

Analysis of Romans 13:1-7 in Light of the Analogy of Scripture
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Twenty first century Christians stare in disbelief at society's degradation into debauchery and post-modernism, asking themselves where they are and how they arrived here. Even the more conservative non-believers often scratch their heads in amazement. Occasionally remembrances of America's golden past instill some hope, but how these bygone freedoms may be regained perplexes many in the church. By the power of what authority will justice be restored? By the power of what authority will lawlessness be suppressed? By the power of what authority will the world's vain philosophies be subdued? One who reads the Bible will answer that such authoritative power ultimately rests in God alone, yet still must ponder how to respond to the earthly authorities who undermine such righteous objectives. The already, but not yet of reality means that Christians live not only under God's sovereign authority, but also under earthly authorities, and the majority in our nation do not consistently submit their governing decisions to Biblical authority. Dilemmas between obeying God and obeying rulers regularly confront today's believer.

In search of guidance, many have turned to Romans 13:1-7 in hopes that its explicit commands will either guide them or will justify their current behaviors. Though considered the "locus classicus" on a Biblical view of civil government by the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, these verses nevertheless have been interpreted and applied in a wide variety of ways. Simply stating that Romans 13 answers the question fully is insufficient as it does not address many themes of government (Bromiley, 545). A proper and full-orbed hermeneutics of the topic is essential. The grammatico-historical approach demands cultural examination of the writer and the recipients. It demands a syntactical dissection along with a study of the key words. It would demand a survey of views professed by our theological ancestors. It would demand delaying a verdict until the whole counsel of God, both the Old and New Testaments, was consulted. In surveying the broad scope of opinions on the topic, this last demand of an analogy of Scripture seems less satisfied than the prior demands and thus serves as the basis for this paper. In widening the breadth of verses which weigh in on this question of civil authority and the authority of God, individual Christians in the contemporary milieu may begin to

understand how to approach the dilemmas which have faced Christians throughout the ages, the same ones which seem to be more evident in our immediate social context. (The English Standard Version has been used for all Scripture citations unless otherwise noted).

General Approach and Basic Principles

A walk through the Scriptural analogies pertaining to Romans 13:1-7 requires a sketch of the proposed path, i.e. method, prior to embarking. Initially, several broader, foundational assumptions are succinctly stated. Then, these broad principles are applied to the particular issues of authority, as expressed in civil government. Specific passages support these applications. Following this, the response of God's people through the timeline of Biblical history are addressed in the Jewish era and then the Christian era. In the conclusion, a short word study is used to hone a few important points. By the journey's conclusion, the analogy of Scripture will shed light on the manner by which Christians are to submit to earthly authorities as instructed in Romans 13.

Before focusing upon the primary topic of civil government and Christian's obedience to it, several assumptions will be stated without supporting arguments due to their fundamental nature in the faith. Readers are expected to accept God's Sovereignty over all creation. Obedience to Scripture is tacitly assumed given its inspired nature and its clearly expressed normative expectations. Christians are sent into the world and commanded to be salt and light to the world, but they are not expected to live according to its principles. The inclusion of Romans 13 in Scripture is not an accident, but an intentional expression of God's preceptive Will which Christians must obey. Although not an assumption, but more of a conscious choice, temporary agnosticism to eschatology will aim to remove potential biases and focus on the simple propositions of Scripture. With these assumptions and this limitation in mind, Romans 13:1-7 will be exegeted using the analogy of Scripture in order to derive beginning principles for the proper response of God's people today to earthly authorities.

God as Ultimate Authority: The First Broad Principle

The nature of authority, as portrayed Biblically in both propositions and narrative descriptions, indicates that God remains the ultimate authority throughout all time. Civil authority, which is a

beneficial institution for mankind, originates with God and is then delegated by God who has divided this authority into earthly jurisdictions and directs it through His revealed law.

Authority originates with God and is therefore delegated by God. Romans 13:1-7 addresses this directly in verse one, "For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." In addition, rulers are called a "servant" (*diakonos*) of God in verse four and "ministers" (*leitourgoi*) of God in verse six, indicating that they owe their allegiance to the One from whom their authority was derived (Logos software). Likewise, Matthew 28:18-20 exemplifies the implications of authority and points to its source when Jesus declares that "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me". Here, Jesus bases his right to command the disciples on the authority given to Him, thereby considering such authority as sufficient for commanding them. In the Old Testament, Jeremiah presents Nebuchadnezzar as being a "servant" (Hebrew *ebed*) (Logos software) of God (Jeremiah 27:6). As the highest authority, God is the source of all earthly authority through the act of delegation.

It is inconsistent with the Scriptures to claim that human governments arise primarily from any "social compact" or "consent of the governed" (Bromiley, 545). Human governments are God ordained for righteous ends even if enacted through human secondary means. In addition, men are intended to be in subjection to earthly authorities, Exodus 21:6 and 22:8 as well as Psalm 82:6 describe rulers as "gods" (Hagopian). Their power over other men, evident in this appellation, implies man's subjection to them as a statement of fact. In verse one of Romans 13, the ultimate authority, God, commands subjection (*hypotasso*, most commonly translated as some form of subjection or submission, see later section for further explanation) to His instituted authorities (Louw-Nida). Verses three and four then portray these God ordained earthly authorities as beneficial for the people. In contrast to living under delegated authorities, Judges 17:6 describes the result of having no king, i.e. no effective government, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." In this case, without a clear figure of authority to whom men were submitting themselves, men individually decided what was right, an ancient post-modernism of sorts. The people's rejection of God's direct and indirect authority through earthly rulers given to them resulted in anarchy. Civil government and obedience to it is good for man because it is derived from God rather than from men.

