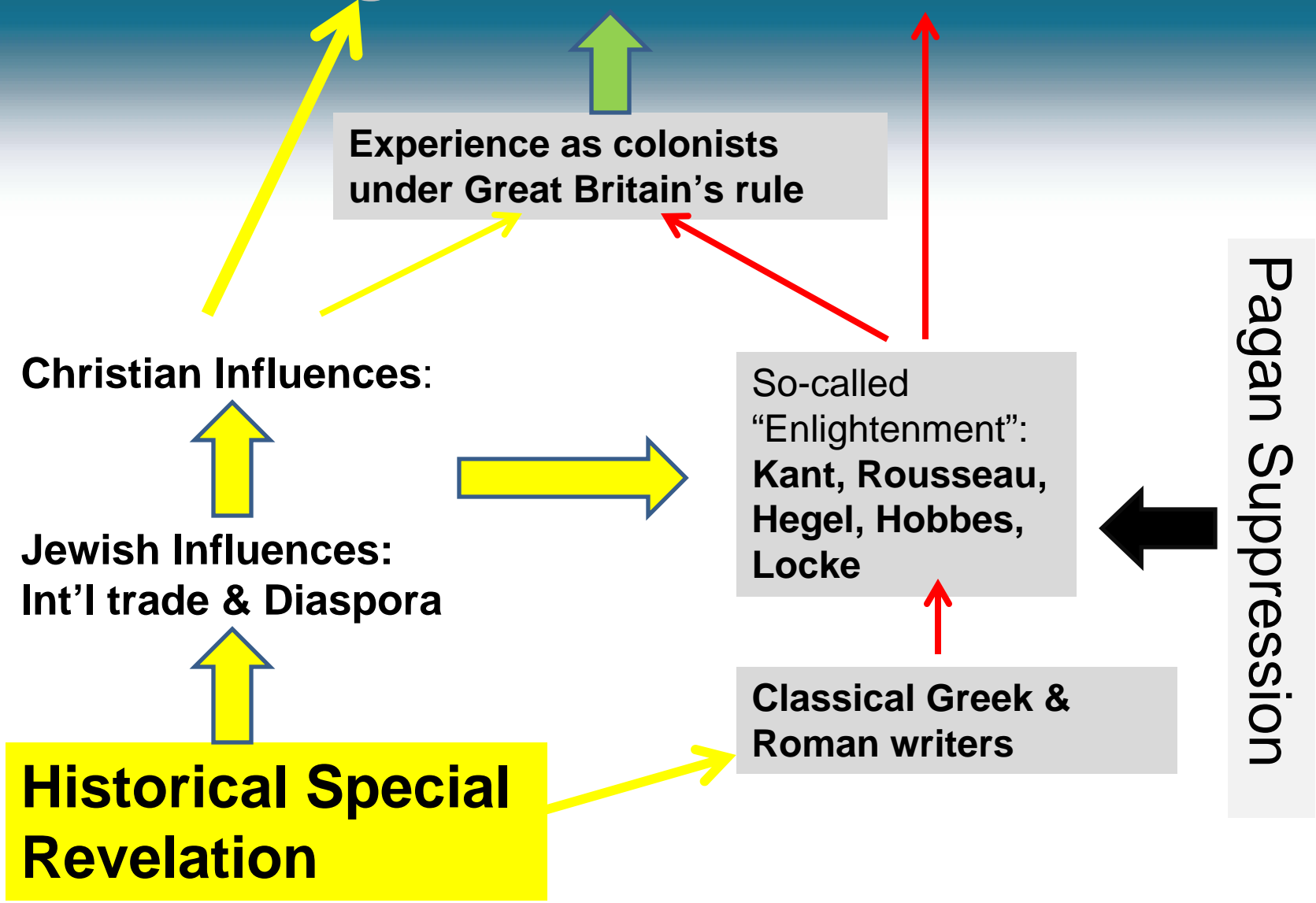


The Basic **Function**,
Limitations and **Dangers** of
Civil Power Revealed in the
Old Testament

Charles A. Clough

Founding Fathers Political Ideas



Terminology

state

government

authority

power

epistemology

metaphysics

The Great Questions

What is the origin of civil government?

What is the natural state of man without government?

What is the justification for one man to rule over another?

How ought a civil government be judged?

What is the purpose of government?

What is an appropriate government?

