

*The Christian World View of
Government*

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**With contributions by members of the
Government Committee of
The Coalition on Revival**

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Contents

What is the Coalition on Revival?	4
About the 17 World View (Sphere) Documents	4
Preface	5
Statements of Affirmation and Denial	6
The Foundation of Governments	6
Jurisdictions of Governments	7
The Nature and Duties of Civil Government	8
Christians' Relations with Civil Government	9
Limitations on Governments	10
A Call to Action in Government	12
General Actions	12
Specific Actions	13

What is the Coalition on Revival?

The Coalition on Revival is a network of evangelical leaders from every major denominational and theological perspective who share a vision for and a commitment to revival, renewal, and reformation in Church and society in America.

People of Anabaptist, Arminian, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Wesleyan denominational backgrounds are all represented among COR's leaders. Pre-, a-, and post-millennialists are cooperating with each other, sharing the exciting task of getting God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven insofar as that is possible between now and whenever Christ comes back to Earth. Charismatics and non-charismatics, covenant and dispensationalist theologians, have joined arm in arm in prayer and hard work to see revival, renewal, and reformation in the Christian Church and the American culture.

COR's vision is to see Christians everywhere doing all they can in the power of the Holy Spirit to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), in every aspect of life. Toward that end, we have developed a series of worldview documents that set forth what we believe are the fundamental and essential points of the total Christian world and life view. The COR worldview documents state what we believe are the biblical principles for all spheres of human life including theology, evangelism, discipleship, law, civil governments, economics, education, family, medicine, psychology and counseling, arts and media, business and professions, and science and technology. We believe that the COR worldview documents state where the entire Church must stand and what action it must take to accomplish its task in the remaining years of the Twentieth Century and on into the next century.

COR steering committee members from all walks of life were joined by many hundreds of other interested Christian scholars, pastors, and laymen in developing the COR documents during many series of workshops and conventions. Each document therefore, reflects input from theologians, philosophers, professionals in their respective fields, pastors, and lay Christians. We have sought to avoid denominational and theological bias in the documents; our aim has been to focus on principles so fundamental that we are convinced no Bible-believing Christian who studied the major questions related to each sphere of life would come to a contradictory conclusion.

COR views itself as a "Bible obedience, holiness movement" that crosses denominational and theological lines. The next step on its agenda, now that its basic documents are complete, is to disseminate them widely and to educate hundreds of thousands of Christians on how to make Christ Lord of absolutely every aspect of life. We plan to do that through publications, and through seminars, and training workshops in the major cities of America and Canada. COR will also work in cooperation with other Christian networking groups to help unify the pastors in major population centers around the vision of mobilizing their people to "Get God's will done in their city as it is in heaven" to whatever degree that is possible before the return of Christ. We believe America can be turned around and once again function as a Christian nation as it did in its earlier years. We believe that wherever the pastors of any city in the world join together in unity to make Christ Lord of every sphere of life, and, with Spirit led strategy, mobilize their people into a unified spiritual army; that city can and will become "a city set upon a hill" and be "a place where righteousness dwells."

About the 17 World View (Sphere) Documents

COR developed the 17 World View Documents, which set forth what we believe are fundamental and essential Biblical principles governing 17 major areas or *spheres* of human life and activity: law, government, economics, business and professions, education, art and media, medicine, science and technology, psychology and counseling, Christian unity, local and world evangelism, discipleship, helping the hurting, educating Christians about social and political moral issues, revitalizing Christian colleges and seminaries, marriage and the family, and pastoral renewal. These documents offer Christian leaders concise and comprehensive Biblical principles of how to apply the Truth of the Bible to all spheres of life and ministry. Each document includes short, creed-like statements of affirmation and denial that we believe state non-negotiable Biblical truths for that sphere of reality.

The 17 World View Documents were developed within 17 different committees made up of leaders with experience and expertise in the 17 different fields over an intensive three-year period of dialogue, critique, editing, and finally, a consensus conviction. Sixty of COR's National Steering Committee members with over 300 other theologians, pastors, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, and Christian workers made up the 17 committees. COR sends forth these documents to the Church at large with the prayer that they may be used by God's Spirit to get God's will done on earth, as it is in heaven—to whatever degree that is possible prior to the Return of Christ.