God delegates authority through various means. Though objectors might note that Scripture depicts rulers and leaders as being chosen through human action in several instances, this does not negate prior assertions of God's ordaining role. Exodus 18:21, where the Jews are commanded to

appoint able men from among their number, and Deuteronomy 16:18-19, where a similar command is given, describe the secondary means of God's actions. God remains the ultimate cause. Given the unambiguous origination of authority from God, this enactment of choosing by man in no way diminishes God's sovereignty in having chosen those particular leaders. God simply worked through secondary causes and intermediaries to bring about His Will (a concept which will be addressed more fully later). Ultimately, God delegates authority to whomever He wills in whatever manner He chooses.

In addition to originating and delegating authority, God has divided authority into the earthly jurisdictional spheres of individual, family, church, and various civil governments. Each of these authorities receives delegated authority within their jurisdiction but not authority outside that jurisdiction (Grant, 19). Only God maintains authority over all areas of life. Several examples from Scripture collectively demonstrate the universality of this principle. Self-government is seen in Galatians 5:23 where "self-control can only be maintained by the power of the Spirit (Hagopian) which means it originates in God. Several Scriptures denote the jurisdiction of the family with its boundaries and responsibilities. These include the household codes of Ephesians 5:22-6:4 and Colossians 3:18-21, as well as I Timothy 5:8's consideration of family responsibilities for one another. In several other Scriptures, church government is established in Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:1-3, Hebrew 13:17, I Timothy 3:1-3, Matthew 18:15-20 and Acts 15. The servant-hood nature of this authority is authority structure is seen in Matthew 20:25-27, Mark 9:35, and John 13:14-15. Finally, Matthew 22:21 makes clear that Caesar, his jurisdiction of civil government, operates with a defined sphere of responsibility. "Therefore, render to Cesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." As in the other spheres, the state's power does not overrule the power of the ultimate authority in the area of overlap for the state's power is derived from God and operates appropriately within its defined limits. George Grant considered this statement of Jesus as affirming both the state's legitimacy and the state's limitations (Grant, 24). Each jurisdiction of authority is limited by God's ordination.

Within each jurisdictional sphere, the responsibilities of the respective jurisdiction are governed by the Law of God as set forth in the Scripture. God's Law defines the extent of their authority and their responsibility. The assumed division between "sacred" responsibility and "secular" responsibility is a false dichotomy. God's law governs all people and all areas. Romans 3:23's explicit declaration that all have sinned and fallen short implies that all were under some form of law in order to sin, so God's law is for all people. Several examples demonstrate that all jurisdictions are under God's law without distinct or complete separation between sacred and secular (Grant, 18-20). Under Israel's theocratic

government both the appointed judges of Deuteronomy 16:18 and the Levites of Deuteronomy 17:8-9 were addressed as judging the people in regards to both religious and civil matters. Both areas were ultimately under God's Law (Hoffecker, 164). In the subsequent theocratic monarchy described in Deuteronomy 17:15, Israel's king was to have both civil and religious duties. In I Corinthians 6:1-7, Paul admonishes fellow Christians to take their disputes before other believers in the Church body rather than before the civil authorities. In the New Testament, church members were therefore to judge civil matters between themselves.

The Scriptures then give explicit principles within various jurisdictions, which show that God's law applies to each of these areas. Ephesians 6:5-9 and Colossians 4:22-5:1 address it at the occupational level. The family is delegated educational responsibility in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and Ephesians 6:1-4 while disciplinary authority is explicit in Proverbs 23:13-14 as well as other verses. The property owner or farmer is given responsibility for charity in Leviticus 19:9 and the church shares some of that charitable responsibility for widows in I Timothy chapter 5. At the civil authority level, it is also expressed. In Numbers 10, Moses as head of the people was responsible for using the silver trumpets to summons or alarm the people to different purposes. Jesus' response to the paying of taxes also exhibits the rightful authority of civil government within its jurisdiction (Grant 24). The apostles' testimony before the Sanhedrin in Acts demonstrates a recognition of civil and religious authority combined.

Again, all government rests on the ultimate Authority who has divided responsibility and delegated authority jurisdictionally under His Law for the good of mankind. God, as this ultimate authority did not then leave the delegated authorities to operate as they pleased, but gave law as the guide for good and evil, for righteousness and unrighteousness. Law is not to cause harm, but as Luke 6:9 implies, it remains for doing good on the Sabbath (a part of the Law). It is meant for man's good. This good also comes through its application to those who are disobedient as described in I Timothy 1:8-10 where the law is said to be "good" if it is used lawfully. The law is primarily for the lawless and disobedient. Paul provides several examples of the lawless and disobedient and finally encompasses his broadest definition by the general statement "whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine."

Though the law of God was meant to curtail disobedience in all spheres, it also limits man's punishment of the wicked to acceptable degrees. In Exodus 21:23-27 and Leviticus 24:18-23, the well-known lex talionis, often viewed in a negative light, actually prevented far more damaging punishments from being inflicted on the guilty. As Schwertley argues in God's Law for Modern Man, the goal was justice. He also quotes Greg Bahnsen's book, Theonomy, pp. 437-438 in further support of this.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20 further confirms this intention by commanding the rulers to “judge the people with righteous judgment”, “not pervert justice”, “not show partiality”, “not accept a bribe”, and to follow only justice. Through this obedience they were to inherit the land which God had given them. The impartiality was to extend both to citizens of Israel and strangers in the land (Leviticus 24:22). Based on Deuteronomy 4:1-8 (particularly verses 7 and 8), Schwertley points out in *God’s Law for Modern Man* that the law was also meant to be a model for other nations. There the nearness of God was extolled as were the laws of the Israelites.

