



ECCLESIOLOGY

The Church's Relationship to the State

THE PATH OF TODAY'S MESSAGE

01

Describe the different views fairly

Secularism, Jeffersonianism, Reconstructionism

02

Give a grammar of law

Eternal Law, Natural Law, Divine Law, Human Law: faith and reason together.

03

Open the texts

Matthew 22, Romans 13, and the other NT texts.

04

The Christian Civic Life

What do we do with all this?



A QUICK NOTE ABOUT THE GOSPEL

The gospel is what saves. But it is not all that love requires.

WHY THIS QUESTION WILL NOT GO AWAY

Genesis–Kings

Image of God, Pharaoh, Sinai, the throne of David

Exile

Joseph, Daniel, Jeremiah 29 —
serve the city; do not worship it

Gospels

Render to Caesar / render to God —
under Augustus and Tiberius

Epistles

Romans 13, 1 Peter 2, 1 Timothy 2,
under Nero

**THREE MAJOR VIEWS,
STATED FAIRLY**

SECULARISM - STATE OVER CHURCH

Public life, law, education, policy, the symbols of the republic, should be conducted without reference to God or to any particular religious tradition.

French *laïcité* (1905): the Republic “neither recognizes, nor salaries, nor subsidizes any cult.” Certain readings of Supreme Court’s “high and impregnable wall” (*Everson v. Board of Education*). Enlightenment hope that unaided reason can ground peace among warring sects.

STRONGEST ARGUMENT

Peace. Europe’s wars of religion were real. Coerced faith is not faith. Only a neutral state can guarantee long-term societal peace.

SECULARISM: CAN A STATE BE MORALLY FULL AND RELIGIOUSLY EMPTY?

Every homicide statute is a creed about the human.

Every marriage statute is a creed about the body.

Every curriculum is a creed about the good.

The question is whether the creed is true.

RECONSTRUCTIONISM - CHURCH OVER STATE

Theonomy: Every law-order is a theology

Claim

The non-ceremonial Mosaic law, including, in stricter versions, the judicial penalties, remains the standard for civil government.

Strongest Argument

If God is perfect and unchanging, His definitions of justice, ethics, and civil righteousness must also remain absolute across all generations and nations.

JEFFERSONIANISM - CHURCH AND STATE

January 1, 1802 · Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association

... religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God... the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions... whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between church and State.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

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

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

JEFFERSONIANISM - CHURCH AND STATE

The Basic Idea

The church must never hold the sword; the state must never write the creed; but a republic of free consciences may still acknowledge that rights come from the Creator and that laws must answer to a moral order older than the legislature.

Strongest Argument

God made man free. True religious liberty **can only exist** when the government acknowledges that man's duty to his Creator is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of civil society.



THE ARCHITECTURE OF LAW

FOUR KINDS OF LAW - A HIERARCHY OF PARTICIPATION

1 Eternal

The wise plan in the mind of God by which He governs all that He has made. Not a posted list. The order of stars and of consciences.

2 Natural

“The rational creature’s participation of the eternal law.”
Romans 2:14–15: the work of the law written on the heart.

