

Statism: Rendering to Caesar the Things that are God's

Stephen McDowell

Statism is the belief that the civil government (or man via civil government) is the ultimate authority in the earth and as such is the source of law and morality. The state defines what is right and wrong, what is lawful and unlawful, what is moral and immoral. The state becomes the de facto god of the society, or in the words of Roscoe Pound, President of Harvard Law School in the 1920s, "the state takes the place of Jehovah."

Statist nations do not want and cannot afford to have parallel societies. All those who believe and act contrary to the statist philosophy will find themselves gradually restricted in their rights and freedoms. A society cannot serve two gods. It cannot have two sources of authority, law, and morality. One will ultimately prevail.

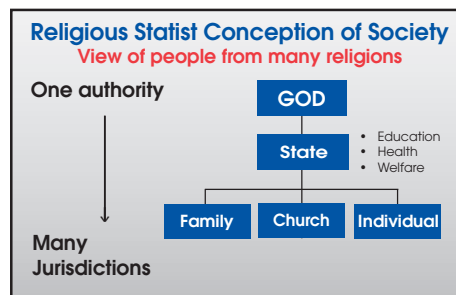
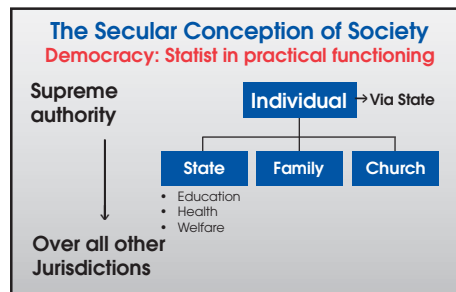
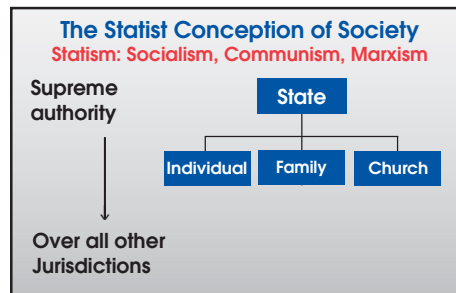
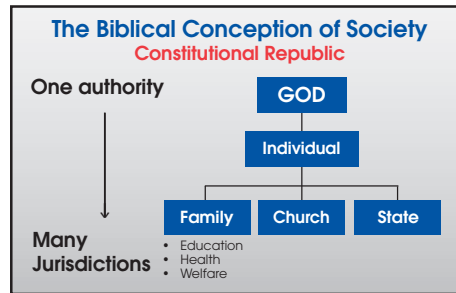
Jesus taught that we are to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. In attempting to trap Jesus, the Pharisees sent their disciples to ask Him whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not. (Matthew 22:15-21) Knowing their malice, Jesus responded by having them show a coin and asking them whose image was inscribed upon it. When they replied, "Caesar's," he said, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."

Jesus was teaching an extremely important concept here—that of jurisdictional authority. Jesus used a coin with Caesar's image upon it to illustrate that civil government does indeed have certain jurisdictional authority, such as in the area of taxation. However, Christ went on to pronounce that the state's jurisdiction is limited when He said

"Statism is the belief that the civil government is the ultimate authority."

that we are to render "to God the things that are God's." The inference is that there is a sphere of life where civil government (i.e. Caesar) has no jurisdiction at all. That sphere is implied here as involving the soul and mind of men, being made, not in Caesar's image, but in the image of God. Jesus was affirming that religious worship and opinions, and any endeavor relating to thoughts or speech, must remain completely free from government control.

This is the Biblical idea of the separation of church and state. It is not like the modern idea, which says we must remove God from public life. The principle of separation of church and state, the separation of school and state, and the separation of the press and speech from the control of the state, which are articulated in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, are rooted in this historic political teaching of Christ. Before Christianity, the pagan world always



included religion and education under the jurisdiction of the state. It was a radical political concept for Christ to declare that Caesar's power should be limited and, therefore, was used against Jesus when He was convicted of treason and crucified under Roman law. Christ's teaching has since changed the western world.

Caesar thought he was Lord, but Christians declared that "Jesus is Lord." Caesar saw this declaration by early believers as a threat to the state and to his reign and, hence, persecuted and killed many Christians.

The responsibilities of the state are to be distinguished from that of the individual, family, and church. Usurpation of authority occurs when

one jurisdiction encroaches upon another jurisdiction. The result is tyranny. Usurpation is exercising authority or power that belongs to another. It is "the act of seizing or occupying and enjoying the property of another, without right."

The charts included here give a brief comparison of the Biblical conception of society (and the role of civil government) with various man-made views of how societies should be governmentally structured. The fruit of socialism – or the Caesar or Babel mentality – is loss of liberty, loss of prosperity, and loss of the ability for the Church to disciple the nations. A statist government will suppress Christian involvement in government, education, and social life.

While civil government is a divine institution with an important purpose, it is very limited in what it is supposed to do. It basically is to protect the life, liberty, and property of its citizens. (Rom 13:4; 1 Pet 2:14) But we have made it like Babel, ~~thinking the state (something of our own creation)~~

~~"Caesar thought he was Lord, but Christians declared that 'Jesus is Lord.'"~~

will do much more than God says it is to do, where it takes on the role of God, the family, the church, and business. Many people look to the state to meet their needs from cradle to grave, to bring peace and utopia on earth, to help them in times of trouble, to solve all their problems, to care for them when they are sick, and to control and regulate all things. We as a nation have given over to the state many of the responsibilities that God says belong to individuals, the family, or the church.

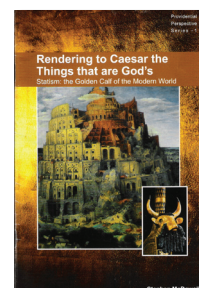
Earthly authorities are not intended to control us. We are to govern ourselves under God and His standard of truth. We should seek to change the mentality of letting others govern us.

Freedom to choose is one key way we are like God. As we choose in a way that pleases Him, we bring Him glory. When we are deprived of this ability to make free choice by evil governments, then part of our God-likeness is suppressed.

Liberty is freedom to do God's will.

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