Preface

“The voice of a god and not of a man!” (Acts 12:22). Herod believed the words of his subjects. He fell for the grand delusion — the belief that those who rule are gods, independent rulers, walking on earth. It did not take God long to remind King Herod and the people that God rules in Heaven *and* earth and that all rulers are subject to His sovereignty and Law. Herod became a diet for worms: “And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died” (Acts 12:23).

God is not against rulers. He is not opposed to government. Indeed, He ordained it! All authority is “established by God” (Romans 13:1).

What God works against is man’s assuming the role of God. God clearly says, “I will not give My glory to another” (Isaiah 42:8). God does not tolerate competition: “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me. And who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; yes, let him recount it to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place’” (Isaiah 44:6,7). The First Commandment reminds us, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). William Penn once wrote, “Men must be governed by God or else they will be ruled by tyrants.”

We are not to make ourselves gods. Our parents are not to take God’s place and rule in the family independently of Him. Our teachers are not to take God’s place and teach as if there were no authority that gives all the facts in the universe meaning. Civil government is not to take God’s place and rule independently of His one government (Isaiah 9:6,7; cf. Romans 13:1-7). Whenever any government oversteps its proper magisterium, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29; cf. Daniel 3:16-18; 6:10ff).

But don’t we act as if someone else is god? We want the state to educate our children, to nurse us when we get sick, to establish homes for us when we get old, to protect us from ourselves, to care for the poor, and to support us when we are out of work. Man often makes the state — civil government — into an idol. We might not say that we worship the state, but the Bible says that we know what people believe “by their fruits” (Matthew 7:20).

God is the ultimate and only independent authority. This must be our starting point as we discuss the role God takes in the affairs of men, especially as His sovereignty relates to civil government. “By Me kings reign, and rulers decree justice” (Proverbs 8:15). When a ruler decrees either by words or by deeds that he is independent of God’s government or that justice is defined according to his self-made laws, then God acts in judgment. We might not see His judgment in the same way Nebuchadnezzar or Herod did, but time brings all things to light. Choosing man as the sovereign ruler, independent of God, inevitably leads a nation into slavery. The self-made god will rule with an iron fist. As Samuel Rutherford said, we have either *Rex lex* or *lex Rex*.¹

With these thoughts in mind, we offer the following affirmations and denials to enlighten the Church and the world about the principles of government set forth by God in His inerrant Word, the Bible.

¹ I.e., either the king is law, or law is the king.

Statements of Affirmation and Denial

The Foundation of Governments

1. We affirm that the Lord God is the universal Governor of all individuals and nations because He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things (Daniel 4:17; 5:21; Isaiah 9:6,7; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Colossians 1:17).

We deny that finite, fallible, fallen men and women have within themselves the ability to govern in a thoroughly just and consistent manner without inerrant Scripture as their governing authority.

2. We affirm that “the government” in the singular, used of ultimate government, must refer to the Triune God, who alone has unlimited and independent authority (right to govern), power (ability to govern), and jurisdiction (sphere of government) (Isaiah 9:6,7).

We deny that any individual, group, or human institution ought to claim to be *the* government with the attendant implication of independent and unlimited authority, power, and jurisdiction.

3. We affirm that the Bible is the authoritative and inerrant standard by which all aspects of civil government are to be conducted and that God holds man accountable to govern himself by that standard.

We deny that any final authority outside the Bible (*e.g.*, reason, experience, majority opinion, elite opinion, nature, etc.) ought to be accepted as the standard of government for any individual, group, or jurisdiction.

4. We affirm that God is the Originator, Sustainer, and Judge of the government of man by man.

We deny that true government is established by man or sustained by any of his activities except obedience to Biblical Laws and laws soundly deduced therefrom.

5. We affirm that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords; that He has all authority in Heaven and on earth; and that all governments everywhere function by His permission and are obligated to follow His Laws.

We deny that any form of government that exalts the individual, the Church, or the state above Jesus Christ is consistent with God’s Biblical standards for government.

