



Government and the God-Ordained Institutions

By Mike Winther

When Americans use the term “government”, we are usually referring to civil government or what may be generically called the “state”. Civil government in America is comprised of multiple levels including federal, state, county, and city government. Civil government (or the “state”) is a political institution that makes and enforces the laws of a society. There are, however, other kinds of government besides civil government. There is individual government where we are to govern ourselves and then there are institutional governments in which others govern us. These institutional governments are collective in nature rather than individual since they involve a collection of individuals. These institutions are usually identified as: family government, church government and civil government.

These are the three institutions, or governments, that are often identified as “God-ordained.” Although Scripture does not specifically say that family, church, and civil government are God-ordained institutions, there are solid biblical based reasons to come to this conclusion. First, each of these institutions is actually discussed in Scripture. Many other societal institutions found in both the modern and ancient world are not mentioned in the Bible. These other institutions, like universities, service clubs, trade associations, or fraternal orders, may serve

beneficial purposes, but they fail to receive biblical attention and are probably more appropriately described as “man-ordained”.

Second, family, church, and state are given specific institutional responsibilities. If God gives them responsibilities, then it is more than reasonable to assume that He views them as important, even essential, to society. Third, they are charged with the task of producing good fruit. Fourth, they are given authority to rule or govern over people in certain specific ways. Fifth, requirements are placed on their leaders. Sixth, requirements are placed on those that are governed by them.

Seventh, and last, there are important principles that apply equally to each of these institutions and we can learn much about the proper operation of one institution from the study of the others. There is a synergistic benefit that results when we make a biblical study of all of these institutions. We deprive ourselves of a clear understanding of these important God-ordained institutions if we neglect the study of any single one.