As further examples of its goal of justice, not punitive purposes, the Law included stipulations for self-defense in Exodus 22:2-4 and required atonement for unsolved murders in Deuteronomy 21:1-9. In fact, government itself could be the enactment of judgment as seen in Hosea 13:11 where God says that He would give a king to His people “in His wrath”. St. Thomas Aquinas noted this in work “On Kingship or the The Governance of Rulers” as he addressed how the people should seek help in resisting a tyrant (Sigmund, 25). Both Biblical narratives and propositions therefore demand the doctrine that God is the ultimate authority, ordaining civil government for mankind’s benefit through delegation and jurisdictional division.

Particular Applications to Earthly Authority: Second Broad Principle

The application of God’s authority may be seen clearly in the areas of His ordaining, directing, commanding, judging, and having dominion over all civil government. First, God’s creation or ordaining of government may be argued from several verses out of both Testaments. Daniel 4:17 describes God as not only ruling the kingdoms of men, but giving it “to whom he will”. Daniel 2:44-45 foretells how God would set up a kingdom which would overturn all the prior ones. In Jeremiah 27:6, God describes how he gave lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Romans 9:17 recounts God’s words to Pharaoh showing that God had raised him up for the very purpose of showing His power. Isaiah expresses God’s giving certain rulers to the people (Isaiah 3: 4-5). Additionally, when man tried to set up kings outside of God’s expressed will, God considered this disobedience (Hosea 8:3-4).

In spite of these examples some would argue that God only ordained institutions, not rulers. They do so to avoid accusations of evil against God. As proof of God’s individual ordination, I Kings 12:15 describes how Jeroboam’s rebellion and subsequent kingdom was “a turn of events from the Lord”, leaving no doubt that even a rebellion was under God’s rule as God had commanded Jeroboam to do so.

The Bible's description of Nebuchadnezzar as God's "servant" in Jeremiah 27:6 and Jesus' dialogue with Pontius Pilate in John 19:10-11 also confirm that God ordains not only offices, but the rulers that fill those offices (Cole).

While God consistently claims prerogative to establish all kingdoms, the Scripture also specifically articulates one means of God's choosing rulers -- that being through other men. In Deuteronomy 16:18 and Exodus 18:21, God commands them to choose from able, God-fearing men to make into chiefs at different levels of governments. God communicates the requirements for these leaders, but uses man as the means of choosing them. God is appreciated again as working through man to choose leaders in the account of Samuel searching out David among the sons of Jesse to anoint as the future king in I Samuel 16:9-13. Yet, God always acts as the sovereign guide over such choices. Deuteronomy 17:15 indicates that even in Israel's choosing a king from among their own people, this king will still be one whom "the LORD your God will choose".

Having ordained governments and their rulers, God then directs their actions. God works out His Will through ordained leaders. Chapter five of the Westminster Confession of Faith reiterates this in broader, yet inclusive terms. This truth is revealed in His Word both in narrative accounts, prophecies, and propositional statements. Ezra 1:1-3 and 2 Chronicles 36:22 tell of how Isaiah's prophecy (Is.: 44:28) regarding Cyrus and Jeremiah's prophecy of the exile's end was fulfilled (Jeremiah 29:10). This exemplifies God's control over nations and kings in all places at all times. Such power to direct and determine the course of kingdoms is also mentioned in Daniel 2:21. Isaiah prophesied in 49:22-23 that God would move the nations along with their kings and queens to serve His people. Psalm 33:10 describes how "the LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples." The previously described rebellion of Jeroboam in I Kings 12:15 fulfilled God's prior prophecy through Ahijah (I Kings 14:1-8) (Cole). Maybe such verses served as the reasoning why John Calvin argued that wicked rulers were one means of God by which He punish His people's sins (Cole quoting Calvin's Comm. p 480 in Baker). God ordains both institutions and individual rulers and directs them in His desired course.

God commands rulers not only generally through commands which apply to all people, but also particularly through commands specific to their positions. Having ordained leaders for Israel, in Deuteronomy 1:16-18, God, through Moses, commands them to "judge righteously", to "not be partial in judgment", and to "not be intimidated by anyone". In Deuteronomy 16:18-20, having commanded the people to appoint leaders, God again gives commands to the people regarding how the leaders are to

rule. In Zechariah 45:7-9, God commands the princes of Israel retrospectively, commanding them to put away violence and oppression as well as to “execute justice and righteousness”. Specific commands are given to princes in Ezekiel 45 in regard to their sinful actions of taking the property of their subjects. God’s words through Jeremiah in 22:1-5 also express clear commands to judges and rulers in Israel along with the people of Israel, demanding their obedience. Though spoken generally to stewards, I Corinthians 4:2 could properly apply to rulers in requiring that they be found faithful. Therefore, God does not leave rulers and leaders only with general commands that apply to all His people, but He repeatedly requires specific obedience from them in their appointed offices.

