

Dr. Cobin responds to a sharp criticism from an apparent adherent to the revitalized Divine Right Theory (a theory criticized in *Bible and Government: Public Policy from a Christian Perspective*)

Reply to “A Refutation of Chapters 4 & 5 of Bible and Government” (Anonymous)

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April 30, 2003

Introductory note: The following comments comprise my reply to an anonymous four-page fax I received entitled “A Refutation of Chapters 4 & 5 of Bible and Government.” Looking only at the paper, I could not determine its authorship with certainty, since there is no name, date, or affiliation on the document. Since then, I discovered that the author is a Baptist pastor in South Carolina. In the original version of this reply, April 27, 2003, I included his name and affiliation. However, after speaking with this pastor I have decided to publish my remarks without using his name. As it turns out—after he had a chance to read my reply to his “refutation”—I detected that he had some regret. He asked me to forgive him for the “harsh” things that he said about me personally, although he was quick to point out that he still disagreed with my premise. He indicated that he thought that his remarks were made hastily and that he never had any intention of his remarks going beyond the man in his church that he sent them to. He also indicated some willingness to read the entire book and to enter into some dialog on the subject with others and myself at a later date. Therefore, since he promised that his critique had not been (and would not be) published in any form, I decided to publish my reply without reference to the author’s name. However, I have retained all of his charges in the text, summarizing all of his major points, complaints because I believe that others in the Divine Right school of thought will bring many of his arguments up again. The author held himself out as a biblical scholar and pastor who is able to criticize works such as mine (although I have since learned that the only academic qualification that he has is an undergraduate degree from a Southern Baptist seminary in New Orleans). He writes in a zealous fashion and, mimicking a seasoned scholar, criticizes with confidence my book *Bible and Government: Public Policy from a Christian Perspective*. He confidently and unequivocally points out what he considers to be unscholarly and illogical aspects of my book. His ardor and confidence make one think that he knows his subject well. Consequently, in my reply below, without knowing what I do now about his academic training, I assumed that the author had the appropriate training and credentials to make his determinations, and I also gave him the benefit of the doubt that he is no coward; his name, affiliation and credentials were not omitted intentionally. Accordingly, I have read his remarks with great care as coming from a person who can speak with authority on his subject. Moreover, I have attempted to look beyond the passion that pervaded the critique. Since the author implied that he is a biblical scholar, I hope to give him the full recognition of that office.

It is not clear to me that the author, who I shall from this juncture refer to as Rev. G, has read my entire book. It seems like he may have jumped ahead and simply read two middle chapters. Of course, Proverbs 18:13 offers some warning to those who answer an argument before they hear it: “He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.” Accordingly, if Rev. G has in fact not read the book in its entirety, I would suggest that his comments will be lacking, if only for that reason. Rev. G’s comments stem mainly from his expertise in biblical scholarship and, to a lesser extent, to his expertise as a historian of Roman times, especially pertaining to welfarism and perhaps abortion policy. I see that he has not attempted to criticize the theoretical public policy, political science, and economics components of the book. I am not sure that this exclusion is due to the fact that he does not understand these areas well enough to comment on them or because he did not read those sections. But, either way, because of the interdisciplinary nature of my book, the thoroughness and effectiveness of his critique is undermined by the fact that he has isolated one particular part of the thesis. He *does* comment on non-theological things like reactive policy and welfarism, but not in any depth that shows he either knows what such things are or that he has read the sections of the book that deal with them. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that his mostly single-faceted critique may have some merit and usefulness in pointing out errors or unclear items in biblical scholarship.

Summary of the main points of the critique

No book is perfect—certainly not mine—and scholars appreciate constructive criticism of their work so that they may improve future editions. That fact is not an excuse but a humble acknowledgement that all academics must face. Indeed, that is the normal course of scientific or scholarly endeavor. If we waited for a book to be perfect before publishing it, then it is likely that no books would be published. The fact that my book mixes scientific inquiry with theological inquiry, the former dealing with data and deduction and the latter with the interpretation of authoritative truth, evinces the difficulty of doing such interdisciplinary work. Crossing disciplinary barriers requires much patience on all sides regarding methodology, word usage, grammatical rules, and analytical criteria (e.g., authoritative interpretation vs. deductive process). So far, the book has received many positive reviews from economists and political scientists (some of them written for publication), both Christian and non-Christian. There have been some mixed reviews as well, although generally positive. The three radio interviews so far have resulted in very positive feedback. Besides Rev. G's critique, there has been only one other strongly negative response so far—the other one coming from a Baptist church member in Greenville, South Carolina who read only the first two chapters. The difference between the two negative criticisms is that the first one focused on political ideology and came from a non-scholar, while Rev. G's seemingly comes from a scholarly and exegetical basis. I intend by my comments below to first outline the main elements of Rev. G's critique and then respond to them one-by-one.

