

SERIES:

SUBJECT: Church and State and The Word of God

READING: [Mat 22:21](#) They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, **Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.**

In his book “America Betrayed!” Marlin Maddoux wrote in Chapter 5. *Time for Hard Thinking - Separating the State From God*; “Through various humanist organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and others, humanists have virtually paralyzed the American Christians in their attempt to speak out This has been done through a calculated, studied, intentional, misinterpretation of the concept of separation of church and state. And they sit back and laugh at the stupid Christians for being so gullible.”

Speaking from the steps of the United States Capitol in 1920 to 15,000 people in the open air, Texas Baptist pastor George W. Truett declared: *“Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s,” is one of the most revolutionary and history-making utterances that ever fell from those lips divine. That utterance, once and for all, marked the divorcement of church and state.... It was the sunrise gun of a new day, the echoes of which are to go on and on until in every land, whether great or small, the doctrine shall have absolute supremacy everywhere of a free church in a free state.*”

I. What Is The Bases for a Free Church in a Free State

- a. We have come to a point when talking about bible believing churches that saying we are Baptists is not nearly enough to insure we are talking about historic Baptists teaching; even Independent Baptists leaves often leaves one with a bitter taste in light of Biblical truth!
 - i. I think the day may be approaching when the word Biblicist is a better term; **a person who takes the Bible literally; accepts it as**

inspired and infallible truth without admixture of error; one who interprets it literally and who accepts only the King James Bible and the preserved word of God for the English speaking people.

- ii. Based on this understanding we will examine the separation of Church and state.**
- b. The concept of a free church in a free state rests not on political theory nor on human documents but on the word of God as interpreted by a **Biblicist**.**
 - i. Such belief in religious freedom and its corollary, the separation of the institutions of church and state, come from the **Biblicist** commitment to the authority of the Bible.**
 - ii. In breaking down the terms “church” and “state” we discover that “state” refers to governments or civil governing bodies.**
 - 1. The Bible indicates that governments are ordained by God to provide law and order.**

Rom 13:1-5 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (2) Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. (3) For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: (4) For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon

him that doeth evil. (5) Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

2. Government leaders are to act for the benefit of the citizens of the state.

1Pe 2:13-14 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; (14) Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

3. **Biblicist** are to honor and pray for government officials;

1Ti 2:1-3 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; (2) For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. (3) For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

Mat 22:17-22 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? (18) But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? (19) Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. (20) And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? (21) They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. (22) When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

1Pe 2:17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

4. Pay taxes (;

Rom 13:6-7 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very

thing. (7) Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

5. Obey the government except when obedience would be clearly contrary to God's will

Act 4:19-20 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. (20) For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Act 5:29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

6. Historically, **Biblicist** have affirmed their loyalty to the state.

iii. **The term “church” refers to religious organizations.** For **Biblicist**, this includes both local congregations and various entities established for religious purposes, such as associations, conventions, schools and institutions for ministry.

1. **Biblicist** teach that the nature of “church” is
 - a. to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8),
 - b. to teach doctrine and develop believers (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-13)
 - c. and to minister in Christ's name (Matthew 25:31-46).

2. The church is to rely on the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God and not the sword of the government in carrying out its mission.

c. **Ideally, the relation of church and state is mutually beneficial.**

- i. For example, the state is to provide order and safety; these are useful to the church in carrying out its mission (Acts 13-16).
- ii. And the church contributes to a positive social order by helping to develop law-abiding, hard-working, honest citizens.

Eph 4:24-32 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (25) Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. (26) Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (27) Neither give place to the devil. (28) Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. (29) Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. (30) And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (31) Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: (32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

1Pe 2:11-17 Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; (12) Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers,

they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. (13) Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; (14) Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. (15) For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: (16) As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. (17) Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

- d. **Biblicist** contend that this mutual benefit works best when the institutions of church and state are separate and when neither seeks to control the other.
 - i. The state is not to dictate doctrine, worship style, organization, membership or personnel for leadership to the church.
 - ii. The church is not to seek the power or the financial support of the state for spiritual ends.
 - iii. This is the model set forth in the New Testament.

II. **The very nature of the gospel and of church calls for such a relationship.**

- a. The Bible reveals that humans are created by God with a competency to know and follow his will (Genesis 1:27).
 - i. Following God's will should be a free choice, not coerced by either church or state.