God judges civil governments by a standard. Being under both the general commandments given to all and also specific commandments directed at their offices, rulers and governments are judged by these commands repeatedly in Scripture. Isaiah 10:5-6 succinctly ties together God’s commanding and judgment, using Assyria to judge Israel for her unfaithfulness by commanding Assyria to attack and to destroy. This comes soon after 10:1 where it says “woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness, which they have prescribed.” King Saul’s poor judgment is well known to most Christians from 1 Samuel 15:25-33. Daniel tells of judgment on rulers in both 4:17-25 and 5:25-28. The Psalms, specifically in 94:20-23, describe what God will do to the rulers who “frame injustice by statue” and “condemn the innocent to death”. Psalm 2 describes God’s response to those rulers who conspire in rebellion against God and His Anointed. Psalm 105:14 tells how God “rebuked kings on their account”. These rulers clearly include nations like the Chaldeans, not just Israel, as is shown by Habakkuk 2:12: “woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity!” Isaiah 5:20-23, 1 Samuel 12:13-15, 2 Chronicles 21:17, Micah 2:2, Isaiah 1:21-26, and Ezekiel 34:1-5 also support this principle of God judging rulers’ unrighteousness.

In contrast, 2 Samuel 23:3-4 describes how a just ruler, ruling in the fear of God, will be a blessing to the people. This ruler will dawn on them “like the morning light...” 2 Kings 17:1-8 then provides a specific example, describing how King Hezekiah’s obedience to God brought blessing to the people of Israel. Ultimately, after all nations and rulers have had their appointed time on earth, Revelation 11:15-16 describes how all kingdoms of the earth will become “the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever”. Here, the blessing of the archetype of the righteous ruler will be fully manifested in Christ’s full manifestation.

While the Old Testament does not explicitly name Christ in any references, the New Testament explicitly attributes all dominion to Christ. Despite this, the Son is clearly understood in Psalm 2:7-12 as

being given dominion and the kings are told to “serve the LORD with fear” and to “Kiss the Son”. In Psalm 22:28, kingship is said to “belong to the LORD, and he rules over the nations”. Then in the New Testament, ascriptions of dominion and kingly rule to Christ as God are well known to Christians. I Timothy 6:15-16 attributes “eternal dominion” to God. Elsewhere, Ephesians 1:20-21 describes how God elevated Christ above all other authorities. God clearly refers to Christ as the recipient of all authority and this is also echoed in 1 Peter 4:10-11 and 5:10-11. Then Colossians 1:15-19 explicitly affirms that not only were all “thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities” created through him, but “for him” as well. Jude 24-25 further ascribes to Christ, glory, majesty, dominion, and authority. Hence, both Testaments attest to the dominion of God and Christ over all authorities on earth.

The Response of the Jewish People to Authority

Having established the nature of God’s authority and the implications of that authority over earthly authority in civil government, the responses of God’s people to Him and His delegated authorities may be examined. Given the testamental division of God’s people into the Jews prior to Christ and Christians or the Church after Christ as well as the progressive nature of special revelation, these responses will be examined for each group separately. Within each group, attitudes towards rulers (either in response or through commands), examples of obedience to government, examples of disobedience, even resistance are noted from Scripture.

Beginning with the Jews, God’s expectations of a submissive attitude by His people is depicted in the Old Testament. This attitude of submission is reflected in Proverbs 24:21, “My son, fear the LORD and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise”. Other Proverbs echo this sentiment such as Proverbs 16:14, 20:2, 20:26, 22:11, as well as Ecclesiastes 10:20. Further, more explicit and specific commands are given to God’s people at different times. In the seventh verse of Jeremiah chapter 29, the Jews are commanded to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” Though not addressing a specific ruler directly, here God commanded obedience or submission to a foreign power, even seeking the good of that power. As the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) explains, the Hebrew word translated “welfare” each time is *šālôm* which is a significant term in Old Testament theology. Various connotations of the word include “peace, prosperity, well, health, completeness, safety”. It includes the concept of “unimpaired relationships with others and fulfillment in one’s undertakings” (Harris, 931).

The Jews are to pray for this peace, well-being, or welfare for their oppressors. While used in a number of settings, this word is highly connected with God's covenantal activity and as the TWOT notes, nearly two-thirds of its appearances in the Old Testament related to "the state of fulfillment which is the result of God's presence" (Harris, 931). Examples include Numbers 25:12, Isaiah 54:10, Ezekiel 34:25, and Malachi 2:5. Though this usage of the term does not restrict the meaning here to such covenantal peace, at the very least, the Jews are to pray for their captors to experience actual well-being and not just a superficial peace. This example testifies to the direct commands given by God both for ordinary life, in Proverbs, and in particular situations of Jewish history so described in Jeremiah. Obedience depended on God, not on who was in power.

As another aspect of the Jew's attitude toward their rulers, God's people consistently pray to God while interacting with earthly rulers. Daniel exemplified this throughout his life. In seeking an answer to the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel chapter 2, he urges Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to join him in seeking "mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery" (2:18). Later, despite the order to pray only to Darius, Daniel continues to pray only to God and ultimately is delivered from the lion's den (Daniel 6). Even while continuing in service within the reign of Darius in chapter 9, Daniel prayed for the deliverance of God's people. In the book of Ezra, we see in chapters 7 onward, how Ezra submitted to King Cyrus' commands, yet submitted his prayers to God. In Ezra 8:21-23, Ezra and his companions' prayer to God regarding protection while traveling from Babylon to Jerusalem rather than ask the king for guards to accompany them. Nehemiah also demonstrated a righteous attitude towards God and King Artaxerxes when he prayed and fasted in Nehemiah 1:4, prior to approaching the king concerning the walls of Jerusalem. This attitude of prayer will be further revealed in the New Testament.