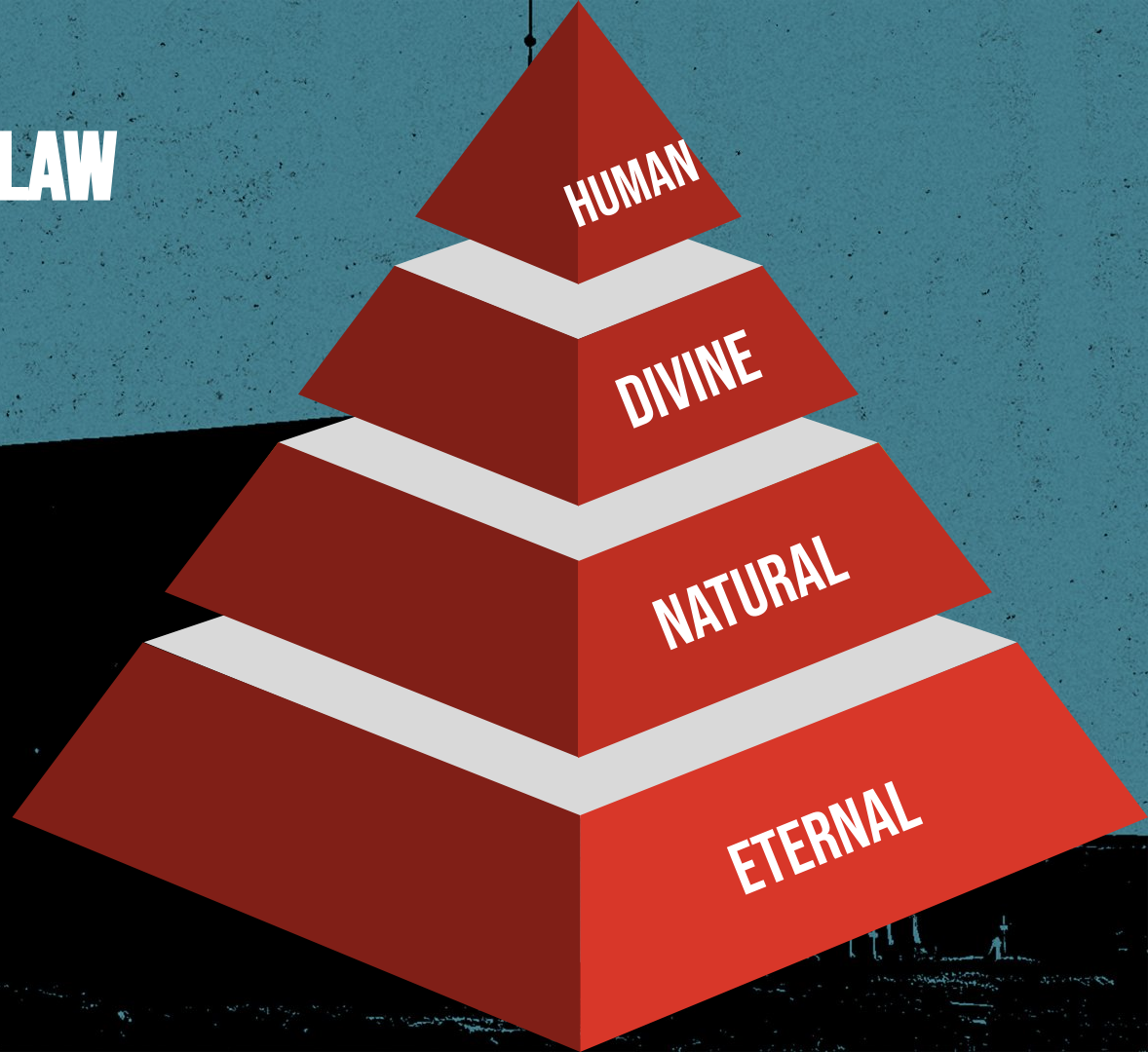
3 Divine

Scripture’s revealed specification. Old Law and New Law. Reaches the interior act. Leads to a good the magistrate cannot confer: eternal life.

4 Human

Particular ordinances for the common good. Temporal tranquillity. External acts of justice between persons.

