

JUSTIFIABLE OR DAMNABLE?: AMERICA'S SCRIPTURAL CASE FOR REVOLUTION

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INTRODUCTION

The Question

Was the American Revolution justifiable or damnable? Being a primarily political controversy, the American Revolution is often discussed from a political point of view, which is fitting, but, for Christians who attempt to answer this question, Scripture must be taken into account, for the Bible must be the absolute standard for all true Christians. To reach a well-reasoned conclusion, each of the two most prominent opposing sides—patriots and loyalists—will have to be understood and compared, then applied to Scripture. From that framework, established on the foundation of the historical context, America's case for revolution may be made and judged. In light of the fact that the conflict took place well over 200 years ago, though, what is the point in devoting any serious time or thought to its justification?

Why is This Worthwhile?

For all citizens of the United States, such a study will provide insight into the character, purpose, and significance of their country's origins as well as into the lives those who unreservedly devoted themselves to the task of establishing that nation and

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those who stood against them. For Christians, it will have the additional benefit of conferring a more thorough understanding of God's will—a fundamental and life-long pursuit—concerning proper submission to government, a subject which is still relevant today since governments still exist and have grown no less susceptible to corruption. Such an exercise also aids in honing one's ability to comparatively analyze opposing arguments—crucial for students and scholars alike—and in developing exegetical ability—an important skill for any studious Christian. Finding it thus reasonably useful, it remains to select a method for its undertaking.

Determining a Method

Dr. James Byrd, a professor of American Religious History at Vanderbilt University,¹ undertook a similar project which resulted in a book entitled *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War*.² Byrd's primary purpose was to shed light on the role and usage of Scripture in supporting the patriot cause during the American Revolution.³ To conduct his research, he collected 543 individual sources which ranged from 1674 to 1800 and spanned "New England, the middle colonies, and the South."⁴ In reading "every page" of

¹ Dr. James P. Byrd: Assistant Professor of American Religious History and Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Research at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and Graduate Department of Religion.

² James Byrd, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), inside back cover flap.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 169, 3.

those sources, he identified 17,148 biblical citations.⁵ This impressive array of primary sources—mostly sermons—provided him with a highly representative data set from which to analyze what he called “the patriotic Bible of the American Revolution,” emphasizing the vital importance of Scripture in the American cause and the patriotic influence on biblical interpretation.⁶ Because of that integral connection, he worked beyond simply noting the frequency of all scriptural references made—no matter how brief—and devoted particular attention to those passages which were consistently the source of thorough discussion and debate during the revolutionary period—1763 to 1800. From these, he created a chart listing the eight most-cited chapters in Scripture and centered the foci of his own chapters on the themes expressed therein.⁷

This may seem a stellar bit of research, but why should Byrd look to sermons and scriptural references in order to understand the patriot cause? Why should this thesis employ arguments from religious leaders to weigh the justness of a largely political movement? After all, any historical study with integrity will approach its subject in light of how those in the historical context understood themselves. Both questions may be satisfied by the same explanation.

Colonial America was “saturated” with Scripture.⁸ As several historians have affirmed, the Bible was held to be a primary guide not only in matters of religion and morality but also in the realms of politics, war, economics, and education. If a family had only one book, it was almost certain to be the Holy Book, making it ubiquitous in the colonies.⁹ Unsurprisingly, Scripture was often invoked by political figures—both

when communicating amongst themselves and to the people—but it was the religious leaders, the local ministers, who made sense of the various happenings in society and made their meanings accessible to the common folk. This was particularly true for the American Revolution.¹⁰ As a result, religion and politics were thoroughly entwined, and religious leaders commanded a respect bordering on reverence. Their sermons, being given orally at the average rate of 2,000 per week across the colonies, were also published “at four times the rate of political pamphlets.” Revivalist preachers such as Samuel Davies, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards were household names in their day. Even Thomas Paine only achieved such renown with his *Common Sense* publication because it read more like a sermon than a political pamphlet.¹¹

Such having been the case, it was most fitting for Byrd to consult sermons to glean a genuine understanding of the patriot cause, and it is equally fitting for this thesis to select certain publications by religious leaders to serve as representative voices for their respective sides. In fact, to ignore the influence of religion would be to violate the very principle of historical study just mentioned: understanding the people as they understood themselves. Of course, since the American Revolution was still a primarily political event, the political context is essential to provide the framework needed to understand the religious controversy according to the perspective of those who lived it. As such, both the political and the religious controversies will have to be considered. Prior to constructing that framework, however, a historical foundation must be established in order to provide a reliable basis from which to examine and seek understanding from the political and religious

⁵ Ibid., 169.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., 170.

⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹ Ibid., 2-14, see also “Further Reading” section of Bibliography.

¹⁰ Ibid., 2-4.

¹¹ Ibid., 16-17, see also “Further Reading” section of Bibliography.

components of the American crisis. Upon that foundation and that framework may be supported the crown of the edifice: America's scriptural case for revolution. Taken together, it will then be seen whether that crown will be upheld, at last providing a reasonable conclusion in answer to the initial question.

Selecting Sources

To lay that crucial foundation, renowned historian Dr. Mark Noll's book *America's God* will be considered alongside an essay entitled "The Transformation of Protestant Theology as a Condition of the American Revolution" by well-known professor of politics Dr. Thomas West. In light of the differences between the evaluations of Noll and West, Dr. Sarah Morgan Smith has provided a balanced perspective which will aid in clarifying the apparent disagreements and forming a unified and concrete historical basis.

To represent the political considerations, a publication by John Wesley entitled *A Calm Address to Our American Colonies* will be paired with an anonymous direct rebuttal entitled *A Constitutional Answer to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Calm Address to the American Colonies*. These two were selected because both authors lived in England—providing a more removed perspective—and both pieces were circulated during the year the conflict exploded: 1775. Wesley in particular had considerable influence in his time and still remains very well known, and his address contains a very clear and succinct representation of the loyalist position from a political perspective.¹² Furthermore, Byrd pointed to Wesley's address as being the catalyst for a

"torrent" of other loyalist publications.¹³ On the other hand, Wesley's intentionally unknown interlocutor lent thorough and non-American support to the patriots' political perspective. Overall, the pairing of these two provides a contemporary illustration of the vigorously contested political situation.¹⁴

For the religious considerations, a 1750 sermon by Jonathan Mayhew entitled *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers* will serve as the representation of the patriot cause from a scriptural perspective. Byrd referred to this sermon as "[o]ne of the clearest statements of [the] view" that Paul did not enjoin submission to tyrants in Romans 13.¹⁵ This will be followed by a 1780 sermon from Charles Inglis—whom Byrd called "one of the most influential critics of American patriotism"—entitled *The Duty of Honouring the King*, in which he presented a thorough argument from Scripture in support of remaining reverent to his Majesty's government. Both men lived in America, and their sermons pair off very well together—both having been given in commemoration of the execution of King Charles I and having addressed similar arguments—even though they were given 30 years apart.¹⁶ In addition, since Mayhew's sermon was written 25 years before the conflict ignited, the potential for pro-American coupled with anti-English bias is substantially reduced. On the other hand, Inglis gave his sermon in 1780, when Britain's prospects for winning the war were no longer on sure footing, thus considerably mitigating circumstantial bias in favor of Great Britain. Finally, of the eight most cited chapters found by Byrd, number one was Romans 13; number five was I Peter 2;

¹² Ellis Sandoz, ed., *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805 Volume 1* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1998), 410-412, 422-424.

¹³ James Byrd, *Sacred Scripture*, 118.

¹⁴ Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons*, 410-412, 422-424.

¹⁵ James Byrd, *Sacred Scripture*, 123.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

number eight was Matthew 5.¹⁷ These passages are the three most thoroughly addressed between the two sermons.

From the material of these four representative sources, a sound understanding will be developed concerning both of the opposing viewpoints which characterized the American revolutionary era. With that understanding, the political and religious components may be accurately applied to each other to construct a reliable framework. This will enable a cohesive case to be made and tested.

To crown the edifice, a thorough treatment of the controversy by Dr. Moses Mather has been selected. Entitled *America's Appeal to the Impartial World*, this work was one of the clearest presentations of the patriot perspective, was composed as the conflict was exploding in 1775, and was, according to Dr. Ellis Sandoz, "a superb statement of American liberty... characteristic of the pulpit at the time."¹⁸ If any one work could successfully present America's scriptural case for revolution, this would be it.