Jurisdictions of Governments

6. We affirm that God's government is independent and unlimited and that all human governments are established or allowed within His sovereignty (Deuteronomy 4:17).

We deny that man's government is independent and unlimited, and that any government can claim independence from God on the basis that governments arise out of "social contracts."
7. We affirm that God has established many governments; that He has given each its own jurisdiction; that all are accountable to God; and that among these are self government (which undergirds all institutional governments), family government, ecclesiastical (church) government, and civil governments (*e.g.*, national, state, and local). We deny that any human government has ultimate jurisdiction over all or over any other individual, group, or government (family, church, or civil).
8. We affirm that the various governments (including self, family, church, and state) have different God-ordained jurisdictions that exist at the same time and place, affecting the same people, and that God desires that they respect each other's separate God-ordained jurisdictions. We deny that it is possible to separate totally the jurisdictions of these God-ordained institutions, since they constantly function at the same time and place and affect the same people.
9. We affirm that without self government all other governments are destined to fail. We deny that civil government can be used to make evil men good, *i.e.*, to develop godly self government in sinful men and women.
10. We affirm that there is a jurisdictional separation between Church and state. We deny that there is an *absolute* separation of Church and state, if by this it is meant that God and His Word should be separated from civil government.
11. We affirm that Jesus Christ, supporting the jurisdictional separation between Church and state set forth in the Old Testament, acknowledged and supported the legitimate but divinely limited jurisdiction of civil government when He commanded us to "...render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:22). We deny that the Church ought to reject civil government and advocate a church-controlled state (ecclesiocracy) in which the church rules over the state.
12. We affirm that ecclesiastical government, the church (as an institution with rulers), has legitimate court powers within its jurisdiction (1 Corinthians 6; Matthew 18), and that Christians should settle their disputes within the Body of Christ, following the procedures of reconciliation set forth in Scripture. We deny that Christians should take fellow Christians to civil courts, and that the state ought to usurp the legitimate and God-ordained jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts.

The Nature and Duties of Civil Government

13. We affirm that there is a vital distinction between state (*i.e.*, civil government) and society, and that society encompasses all governing institutions, of which civil government is one.

We deny that the realm of the state (civil government) is to be considered co-extensive with society.

14. We affirm that God holds civil governments everywhere responsible to protect the God-ordained rights to life, liberty, and private property, and to keep the peace by their legitimate powers.

We deny that life, liberty, and private property are rights defined by man or granted by the state.

15. We affirm that civil government has the God-ordained power of the sword to punish evildoers and to promote the good, and that this power includes capital punishment.

We deny that civil government is given absolute power or flexible jurisdiction for the use of the sword to further its power and influence, and that it may rightly refrain from use of the sword in capital cases as described in Scripture.

16. We affirm that civil government has the responsibility of administering justice, which includes and is limited to the commendation of those who do right, the punishment of evildoers by restitution and retribution, and the preservation of peace against domestic and foreign oppressors, and that the fulfillment of this responsibility allows for the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the application of the Word of God to every area of life.

We deny that civil government by its very nature is unjust and an enemy of individual freedom.

17. We affirm that nations have a right to maintain national sovereignty.

We deny that it is right or wise to work toward a one-world government under which all nations would be asked to give up their national sovereignty.

18. We affirm that civil governments have the God-given authority and responsibility to build up and maintain a strong military preparedness to protect their citizens from foreign threats, and that it is right and wise for them to do so.

We deny that absolute pacifism, which would resist arming local policemen with guns or maintaining a national standing army equipped with the best weaponry available resources can provide, is Biblical.

19. We affirm that civil governments everywhere ought to follow a Biblical moral order so that citizens can work out their callings under God, and that they should treat all citizens as juridically equal, *i.e.*, equal in the eyes of the law.

We deny that civil governments should use any method to coerce or aim for an “egalitarian society” to make all functionally, positionally, or economically equal.

20. We affirm that civil government has the God-ordained authority to collect personal taxes (not property taxes) to support its Biblically stated jurisdictional duties.

