

DIVINE GOVERNMENT

Top-down rule:

The Mono-Theist theory of how the world works is like that of an absolute Monarchy. Humans are ruled by an omnipotent and perfectionist, sovereign King, who is likely to command, “Off with their heads!” when provoked. As Father of the world, the supreme ruler administers a benevolent dictatorship, but He can also be cranky and moody and violent. His justice is capricious: He blesses whom He will, and curses whom He will. Yet, divine laws, for our unquestioning obedience, are carved in stone, and violators are severely punished, or will be in some unspecified future day of reckoning. The King’s subjects have no rights and no vote in how things are run, but the great Lord does like to hear them beg and pray. So they have little choice, but to bear the tyrant’s whims and mood swings. If they displease Him, they know that they may end up in the fiery dungeon of damnation forever.

The Monarch’s minions use fear and guilt to manipulate the masses. Punishment and rewards are dealt out arbitrarily, as whole families and nations are annihilated for the sins of the few. Like a Saddam or a Stalin, the mono-maniacal iron-rod-ruler rewards the faithful and the loyal, while stamping out free-thinkers and trouble-makers. As in mundane dictatorships, the oppressed subjects are too fearful to rebel. Instead, they become flattering sycophants, praising the Lord for small favors, and blaming themselves when they are punished unjustly. By enduring the injustices of this world meekly, they expect to gain favor in the eyes of the Lord, and they vainly hope to inherit a tiny piece of the estate in their eccentric Father’s will.

Bottom-up rule:

The Deist version of divine government is more like a Democracy. The general rules were set up by the Creator in a constitution called Natural Laws. The “Founding Mother” then relinquished power, like George Washington, in order to allow the new creation to freely evolve, without supernatural meddling. God’s creatures have only one Natural Right: equality under the law. Yet they inherit an unequal hierarchy of powers and initial conditions. So, only those at the top of the pyramid have a significant degree of moral autonomy, with proportional rights and responsibilities. Thus the free world’s voting citizens are those who have the social capital to compete in a free market. However, the system works best when each citizen will give-up a small piece of his personal wealth in order to reap the benefits of communal life. In return for their negotiated rights as citizens, they must accept the limitations and duties inherent in those rights, including shouldering some responsibility for the weaker creatures, who are also God’s children.

Like disorderly Democracy, barely controlled chaos is the norm in a world ruled by general consensus. Without a single power source to keep order, the citizen-creatures of various political and religious sympathies must barter and negotiate in good faith with their opposites to get a fair share of the blessings of freedom. Since there will always be cheaters, who take advantage of our cooperative spirit, we must learn how to punish the guilty without raising fears among the innocent. Our incentive for good behavior will come from within, and from our peers—in **this** life. For Deists, virtue is its own reward.