Logical
Sequence

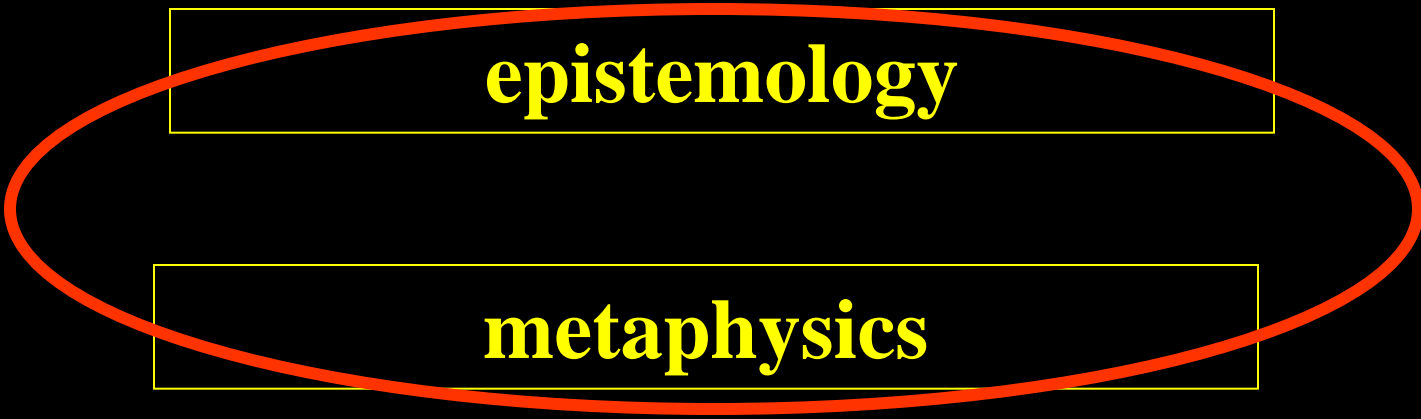


politics

ethics

epistemology

metaphysics



Pressure of Life



Pre-Israelite Origins of Civil Power

CREATION

Governance of *self, nature, marriage, family*

FALL

Evil dominion over *body, spirit, and nature*; Governance by angels

NOAHIC COVENANT

Governance by man (civil government): capital punishment to honor life

TOWER of BABEL

Civil government to build a society independent of God for man's happiness

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

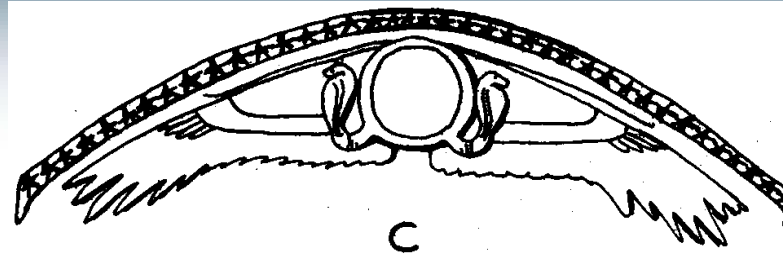


“Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood will be shed; for in the image of God He made man” Gen. 9:6

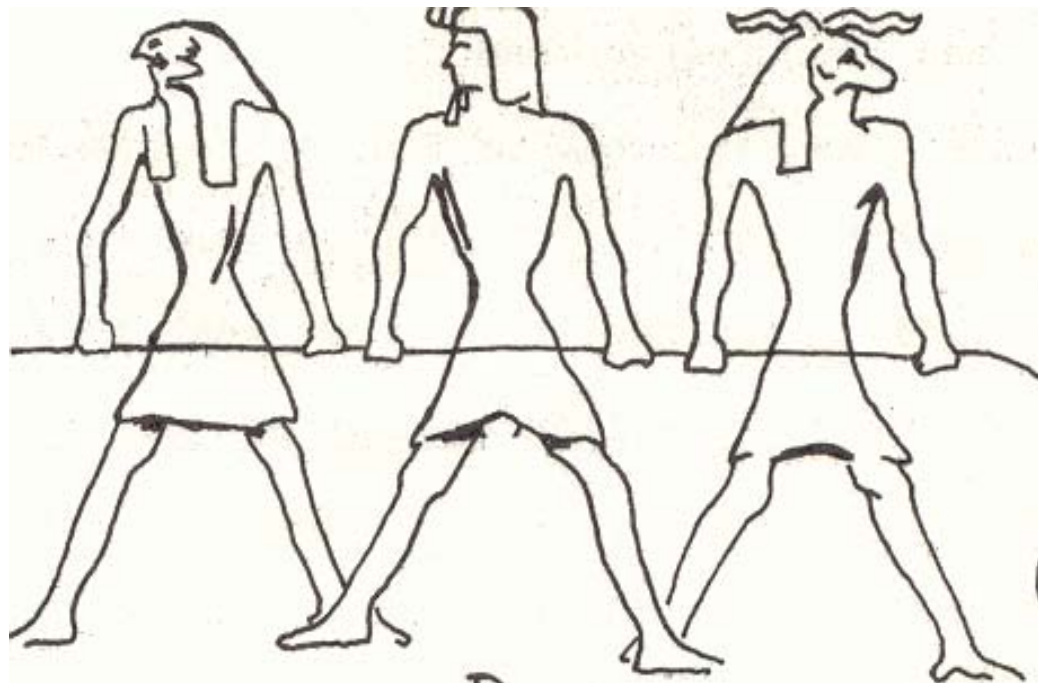
- **“The rebellious people are tired of being named, of being the recipient of a name. They want to name themselves. . .This means becoming independent. . .It is the desire to exclude God from his creation. And it is this solidarity in a name, this unity in separation from God, which was to keep men from ever again being separated on earth. . . .”**