If I have understood his points correctly, Rev. G's comments and criticisms include (1) a charge that I inappropriately use an apocalyptic portion of Scripture to develop a key doctrine about government, wherein he notes several fallacies in my argument, and that to argue for the superiority of Romans 13:1-7 at one point and then for Revelation 13:1-8 at another is fallacious; (2) a charge that I have misrepresented the Apostle Paul by stating that Paul declares something about the nature or character of government when in fact he does not, and that if the Apostle John does in fact suggest that the Roman government was empowered by Satan it does not imply that all government is so empowered; (3) a charge that my work takes a "sidetrack into the subject of 'Divine Right' [that] is simply a red herring without any reasonable warrant;" (4) a charge that I have acted in a way that is "beneath a biblical scholar" by questioning the judgment of the godly scholars who translated the King James Version (KJV); (5) a charge that I have practiced eisegesis instead of exegesis (although he does say that I have at least done a "precious little" of exegesis) when dealing with Romans 13:1-7 (and perhaps other passages), wherein he points out several examples, calling my conclusions "conjecture," "unproven," "unfounded", and "errant," being formulated using "extremely poor logic;" (6) a charge that I have erred greatly in my understanding that the words *good* and *evil* in Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 refer to the government's definition of what is good and evil rather than God's definition (which is, of course, a central argument of my book); (7) a charge that I have used a "slandorous" practice in defining reactive policy; (8) a charge that I have used "completely unproven assertion" at times which are without "real proof," particularly on issues such as the believer's conscience; (9) a charge that my work is completely biased by my philosophical or economic "prejudice" (or "extreme prejudice of government"), "extreme bias," "glaring anti-government slant," and "skewed argumentation;" (10) a charge that my book contains "logical fallacies known as poisoning the well," which he says are useless "in a scholarly endeavor," and that I have used other logical fallacies such as "negative inference;" (11) a charge that I have used straw man arguments regarding those who hold to a Divine Right perspective; (12) a charge that my views about taxation "cannot be squared with either scripture or law" and amount to "rantings of a prejudiced man without knowledge;" (13) a charge that I have incorrectly stated that government should have no role in charity or welfare, which I argue on both biblical and economic grounds; (14) a charge that I have incorrectly stated that there was no welfare state in Rome, and that my speculation is wrong that Paul would have qualified his obligation to believers to submit to the state if welfarism had

indeed existed during his day; (15) a charge that I have inappropriately extended the rightness of rebelling against public policies (like paying taxes) which are other than policies that entail “a direct command to disobey God” (e.g., to stop gospel preaching, to murder); (16) a charge that I do not understand the meaning of the phrase in Romans 13:1-7 “do you good”, especially because it runs against my thesis about government being evil; (17) a charge that my interpretation of Paul’s message to the Romans, suggesting that submission is pragmatic or expedient (especially as it was for that age—although not exclusively) is unjustified (this thesis is another central tenet of my argument in the book); (18) a charge that I have not proven my speculation that neither Paul nor Peter would have ignored the welfare state had it existed, because its central tenets run contrary to their clear teachings elsewhere against stealing, lying, etc.; (19) a charge against me personally that I have a “rebellious heart,” that I am a “factious” person who “must be rejected”, and that my book and myself are “damaging to the peace and harmony of the body of Christ;” and (20) a charge that my book is “poison” and “must be rejected as rebellious and very poorly researched and written.” I trust that these twenty items accurately reflect the key points of Rev. G’s critique.

