

Christian Duty Under Corrupt Government

by Ted R. Weiland

The previous article, “Was America Founded as a Christian Nation” was written 1993 to refute the Religious Right’s claims that America was and should be a “Christian Nation”. In a sense, that 1993 article — and other, more extensive articles — were written to blunt the post-1962 (school prayer) growth of the Religious Right. As illustrated in the previous article, many of the arguments against Christian activism are based on Biblical mandates in 1 Peter 2:13-17 and Romans 13:1-6 for Christians to submit to all governmental authority.

The Religious Right responded by publishing its own new-and-improved versions of evidence and argument to support the Christian activist claims. This next article is a cutting-edge example of the Christian Right’s efforts to support their political activism. It’s author, Ted Weiland is a former rodeo bull rider, current evangelist, and writer who has permitted us to reprint excerpts from his book, “Christian Duty Under

Corrupt Government”. This book offers an alternative analysis (primarily) of Romans 13:1-7 which is so strong that his work should be studied by anyone who seriously supports or rejects the Religious Right’s political activism.

Note that Mr. Weiland prefers to use the Hebrew translation “Yhshua” rather than the name “Jesus” used by most Americans. He also uses the Tetragrammaton, “YHWH” (God’s name in the Old Testament name; pronounced “Yahweh”), wherever he believes “it has been incorrectly replaced with the words ‘the LORD’ or ‘GOD’.”

The first seven verses of the 13th chapter of the Apostle Paul’s epistle to the Romans are often abused and misused by today’s average clergyman. This has resulted in one of the most destructive doctrines that has come out of “Judeo-Christianity” (that segment of Christendom that is

heavily influenced by the Talmudic religion of Judaism) — the false teaching of total submission to *all* government authority. This theological mistake has probably contributed more to the loss of Christian dominion than any other false doctrine. Judeo-Christianity relies on the following three passages for its Scriptural basis for this doctrinal error:

Titus 3:1-2: Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to do every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

1 Peter 2:13-15: Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him . . . For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Romans 13:1-7: Let every soul be subject unto the

higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.... Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Much of Judeo-Christianity has interpreted these passages to mean that God sanctions all existing government authority and that we are therefore to submit completely to any authority that happens to rule over us. Further, they teach that resistance to civil authority is rebellion against God Himself (except in the rare instance when someone might be ordered by government to deny Yhshua the Christ) and that God will punish those who rebel.

In fact, the Bible *does* teach submission to government. However, it teaches a *limited* submission which is not rendered indiscriminately to any and all who rule. Support for this view can be found from a careful reevaluation of *Romans* 13:1-7 where we discover Scriptural justification for the type of authority to which Christians *are* and *are not* obliged to submit:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers [governing authorities, New American Standard Version; NASV]. For there is no power [authority, NASV] but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (Romans 13:1)

This verse is currently interpreted by most clergymen and government officials to mean: "God has established every civil or government authority, and thus Christians are bound to submit totally to whichever government God has placed over them at any given time."

Every authority?

It is remarkable how the teachings of the majority of modern preachers contrast with the views many of our predecessors held concerning submission to government authority. In 1603, speaking before Parliament, even King James I recognized that a ruler's authority has limits: "A king ceases to be a king, and degenerates into a tyrant, as soon as he leaves off to rule according to his laws."¹

In 1643 Pastor Samuel Rutherford wrote *Lex, Rex (The Law and the Prince)* in which he explained: ". . . God hath given no absolute and unlimited power

to a king above the law [of God] . . ."²

"When the magistrate doth anything by violence, and without [outside of] law, in so far doing against his office, he is *not* a magistrate. Then, say I, that power by which he doth, is not of God. None doth, then, resist the ordinance of God who resist the king in tyrannous acts."³

"Therefore an unjust king, as unjust, is not that genuine ordinance of God. . . . So we may resist the *injustice* of the king, and not resist the king. If, then, any cast off the nature of a king, and become habitually a tyrant . . . he is not from God. . . . If the office of a tyrant . . . be contrary to a king's office, it is not from God, and so neither is the power from God."⁴