Jacques Ellul, The Meaning of the City

EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT RELIGION

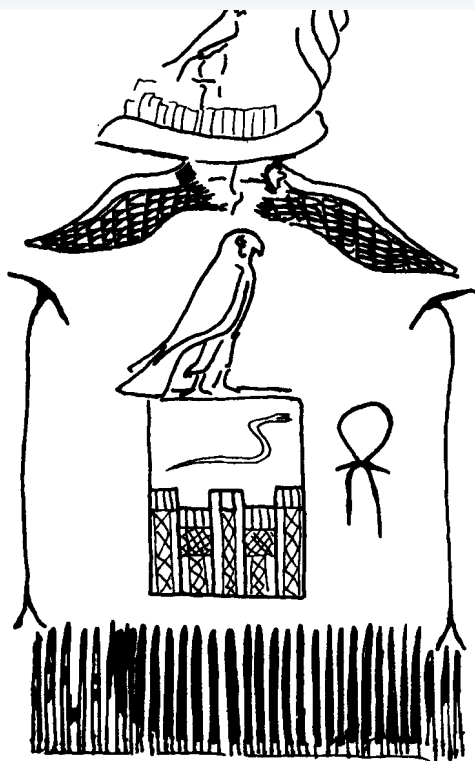


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EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT RELIGION



“Wherever a society has a naturalistic religion, grounded on the concept of continuity, man faces the total power of the state. . . .Where there is no transcendental law and power in a separate and omnipotent being, then power has a wholly immanent and immediate source in a state, group, or person, and it is beyond appeal. The state becomes the saving power and the source of law. . . .[It] becomes god walking on earth. . . .”

Rousas Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*

“Justice Lifts the Nations”