Responses to Rev. G’s critiques

First, Rev. G goes beyond proper hermeneutics in his criticism of my use of apocalyptic literature. Christian doctrine is and should be based on the clear teaching of didactic passages—from the epistles and the gospels particularly. However, that does not preclude us from using other passages of Scripture to form doctrine. After all, Paul tells us: “*all Scripture* is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim. 3:16a). This fact is especially true when there is no clear teaching on a subject in didactic sections of the Bible. Of course, caution should be exercised when undertaking the use of apocalyptic passages, and one should perhaps be careful to not conclude too much from non-didactic passages or formulate fundamental doctrine from them. In my book, I go out of my way to point out this aspect of hermeneutical principles before expounding my view of Revelation 13:1-8. Rev. G ignores this fact, or at least does not give me credit for attempting to deal with the hermeneutical issue in the book. Indeed, his critique makes it sound like I have ignored the issue. Romans 13:1-7 does not deal with the *nature* of government; neither does 1 Peter 2:13-17. These passages mainly discuss what the believer’s response to public policy should be. All that we know about the nature of government is inferred in other passages, and that is why I chose to use Revelation 13:1-8 to show that the nature of government is evil. So I conclude that Rev. G’s first criticism is invalid. Furthermore, Rev. G’s contention that I argue for the superiority of Romans 13:1-7 at one point and then for Revelation 13:1-8 at another is simply not true. I do not exalt one passage over another. I simply utilize each text according to what can legitimately be gleaned from each text. In other words, when arguing for the satanic nature of government, I use Revelation 13:1-8 because it more clearly deals with that issue. When I discuss the believer’s response to public policy I rely on Romans 13:1-7, Titus 3:1-2 and 1 Peter 2:13-7. These two sets of texts deal with different aspects of the doctrine or biblical perspective of government. Rev. G cites my statement that Romans 13:1-7 is the most significant of all the fragments we have regarding government, but then seems frustrated that I do not give it more weight in general. He does not give me any reason for why I should give it more weight. He just states that my handling of the text is wrong. That critique is shallow. Also, I often go out of my way to *not* be dogmatic when gleaning principles elsewhere in my book where the Bible passages are not as clear as Revelation 13:1-8. For instance, I do not draw any strong conclusion from Luke 23:2: “And they began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King’.” Rev. G wrongly gives the impression that I am dogmatically proclaiming doctrine without even the least hint of scholarly doubt or humility. In this aspect I think his critique goes awry greatly.

Second, The charge that I have misrepresented the Apostle Paul by stating that Paul declares something about the nature or character of government when in fact he does not is simply unfounded. On the contrary, as I have just said, Paul does not deal with the nature of government in Romans 13:1-7. At first glance, I thought that Rev. G had a good point when he cited on page 114 my statements “If Paul is saying that civil government *is* good...” I thought that perhaps the word “is” should be changed to “does.” However, after re-reading the page I see no problem with the structure of the language given the context. I was taking a hypothetical, which should have been clear in my use of the word “If” at the beginning of the sentence. I was not making a general declaration of what Paul believed about civil government’s nature. Indeed, I think that Rev. G did not undertake a careful reading of my book. This fact is evident in Rev. G’s criticism that even if the Apostle John did in fact suggest that the Roman government was empowered by Satan it does not imply that all government is so empowered. If Rev. G had carefully read the other parts of my book he would have found that the biblical data suggest that public policy and/or governments were evil or opposed to God and His kingdom over 90% of the time (outside of the theocracy). These data when coupled with the passage from Revelation 13:1-8 and elsewhere in the Bible are used to make my case for the evil nature of government. If these other data did not exist, I would agree with Rev. G and be far more reserved in my judgment about the nature of the state. However, since these supportive data and principles do exist, I think that the Revelation 13:1-8 passage actually serves to clarify what is only hinted at or implied elsewhere: that civil government is empowered by Satan and shares his nature. Rev. G’s criticism suffers from the pitfall in Proverbs 18:13 regarding answering a matter before he hears it, as well as an improper or rushed reading of what my book actually says.

Third, simply stating that my book goes on a “sidetrack into the subject of ‘Divine Right’” and claiming that what I say “is simply a red herring without any reasonable warrant” is not a refutation and not really a criticism. It is just a statement of opinion without any support. Is Rev. G going to deny that the Divine Right of Kings doctrine existed or now exists? Did he read the section of the book where I cite the illustrious King James? It is somewhat odd to find a biblical scholar using such a “critique.” I would have expected a bit more. Perhaps Rev. G subscribes to the modern revitalized Divine Right theory himself and was thus a bit too flustered over my comments to make a solid critique?

