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John Eidsmoe: God and Caesar Study Guide

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JOHN EIDSMOE: GOD AND CAESAR
STUDY GUIDE, 1985-2008
Steven Alan Samson

INTRODUCTION

Study Questions

1. In the period between 1976 and 1980, had the evangelical community become more politically sophisticated? What is some of the evidence? If the Bible does not tell you how to vote, what does it provide that is far more important? Why does the author believe that the entry of evangelicals into the political arena is a positive step? What is one of the great strengths of Christianity? What is our source of authority?

Review

Christian Right Moral Majority strength of Christianity

CHAPTER ONE: WHY DO WE NEED GOVERNMENT?

Study Questions

1. What are the two reasons God has ordained government? What is the root of crime? (Jas. 4:1-3; Rom. 1:28-32, Gal. 5: 19-21). How is criminality to be restrained? As a consequence: Is the function of government essentially positive or essentially negative? How does Paul's admonition in 1 Tim. 2:1-2 reflect the separate emphases of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas?

Review

Cain's city covenant with Noah Augustine
Thomas Aquinas

CHAPTER TWO: APPLYING THE BIBLE TO MODERN GOVERNMENT

Study Questions

1. Why is discernment concerning the proper interpretation (**hermeneutics**) and application of the Bible so important? Identify some of the sound principles of hermeneutics? [NOTE: Francis Lieber, who was America's first professor of political science and a Christian, wrote a book entitled *Legal and Political Hermeneutics*. Joseph Story, a Supreme Court justice who wrote the major entries on American law for Lieber's 13 volume *Encyclopaedia Americana* (1829-1833), wrote a catechism of the Constitution].
2. How do we distinguish law from gospel? Why is this important with regard to government? Distinguish three uses of the law. How does God's law apply differently to civil rulers than to private individuals? Thought Question: why are civil rulers called "ministers" (Rom. 13:4)?
3. What does the author mean by the dominion mandate and the stewardship mandate? [But too often dominion is caricatured as irresponsibility, exploitation, and waste by those who seek to give dominion over to the State]. Reasoning from these principles and taking changeable circumstances into account, what does the Bible teach us about a public policy issue such as hunting? Thought Question: What does the phrase "dress it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15) mean?

4. What questions must we ask ourselves in determining whether to make such crimes as murder and blasphemy illegal under human law? What is meant by the **two kingdoms**? [Pope Gelasius later used the image of “two swords”].

Review

hermeneutical principles	uses of the law	ceremonial and moral law
duties of the civil ruler	dominion mandate	stewardship mandate
authority of church and state		

CHAPTER THREE: THE TWO KINGDOMS: CHURCH AND STATE

Study Questions

1. What is the origin of the institutional separation of church and state? By contrast, what kind of cultures are characterized by a unity of church and state? NOTE: The first office that **Julius Caesar** held as he pursued the *cursus honorum* to political preeminence was that of **Pontifex Maximus**, *i.e.*, the Supreme Bridge-Builder between the human and divine worlds. Caesar’s adopted son, Octavian, later adopted the title *Savior of the World* as emperor **Caesar Augustus**. A century later, another emperor built the **Pantheon** to celebrate the unification of religions under the auspices of the cult of Caesar-worship (which remains ever with us in spirit). By contrast, “Hegel has noted that the spread of freedom is coterminous with the spread of Christianity.”
2. What is a “theocracy”? How are the separation of power and limited government reflected in the Bible under the judges as well as the monarchy? How were usurpers treated? What is the significance of the “two kingdoms” concept, according to Lord Acton?
3. Characterize the relationship of the two kingdoms in each of the following four perspectives: Roman Catholic, Anabaptist, Calvinist, Lutheran, and modern evangelicalism. What are the positive as well as negative forms of these views? What is the great danger in America as he saw it in the 1980s? Thought Question: Which view or combination of views do you favor?
4. What limits were biblical monarchs supposed to observe? Why should governmental power be limited? How did America’s founding fathers resolve this problem (but not with “amazing ease”)? Identify four practical guidelines or principles for dividing authority.

Review

worship of Caesar	theocracy	two kingdoms
four perspectives	Pope Boniface VIII	religion of secular humanism
Lord Acton on America’s founding fathers		four guidelines

CHAPTER FOUR: CHURCH AND STATE IN AMERICA: THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Study Questions

1. Why were religious establishments so prevalent in the American colonies and even after independence? What was the twofold purpose of the First Amendment? How was it changed by the Fourteenth Amendment and the Supreme Court in Cantwell v. Connecticut (1940)?
2. In Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971), what is the three-prong test the Supreme Court uses to determine whether governmental activity constitutes an establishment of religion? a) Did the authors of the First Amendment intend a total separation of church and state? Support your answer. In The Garden and the Wilderness, Mark DeWolfe Howe notes that the Puritan dissenter Roger Williams, who helped found Rhode Island in the 1630s, used the phrase “wall of separation” as a

hedge against interference by the State. What was James Madison's interpretation of the First Amendment? b) Did they intend to exclude religion or religious thinking from public life? Besides the Farewell Address, we also have some of the prayers of George Washington: <http://www.eadshome.com/WashingtonPrayer.htm>. c) May the laws and policies of American reflect the Christian tradition? Biblical metaphors were once the very stuff of political thinking. Sen. Charles Sumner's so-called "Naboth's Vineyard" speech, for example, successfully argued against the annexation of Santo Domingo to the United States during the Grant Administration. Why is the Supreme Court's decision in Harris v. McRae (1980) so important? d) According to Abington Township v. Schempp (1963), does the First Amendment require a secular humanist state or that Christianity be excluded from the public schools? [See also chapter 15].