Beyond these commands of submission to rulers and prayers to God while interacting with them, clear examples of righteous obedience to governments are appreciated in the Old Testament. Daniel's response to Nebuchadnezzar in chapters 1-4 of Daniel are commonly cited (Darrow, Hagopian, Nelson, Wilson to name a few). There Daniel showed respect towards the king and his delegated authorities in obedience to Jeremiah's words noted earlier yet served God outwardly while doing so (1:8-21, 2:17-30). Daniel continues this pattern of obedience with Belshazzar in chapter five and King Darius in chapter six. God obviously blessed Daniel's obedience and wisdom throughout the book by deliverances and promotions across several kingly reigns. Elsewhere, Esther walks in submission before the king to save her people in Esther 5:1-2, even at the risk of her own life. Ezra (chapter 7 onwards) and

Nehemiah (chapters 1 and 2) submit to the rule of kings over them similarly while seeking the good of God's people. These examples are clearly approved by God in God's restoration and protection of His people.

While obedience is commended, several well-known examples of individual's disobedience to oppressive foreign governments are also approved by God in the Old Testament. As early as Exodus 1 and 2, the refusal of the Hebrew midwives to obey Pharaoh's command to kill Hebrew male babies was explicitly blessed. Various speakers and authors reviewed for this paper cite this example: Kirby Anderson, John Piper, Kenneth Nelson, Darrow & Darrow, David Hagopian to name only a few. Soon after this example, Moses' parents disobey Pharaoh by hiding their son in Exodus 2 (also described in Hebrews 11:23). Continuing in the life of Moses, Moses also disobeyed Pharaoh in chapter five of Exodus by refusing to worship Pharaoh in place of God, even refusing to be of that family. This is described as an act of faith in Hebrews 11:24-28. In Joshua 2:1-7 and 15-18, God worked through the disobedience of Rahab to her own government in order to provide victory to the Jews over Jericho. She is then praised for her act of faith in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25. God uses another woman, Deborah, in Judges 4 to overturn the rule of Jabin, king of Canaan, which God had placed over the Israelites for their sins. Also of note is Ehud's murder of Moab's king Eglon who had been ruling over Israel in Judges 3:15-23. Later in Israel's history, Daniel along with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah obtain permission to disobey the king's dietary orders. Then in chapter three Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah directly defied the king's command to worship the statue. These orders contradicted God's commands in Exodus 20:3-6. Otherwise submissive Daniel himself disobeys an unambiguous command by Darius in chapter six by refusing to pray to Darius rather than God. Again, authors such as Kirby Anderson, John Piper, James Wilson, and others note these examples by Daniel. Though they were Jews who overthrew governments, Old Testament heroes noted in the New Testament (Hebrews 11) include Gideon, Barack, Samson, and Jephthah (Houdmann). Clearly God and His Word approves of His people's disobedience to foreign governments when obedience to that government requires disobedience to God and His Law.

In addition to disobeying foreign civil powers, resistance to Israel's own government abound. In 2 Chronicles 26:16-19, the priests, particularly Azariah, withstood King Uzziah's attempt to unlawfully offer incense to God. God directly judged the king with leprosy when he continued to press against the priest's resistance. Elijah's resistance of Ahab and Jezebel in I Kings 17 (Darrow) is well known as is his putting to death the priests of Baal in I Kings 18:40 (Brutus). Micahiah is also mentioned in I Kings 22 as standing against this nefarious pair of rulers. The prophet, Nathan, directly rebuked King David's sin in 2

Samuel 12 and led to David's repentance (Darrow). A similar act of rebuke landed the prophet Hanani in prison, sent there by King Asa (2 Chronicles 16) (Darrow). In response to Ahab's wickedness, Elisha goes as far as refusing to recognize Ahab as king in 2 Kings 3:13-15. Additionally, Obadiah, from Ahab's own ruling household resisted Ahab even while serving him. I Kings 18 tells of how Obadiah hid one hundred prophets of God from Ahab and cared for them. (Nelson). Clearly, Ahab's notorious disobedience to God produced a number of episodes in which he was resisted by God's prophets. Ahab was not the only Jewish ruler righteously resisted by religious leaders. II Chronicles 22:10-23:4 describes a sad time in the history of Israel during which the priests righteously participated in a comprehensive overthrow of Israel's corrupted government. Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah had taken the throne by killing the entire household of the royal family. King Jehoram's daughter Jehoshabeath who was also wife of Jehoiada the priest, stole away and hid Joash, the lone surviving son, in the house of God. After seven years, Jehoiada then covenanted with commanders in the army and the Levites to gather an assembly to reestablish Joash as king. Queen Athaliah, acting as an unlawful tyrant, was then overthrown. Reforms in the nation and its worship were then instituted. In an instructive example of civil disobedience, the Jews under King Saul refused to execute Saul's son, Jonathan, after Jonathan disobeyed the king's command to not eat for a defined period (I Samuel 14:27-46) (Faith Bible Church). King Saul clearly ordered this foolishly, and the people received no condemnation for their refusal to obey. At another time Jonathan knowingly resisted his father's opposition of David (I Samuel 20:30-34, 23:17).