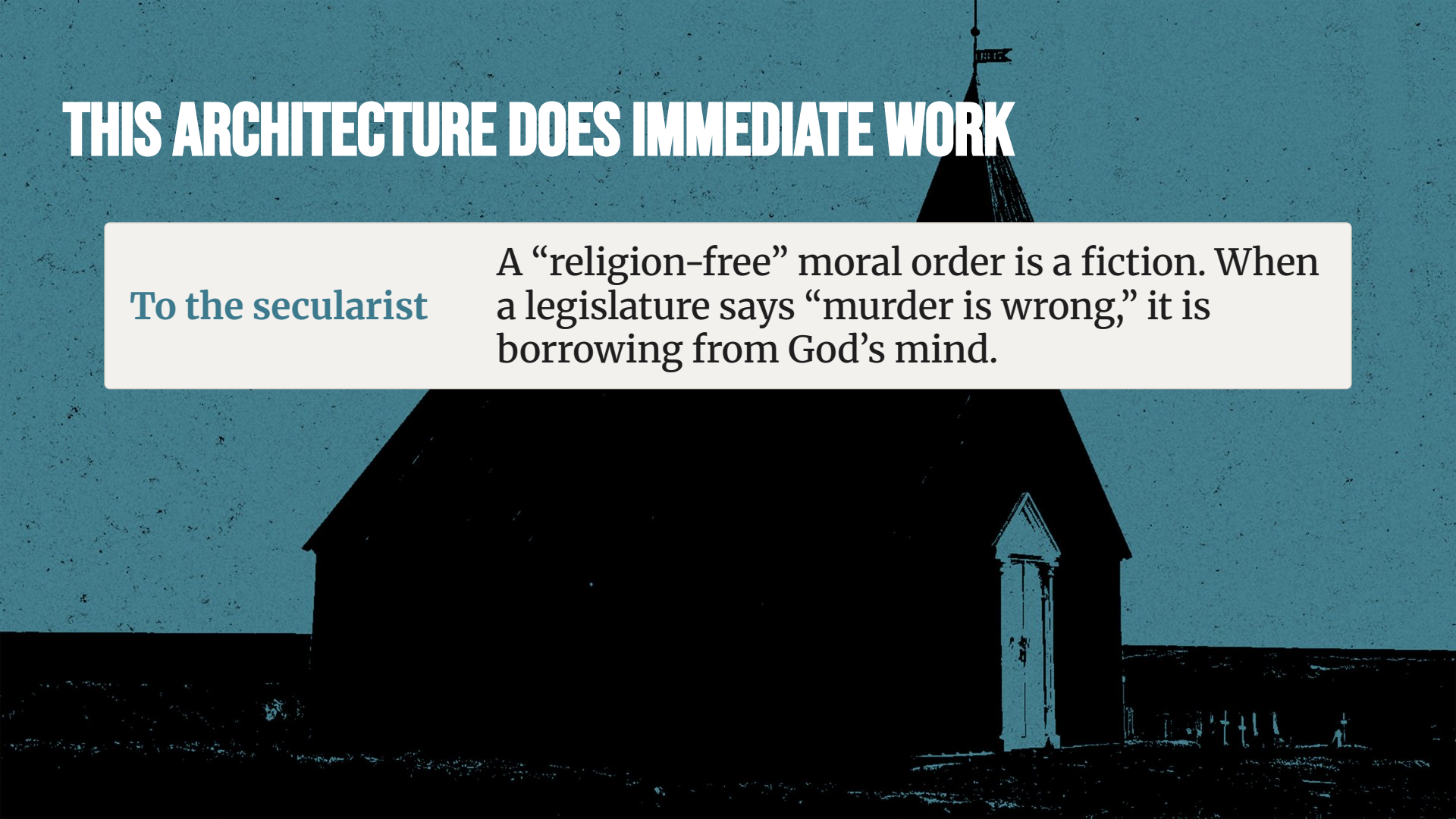
THE ARCHITECTURE OF LAW



THIS ARCHITECTURE DOES IMMEDIATE WORK



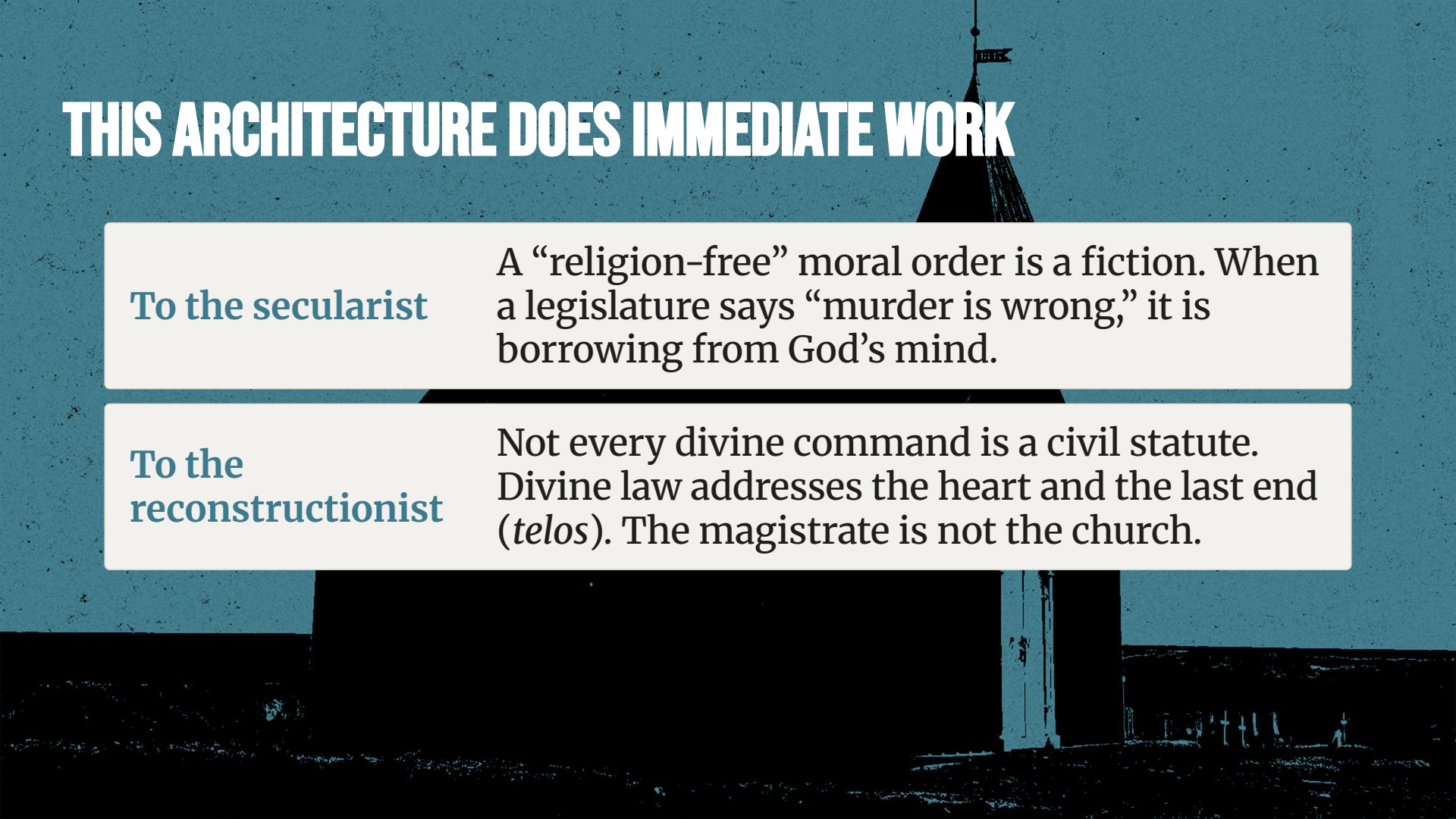
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To the Jeffersonian

The wall between institutions is not a wall between law and God. Government reaches actions. Actions have a moral nature.



THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

MATTHEW 22:15–22, THE COIN AND THE IMAGE

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. 16 And they *sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. 17 Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?” 18 But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, “**Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?** 19 **Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax.**” And they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, “**Whose likeness and inscription is this?**” 21 They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” Then He said to them, “**Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.**” 22 And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

MATTHEW 22:15–22, THE COIN AND THE IMAGE

ἀποδίδομαι (apodidomai): give back what is owed.

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

CAESAR IS OWED SOMETHING

The coin that bears his image may be returned to him. The tax is not, in this saying, an act of worship. It is acknowledgment of a real, limited, providential authority.

CAESAR IS NOT OWED EVERYTHING

If the coin bears Caesar’s image, the human being bears God’s (Gen 1:26–27).
Tertullian: render to Caesar the money; render to God yourself.

ROMANS 13:1–7, THE SWORD AS A MINISTRY

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13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

ROMANS 13:1–7, THE SWORD AS A MINISTRY

5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay [render] to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

ROMANS 13:1–7, THE SWORD AS A MINISTRY

Not Optional

- 01 Civil authority is a divine institution. Even pagan Nero sits, in this sense, on a providential chair. Cf. Daniel 4:17.

A narrow ministry

- 02 Praise the good. Punish the evil with the sword. A ministry of justice, not of grace. Church wields the Sword of the Spirit, state wields the sword of steel.

For conscience

- 03 Submit not only to avoid wrath but “for the sake of conscience” (13:5). Taxes, revenue, respect, honor; *apodote*, the same rendering as Matthew 22.

THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

1 Peter 2:13–17

Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. God is feared. The emperor is honored.

Acts 4–5

First clash is with the Sanhedrin. When forbidden to preach Christ, the church preaches anyway.

1 Timothy 2:1–4

Pray for kings; that we may lead a peaceful life. Civic peace serves evangelism.

John 18:36

“My kingdom is not of this world.” Origin and weapons are not Rome’s.

Philippians 3:20

“Our citizenship is in heaven.” Dual citizenship is normal. Our heavenly passport is primary.

A TEXT-DRIVEN SYNTHESIS

Two institutions

Church and state are God-ordained, limited, and distinct. The church does not bear the sword (John 18:36). The state does not preach the gospel.

One moral universe

The state is not morally autonomous. It is a servant of God for good and against evil (Rom 13:4). Good and evil are recognized, not invented.

Dual citizens

Honor the emperor. Fear God. Pray for kings. Disobey when commanded to sin. Seek the city's welfare.

A TEXT-DRIVEN SYNTHESIS

Caesar gets the coin.

God gets the image-bearer.

The church keeps the gospel.

The magistrate keeps the sword.

Neither pretends to be the other.





THE CHRISTIAN IN CIVIC LIFE

DUAL CITIZENSHIP WITHOUT DUAL LOYALTY

The Christian who says “I don’t do politics” is not being spiritual. He is being selective. He already accepts Caesar’s roads, courts, currency, and fire department. Romans 13:7 does not say “render if you feel called.” It says render what is owed.

THE OPPOSITE ERROR

Treating the earthly city as the primary theater of redemption. The church is not a Super PAC. The pulpit is not a precinct.

VOTING: STEWARDSHIP, NOT SACRAMENT

- Not a command, but a form of neighbor-love
- It does not require a “Christian party.” It does require a conscience.
- Vote as one who will give account, not as one who will save the country





HOW INVOLVED SHOULD WE BE?

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All Christians

Prayer for rulers (1 Tim 2). Submission where possible. Truth-telling. Refusal to sin when commanded. Honor without worship. Taxes and promises.



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The background of the slide features a photograph of a church steeple with a small flag on top, set against a clear blue sky. In the foreground, there is a cemetery with several white headstones and crosses visible on a grassy field.

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The church as church

Preach the whole counsel of God. Discipline its members. Name public evil, but not everything is a personal crusade.

CLOSING CHARGE



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Love the brotherhood.
Fear God.
Honor the emperor.