Review

state church

First Amendment

Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971)

"wall of separation"

Abington Township v. Schempp

Anglican establishments

Fourteenth Amendment

establishment clause

James Madison

Puritan Congregationalists

Cantwell v. Connecticut (1940)

free exercise clause

Harris v. McRae

CHAPTER FIVE: PRAYER

Study Questions

1. What are Paul four words for prayer? Why pray for government officials? What is the Key-16 concept?

Review

minister of God (*diakonos*)

CHAPTER SIX: OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE

Study Questions

1. What does government need? Identify four biblical reasons for obedience to the laws of civil government. Is it ever our duty to disobey? Support your answer. How do the Hebrew midwives and Daniel illustrate? Identify five principles concerning civil obedience and disobedience.
2. What is rebellion? Where does it lead? When might it be justifiable? Here careful attention should be taken to moral reasoning concerning necessary goods and lesser evils. Why was the American Revolution not a true "revolution"? What made it a war for independence? The Fairfax County Resolves made it clear that the colonies were not financially dependent on Britain. What evidence does Eidsmoe use to support his claim that the American colonies had every legal right to break away from England? Where was legal authority vested? What happened when Parliament attempted to assert its authority over the colonies after the execution of Charles I? Were the colonists represented in Parliament? What action put the legitimate authority of the Crown over the colonies in doubt and when? What action removed the colonies from the king's protection? For the connection of the **Prohibitory Act** with subsequent events, including the Declaration of Independence, see <http://www.manhattanrarebooks.com/prohibitoryact.htm>.
3. What does the claim to a right to civil disobedience rest upon? Why would humanism remove this concept? Its removal produces what is known as statism or state sovereignty. Why does this lead to **tyranny**? Jean Bethke Elshtain considers the alternatives in her recent Gifford Lectures, aptly entitled *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self*.

Review

reasons for civil obedience	Hebrew midwives	Daniel
principles of civil obedience and disobedience	colonial charters	American war for independence
Crown and Parliament	Prohibitory Act	execution of Charles I
Glorious Revolution	tyranny	Edmund Burke
humanism		sovereignty

CHAPTER SEVEN: TAXATION

1. Are we supposed to pay taxes, even unfair ones? Distinguish between tax evasion and tax avoidance.

CHAPTER EIGHT: PATRIOTISM

1. What are some examples of patriotism in the Bible? Is patriotism supposed to be blind to our country's shortcomings?

CHAPTER NINE: MILITARY SERVICE

1. Identify biblical passages that lend support to national defense and the deterrence of aggression.
2. Does the biblical injunction against murder apply to killing in war? How do Jesus and the Bible regard military service? How were wars fought in the Bible?
3. In Scripture, who was not supposed to engage in military service?

CHAPTER TEN: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

1. Identify biblical examples of political involvement outside the theocracy.
2. What is wrong with the arguments against Christian political participation?
3. What can an individual Christian do in terms of political involvement? What sound advice did Mordecai give Esther?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE FAMILY

1. Identify the biblical function of the family.
2. Identify some political threats to the family. Thought Question: what do they have in common?
3. What sort of "rights" are promoted by the children's liberation movement? What are some of the potential effects of federally-sponsored day care? Are juvenile institutions generally safe?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: HUMANISM

1. Define "humanism". (Check "humanitarianism", which has a similar origin). What are the underlying premises of the humanist worldview? What is the humanist program, according to the Humanist Manifestos?

2. Identify some of the vehicles through which humanism is subsidized and promoted by the government? How may Christians effectively respond to such evangelism?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: EDUCATION

1. Identify and discuss nine myths about education? What claims have been made for public education by Horace Mann? What goals did Mann and, later, John Dewey pursue?
2. Identify the various forms taken by government attempts to regulate private schools. Do these regulations tend to impede the educational mission of these schools?
3. Has the biblical Christianity always been unwelcome in public schools?
4. What are some of the pros and cons regarding government aid to private school? How have the courts ruled? What are the dangers of government aid?
5. What may be done to improve the public schools?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: CENSORSHIP AND PORNOGRAPHY

1. What is the danger to religious liberty of compulsory reading assignments in public school? Is censorship ever legitimate?
2. Identify some ways Christian views have been repressed? How was the publication of Worlds in Collision affected by a boycott?
3. What is pornography? (Justice Potter Stewart could not define it but said "I know it when I see it"). What kinds of ordinances might pass muster with the courts under the "contemporary community standards" tests of Miller v. California.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: THE RIGHT TO LIFE

1. Why does the Bible place such a severe penalty on murder?
2. When does human life begin? What is some of the scriptural evidence in support of the unborn child's right to life?
3. Identify the various alternative views and discuss their shortcomings.
4. What is the rationale of the Supreme Court's ruling in Roe v. Wade? What is wrong with its reasoning? How has the "right to abortion" subsequently been expanded?
5. What steps may be taken to restore legal protection to the unborn child?
6. Where has fetal experimentation been leading? What are the implication of the abortion laws for the infanticide and euthanasia? How do we know when somebody is alive or dead? Thought Question: From the humanist viewpoint, does it matter?

CHAPTER NINETEEN: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

1. What are the commonly regarded causes of crime? What is the root cause?
2. Identify five reasons for criminal punishment.
3. What are some of the safeguards built into the judicial system? How may the system be abused?
4. Identify the various biblical forms of punishment and the crimes they covered.
5. What is the origin of our prison system? Is it biblical? What are the alternatives?
6. Identify some current problems in criminal law.