The narrative of the conflict between David and Saul provides many instances of resistance to the civil government. David's period of fleeing Saul exhibits several forms of obedience and disobedience which each elicit approval as righteous acts or at least no condemnation. David had been anointed future king by Samuel (I Samuel 16:13) and had gained great respect from the Jews (I Samuel 18:6-16). Saul knew of David's fame and feared it (I Samuel 18:6-16), causing him to try to kill David (I Samuel 18:1-2). Knowing God's will for his future, David was under no obligation to surrender to Saul's act even though it was an act of Israel's government. David took Jonathan's warning in chapter 20 and escaped Saul's plan to murder him. Others fled to serve under David and also incurred no Biblical condemnation, though they were effectively rebelling against Saul by supporting David (I Samuel 21:1-2). Yet, when David had the opportunity to slay Saul by ambush, David held back unwilling to lift a hand directly against God's anointed (I Samuel 24:1-15). Saul recognizes his own sin in this episode (verses 16-22). Clearly, the righteousness of each participant depended not on the simple presence or absence of government approval, but on whether or not God approved.

In order to avoid the accusation that Scripture approves of all disobedience, blatantly sinful examples of the Jew's disobedience to government are condemned in Scripture's history of Israel. In Numbers 16, Korah's rebellion against Moses is condemned and punished (31-35). The story of Absalom's unrighteous rebellion against his own father, the king, is narrated in II Samuel from chapter 15 to 19. The results of this are disastrous for both father and son. Worthy of note is the fact that David resisted Absalom even though Absalom had gained military control and wooed the people to his side (Price). Although recounted in Acts chapter 5, Theudas and Judas were alluded to as having led revolts besides that of Barrabas. In these instances, there was no sign of God's approval. Disobedience to government is acceptable to God only when it is in accord with His will or commands and is otherwise condemned.

In summary of Jewish subjection and response to human government, several principles can be ascertained. First, they were to have a submissive attitude towards earthly rulers while praying to God in all matters including for provision through foreign powers and protection from these same powers. Second, they owed obedience first to God and then to human government only so far as obedience to God could be maintained. Third, when that obedience to God could be maintained, they were to seek the welfare of the government or culture ruling them. Fourth, should the government demand disobedience to God and His Law, the people could resist that government when led by God to do so through leaders appointed by God. Fifth, in contrast, resistance to godly government would result in judgment for those who rebelled. Ultimately, it all boiled down to obeying God. God, as ultimate authority demanded submission to His Will and Law.

The Response of Christians to Civil Government

The response of Christians and the Church after the first advent builds on the Jewish principles elucidated from the Old Testament, deepening them and furnishing further examples of how to obey God in the public expression of Christian life. Again, commands for submissive attitudes, exhortations towards prayer, and God's reactions to both obedience and disobedience will provide the student of Scripture with great wisdom.

The exhortation towards an attitude of submission to ordained authorities stands out repeatedly in the New Testament. The primary New Testament texts addressing government makes this clear. Titus 3:1 and I Peter 2:13-17 both stand beside Romans 13:1-7 as the most explicit statements regarding

Christian's obedience to earthly authorities. Romans 13:1-7 leaves no doubt that such an attitude is commanded by God. In I Peter Christians are commanded to "be subject ... to every human institution whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors..." Peter also commands his readers to honor the emperor. Dale R. Bowne and Jon D. Currid, note that despite Peter's calling civil government a "human institution", he directs believers to obey their rulers. It has already been established that God delegated the authority to these "human institutions". Therefore wisdom demands appropriate submission to God's instituted leaders. Peter explains that by doing so they will silence foolish people (Hoffecker, 183). Titus 3:1 also directs a submissive attitude to rulers and authorities. No denial of this direct command is possible.

In addressing the command to submit, the chronology of Nero's rule poses a challenge when exegeting historically the commands of Peter and Paul (du Toit). Paul likely wrote Romans prior to the degradation of Nero and could have had a more positive view of government (Guthrie, 407-408). The dating of I Peter is less sure according to Guthrie but would also fit well prior to Nero's full scale persecution of the early church (Guthrie, 786-788). Some, such as Krell, argue for a later date in the midst of the Neronian persecution (Krell). Regardless, it would be damaging to the doctrine of Scripture's inspiration to claim that Paul's (if not both Paul's and Peter's) lack of foreknowledge into Nero's future wickedness led either author to write something which would be fallacious reasoning for later believers. If the Spirit were inspiring the authors before Nero's persecution, then their words which are the Words of God would remain true later. Also, as Jews, Peter and Paul would have had a cultural bias against Roman rule in general.

Besides an attitude of submission, believers are commanded in I Timothy 2:1-3 to pray for all peoples, including civil authorities, as this is pleasing to God (Duncan III). Not only is it pleasing to God, but immediately afterwards God's desire for "all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" expands this to include spiritual benefits in addition to earthly ones (WCF, Nelson). This command sounds very similar to the one in the book of Jeremiah to seek the welfare of the city in which they were exiled, for believers are sent into the world not to be a part of it but to interact with it on many levels (John 17). When one combines this idea with Matthew 6:10-13, where Jesus instructs the disciples on how to pray, God's Will for the shalom of all people becomes a particular portion of His Will to "be done on earth as it is in heaven".

Several examples of obedient submission are provided in the New Testament. Jesus himself provides a model for submission to earthly authorities. He submitted to the jurisdictional boundaries of

instituted governments by paying instituted taxes or acknowledging civil jurisdiction right to tax in Matthew 17:24-27, Matthew 22:15-22, and Luke 20:25. Despite the command to obey government, believers are foremost commanded to work not for man, including rulers, but for the Lord (Colossians 3:23-25).