CHAPTER ONE

Christianity and Republicanism Leading Up to the Revolution

Conflict Between Christianity and Republicanism

Following the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s, republicanism—an idea which essentially promoted free and representative government as the best societal constitution and emphasized a 'virtuous' citizenry as the surest means of preserving it—gained increasing prominence in Europe. One might expect conflict in the political sphere considering the ubiquity of monar-

chies at the time, but there was also a significant degree of religious conflict, even beyond that between Protestants and Catholics. Part of that conflict almost certainly stemmed from the inception of these republican notions in Europe, though what precisely was the source of that inception is subject to speculation.

Dr. Mark Noll posited that republican thought was actually derived from Niccolo Machiavelli and his conception of *virtù*. This Machiavellian notion elevated the safety and success of the state and its ruler above all else, including any sort of moral code. Everything would serve the ends of the state in order to overcome the influence of *fortuna*. In short, virtue for Machiavelli was power expertly exercised to achieve the success of the wielder by any means. Clearly, this was diametrically opposed to the core Christian concepts of love and godliness above all and acknowledgement of God's providence.¹⁹ According to this view, then, Christianity was a useful tool in furthering the humanistic interests of the state and its government, yet was that truly at the heart of republican thought in Europe? To lend support to such a conclusion, Noll referenced the works of several notable historians and pointed specifically to the Baron de Montesquieu's distinction between republican virtue and Christian morality.²⁰ Noll did acknowledge, however, that there were republican thinkers who conveyed a genuine adherence to Christian convictions—even if some of their views were unorthodox—and cited the contrast between the Dutch theorists Benedict Spinoza and Rabod Scheels as a case-in-point.²¹ Was the incorporation of Christian principle into republicanism merely a means of making Machiavelli's thoroughly secular views more palatable to religious ears, a sleight-of-hand

¹⁷ Ibid., 170.

¹⁸ Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons*, 440.

¹⁹ Mark Noll, *America's God*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 58.

²⁰ Ibid., 61.

²¹ Ibid., 58.

convincing enough to enable the subversion of Christianity by those who paid homage to it? Dr. Sarah Morgan Smith was kind enough to bring some clarity to the issue.

Clarifying the Conflict

First, in discussing conflict between republicanism and Christianity, one cannot simply treat Christianity as one entity. After the Protestant Reformation, multiple lines of Christian thought were established: Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Anabaptist, Presbyterian etc. So, the level and content of conflict with republicanism would vary depending upon which Christian group was in question. Catholic France—in which the ecclesiastical authorities were thoroughly intertwined with the monarchical structure—would thus provide a vastly different environment for republican thought than Calvinist Holland. Nations such as the former would be far more inclined to be both politically and ecclesiastically hostile to republicanism, and, as such, it would be more likely for republican thinkers residing therein to be antagonistic to both absolute monarchy and Christianity. The opposite, however, would be true for nations such as Holland and Great Britain.

Second, republican thought was not restricted to certain Christian groups. Following the Reformation, there was a resurgence in Hebrew Republicanism. This line of thought drew attention to various points in the Torah which signaled God's endorsement for a representative form of government consisting of multiple officials in a federal structure—Jethro's advice to Moses²²—and even a divine stance against kings.²³ Both Jews and Christians, then, contributed to the rise in republicanism and did so from a basis in Scripture.²⁴ So, there

is a Machiavellian vein as well as a Judeo-Christian vein in the heart of republicanism. The question then is: which one exercised the most influence in America? Before going to the colonies, however, the mother country should be considered.

Christianity and Republicanism in Great Britain

Great Britain was something of an anomaly among the European empires. After all, its constitution was a monarchy that was limited by Magna Carta and that shared power with a representative Parliament. Within the nation, there were strong contentions between Catholic- and Protestant-leaning groups that erupted into violent conflict on multiple occasions. As such, British thinkers represented quite a range of perspectives, and Noll noted a peculiarity that manifested itself therefrom.

In the 1640s, an alliance arose between Christian Puritans and republican “commonwealthsmen.” Members of each group were united in stalwart opposition to monarchical overreach and in the promotion of virtues such as “frugality, sobriety and industry” among the citizenry. Both emphasized a clear distinction between liberty and license and denounced all manifestations of the latter, as well as “luxury and sloth.” Ultimately, though, they were still two distinct entities since the Puritans were willing to bend on republican principle to achieve their ends—Oliver Cromwell being a fitting example—and certain commonwealthsmen had a tendency to view religion more as a necessary component for supporting republican society than as a primary directive for life. Nonetheless, this persistent if somewhat unstable alliance brought Christianity and republicanism closer to one another in practice. Concerning the English republican theorists, though, Noll put them all among the less religious common-

²² Ref. Exodus 18.