- ii. Salvation in Christ is the result of free choice to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-10).
 - iii. Therefore neither church nor state should ever interfere with the free proclamation of the gospel or with the freedom of people to accept or reject it.
- b. Likewise, churches ought to be composed of people who have freely chosen to be baptized and to congregate (Acts 2:41-42).
- c. People should support the churches by voluntary contributions of tithes and offerings (2 Corinthians 8:1-15).
- d. Only Jesus is to be Lord, never any government or ecclesiastical organization (Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:8-11).

III. The History of Church-State Relations

- a. The biblical ideal of church-state relations has seldom been realized.
 - i. In the earliest years of the Christian movement, the church suffered persecution from the Roman government.
 - ii. In the fourth century this all changed, Constantine I was a Roman emperor who ruled early in the 4th century. He was the first “Christian” emperor and saw the empire begin to become a Christian state.

- iii. The Roman government decreed not only toleration but also a privileged position for the Christian movement.
- b. This led to a union of church and state, that is to a union of the prevailing government with the dominant form of Christianity.
 - i. The arrangements varied through the centuries but one thing remained constant—**all forms of religious expression except the “official” one were persecuted.**
 - ii. People who believed in freedom of religion, such as **Biblicist**, were regarded as traitors by governments and as heretics by the government- supported churches.
- c. The use of the power of the state to enforce religion sapped the spiritual vitality of the established state churches and added a host of unsaved people to the churches.
 - i. Furthermore, efforts by governments to protect the established religion of a country resulted in wars and civil strife that undermined the governments.
 - ii. Thus, the union of church and state was and is harmful to both.

IV. **Biblicist** and Church-State Relations

- a. **Biblicist** suffered severely under the union of church and state.
 - i. They campaigned vigorously for religious freedom, not just for themselves but for all

people. **Their goal was freedom, not mere toleration.**

- b. The record of the **Biblicist** struggle for religious freedom and the separation of church and state is a story of courage and persistence.
- c. A host of people with courage stayed with their convictions in the face of stiff resistance from both religious and government authorities. **They did so because they believed that they were being true to the teachings of the Bible.**
- d. One such Christian was Thomas Helwys (c. 1556-1616), a Baptist pastor in London in the early 1600s, publicly advocated religious freedom.
 - i. In England, the king was not only head of the government but also of the Church of England.
 - ii. Helwys insisted that the king had no authority over the spiritual dimensions of life.
 - iii. He sent to the king a copy of a book he had written, adding a handwritten statement, *“The king is a mortal man, not God.”*
 - iv. King James placed Helwys in prison, where he died because he would not abandon his convictions.
- e. A few years later in America, another Christian and Patriot Roger Williams (1603- 1683) was forced to leave Massachusetts Bay Colony because of his views favoring church-state separation.

- i. Williams established both the first Baptist church in America and the colony of Rhode Island.
- ii. The colony afforded religious freedom to all. He wrote advocating a *“hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world.”*
- iii. Years elapsed, however, before the *“wall of separation”* became a national reality.
 1. When the Constitution of the United States was placed before the people for ratification, it contained no provision for religious freedom.
 2. Baptists joined others in an effort to defeat ratification unless there was a guarantee of religious freedom.
 3. Thus, the First Amendment was made to the Constitution, stating, *“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”*

V. Challenges to a Free Church in a Free State

- a. The struggle for the separation of church and state is far from over.

- b. The ideal that Truett expressed on the Capitol steps of “absolute supremacy everywhere of a free church in a free state” has yet to be realized.
- c. In some countries, union of religion and government prevails, and there is little or no religious freedom.
- d. In others, mere tolerance, not full religious freedom, is the law of the land.
- e. A continuing temptation exists to use the tax money and power of the state to carry out the ministries of churches.

VI. **To work out what the concept of separation means in an ever-changing world is an abiding challenge.**

VII. By separation of church and state, **Biblicist** do not mean the separation of God and government.

- a. **Biblicist** are not oblivious to the gray areas in the relationship and the various interpretations of what separation means.
- b. However, **Biblicist** continue to emphasize that neither church nor state should exercise authority over the other, to stress that the church should not depend on the finances or power of the state to carry out its mission, and to point to history’s record that a free church in a free state proves a blessing to both.

Conclusion

It this current time in history the state is exercising unprecedented pressure by the government to restrict the churches freedom of worship, speech and assembly and we as **Biblicist must fight to**

continue defend the principle that “Church and state should be separate... A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal...”

It must be kept before our minds and hearts in the church!