The proper perspective on authority was also introduced by the English philosopher, John Locke: "Wheresoever the authority

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ceases, the king ceases too, and becomes like other men who have no authority."⁵

Many of America's early preachers and founders concurred with Mr. Locke. In a message preached just thirty-six days prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Pastor Samuel West emphatically proclaimed: "In order . . . that we may form a right judgment of the duty enjoined in our text [Titus 3:1, *supra*], I shall consider the nature and design of civil government, and shall show that the same principles which oblige us to submit to government do equally oblige us to resist tyranny; or that tyranny and magistracy are so opposed to each other that where the one begins the other ends."⁶

Pastor Samuel Cooke, preaching at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 30, 1770, declared: "Justice also requires of rulers, in their legislative capacity, that they attend to the operation of their own acts, and repeal whatever laws, upon an impartial review, they find to be inconsistent with the laws of God, the rights of men, and the general benefit to society. This the community hath a right to expect."⁷

In 1765, British jurist Sir William Blackstone put it similarly in his commentaries on English law: "No human laws are of any validity if contrary to [God's Law]."⁸

In 1860, John Wingate Thornton developed this thought further: "We may very safely assert these two things in general without undermining government: One is, that no civil rulers are to be obeyed when they enjoin things that are inconsistent with the commands of God. All such disobedience is lawful and glorious All commands running counter to the declared will of [YHWH] the Supreme Legis-

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lator of heaven and earth are null and void, and therefore disobedience to them is a duty, not a crime."⁹

The wrong-headed teaching of many of today's clergy is at odds not only with our founding fathers, but more importantly, with Scripture itself. Consider the words of the Prophet Hosea: "Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of YHWH because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not. (*Hosea 8:14*)

In this passage, disobedient Israelites are described as those who "rebelled against [God's] law," and "set up kings, *but not by [God]*." Are we to believe that the omniscient sovereign God actually did *not* know what these rebellious Israelites were up to? Of course not! Hosea is simply telling us that these rulers were set in positions of authority without God's favor.

No government can exist without God allowing it to do so. However, we must understand that there are two different types of government for two different types of people. A people who have submitted themselves to YHWH's Word are blessed with just and righteous rulers.

But those who have willfully rebelled against YHWH's Word are visited with an oppressive government for the purpose of bringing them back into submission to God. *Hosea 11:5* provides a graphic example: ". . . the Assyrian shall be his king, because they [Israel] refused to return [to YHWH]."

While this is true for the wicked, in *Romans 13* Paul is addressing a body of believers who have submitted themselves to Yhshua as King, and is instructing them in the concepts of a Christian civil body politic. John Milton, in his book *Defense of the People of England*, commented on Paul's intent:

"It being very certain that the doctrine of the gospel is neither contrary to reason nor the law of nations, man is truly subject to the higher powers who obey the laws and the magistrates so far as they govern according to law. So that St. Paul does not only command the people, *but princes themselves, to be in subjection*; who are not above the laws, but bound by them . . . but whatever power enables a man, or whatsoever magistrate takes upon him, to act contrary to what St. Paul makes the duty of those that are in authority, neither is that power nor that magistrate ordained of God. And consequently to such a magistrate no subjection is commanded, nor is any due, nor are the people for-

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bidden to resist such authority; for in so doing they do not resist the power nor the magistracy, as they are here excellently well described, but they resist a robber, a tyrant, an enemy."¹⁰

Theologian Adam Clarke expressed similar sentiments: "Nothing can justify the opposition of the subjects to the ruler but overt attempts on [the ruler's] part to change the constitution, or to rule contrary to law. When the ruler acts thus he dissolves the compact between him and his people; his authority is no longer binding. . . . This conduct justifies opposition to his government."¹¹

Pastor West preached: "Unlimited submission and obedience is due to none but God alone . . . and to suppose that He has given to any particular set of men a power to require obedience to that which is unreasonable, cruel, and unjust is robbing the deity [YHWH] of His justice and goodness."¹²

In 1749 Pastor Jonathan Mayhew argued lucidly *against* unqualified compliance to civil authority:

"Children are commanded to obey their parents, and servants their masters, in as absolute and unlimited terms as subjects are here commanded to obey their civil rulers. . . . Thus, also wives are commanded to be

obedient to their husbands. . . . In all these cases, submission is required in terms at least as absolute and universal as are ever used with respect to rulers and subjects. But who supposes that the apostle ever intended to teach that children, servants, and wives, should, in all cases whatever, obey their parents, masters, and husbands respectively, never making any opposition to their will, even although they should require them to break the commandments of God, or should causelessly make an attempt upon their lives? No one puts such a sense upon these expressions, however absolute and unlimited.

"Why, then, should it be supposed that the apostle designed to teach universal obedience, whether active or passive to the higher powers, merely because his precepts are delivered in absolute and unlimited terms? And if this be a good argument in one case, why is it not in others also? If it be said that resistance and disobedience to the higher powers is here said positively to be a sin, so also is the disobedience of children to parents, servants to masters, and wives to husbands, in other places of Scripture.

"But the question still remains, whether, in all these cases, there be not some exceptions. In the three latter it is allowed there are; and from hence it follows, that . . .

. the use of absolute expressions is no proof that obedience to civil rulers is in all cases a duty, or resistance in all cases is a sin."¹³

Pastor Rutherford joined in demonstrating the foolishness of arguing that Christians are to blindly submit to authority under all circumstances:

"It is true, so long as kings remain kings, subjection is due to them because [they are] kings; but that is not the question. *The question is, if subjection be due to them, when they use their power unlawfully and tyrannically.* Whatever David did, though he was a king, he did it not as king; he deflowered not Bathsheba as king, and Bathsheba might with bodily resistance and violence lawfully have resisted king David. . . ."¹⁴

David was a minister of God, and was beloved of God, but was he *never* to be resisted, simply because he was king? Of course not!

Pastor Cooke pointed out the relationship between those in authority and the laws of God: "Rulers of every degree . . . are, equally with others, under the restraints of the divine [YHWH's] law. The Almighty has not divested Himself of his own absolute authority by permitting subordinate government among men. . . . without true fear of God, justice will be found to be but an empty name."¹⁵

Further, if Christians are required to submit to every authority — to which authority would God require them to submit in the midst of a revolution? At such times there would be two competing authorities, and Christians who attempted to conform to the present-day Judeo-Christian interpretation of *Romans 13* would find themselves in an impossible position. Common sense tells us there must be something wrong with such a doctrine.

The second clause of *Romans 13:1* reads: "For there is no power [authority, NASV] but of God." The literal translation of the original Greek words is not "but" — it's "if not."¹⁶ If we replace the word "but," as found in the KJV, with the literal translation, this verse would read: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power *if not of God*"

In other words, any civil authority not set up and sanctioned by God *and* not enforcing His laws is *not* a legitimate authority, at least not over Christians who have submitted themselves to the Kingship of Yhshua. J.B. Rotherham arrived at the same conclusion in the Emphasized New Testament, when he translated verse 1: "for there is no authority save by God."

Even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* reports under the

heading "Messiah," that this was the understanding of the early Hebrews: "In the period of the Hebrew monarchy the thought that Yahweh is the divine king of Israel was associated with the conception that the human king reigned by right only if he reigns by commission or 'unction' from him [YHWH]."¹⁷

The latter part of *Romans 13:1* reads: ". . . those [authorities] which exist are established by God." To put it another way: "Legitimate authorities are only those established by God." J.B. Phillips obviously understood this when he translated verse 1 in *The New Testament in Modern English*: "Everyone ought to obey civil authorities, for all *legitimate* authority is derived from God's authority."

Apparently our early American forefathers' interpretation of verse 1 was much more Scriptural than the one advanced in many churches today.

In his book, Mr. Weiland analyzes the other six verses (*Romans 13:2-7*), offers a Conclusion which includes the following excerpts:

We can be thankful that many of our early preachers and founding fathers were not encumbered by the false theology so widespread today. They properly understood the question of submission to government and preached and wrote extensively on the subject. Had they followed modern Judeo-Christian notions, the United States of America simply would not exist.