We deny that taxes should be collected to fund programs outside civil government’s Biblically delineated purpose.

21. We affirm that individuals, families, churches, and voluntary associations should care financially for widows, orphans, aliens, and the truly needy through the tithe and offerings.

We deny that civil government has a duty to care financially for widows, orphans, aliens, and the truly needy through a coercive tax system, unless the primary providers totally fail to fulfill their responsibility to do so.

22. We affirm that civil governments must maintain just weights and measures.

We deny that any civil government ought to overturn its obligation to maintain just weights and measures by issuing any type of fiat currency.

23. We affirm that it is the duty of civil government to protect the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We deny that civil government should always be neutral toward Christianity and treat it as equal with all other so-called religions.

Christians’ Relations with Civil Government

24. We affirm that Christians everywhere ought to pray for their civil leaders and to honor the offices they hold.

We deny that citizens should show disrespect toward those who hold political office.

25. We affirm that all citizens have a duty to pay a tax because of the services rendered by civil government, and that the Church, the Bride of our Lord Jesus Christ, is tax-immune and not merely tax-exempt (the latter of which might imply authority in the state to grant or withhold the status, making the state sovereign over the Church).

We deny that the state has any right or authority to tax the Church, and that the state

should tax citizens to perform tasks that are unbiblical in nature or unwarranted by our Constitution.

26. We affirm that it is the responsibility of Christians to seek godly influence on the many civil governments, confronting all of them with the Gospel and Law of Christ, and that for Christians to “stay out of politics” or the political process is to disregard our duty to be salt and light to the world (Matthew 5:13-16) and dooms society to corruption and judgment, at least in the political sphere.

We deny that Christians ought to “stay out of politics” or the political process.

27. We affirm that it is the duty of Christian citizens to keep informed of issues, candidates, and trends in their civil governments at all levels.

We deny that local churches are fulfilling their responsibility to be salt and light in their society if they are not systematically keeping their members apprised of the threats to their people and to the continuance of their churches’ ministry that come from such evils as encroaching stat-ism, moral decay, media manipulation, and communism.

28. We affirm that Christians in general and church leaders in particular, like the prophets of old, have a mandate from God to declare society’s accountability to God through and according to His Word in every sphere of a nation’s activities.

We deny that God is concerned only with private morality.

29. We affirm that the people of God, no matter what their national ties, constitute a “holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9).

Limitations on Governments

30. We affirm that those who govern, whether in the family, the Church, or the civil realm, are *ministers* of God and are thus subject to God’s Laws.

We deny that it is moral for earthly governments to establish laws that run counter to God’s Biblical principles, and that it is moral for earthly governors to govern independently of those principles.

31. We affirm that, wherever citizens are capable of self government, the power and bureaucracy of civil government should be kept as small and localized as possible.

We deny that it is wise or beneficial to citizens for governmental powers to become increasingly centralized.

32. We affirm that, because man is created in the image of God and therefore has God-given worth and dignity, civil governments exist for the benefit of their citizens, not *vice versa*.

We deny that individuals exist for the sake of the state.

33. We affirm that civil government is established in part to protect the freedoms granted to people by God.

We deny that civil government has legitimate power to subordinate the individual to the ultimate wishes of the state.

34. We affirm that systematic and deliberate attempts to tyrannize people, such as occur in Communism, ought to be opposed by all Biblical Christians through prayer, speaking out, and taking whatever action God directs one to take.

We deny that Christians whose thinking is controlled by Biblical categories can have a neutral or positive stance toward communism, Nazism, or any other human tyranny.

35. We affirm that God defines justice, and that the ultimate, authoritative understanding of justice is to be found in Biblical revelation alone, to which the understanding of justice found in general revelation must always conform.

We deny that justice is to be redefined by the state, and that the state may rightly force ever-evolving and increasingly arbitrary definitions of justice on society.

36. We affirm that civil servants should be held accountable for their sins, and that there is a relationship between righteousness in one's personal life and one's ability to rule (1 Timothy 3).

We deny that anyone's personal life should not be taken into account when he seeks or occupies public office.