²³ Ref. I Samuel 8-12.

²⁴ Sarah Morgan Smith, interview with author, March 7, 2018.

wealthsmen, insisting that they were really promoting “*virtù* above all.”²⁵ One particularly prominent man Noll placed in that category was John Locke, a designation with which Dr. Thomas West most certainly did not agree. Due to the importance of Locke in understanding American discourse, it is worthwhile to briefly consider what his true character most likely was.

John Locke's Character

Rather than assigning Locke to one side or the other of the English alliance that Noll described, West saw in him a unification of the two perspectives. In the thought of Locke, reason and revelation were simultaneously present in Christianity, and that produced a theology that proclaimed the republican principles which were to be found both in nature and in Scripture. Even ignoring the many scriptural references in Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, his *Reasonableness of Christianity* and *Letter on Toleration* made this conclusion inescapable for West. In fact, so convinced was West that he referred to Locke as “a major theologian” and pointed to one claim in Locke's *Letter on Toleration* that seriously undermines an evaluation such as Noll's: “Locke insisted that man's duty to God is higher than man's duty to man: ‘For obedience is owed first to God, then to the laws.’”²⁶ So, which evaluation is correct? Again, Dr. Morgan Smith offered a balanced clarification to the issue.

Like so many descriptions of historical events and figures, the truth is more complex than is often presented. Dr. Morgan Smith found Locke “hard to pin down.”

Some of his thoughts were decidedly opposed by Christian orthodoxy, which would be an indication that he might have been using Christian language as the most effectual means of generating acceptance for his thoughts among the general populace. On the other hand, there are clear indications that he did personally hold genuine Christian convictions and so may have considered his unorthodox views to be more faithful to the Christian faith than those designated ‘right-belief’ by others. So, Dr. Morgan Smith was hesitant to definitively place Locke squarely in either category. That having been said, she pointed out that his most famous works—especially those circulated in America—were “highly theological” and most certainly “not secular”—or Machiavellian.²⁷ With that in mind, the situation in the colonies may be more ably considered.

Christianity and Republicanism in America

America was a refuge for the persecuted of Europe. Whether a continually hostile environment such as that in France or a more volatile one such as that in Great Britain, religious dissenters could never be entirely secure in their properties and persons. Many Reform-minded folk then made their way to America to establish safe havens for themselves. Through many trials and hardships, these intrepid settlers established themselves and refined their ideas about religion and government. Of particular note are the experiences of the Puritans in America and the endurance of their systems of thought. For some time, the Puritans gained increasing prominence, but, eventually, the establishment and growth of the colonies resulted in a tapering of Puritan hegemony. Some have described this process as a secularization of that which had been previously held sacred. West, however,

²⁵ Mark Noll, *America's God*, 58-59.

²⁶ Thomas West, “The Transformation of Protestant Theology as a Condition of the American Revolution,” in *Protestantism and the American Founding*, ed. Thomas Engeman and Michael Zuckert, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 206-207.

²⁷ Sarah Morgan Smith, interview with author, March 7, 2018.

argued that the opposite was true: that it was a “sacralization” of what had been previously held secular.²⁸ This controversy is really just another manifestation of the same basic disagreement over the prominence of Machiavelli versus the Reformation in the heart of republicanism. In this instance, however, the truth is more readily discernible.

Sacralization Not Secularization

There are several pieces of evidence that enable a confident rejection of the secularization argument. First, the fact that many of those who came to America were willing to risk their lives to be able to hold and practice their religious convictions and instill them in their children stands as a resolute refutation to the notion that Christianity could be a mere tool to be used for political expediency. Second, the already mentioned importance and prevalence of religious services, theological institutions, copies of Scripture, public discourse on religious matters, and references to Christian Scripture and principles at all levels of society were far too great—even throughout the Eighteenth Century—to be a mere façade. Third, the success of revivals leading up to and through the Great Awakening bear witness to a level of genuine conviction and eagerness to receive religious instruction. Fourth, as Dr. Morgan Smith mentioned, there was strong Judeo-Christian support for republican thought—based in Scripture—to be found among Reformed groups, allowing for an honest support of political reform on a biblical basis. Fifth, as Byrd pointed out, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, pamphlet only gained such popularity because it read much more like a sermon than a political tract. Sixth, when Paine later tried to introduce his atheistic *Age of Reason* to