America's Christian forefathers and patriotic citizens were courageous and stood upon the Word of God. They knew they

must not surrender to tyrants. In 1773 the following famous proclamation was heralded by the men of Marlborough, Connecticut: "Death is more eligible [at least for some] than slavery. A freeborn people are not required by the religion of Jesus Christ to submit to tyranny. . . . [We] implore the ruler above the skies, that He would bare His arm in defense of His church and people, and let Israel go."⁶⁰

Preachers like West, Cooke, and Mayhew accurately taught early Americans what the Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write. Consequently, they felt no inhibition for resisting ungodly authority and establishing in its stead an American civil body politic that more closely resembled God's design. Pastor Mayhew answered all of his previous questions with the following ringing declaration:

"It is blasphemy to call tyrants and oppressors God's ministers. They are more properly 'The Messengers of Satan to buffet us.' No rulers are properly God's ministers, but such as are 'just, ruling in the fear of God.' When once magistrates act contrary to their office, and the end of their institution — when they rob and ruin the public, instead of being guardians of its peace and welfare — they immediately cease to be the ordinance and ministers of God, and no more deserve that glorious character than common pirates and highwaymen."⁶¹

"Thus, upon a careful review of the apostle's reasoning in this passage, it appears that [Paul's] arguments to enforce submission are of such a nature as to conclude only in favor of submission to such rulers as he himself describes; i.e., such as rule for the good of society, which is the only end of their

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institution. Common tyrants and public oppressors are not entitled to obedience from their subjects by virtue of anything here laid down by the inspired apostle."⁶²

Christians can serve only one master. The consequence of Judeo-Christianity's ambivalence is clearly seen in the *John 19:14-15* account of the trial and crucifixion of Yhshua: "and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."

This is a far cry from the disposition of the first-century Hebrew zealots and the eighteenth-century Christian patriots. The watchword of the zealots was: "No God but Yahweh, no tax but to the Temple . . .!"⁶³ The rallying cry of America's early Christian patriots was: "No king but King Jesus!"⁶⁴

If Paul and Peter had *lived* what modern preachers say they *wrote* – i.e., unconditional submission to King Nero's government — then Nero would have never have put them to death. Instead, Paul and Peter would have been lauded and honored as loyal citizens. Caesar put them to death because they preached and lived unconditional submission to King Yhshua and taught disobedience to all antichrist authority. Consider the following unmistakable proof of *Acts 17:6-8*: "And when they [the Thessalonian Jews] found them [Paul and Silas] not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, *These that have turned the world upside down* [effecting a change in government by what they were preaching] are come hither also . . . and these all do [act, NASV] *contrary to the decrees of*

Caesar, saying that there is *another king*, one Yhshua."

Was Yhshua another *current* king? Yes, definitely! Were these first-century disciples preaching only a *future* king? If so, the rulers of their day would not have troubled themselves about Him. Christians looked to Yhshua as a reigning King who alone deserved their allegiance. . . .

It is any wonder that the authorities were disturbed in the Apostle Paul's day? They and their system of government were being toppled by this "new" King and by what first-century Christendom was preaching and practicing. Whether modern Christendom understands it or not, the Thessalonian authorities understood that proclaiming Yhshua as Lord and King required unconditional submission *only* to YHWH and His laws.

Modern Judeo-Christianity calls resistance to tyranny *sin* against God; whereas true

Christianity understands that such resistance is *obedience* to God.

Christians who understand the Apostle Paul's intent in *Romans 13* are today's point men. They, as the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world," are once again "turning the world [order] upside down" for their Lord and King, Yhshua the Christ. May our banner forever be: OBEEDIENCE TO GOD RATHER THAN TO MEN!

Wieland's fiery book ends with a more moderate "Epilogue" by Pastor James Bruggeman:

America has been enslaved economically if not (yet) militarily. The process of enslavement has been so gradual and so subtle that most Americans still have not recognized their bondage-captivity. . .