Fourth, Rev. G’s opinion that I have acted in a way that is “beneath a biblical scholar” by questioning the judgment of the godly scholars who translated the KJV is very odd to say the least, especially coming from a Baptist. I nowhere in the book question the “moral character” of the KJV translators. Yet it has been widely noted by other scholars that theological viewpoints can creep into translations when there is a Greek or Hebrew word that can be legitimately translated more than one way. For instance, it is not surprising that the KJV translators, being largely of paedo-baptist persuasion, chose to transliterate the Greek word *baptidzo* as “baptize” rather than the equally or more legitimate translation “immerse.” The same may be said of the choice of translation for the Greek word *kai* in Galatians 6:16: “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, *and* upon the Israel of God”, with premillennialists and dispensationalists being more content with “and” while covenantalists and amillennialists would prefer the equally valid translation as “even” before the phrase “Israel of God.” Likewise, in Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17, I point out that the Greek word translated “evil” could have been translated as “bad behavior” or “misdeeds” such that the reader would be less inclined to think that evil as God defines it is being discussed. I am surprised, once again, that a biblical scholar like Rev. G would have missed this facile point, and that he would have confused my argument about translation bias with an attack on the moral character of the translators. Did Rev. G honestly give a charitable reading of my book?

Fifth, Rev. G charges me with practicing eisegesis. This charge is the first of several composite pronouncements he makes against my character as well as a criticism of my scholarly ability. He does give me credit for doing some (“precious little”) exegesis, but in general he argues that my points amount to “unproven” and “unfounded” bits of “conjecture.” Generally, Rev. G seems to think that I have a radical agenda in free market economics and policy that I am forcing into Romans 13:1-7. I am making the text say something that it does not say in order to serve my nutty ideas. He does not like the fact that the Bible’s teaching on public policy and the state are found in fragments, and that some passages contain pieces of information that others do not. He also does not like that passages other than Romans 13:1-7 are used to glean principles or doctrine without trying to somehow force those passages into Romans 13:1-7. Nevertheless, Rev. G does nothing to prove that the biblical teaching on public policy is anything other than fragmentary. It is obvious that Rev. G did not read or did not remember chapters 1, 2, 3 and 7 of my book before writing his critique. There are at least 19 important passages in the Bible that constitute the body of doctrine regarding the state and public policy. Most of these passages deals with a distinct issue, and there is hardly any wide overlap on doctrinal principles. Furthermore, Rev. G seems to be a bit of a slave to his own discipline. (Perhaps there is some principle to be applied here from in Ecclesiastes 10:8: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a serpent.”) Why should we believe that non-theological disciplines may not apply their knowledge to shed light on obscure passages of Scripture or incomplete knowledge? We use history to set a context for why the Jews (and Hebrew Christians) were suffering in AD50 to AD70, why the Corinthians were given to excess, why the Apostle John wrote about Gnosticism in his epistles, why Paul had to deal with Judaizers in the Galatian church, and why one evangelist said that Jesus died at the sixth hour and another at midday. We understand more clearly why the Sadducees and Athenians had difficulties or contentions about the resurrection from the dead based on their philosophy by consulting non-theological disciplines. Surely Rev. G does not question the use of other disciplines like history and philosophy to help clarify biblical truth. So why is it that Rev. G has a problem with bringing light from economics, political science theory, demography, and public policy theory to bear upon the Bible? Rome had riots and social upheaval when Paul and Peter wrote to the Roman Christians. Is it merely coincidence that the key passages about the Christian’s response to public policy are contained in Romans, Titus, and 1 Peter which were primarily directed to Christians at Rome? Like the Galatians and the Corinthians, the Roman Christians had a special problem that the apostles dealt with when writing to them. We also know that Rome had no welfare state circa AD50. Rev. G is simply mistaken when he claims otherwise. Let him check my sources if he will not believe me. Has Rev. G ever written on the history of the Roman Empire? On what sources does he base his claim? Recently, Dr. John Robbins of the Trinity Foundation (www.trinityreview.org) has completed an excellent brief account of the Roman civilization that would evidently be useful for Rev. G to consult before he accuses me of eisegesis. Accordingly, I deny that I have either a motive to read something into God’s word or that I have actually done so. What I have endeavored to do, and still believe that I have done, is to shed new light on an area of Scripture that has not been adequately dealt with up to this point. The Puritans and those scholars in our Reformed heritage as Baptists have been especially lacking in formulating a doctrine of government and public policy that is consistent with our baptistic principles. I think that my book makes a good attempt at doing so. What I have to say in the book is hardly unproven or unfounded, as Rev. G claims. I provide many scholarly sources and, I trust, scholarly reasoning (as many erudite reviews have agreed). Maybe Rev. G does not agree with my conclusions but that is not enough of a reason to justify his remarks as a valid criticism. It is also quite odd that Rev. G has chosen to judge my motives as well, especially since he has never talked with me, known me in any way (other than that I have been the main contact to the Chilean Christians that both of our churches support), and has evidently not even read my entire book. What is even more curious on this point is that I am a member in good standing of the church that planted the church that he now pastors. One would think that fact alone would have at least earned me the benefit of the doubt in his mind. Apparently it has not.