America, he was resoundingly rejected and even Benjamin Franklin advised him to burn it. Seventh, the writings—both private and official—and actions of those bearing the mountainous load of defending their homeland against the world’s greatest empire and uniting thirteen states into one nation offer the most profound and conclusive evidence of the genuineness of America’s religious convictions. Consequently, Dr. Morgan Smith agreed with West: America’s growth throughout the Eighteenth Century was definitely not a process of secularization; it was one of sacralization. One could point to some notable secularizing influences following the Revolution, but, even then, it would be a gross exaggeration to propose that the entire nation was undergoing secularization.²⁹

Old World versus New World

America, then, differed from Europe. Established structures of the Old World consistently caused a certain level of antagonism between Christianity and republicanism; even in Great Britain, though they may have been allied, they were still distinct groups. In the New World, however, a unification of reason and revelation gave rise to a Christian theology of republican liberty. There may have been a Machiavellian vein in the heart of European republicanism, but America’s heard beat resoundingly with the lifeblood of the Reformation.

Even as America was experiencing sacralization and Europe was continuing in its wrestling, Noll observed that there remained a deep sense of kindred sympathy for one another’s views between Great Britain and the American colonies even into the 1770s.³⁰ Dr. Morgan Smith, having agreed with that, also highlighted the fact that—

²⁸ Thomas West, “The Transformation of Protestant Theology,” 214-215.

²⁹ Sarah Morgan Smith, interview with author, March 7, 2018.

³⁰ Mark Noll, *America’s God*, 65.

generally speaking—Great Britain was thoroughly hierarchical in both political and ecclesiastical thought, whereas America was of a decidedly non-hierarchical bend of mind. Both the historical background and this contrast in British and American mind-set provide a solid foundation on which to establish the framework of the controversy between Great Britain and America as it was beginning to escalate past the point of no return.

CHAPTER TWO: Political Controversy with John Wesley and John Almon

Further Background of Authors

Among religious circles in the Christian West, the name John Wesley remains readily familiar and the man generally admired. Living in England through most of the Eighteenth Century, the well-educated and highly influential minister held a rather valuable vantage point from which he could assess the rising tension between Great Britain and the American colonies. That being said, he was not entirely aloof from the colonies either, as he and his brother had conducted a missionary tour of the southern colonies—especially Georgia—from 1735 to 1737.³¹ This balance of familiarity with personal disinterestedness in the colonies, along with his education, devotion to the wellbeing of others, and impressive reach of influence invests him with the perspective, motivation, and means which make his *A Calm Address to Our American Colonies* a worthwhile piece for consideration.

One noticeable oddity, though, is that Wesley did not employ Scripture for the majority of his address. This is only somewhat cleared up by the fact that the central question he was attempting to answer—

which concerned taxation—was one of the most prominent questions in the political controversy, ‘only somewhat’ because there are passages to which he could have referred yet did not. Wesley himself gave no reason for the omission, yet, as mentioned before, religious leaders exercised considerable influence in several areas of society. To have such a prominent figure engage with a prevalent argument primarily according to its own subject area, such as in this case, is perhaps not so strange after all.

As for the rebuttal, some initially anonymous writings have had their authors subsequently identified by historians, but, unfortunately, that has not yet proven the case in this instance. In spite of that, distinguished professor of political science Dr. Ellis Sandoz has given reason to believe that the author was a Londoner associated with opposition politics named John Almon.³² So, in order to have a convenient reference, the following examination will assume that Almon was indeed the author.

Setting Up the Debate

Each of the following points from Wesley's address represents an assertion about either taxation or representation which, if true, would justify the position of the British Government and establish British sovereignty over the colonies. Naturally, Almon attempted to refute each one and thereby sway the weight of evidence in favor of the patriot position. This contention gives a sound sense of the political tension which was so entwined with the prevailing religious tension as everything was beginning to spiral out of control in 1775. While comparing the arguments of both, one should note the presuppositions each makes about the political structure and situation leading up to 1775 as well as the level of accuracy, detail, and depth reached by each.

