**The Christian and Civil Government**

1. Primary Texts

Romans 13:1-7

1 Peter 2:13-17

Titus 3:1

1. Like many subjects the Bibles teaching on the Christians relationship to Civil Government is complex. It calls for study, contemplation, and nuance.
2. What are the complexities?

A. Regarding Romans 13:3-6. Is this prescriptive or descriptive?

v.1 Is the higher power a document or a person?

v.3-4 Are all governments at all times, punishers of evil and praisers of good? If a government punishes good and praises evil is the Christians duty to that government in any way changed?

1. There is a biblical teaching that seems to advocate resistance to civil government.  
   Exodus 1:17 Judges 3:20-21 Daniel 3:18 Daniel 6:10 Acts 4:19 Acts 5:29

-Is resistance permitted only in the unique circumstances described in the passages above?

-Is resistance permitted in any circumstance where obedience to the civil government entails disobedience to an explicit command of God?

-Is resistance permitted in any circumstance where obedience to the civil magistrate would entail disobedience to any command that by good and necessary deduction may be deduced from scripture?

1. There is biblical teaching that seemingly gives the same unqualified authority to multiple entities.

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things…

Colossians 3:22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters…

Ephesians 5:24 …Let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive…

1 Peter 2:13-14 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man…

The obvious conflict between the various human authorities can be resolved in one of two ways.

* Subordinationism- Amongst the various authorities there is an established hierarchical structure. Of the various human authorities, one is recognized as supreme and all others are subordinated to it. The subordinate authorities with the supreme authority’s permission may exercise a delegated authority over others that are lower on the hierarchical structure than they are. (ex. Statism, communism, Erastianism Divine right, Roman Catholicism, Islam)
* Sphere Sovereignty – Each of the various authorities has sovereign authority in its own sphere. None of the authorities has any authority outside of its own sphere.

*An individual may exercise authority distinctly in multiple spheres. (ex. A man can be a father/ husband, employer, pastor and civil authority all at the same time.)*

1. Does scripture present either Subordinationism or Sphere Sovereignty as the biblical option?

Yes, sphere sovereignty is supported by scripture. This assertation is necessarily inferred from the following:

* Scripture teaches the separation of powers (most clearly seen in

2 Chron. 19:11)

* Scripture limits the authority that may be exercised by the various entities that God has ordained. (A. 2 Chron. 26:15-21, B. Exodus 21:15, Lev. 20:9 vs Deut. 21:18-21 C. Matt. 18:17, 1 Cor. 5:9-11

1. How are we to discern the boundaries of the Civil Governments sphere of authority? (For that matter, the boundaries of any human authority.)
2. Summary
3. Further considerations