Sixth, in criticizing my understanding of the terms good and evil in Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17, Rev. G does not deal with my argument. He simply denies it, accompanied with a lot of adjectives. Does Rev. G want to argue that the Roman government was actually upholding the law of God or God's ways? Does he want to argue that the Roman state rewarded Christians and others who did good things that were found to be well pleasing in the sight of God? If so, Rev. G has a lot of explaining to do. Giving Rev. G the benefit of the doubt, perhaps he has written an article or a book that revolutionizes our idea of the practices of the Roman government. If so, I would humbly ask for a reference that I might learn from it as well. Or is Rev. G arguing along the lines of some theologians I have talked to that would place Romans 13:1-7 in a future golden age or make it a prescription for what government should be but never actually is? Let him prove his assertions.

Seventh, Rev. G makes his most bizarre critique by charging that I have used a "slandering" practice in defining reactive policy as the inefficient provision of genuine goods and services. Apparently, Rev. G did not read this part of my book very well. Has he likewise misread other parts of my book? There are three categories of public policy outlined in chapter 1: reactive policy, proactive policy (with two sub-classifications), and policies of the inefficient provision of genuine goods and services. I do not anywhere define the first category as the third. Rev. G's critique is ignorant nonsense at best and disingenuous at worst. Is it a slandering practice to make up things about a person that he has not said and then spread them around to others as if he did so? Perhaps Rev. G needs to re-examine his own judgment.

Eighth, Rev. G says that I have used "completely unproven assertion" without "real proof." I am not sure if Rev. G is referring to my scientific analysis or my biblical one, but either way, his charge is odd. First, science does not really "prove" anything, and it does not uncover absolute truth. We endeavor to explain and if possible to predict, based on observation, repetition, and theorizing. Some theories we produce may be useful but they are never absolute truth or completely proven. Even the law of gravity is not absolute. If Rev. G is referring to logical "proof", meaning that within a deductive system there are no errors in a paradigm, then I would appreciate some more clear examples of any errors that I have made rather than the bald assertions he has offered. Rev. G seems to think that by offering his logical argument about "driving regulation" he has me, but he does not. In fact, I agree with Rev. G's deduction: there was no driving regulation when Paul wrote, so Paul could not have obligated Roman Christians to comply with driving regulations, and therefore Paul does not so obligate us. This is certainly true. What is important to note, however, is that the principle of Romans 13:1-7 may well be applied to driving regulation today. We should submit to driving rules out of pragmatic expedience just as the Roman Christians submitted to Rome's rules and taxes. I argue that, in usual circumstances, we should generally do so too; since otherwise the state will clobber us *and* because we will be worried about what the state will may do to us if we violate a decree. Rev. G thinks that he has authority because he has found many commentators who agree with him on the definition of *conscience*. While his advisors may be right, I remain unconvinced. The term conscience is used in the New Testament to describe the discernment we have regarding what is good or bad. It is not always bad or good as defined by God, as was also the case with the Corinthian and Roman brethren who worried about the morality of eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8:7-12; 10:25-29 and Romans 14: 1-23). The conscience had to do with right and wrong but not right or wrong in a moral sense as defined by God. (One thing I do appreciate about Rev. G's criticism, however, is that he highlights the fact that I did not defend my position in the book as well as I should have, and I hope to correct that problem in the next edition.) Rev. G argues that Rome had no abortion policy, but I would like to see scholarly evidence of his claim. The Hippocratic Oath contains a requirement that a physician should not perform an abortion: "To please no one will I prescribe a deadly drug nor give advice which may cause his death. Nor will I give a