³¹ Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons*, 410.

³² *Ibid.*, 424.

By doing so, a sound view of the British constitution may be discerned from an English perspective and serve as a guide for rightly applying scriptural precepts.

Wesley's Opening: Colonies and Taxation

In his very first sentence, Wesley established the central question of the escalating conflict: "Has the English Parliament power to tax the American colonies?" Though certainly not all-encompassing concerning the extensive grievances which would be listed in the Declaration of Independence just over a year later, this was indeed a recurring aggravation that worsened other points of tension and was itself listed among those grievances on account of which the colonies would adopt a course of irrevocable separation. Wesley began the answer to that question by presenting his conception of an English colony.

As Wesley understood it, to form a colony, the king would authorize for a certain group of people a charter which would grant them leave to establish themselves in another land. He likened them to a corporation; this corporation would be empowered and organized by the charter's provisions and be permitted to make laws for its members accordingly, yet it would remain "subject" to the source of authority which authorized the charter. Based on Wesley's explanation, that source would be the king. From this, he insisted that the authority of the "supreme power in England" to levy a tax on colonies was clearly legitimate. Now, within the next two paragraphs, he made it plain that the "supreme power" to which he was referring was the English Parliament, which means subjection to the king must simultaneously demand subjection to the Parliament. So, by Wesley's understanding, an English colony consisted of a community of people residing in a distant land based on the authority of the

king yet subject to both the king and the English Parliament. Here, Wesley addressed the well-known objection that Englishmen were not to be taxed but by their consent as given through representation.

Since taxation is a legislative act, Wesley observed, an English Parliament without the power to tax would also be without power to pass any laws, yet the colonies had accepted such laws where they had concerned the "punishment of offenses" and the "preventing or redressing of inconveniences," by which one may assume he was referring to matters of trade, which had been greatly increasing to the profit of both England and America. Therefore, where legislative action addressing the administration of justice and trade had previously been accepted, there could be no justification for preventing the legislative act of taxation.³³ With these initial lines of thought, Almon took serious issue.

Almon's Counter: Colonial Development and the Nature of Taxation

First, he considered the definition of an English colony given by Wesley to have been historically inaccurate in the case of American colonies, which he described as groups of people who had sought refuge from "tyranny" in England by settling in new lands with little to no help or protection from Great Britain, at least until American trade became valuable enough to be protected and American wealth had accumulated enough to be taxed. So, it was not so much by a proclamation of the king as it was by the monumental effort of the colonists that the colonies were planted, boring roots downward and bearing fruit upward. Parlia-

³³ John Wesley, "A Calm Address to Our American Colonies," in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730—1805 Volume 1*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1998), 413.

ment simply wanted to lay claim to a portion of that produce, and that is precisely what provoked Almon's second objection.

According to the English parliamentary system, only the House of Commons had the power to tax the people, and tax money was "not *taken*, but *given*."³⁴ Neither the House of Lords nor the king could impose a tax. If an English monarch needed funds, he or she would have had to petition the House of Commons to levy a tax, and, should that house of people's representatives have consented to provide the requested money by taxing the people, that money would have been willingly given by the people according to the system of representative government to which they had previously consented. In other words, by the English system of governance, no English monarch could impose a tax or take money from the people, and the provision of an English monarch's request was to be based on the consent of the people as expressed through their representatives.

Moreover, this restriction applied to only taxation; other legislative measures were able to be enacted by the king, the House of Lords, or the House of Commons. This made it abundantly clear to Almon that taxation had long been perceived as a distinct category of legislation meant to be enacted exclusively through representative consent.

Since the people of America were unable to—and had never been asked to—supply representatives to the House of Commons, that body—and therefore the British Government generally—had no power to tax the colonies. So, even if the colonies had accepted—which implies consent—certain legal measures from England, they would

have been just in refusing to accept taxation from the same, yet such determinations were not to be merely arbitrary. Almon pointed to the British constitution as the ultimate arbiter.