Examples of obedient submission to government within the bounds of obedience to God may be discerned in Scripture in examples where new believers continued to work for government institutions after their conversions. In Luke 19, Zaccheus is nowhere said to have forsaken his position of tax collector, only that he performed his duties righteously after having paid restitution. In Acts 13, Paul did not instruct the leader Sergius Paulus to resign from Paphos leadership, nor did Paul direct the Philippian jailer to quit in Acts 16. Paul exhibited these principles of obedience in how he behaved before the Roman government in Acts 25:10-12, Acts 24-25 before Felix, Festus, and Herod Agrippa, as well as before Caesar in Acts chapters 26 through 28 (Bromiley, 545). The ISBE notes that in no Scripture does the New Testament forbid participation by Christians in civil government and cites the Ethiopian eunuch, Cornelius, “those in Caesar’s household”, as well as some already mentioned above as examples. The ISBE highlights that these believers exercised these privileges as individuals rather than as representatives of the corporate Church (Bromiley, 545).

Narrative examples of the early Christian’s resistance or disobedience to established civil authority provides helpful insight through a variety of responses. In Acts 4:1-31 and Acts 5:29, Peter and John demonstrated respect towards the Sanhedrin while unequivocally refusing to obey their commands which contradicted those of God. Paul, undergoing harassment from both civil and religious leaders, escaped in a basket from the authorities who sought to execute him (Acts 9:23-25). No disapproval of this fleeing is found in that text. In another instance, Paul used his Roman citizenship to avoid unlawful punishment in Acts 22:24-29.

Some means of resistance are also noted in commanded flight from authorities. As mentioned earlier, Joseph and Mary fled from Herod. Matthew 10:23 commands the disciples to flee to the next city when they are persecuted in one town. Hebrews 11:37-40 commends the faith of those who had wandered “about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” in their fleeing from persecution. If one considers the analogous pattern of children being commanded to obey parents in Ephesians 6:1-3 as a form of instituted authority, then the approved description of the Gospel turning children against their parents in Luke 12:53 would seem to coincide with this concept that man is to obey God rather than any instituted authority if only one may be obeyed to the exclusion of the other

(Volkmer). In fact Ephesians 5:6-11 clearly commands Christians to “not become partners with them” (the sons of disobedience) (Volkmer). I Peter 4:14 even describes those who are persecuted for Christ’s sake as blessed as does the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:10), assuming that Christians will oppose evil in whatever form it occurs and suffer for such opposition.

Also indicating that a blanket submission to man’s government is not intended by Scripture, I Corinthians 6:1-7 directs church members to judge grievances among believers within their own numbers rather than submitting disagreements before civil courts. God actually directed Joseph and Mary to flee from Herod’s edict of infant execution in Matthew 2:1-12. Kevin Swanson in his book *The Second Mayflower* believes that the principle of self-defense is found in Luke 22:36-38, a principle which can be applied to both individuals and government. He expresses his opinion that these verses allow Christians to resist other individuals or institutions in defense of their own lives.

James 4:4 also supports such a principle of opposing ungodly authorities as does II Corinthians 10:5-6 and Ephesians 5:6-11. In II Corinthians, the command is to “destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...” Then Ephesians directs them to “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them”. There is therefore a proclamatory function for believers here among these examples of resistance. Though this collection of verses urges man to obey God over authorities, I Peter 4:15 enunciates unambiguously how no Christian should suffer for unrighteous acts. At other times a creatively adaptive approach may be appropriate in light of becoming all things to all men if this leads to glorifying God and furthering the Gospel (Volkmer). Christians must then discern cautiously whether a given civil disobedience is truly a dilemma between obeying God and obeying earthly authorities or an opportunity to submit within Biblical limits and advance God’s Kingdom.

In summary, one easily sees the continuance of the same basic principles from prior to Christ through the times after Christ’s first advent.

Final Considerations

Before stepping back to tie all these strands together, a few etymological considerations of Romans 13:1-7 deserve attention. “Every”, “authorities”, “be subject”, “resist”, “servant” in v 4, and “ministers” in v. 6 deserve brief exposition. Examples of submission, prayer, and various commands to

do so exist in the New Testament. Examples of unrighteous obedience as well as righteous disobedience to instituted civil authority in the New Testament provide further clarity.

“Every person” comes from Greek *pas* psyche. The Louw Nida explains “*pas*” as “the totality of any object, mass, collective, or extension”, consistently being translated as “all, every, each, whole”. “*Psyche*” was the “inner self, mind” or “a person as a living being”. Together these leave little room to interpret except as including all people without exception (Louw-Nida, 596). Christians do not get a “pass” on obeying.

Given its role in the command, *hypotassestho*, from *hypotasso*, also deserves note. It is translated “be subject” in the ESV, KJV, NKJV and NIV, and “be in subjection” in the NASB. Louw-Nida defines it “bring under control, ‘to submit to the orders or directives of someone—‘to obey, to submit to, obedience, submission.’” The Dictionary of Biblical Languages – Greek by Swanson defines it as “obey, be obedient; bring under control”. It is found 38 times in the New Testament, with the ESV translating it 24 times as some form of “subject”, but also in the remaining times as some form of “submit”, “submission”, or “put” (Logos). The understanding of *hypotasso* throughout this paper as “subjection” or “submission” fits this interpretation.