woman a pessary [a device worn in the vagina] to procure abortion. But I will preserve the purity of my life and my art.” Since Hippocrates of Cos lived from about 460BC to 357BC, abortion must have been a hot issue long before Paul and Peter wrote. Why should we believe that a Roman government that had no problem with murder, gladiator events, and infanticide would have any sort of policy restricting abortion? If I were making an assumption, the other policy evidence of the era would lead us to believe that abortion would have been condoned in Rome. If so, I doubt that the Apostles would have sanctioned believers to submit to abortion policy. Second, what the Bible says is absolute truth and authoritative. That makes biblical analysis different than scientific analysis. One need not “prove” anything about the Bible. It is accepted by faith as revelation. All we can hope to do is bring biblical ideas to clearer light through greater study and application. Rev. G has hardly shown any of my theses to be in error by either his assertions or his driving regulation “proof.”

Ninth, Rev. G declares that my work is completely biased by my philosophical or economic “prejudice” (or “extreme prejudice of government”), “extreme bias,” “glaring anti-government slant,” and “skewed argumentation.” Here again, I am not sure what he means to say, or perhaps he is saying too much. Is Rev. G purely objective when he analyzes an event or a passage? Does nothing from his cultural or mental context creep in to “filter” how he reads something or understands the world? I am not arguing determinism or deconstructionism here. I am merely questioning whether Rev. G or anyone can be truly objective in analysis. That is not to deny that we should and must try to *avoid* bringing in our subjective biases. All honest researchers in theology and science attempt to do so. So is Rev. G accusing me of being dishonest and intentionally bringing my bias, etc. into my analysis to purposely twist the plain teaching for something that is not there? Is he again attacking my character and judging my motives? Or is it just that he does not like the conclusions of the economic sciences? Or does Rev. G have socialist leanings that make him smack at any ideas to the contrary? Perhaps Rev. G is more of a slave to his own disciplinary framework than he claims I am to mine. I do not operate under any pretense of objectivity. I bring what I have to the table, utilizing the gifts and skills that I have acquired under Providence, and offer that “light” in humility and hope for the amelioration of all concerned. I think that I cannot be fairly expected to do more.

Tenth, Rev. G charges that my book contains “logical fallacies known as poisoning the well,” which he says are useless “in a scholarly endeavor,” and that I have used other logical fallacies such as “negative inference.” Since I do not know what “poisoning the well” is or means, I cannot comment on that criticism. If by “negative inference” he means that I argue from silence or that because the Bible does not explicitly grant government the right to undertake a certain policy does not mean that it may not, I reply that I do *not* so argue. Welfare or public charity is Rev. G’s case in point. Nevertheless, I would argue that Rev. G is sadly mistaken, not merely because the economics of socialism brings bad news, but because the principles on which socialism and welfare rest are immoral. The Bible condemns theft, laziness, lack of thrift, poor stewardship, restrictions on intergenerational transfers, and envy. How can Rev. G possibly argue that government can participate in policies that are immoral? If Rev. G would take the time to read my whole book carefully he might find that I do make a case from both biblical principles and from scientific light to make my case against welfare and proactive policy. He has, apparently, built his own straw man called negative inference and shot it down. I do not argue that because government has not been granted a role by God to dole out welfare that it may not. I argue that government may not do so because welfare is a composite wickedness of the modern age.

Eleventh, Rev. G accuses me of using straw man arguments, citing in particular the Divine Right view that says that Christians should bow to virtually every whim of public policy. I have no idea why he would claim this is a straw man since it seems clear that Rev. G would submit to nearly any public policy. He is very clear that only a few limited policies qualify for disobedience (most of which no

longer occur today), like prohibiting Gospel preaching or committing murder. So why does Rev. G claim that my argument is of the straw man variety? For the vast majority of revitalized Divine Rights folks that I know, there are very few current policies that they would resist. I do not make up a straw man in the book. It is widely held that Christians should bow to virtually every whim of modern public policy that they come up against.