Almon Continues: The British Constitution

Giving popular assent to and obediently upholding laws would certainly be a recognition of governmental sovereignty. After all, Almon maintained, all manner of laws enacted by the English government had been accepted and upheld in England. This did not, however, invest the English government with a license to violate its own constitution through actions which abrogated the Magna Carta, revoked fundamental rights of the English people, or ascribed to the king powers which he did not possess. Since the constitution served as the foundation for government, any governmental action which did not stand on that foundation was inherently "void."³⁵ So, there were constitutional limits on the English government even regarding its authority over residents of England, much less far-removed, unrepresented residents of British colonies. This sequence of logic may seem airtight, but Wesley contended that the colonies were, in fact, satisfactorily represented in the English Parliament. As a foundation to this claim, however, Wesley made an even more controversial assertion which is worthy of note.

Wesley's Argument: Government by Consent

"[A]bsolutely false," that was how Wesley responded to the belief "[t]hat 'every freeman is governed by laws to which he has consented.'"³⁶ The notion that liberty was present only where people were ruled by the consent of the governed was "abso-

³⁴ John Almon, "A Constitutional Answer to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Calm Address to the American Colonies," in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805 Volume 1*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1998), 425.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 426.

³⁶ John Wesley, "A Calm Address," 413-414.

lutely false.” Such a bold claim would have certainly provoked impassioned counter-argument; so, he knew he needed to make a strong case.

For proof, Wesley pointed to the very limited number of people within English society who were actually involved in the process of governance and the fact that those who were able to vote these individuals into office were themselves a rather select group. As such, a majority of the people were “idle and helpless spectators” to the political process. Even for those few who could vote, the situation was hardly better, for, if 51% were to favor a candidate whom the other 49% strongly disfavored, the 49% would subsequently be ruled contrary to their consent. To emphasize the inevitability of this limitation to what might be termed active or real consent, Wesley observed that everyone born into a society would in like manner be helpless to influence laws which had already been established prior to one’s birth. He described this system for the masses as “passive consent,” and only those who voted and voted with the majority would have had some measure of active consent.³⁷ So, from this foundational understanding, how was the protestation concerning representation to be handled?

Suffrage, as mentioned, was not universal in England. Representatives were chosen by “men particularly qualified.” Englishmen who did not fulfill the qualifications were unable to vote yet were still bound to the decisions of men elected by others. Those living in the colonies were unable to meet the qualification of being present for elections. Colonists, then, were in the same political situation as the majority of those living in England: giving passive consent as “idle and helpless spectators” and obeying measures enacted by a select few others. By

venturing to America, then, the colonists retained what they had had in England, “the happiness of being protected by laws, and the duty of obeying them.”³⁸ Therefore, Wesley confidently asserted that those who lived in the colonies were satisfactorily represented in the English Parliament and subject to every measure enacted therefrom, including taxation. Unsurprisingly, Almon countered with multiple objections.

Almon’s Counter: Clarifying Government by Consent

First, while it was true at that time that office holders were chosen by a select few among the people, such was not always the case. Originally, the choice was made by “the people at large.” With the consent of the people, it was later decided to establish suffrage qualifications “for the sake of convenience.”

Second, whether or not suffrage had been more universal, disqualification from voting did not necessitate an absence of influence. In fact, because those with suffrage were so interspersed among those without it, the conversations and interactions between them would have provided the latter with a significant influence in the decision-making of the former. Thus, those without suffrage who yet lived among those granted that privilege would hardly be left “idle and helpless spectators.”

Third, Almon denounced as entirely fallacious the notion that a minority is ruled contrary to its consent. True, there would be disagreement in the choice over which candidate to elect, yet all involved in that process would have previously consented to accept the outcome of that choice. Wesley’s fallacy was in his application of consent: the system, not the candidate, was the true object of consent.³⁹ Though Almon did not

³⁷ Ibid., 414.

³⁸ Ibid., 414-415.

³⁹ John Almon, “A Constitutional Answer,” 426.

make this point himself, the principle behind this rebuttal of his also exposes a fallacy with Wesley's portrayal of the principle of government by the consent of the governed, and, due to the importance of this idea amid the upheavals of 1775, a brief clarification is worthwhile.

A Brief Interjectory Clarification

As quoted above, Wesley referred to government by consent as the belief "that 'every freeman is governed by laws to which he has consented.'" Now, though he did not likely intend this, Wesley's description left room for two possible interpretations. One could, as Wesley did, tie the consent to the laws; in other words, only a man who has consented to every single law by which he is governed is truly a free man. On the other hand, one could—technically with the insertion of a comma after "laws"—apply the consent to the entire preceding phrase, "is governed by laws," thereby making the system of governance by law—as opposed to a system of governance by men—the object of consent and the standard for liberty. It is this latter interpretation which would more closely align with the passage in the Declaration of Independence which declared that governments "deriv[e] their just powers from the consent of the governed," meaning people may not agree with every law, yet they have consented to the form of government which produced the laws. Furthermore, people in such a system would not be "helpless" to effect change in the preexisting laws or even the form of government, as Almon explained in his fourth and final objection.