The word translated authorities in verse 1 and 2 is *exousia* in Greek. From the Louw Nida, 37.38 it means “one who has the authority to rule or govern—‘an authority, ruler.’ It is used 102 times in the New Testament, 72 of which is translated authority or authorities in the ESV. It is also translated as “power”, “right”, “jurisdiction”, “charge”, “disposal”, “control”, “claim”, and “domain”. It is used both of the power and the being or beings in authority. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament nuances the word in different ways, either as denoting “ability to perform an action”, “the right to do something or the right over something”, as possessing real power to carry out an action, as opposing the law in “the sense of self-asserted freedom”, or more particularly to office bearers or rulers.

Although *exousia* is used for authorities more than once in these verses, verse 3 also used the word *archontes* for “rulers”, in seeming contradistinction from authorities. His word is found 37 times in the ESV, 28 of which are translated either “ruler”, “ruler’s”, or “rulers”. It is also translated prince, authorities, or magistrates. Regardless, understanding *exousia* as representing authority is undoubtable in the verses cited.

The English word “resist” is used first for the Greek “*antitassomenos*”, a verb in the present middle tense as a participle. The Louw-Nida notes that it means “to oppose someone, involving not only

a psychological attitude but also a corresponding behavior". Then it is used again for *anthehteken* later in the same verse. This second Greek word is defined in the Louw-Nida by "to resist by actively opposing pressure or power." Thus the attitude and behavior of opposing the earthly authorities equates with active resistance towards God who ordained them. Resisting in these verses means what we understand as resisting.

The appellations of "servant" and "minister" were mentioned earlier as translating *diakonos* and *leiturgoi* (Louw-Nida, 494). Again, this indicates a hierarchy of authority in which God placed them where they are for the purpose of carrying out His Will. Together these very brief word studies coincide with the previously stated analogy of Scripture. God's sovereignty/authority is emphasized. God's authority over the rulers is explicit. Man's responsibility first to God, but secondarily to God's ordained rulers is maintained. The consequences of disobedience are unequivocal.

A few miscellaneous Scripture references which do not fall into any of the above categories provide a little further insight into Romans 13 as well. In regard to the welfare of a city, Proverbs 11:10-11 and Proverbs 14:34 note how righteousness among the inhabitants bring blessing upon them while sin is a reproach and shameful acts brings wrath. The combining of the command to "seek the welfare of the city", if it is applied to today's Church, implies that the righteousness of individuals contributes to whether a city whose welfare is to be sought can be promoted otherwise. The shalom of their city is to be a goal of Christians. Matthew 5:13, in which Jesus told his disciples that they would be the salt of the earth, further echoes this principle. Priestly connotations were inescapable as they were to guard the nations with their covenant loyalty, acting as a preserving agent (Grant, 39). Grant also points out that when God wants to preserve the earth, He often puts His priests in positions of political prominence; Joseph (Genesis 42:6), Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:1), Mordecai (Esther 10:3), and Daniel (Daniel 6:25-28) (39 Grant). Another consideration is the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 in which the disciples are told to make disciples of all "nations". Does "nations" mean individuals or people groups? Much debate which will not be addressed here has focused on this question. The application of bystander responsibility in Exodus 23:1-5 and Deuteronomy 22:1-4 could be applied to how Christian's interact with an evil government, affecting how far they may participate in the government's sinful acts through commission or omission. Psalm 82:1-4 and Proverbs 24:11-12 seem to encourage rescuing the weak and needy from the hand of the wicked, without regard to the office of the wicked. The frequently repeated command to love our neighbor as ourselves also seems to apply here (Matthew 22:39) 2 John 1:9-11 teaches that we are to reject both the teaching and the teachers of heresy. Each of these examples

either clarify or nuance the general principles discovered by this approach while maintaining their integrity in particular applications.

Romans 13:1-7 in Light of the Analogy of Scripture

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for she is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.”

In regard to Romans 13:1-7, the analogy of Scripture provides support, clarification, and deepening of this debated and critically important passage. Submission to authorities means obedience to those powers placed by God over the believer as a dual citizen. Those authorities derive their power from God as the ultimate authority. Authorities whose commands coincide with that which God has commanded or permitted must be obeyed dutifully by Christians for God has not only instituted them, but done so for the good of all. Resisting such righteous authority and such righteous commands by these human authorities brings judgment. Christians' goals for the good of society should coincide with the God ordained goals of the governing authorities in punishing evil and encouraging good. Where Romans remains silent is whether there are times in which Christians can righteously oppose evil government. The analogy of Scripture both in the Old and the New Testaments attest that obedience to God not only often stands in opposition to obedience to rulers, but also unequivocally commands believers to choose obedience to God over human authorities. However, even in such resistance, Christians are to remain prayerful and to exhibit subjection to human authorities through respect and obedience to all that which does not contradict God. The principles of self-defense and defending the weak or needy as well as examples of fleeing evil acts limit submission to the punitive consequences of

such an evil government. It permits Christians to seek reasonable or lawful escape from such oppression. This resistance can extend beyond individual interactions to larger, societal resistance in cases where God works through appointed leaders to suppress an evil ruler, even overturn their rule. Even Calvin permitted the idea of "God's Avengers" in chapter 20 of the Institutes (1517). As the primary two commandments make clear, the goal of Christians in regard to government is to love their neighbor by seeking their good and to love God by keeping His commandments. When this can be accomplished through obedience to civil government, Christians are bound to obey that government, but God's Word demands that Christians resist that which resists God, yet only that part which resists God, submitting as far as is lawfully possible to government while maintaining a prayerful and respectful attitude. From this starting point, the committed exegete can continue the grammatico-historical hermeneutics approach in search of not only orthodoxy, but with the goal of orthopraxy to God's Will in this area of life.

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