(1905) in old Supreme Court Building, Lausanne, Switzerland

Cited in Francis Schaeffer, How Shall We Then Live? p107



Chiastic Structure of the Decalogue

5:6-10 God alone is worthy of worship and service

5:11 Accuracy in language about God

5:12-15 Management of labor and property

5:16 Functioning marriage & family

5:17 Life is to be respected & preserved

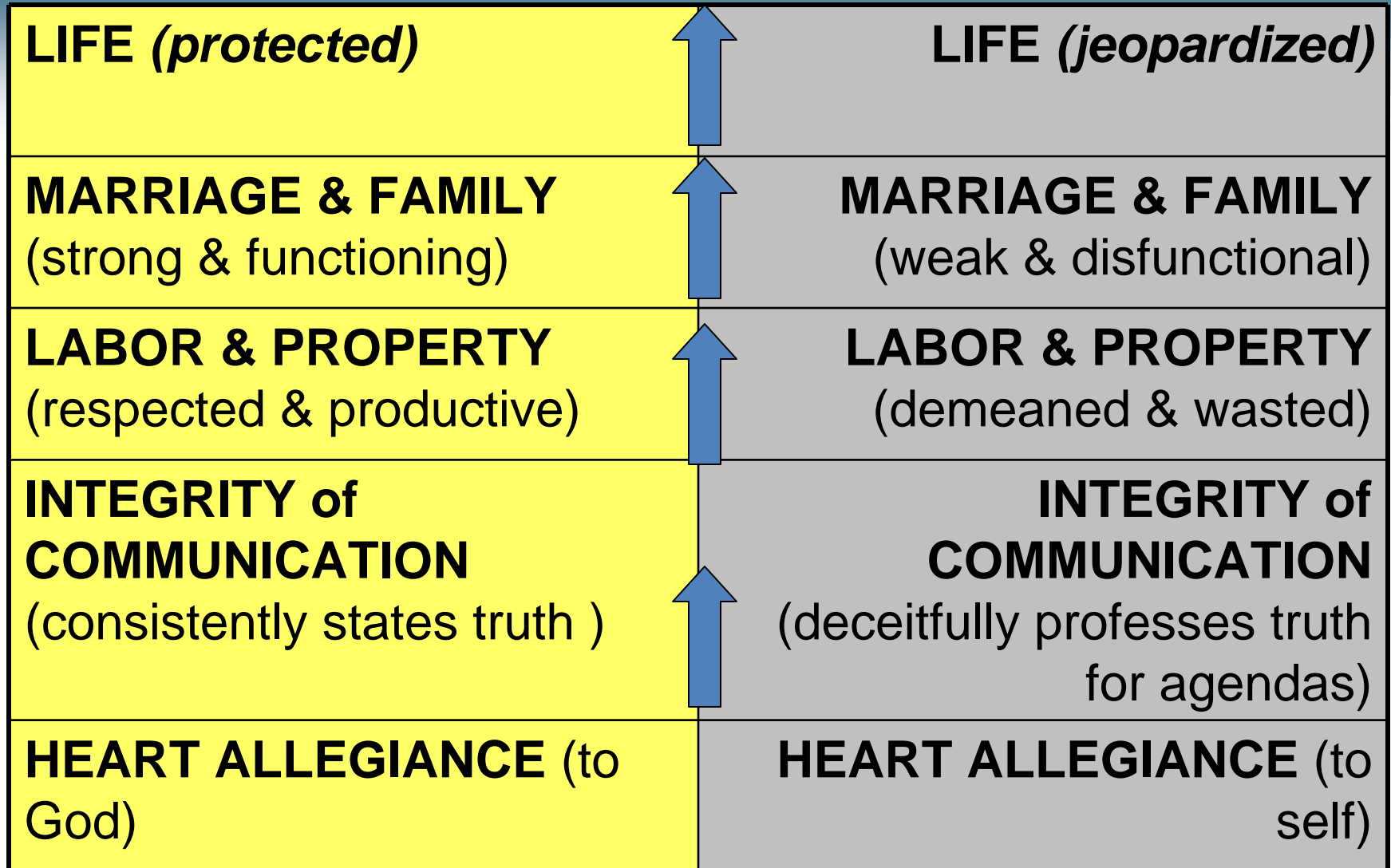
5:18 Marriage is to be protected

5:19 Property is to be protected

5:20 Accuracy in language of judicial proceedings

5:21 Self is not worthy of worship and service

God's Design of Society



[There must be legal and constitutional limits on the ability of homeschooling parents “to teach their children idiosyncratic and illiberal beliefs and values” . .

. [Government control must be exercised against] “parents [who] want to teach against the enlightenment.

. . .

Parental control over children’s basic education flows from the state (rather than visa versa). States delegate power over children’s basic education to parents. . . .”

Kimberly A. Yurako, “Education Off the Grid...”, *California Law Review* 96 (February 2008) (She is a professor at the Northwestern University School of Law)

“This essay explores the choice many traditionalist Christian parents (both fundamentalist and evangelical make to leave public schools in order to teach their children at home, thus in most instances escaping meaningful oversight. . . .Society need not and should not tolerate the inculcation of absolutist views that undermine toleration of difference. . . .If a parent subscribes to *an absolutist belief system premised on the notion that it was handed down by a creator, that it (like the Ten Commandments) is etched in stone and that all other systems are wrong, the essential lessons of a civic education. . .often seem deeply challenging and suspect. . . .Such ‘private truths’ have no place in the public arena, including the public schools.*”

Catherine Ross, “Fundamentalist Challenges to Core Democratic Values: Exit and Homeschooling”, *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal* 18 (May 2010) (She is professor at George Washington Law School)

Changing the form of government: a wrong (secular) strategy

- ~~1. The judges period shows a high correlation between freedom from pagan domination and the presence of a judge~~
2. Judges not continuously present
3. Therefore a permanently present leader is necessary (a king)

Lessons from the eight-century theocratic experience

Yahweh's power rationally connected with His authority (a model for civil government)