Twelfth, Rev. G claims that my views about taxation “cannot be squared with either scripture or law” and amount to “rantings of a prejudiced man without knowledge.” Nevertheless, it is not clear that Rev. G took the time to read my extensive discussion about taxes in chapters 1 and 5. I think that I deal well with the biblical texts and would be interested to see if Rev. G can muster a biblical refutation of what I say there rather than rest on his incomplete analysis of my book. Insofar as law is concerned (or does he refer to legislation?), is Rev. G also claiming to be a legal scholar? How does Rev. G know that my thesis about taxes cannot be squared with law? Let me in fairness note, however, that Rev. G does provide one good criticism when he points out that I overstate that a Christian should *never* take a Social Security check and then seemingly contradict this claim by later saying the possible exception would be to use the proceeds from Social Security to pay his current tax bill and thus minimize theft. In the next printing, I plan to add a clause such as: “and spend it as he would his normal income” after the words “Social Security check.” (Or I might start the sentence with: “With one notable exception to be discussed shortly....”) Other than that point, Rev. G does not cite any specifics and therefore I cannot take his criticism very seriously. He did not refute my arguments about taxes or Social Security, and I still stand by those arguments. Rev. G says that I rant and know nothing. Again, since he does not know me and has evidently not even read my book entirely to know the argument I am making, I wonder why he is making such claims. I wonder if someone who knows him would make a similar charge about Rev. G?

Thirteenth, Rev. G charges that I have incorrectly stated that government should have no role in charity or welfare, which I argue on both biblical and economic grounds. However, in his critique he does not show us why government provision is efficient for society in an economic sense and he does not show where the Apostles would have defended such an immoral act. I have already said above, as I have more thoroughly shown in the book, that welfare is evil. Why would the Apostles condone something that is evil, even if done by government? Is Rev. G trying to argue that the Apostles would have sanctioned evil by the hand of the state?

Fourteenth, Rev. G charges that I have incorrectly stated that there was no welfare state in Rome and that my speculation that Paul would have qualified his obligation to believers to submit to the state if welfarism had indeed existed during his day. As I have already noted above, both the sources in my book and Dr. Robbins suggest that Rev. G is wrong about Roman welfarism. If he has evidence to the contrary then let him produce it. Rev. G’s inordinate reaction to my speculation about what the Apostles would have done is curious. Surely, I do not offer it as a fact or certainty. I believe that I carefully qualify my speculative statements. The only reason that I can build upon the speculation at all is by means of the other principles found in the Bible and the scientific light that I imagine God would endorse.

Fifteenth, Rev. G charges that I have inappropriately extended the rightness of rebelling against public policies (like paying taxes) that are other than policies that entail “a direct command to disobey God” (e.g., to stop gospel preaching, to murder). Presumably then, Rev. G would say that we must obey government when it obligates us to violate premises from God’s word as well, so long as there is no clear, direct command to violate. For instance, the Bible requires Christians to be good stewards (Luke 19:15-25, Matthew 25:15-28, Proverbs 13:22) and that Christian men provide for their families (1

Timothy 5:8). Naboth was a good steward of his vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-19) and refused to obey king Ahab by giving him the vineyard. That act was active, civil disobedience. Yet, when it comes to taxation today, Rev. G is dead sure that it is sin to resist taxation on account of the stewardship principle. Perhaps we can resist a common thief or the mafia but never the well-organized civil government. The invading Israelites (who had a direct command of course) did not submit to any king around them that they assailed. I guess that means that Christians in the American army would not have to submit to Saddam Hussein during the war but before the war they would have to obey him? It is not clear that Rev. G would be able to apply his submission principle to such a scenario. Furthermore, is it just for governments to rebel against other government in war? May the American government overthrow the Iraqi regime, but the Iraqis may not do so themselves? May the Iraqi Christians not rebel without sinning but still be permitted to petition or pray for deliverance by the hand of the American government and remain righteous? Needless to say, Rev. G has a lot of convincing to do. In short, by his reasoning Rev. G raises far more questions than he purports to answer. I stand by my thesis that we must disobey the state any time that we believe that the state is making us do something contrary to what God would have us to do (e.g., stewardship). What constitutes an offense depends on personal conviction and is thus a matter of Christian liberty.