Recently, however, many more Americans are being

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awakened to the true state of affairs, namely their bondage. . . . But those who understand Romans 13 properly, along with understanding the *whole* counsel of God in relation to government, are confronted with a dilemma: At what point of government oppression is civil disobedience and/or resistance in order?

Since the possible scenarios are myriad, we cannot give any more than general guidelines. We must look to Scriptural examples. At what point did the Hebrew midwives practice civil disobedience? At what point did Daniel defy King Nebuchadnezzar? When did Daniel's three friends rebel against this same king? Upon reflection of these incidents, it becomes apparent that just because our present government may be increasingly oppressive, that does not give *carte blanche* to any and all citizens to refuse to obey whatever laws and regulations they choose.

To cite one case history from the Scriptures, we can be certain that many laws, rules, and regulations in Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon galled Daniel severely. For example, if Babylon required a license for one to drive a chariot, our guess is that Daniel had one. Remember, Daniel was not only "in the system," he was a very high government official in Babylon. His was an Old Testament example of "being in the world, but not of the world." Daniel recognized that his people's captivity was a God-sent chastisement. Yet, he drew the line when a "federal law" prohibited him from praying to his God. We would do well to study this and other such Biblical examples.

In summary, while there may be some who are called to

fight the present, ungodly system via court challenges, common law, the Constitution, etc., we do not believe nor expect that everyone who comes to the proper understanding of Romans 13 must therefore revoke his driver's license, marriage license, Social Security number, insurance policies, etc., and "fight the system." Each person must by much prayer, Scripture study, counsel from others, and study of current conditions, come to the conclusion *for himself* concerning what God is calling him to do at this critical time in history. "Let every man be fully persuaded *in his own mind*."

Pastor Bruggeman's moderating Epilogue implies that even the Religious Right and Fundamentalist communities are reluctant to release the passions of faith into the body politic. The lessons of history — especially the first American Revolution — make it clear that an unbridled Christianity can be an awesome political force. Instead of calling for a revolution, author Weiland seems only to warn that if the principles of the Religious Right concerning issues like school prayer and abortion are not given enough political space to survive, another American revolution fueled by religion may in fact occur.

¹ King James I, quoted by John Wingate Thornton, *The Pulpit of the American Revolution - Political Sermons of the Period of 1776* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970) p.74.

² Pastor Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex, or The Law and the Prince* (Originally printed in

London for John Field, October 7, 1644) (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982) p. 101.

³ Rutherford, p.103.

⁴ Rutherford, p.117.

⁵ John Locke, quoted by Thornton, *supra* p.74.

⁶ Pastor Samuel West quoted by Thornton, *supra* p.270.

⁷ Pastor Samuel Cooke quoted by Thornton, *supra* p.167.

⁸ Sir William Blackstone, *Blackstone's Commentaries* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs Publisher, 1870) Vol.1, p.41.

⁹ Thornton, *supra* p.86.

¹⁰ John Milton, quoted by Thornton, *supra* pp.67-68.

¹¹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary and Critical Notes* (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press, 1831) Vol. VI, p.145.

¹² Pastor Samuel West quoted by Thornton, *supra* p.283.

¹³ Pastor Jonathan Mayhew quoted by Thornton, *supra* pp.65-66.

¹⁴ Rutherford, p.149.

¹⁵ Cooke, quoted by Thornton, p.168.

¹⁶ Wesley J. Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1990) p.119.

¹⁷ "Messiah," Encyclopaedia Britannica 11th Ed. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1910-1911) Vol.18, p.192.

⁶⁰ The Men of Marlborough, Connecticut, quoted by George Bancroft, *History of the United States* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1854) Vol. VI, p.442.

⁶¹ Mayhew quoted by Thornton, *supra*, pp73-74.

⁶² Mayhew, quoted by Thornton, *supra* p.78.

⁶³ Quoted by Abram Leon Sachar, *A History of the Jews* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1968) p.117.

⁶⁴ Committees of Correspondence, quoted by Cushing Strout in *The New Heavens and the New Earth* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1974) p.59.