37. We affirm that the Triune God is the ultimate Governor for all institutions in all societies, and that all forms of government that exalt either the individual (anarchy) or the state (socialism and communism) as ultimate are contrary to Biblical revelation.

We deny that either the individual or the state is ultimate.

A Call to Action in Government

General Actions

Because of the preceding convictions, we call upon all men and women who name Christ as their personal Savior and Lord to join us in:

1. examining earnestly these affirmations and denials in the light of God's Word to see if they are true, and informing us directly of those points in which they believe we have departed from Scripture or logic;
2. re-examining our own theories and practices of government and asking God to show us where we are falling short;
3. repenting of all known sins, confessing and forsaking them, asking forgiveness both of God Himself and of all those who have been offended, and then making all possible restitution;
4. praying for God to fill all of His people with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit in order that we may bring our personal lives and our theories and practice of government into closer conformity to His revealed will on a permanent and consistent basis;
5. seeking guidance from our brethren and local church authorities as to how we can mutually support and influence one another to make our practices of government glorifying to God.

Having dealt with our own personal sins and failures, and placing ourselves accountable to the Bible and to the brethren, we now commit ourselves to:

1. influencing any known Christians or Christian associations with whom we work to consider seriously our affirmations and denials with the goal of enlisting their responses;
2. influencing those in the field of government who agree with our affirmations and denials to implement these proposals in their work;
3. mobilizing and networking our Christian resources and working in concert with the other professional spheres both inside and outside COR, to see the behavior of the Body of Christ and our nation changed to approximate more closely the view of reality and morality presented to us in the Holy Scriptures.

Specific Actions

To these ends, we commit ourselves to the following specific actions:

1. The Coalition on Revival's Government Committee recommends that the action steps be taken that are listed in the document *Educating Christians on Social, Political, and Moral Issues*.
2. The Coalition on Revival highly recommends that every Bible-believing church in America put into the hands of all members Bill Bright's little booklet *The Five Duties of a Christian Citizen*, which encourages Christians to pray, register to vote, become informed, help godly candidates get elected, and vote.
3. The Coalition on Revival recommends that each local church develop a clear, concise, **written policy on church discipline and excommunication**, based on Matthew 18:15-20; that it distribute copies of that policy to all members and non-members attending the congregation for their information, comment, and understanding; that it officially adopt that policy through whatever policy-making means are appropriate to its form of church government; and that it then develop, in consultation with a Christian attorney committed to the principle of church discipline, a legally binding document for all members, old and new, to sign, declaring their voluntary submission to that policy of church discipline and disavowing any real or alleged right of litigation against the church or its leaders when they or their family members become the objects of church discipline exercised in accord with that official, written policy.
4. The Coalition on Revival encourages all Christians who have a burden for reclaiming our civil governments at all levels for God and justice to participate actively in one of the many fine Christian political action groups now in existence or to get involved in their local political party. Those interested may contact The Coalition on Revival, 89 Pioneer Way, Mountain View, California, 94041, for names, addresses, and telephone numbers of such organizations.
5. The Coalition on Revival urges pastors to encourage all heads of households to take their children through systematic studies of some of the excellent books and studies on early American Christian history now available. A list of such materials is available from our office.
6. Since no man knows the day or the hour of Christ's return, The Coalition on Revival recommends that every family take an evening to discuss, pray about, and then write out its plans in broad outline for the next 25 years regarding training of children and grandchildren, ministry plans, job possibilities, projects, vacations, and how to make their church and city into what they would like them to be. We recommend this to counter the very unhealthy mind set that has captured much of Christianity, claiming that in a few years the world will be largely destroyed or Christ will return and so

focuses attention on escaping rather than on storming the gates of hell. We must move the Christian Church from a “victim” mentality to a “conqueror” mentality. This kind of productive family evening can be staged with theological integrity whether one is a pre-, post-, or a-millennialist.

7. A national network of prayer for the “key 16” governmental officials over each citizen should be mounted for the sake of bringing the power of God to bear on every governmental official in America who has a direct effect on the citizens of every city and congressional district. A game plan is in place for such a network of prayer. Interested persons may contact our office for details.