Sixteenth, Rev. G charges that I do not understand the meaning of the phrase in Romans 13:1-7 “do you good”, especially because it runs against my thesis about government being evil. On the contrary, I clearly state that the phrase cited refers to general sanctification in the sense of Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for *good* to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” The state does not do “good” for us, generally, in other ways, either temporally or in advancing the cause of Christ in the world.

Seventeenth, Rev. G charges that my interpretation of Paul’s message to the Romans is unjustified, where I suggest that submission is pragmatic or expedient (especially as it was for that age—although not exclusively). This thesis is another key tenet of my thesis. Yet Rev. G does not deal with my reasoning well. I show that on several other occasions the Bible demands a pragmatic or expedient response to public policy or government. I argue that the plain meaning of the text in Romans 13:1-7 could go either way, but that by looking at these other pragmatic passages, as well as other biblical principles, my interpretation is best. The fact that my interpretation is also congruent with culture, history and scientific principles bolsters the defense of my pragmatic or expedience thesis. Rev. G’s understanding fits neither the other texts in the Bible nor the reality of life well.

Eighteenth, Rev. G charges that I have not proven my speculation that neither Paul nor Peter would have ignored the welfare state had it existed, because its central tenets run contrary to their clear teachings elsewhere against stealing, lying, etc. Nevertheless, as I have already noted above, I make a case that the Apostles would not have advocated violating biblical principles through complying with immoral public policies. If a proactive policy is wicked, then it makes no difference that it is civil government that carries it out. The idea that government is a special sphere of authority that holds special sway over Christian behavior regardless of what it does is something to be demonstrated or “proven” rather than assumed. The *Westminster Confession* and *Larger Catechism* may designate the state as a special sphere of authority, and Rev. G may agree, but it is not clear that the Bible grants such a special designation. Let Baptists beware of coddling an errant Presbyterian notion. It could as well be that states take “rights” and subsume authority under the permissive decree of God in order to carry out their judgmental purpose. Christians submit insofar as they possibly can in order to stay out of the state’s way. That view is far different than the Divine Right view that says God created a special office called the state to promote His kingdom in the world, and thus gave it special rights over all its subjects, obligating believers to obey it (except when it clearly sins).

Nineteenth, Rev. G charges me personally that I have a “rebellious heart,” that I am a “factious” person who “must be rejected”, and that my book and myself are “damaging to the peace and harmony of the body of Christ. Rather than reply to this, let me just say: “I earnestly hope not.” My constant prayer is: “May God be merciful to me and give me wisdom as I seek to help promote edification in the modern church and better understanding of Your word.”

Twentieth, Rev. G charges that my book is “poison” and “must be rejected as rebellious and very poorly researched and written.” I submit that my book has imperfections, most of which I hope I will be able to fix over time. If I have erred, then may God help me to have the humility and the courage to correct my what I have said in error. Moreover, may God help Rev. G to be a good pastor, above reproach, and to offer good counsel to others and me who cross his path.

One theme that should be reiterated in my book is the principle of toleration. Romans 14:4 says: “Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.” I argue that Christians should respect the liberty of conscience of other believers in the area of public policy, and that they should be careful not to despise one another on account of their relative positions. I have pointed out four major positions that one could take regarding public policy: theonomy, the revitalized divine right of kings, the old-line Anabaptist view, and the view presented in my book. I have rejected the first three of these views, but I am still able to fellowship with those who hold them. In America, there are also other, perhaps less scholarly, views—such as those found within the “patriot movement”—that could be added to the list. One side calls the modern state and all its licenses and taxes “Babylon” and another does not. One side is pacifist, and the other is not. Rather than vituperating one another over the convictions each one of us have from the Bible and science, I hope that we will all be able to disagree without being disagreeable, and continue to advance our common goal of proclaiming the gospel and edifying the saints.

For now the kingdoms of this world are against the Lord. The devil is about his business, even knowing that he has a short time. Surely the governments of the ages do their (often foul) deeds under God's permissive will. But there is a day coming in which there will be: “loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’ And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: ‘We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth’” (Revelation 11:15b-18).