledge him.’

“from [sic] James Willson's sermon _[sic]THE SUBJECTION OF KINGS AND NATIONS TO MESSIAH_ [sic]

It is fine and good to assert that the Word of God requires “nations to acknowledge God.” I do not think any theonomist Christian, be he a “Reconstructionist” or a so-called “Covenanter,” believes that individuals, churches, families, and states need not acknowledge God. The trick is that these quotes from various theologians from the past do not define what exactly “acknowledging God” entails. How specific, for example, must an acknowledgement of God be, under their view? Second, is God only

¹⁹ See Dr. Ken Gentry’s lectures on Theonomy from Vision Forum’s *Theological Bootcamp*, Vol. 2; cf. Dr. Greg Bahnsen, *By This Standard* 2-5 (American Vision Press, 2008).

acknowledged by a nation stating His name or by doing what He commands? Jesus said that the test of being Christ's friend was not merely calling Him "friend," but "do[ing] whatsoever [He] has commanded you" (John 15:14). Third, is God only acknowledged in our constitutions or may He be acknowledged in other official acts of the civil government, such as proclamations and national days of prayer and thanksgiving?

The problem is not so much that these theologians assert God's need to be acknowledged, but rather that they do not show from Scripture the definition of acknowledging God and how the United States has fallen short of that definition.

If "acknowledging God" is not defined by the requirements of God's Word, then that phrase will be used arbitrarily. In the case of these calling themselves new "Covenanters," we observed earlier how their application of "acknowledging God" turned out to be arbitrary because even it falls significantly short by not addressing the Law of God nor the Trinity.

However, if a thorough and exhaustive acknowledgment of God is not necessary at every reference, then why must it be done to the extent that these neo-Covenanters specify? They cite no Scriptural basis for their assertions here other than some non-concrete prophetic texts and some examples in the Old Testament historical account that could very well be non-normative. No statutes from the Law in either the Old or New Testament are cited as a basis for the idea that there should not be a national ecclesiology enforced by the civil government rather than simply a national *theology* and *worldview*. Nothing from the Bible at all is cited to argue that a nation's founding document's preamble must have an explicit reference to God's authority over the earth (but need not explicitly assert the deity of Christ, the Law of God, or the Trinity).

Nathaniel's Concluding Response

Is the U.S. Constitution "Christian" in the sense that it reflects a Christian worldview? A Christian or biblical worldview is not measured by overt statements alone but rather by how closely the ideas communicated about every area of life conforms to the whole of the Word of God. A Christian worldview is thus comprehensive.

The trick is that we all have fallacies and short-comings in our worldview. The founding fathers who wrote the U.S. Constitution were no exception. The best Christian men in history and even Bible times had inconsistencies in their worldview. If we were to thoroughly scrutinize through every great Christian's life in history, we would find examples of inconsistencies in the worldview of virtually every single one of them

(especially the more historical documentation we have available about them). So every single one of us could be found guilty of not having a biblical worldview at one point or another.

Thus, evaluating a Christian worldview is much more comparative and progressive than evaluating orthodoxy. Just as individuals must be progressively sanctified, so also must societies of people. (See Philippians 3:12-14.) When we look at the founders, we find that compared to people in the modern day, nearly all of the founders had a much *more* biblical worldview. Even the unorthodox founders such as Jefferson and Franklin had a strong biblical worldview when compared to even many orthodox Christians living today. That is because they lived in a time and culture much more permeated with the Christianity inherited from the Reformers, Pilgrims, Puritans, and Scottish Covenanters, and rekindled by the Great Awakening of the 1740's.

Therefore, much could be written to document and demonstrate how the founding fathers fell short on several points in their applications of the biblical principles for civil government. Much could be written about how they could have been more explicit about their theology and worldview than they were, particularly in the U.S. Constitution. That does not change the fact, however, that the extent to which the founders did faithfully apply the biblical principles and statutes of civil government, including in the U.S. Constitution, have not been surpassed by any other government since the Hebrew Republic.

Other books and documents analyze not only the wording of the U.S. Constitution but also the effect and historical context of it to demonstrate how that founding document meets the minimal threshold necessary to qualify it as a document reflecting a Christian worldview. I refer my readers to these resources for such an exhaustive study. Dr. R.J. Rushdoony's books *This Independent Republic* and *The Nature of the American System* are a good starting place. Gary DeMar's books *God and Government* and *America's Christian History: The Untold Story* are also helpful. Finally, the book by Col. John Eidsmoe (who is both an attorney as well as an ordained minister) entitled *Christianity and the Constitution* does much to document how that founding document was built predominantly upon Christian presuppositions.

In the end of the evaluation, however, the crux of whether a nation is truly in "covenant" with God and subservient to His Lordship will not be the statements of the founding civil documents of that nation, but rather whether the people from their hearts are living in willing subjection to Him. Explicitly orthodox constitutions are *the result*, not the cause, of being faithfully "in covenant" with God. The legal document that really matters is the

Law of God, and it must be written on the heart. That is the standard communicated to us from the Word of God in Old Testament passages such as Jeremiah 31:31-34, as well as New Testament passages such as Hebrews 8:7-12. As Jesus Christ said, the Kingdom does not originate from political forces of this world but the Kingdom advances by the Holy Spirit *in the hearts* of “the people.”