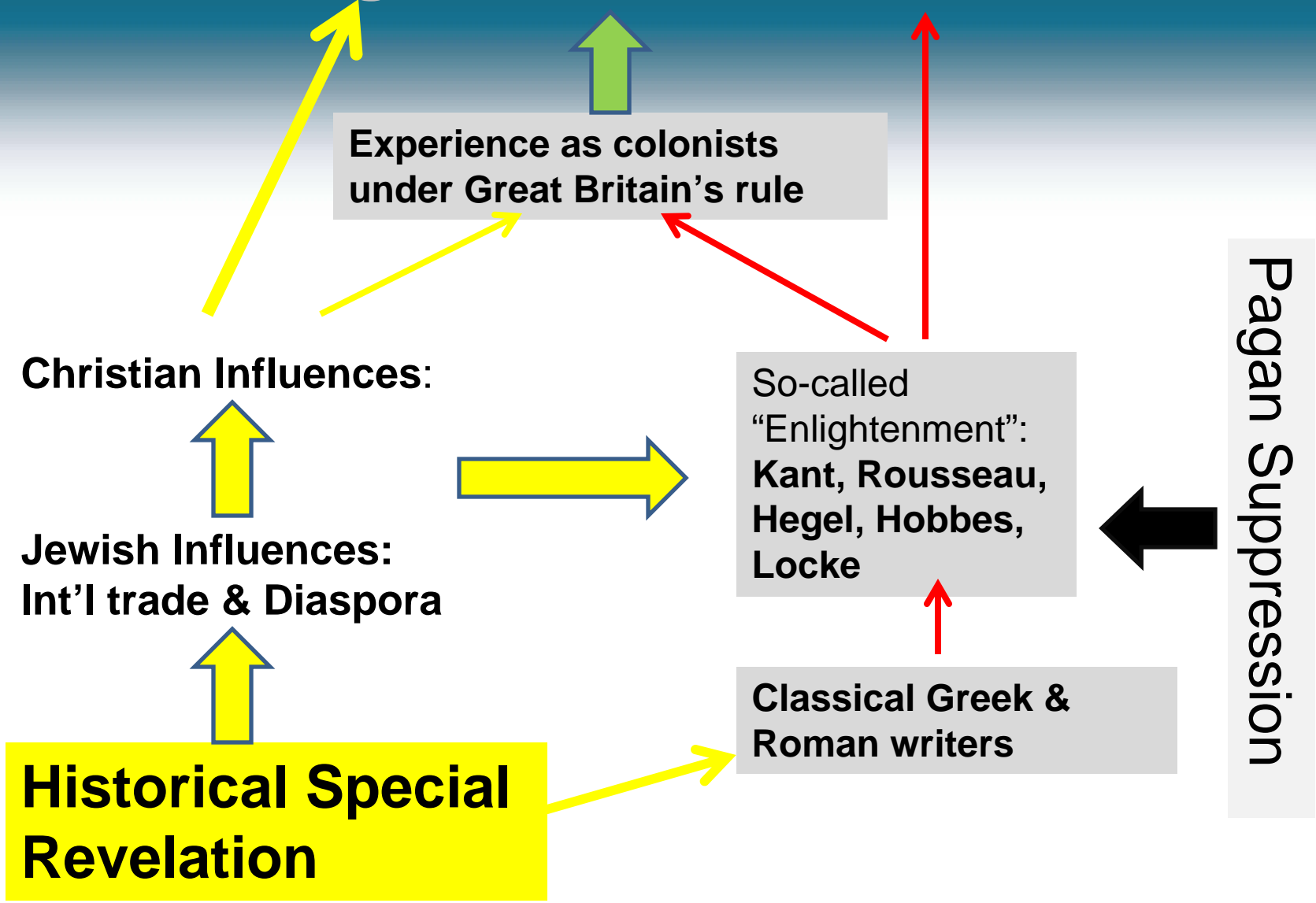
Original spheres of authority (self, nature, marriage, family) remained unmodified by civil government

Civil government cannot conquer angelic and human evil

Lethal civil power was affirmed but was incapable of creating a righteous society

Civil power of a corruptible elite cannot produce a utopian Babel dream

Founding Fathers Political Ideas



The Times of the Gentiles

The rule of God entirely providential (no special contracts with clear moral cause-effect and no interpreting prophets)

Imperial empires that accumulate their cultures

Uneasy tension between civil governments and citizens following the Word of God

Gentile culture relies on a foundation of order borrowed without acknowledgement from God's historic revelation

The *function* of civil power

To protect God's image in human life

- **as unique over animal and plant life**
- **as it functions in self governance, managing natural resources, and governance of marriage and family**
- **as it exists in a fallen state**
- **with power up to and including taking human life**

The *limitations* of civil power

The ethical quality of the *governed*.

- as the people conduct themselves in self-government and the institutions of marriage and family and community

The ethical quality of the *governing*. . . .

- as they have good intent, integrity, wisdom

Under the providence of God and the extra-human domain of evil

The dangers of civil power

Jeopardizing capital punishment authority by sloppy procedures → loss of significance of murder

Increased costs and inefficiencies

Collateral damage to the other spheres of governance

Increased vulnerability to Satan deception due to concentrated power in a few