Almon's Counter Resumed

Lastly, the notion that a majority of England's residents were "idle and helpless spectators" stood in stark contrast to the intended outcome of the English constitution. To show this, Almon wove a succinct

illustration of that constitution insofar as it concerned the consent of the governed. If the commons, meaning those not included in the ranks of the gentry, were to desire a legislative action, they would inform their delegates in the House of Commons of their wishes. If the people's delegates were to refuse to fulfill their appointed purpose of representing their constituents' will, the violation of consent would not be permanent; the office of a representative having been limited by terms, the incumbent officeholder could be voted out at the end of said term and a more faithful delegate chosen instead. If the people's delegates were to acquiesce to their constituents' will and take said action, the monarch would be able to affirm or refuse the measure, and here is where the English system of taxation would become critical. If the monarch were to refuse the royal assent to laws deemed needful by the people through their delegates, the people through their delegates might refuse to grant supplies deemed needful by the monarch, thereby forming an important balance of power meant to secure government by the people's consent. This same process would have applied to the removal of any preexisting laws deemed obnoxious by the public.⁴⁰

From this, Almon concluded that government in England was purposefully constituted so as to be carried out according to the consent of the governed. If any resident of England was merely an "idle and helpless spectator," it was on account of that individual's "corruption of morals" and "supineness [weakness] of spirit," not a result of the English constitution.⁴¹ Consequently, the colonists—who could not possibly exercise either vote or influence in England nor send delegates to the House of Commons—were obviously not represented

⁴⁰ Ibid., 427.

⁴¹ Ibid., 428.

in any way which could have justified taxation.

***Almon Continues:
Importance of Self-Taxation***

In addition, there was another aspect of English taxation which Almon considered critical. Delegates who agreed to levy a tax on their constituents would also pay the very same tax themselves, making it far less likely that a delegate would be willing to consent to an oppressive tax. Almon described this “self-taxation” as the “sole pledge” of the delegate for the “security” of the constituent.⁴² Any taxation laid by the House of Commons on the American colonies would have completely severed this security, there being no member of that house whose personal pocketbook would have been affected in the least by dipping into the colonists’ coffers. Yet once more, taxation by the English Parliament of American colonies was shown by Almon to be fundamentally antithetical to the English constitution. Again, this rebuttal may seem quite sound, yet Wesley claimed that, from their founding charters, American colonies had acknowledged Great Britain’s power to tax them.

***Wesley’s Argument:
Taxation in Colonial Charters***

For his first piece of evidence, Wesley referenced the charter of Pennsylvania, which, he claimed, had a clause “admitting, in express terms, taxation by Parliament.” Granted, there were twelve other colonies, each with its own charter, but, if this colony was explicitly subject to parliamentary taxation, surely the implication was clear that the others were as well. In fact, according to Wesley, if other charters did not have a provision directly admitting

parliamentary taxation, such omissions must have been allowed only because the Parliament’s power to tax was so well understood that it needed no mention.⁴³ Such being the case, Wesley thought there was no need to provide any other examples; however, since the Massachusetts-Bay charter had been specifically mentioned by certain patriots, he briefly addressed that charter as well.

Patriots claimed that Massachusetts-Bay had been granted a seven-year exemption from taxation. Wesley conceded this claim, yet he pointed out that the very presence of an exemption would necessarily imply that, apart from or beyond the limits of that exemption, the enforcement of that which had been exempted would indeed be proper and just. So, far from undermining the justness of parliamentary taxation in the colonies, the Massachusetts-Bay charter actually confirmed it. If the documents which established the constitutions of the colonies had expressly permitted taxation by the king or the Parliament, that would have created a serious constitutional dilemma in which—according to colonial constitutions—external taxation would have been permissible even though it would have clashed with the English constitution. Almon denied any such possibility.

***Almon’s Counter:
Clarifying Taxation in Colonial Charters***

In spite of the Pennsylvania charter having been the foremost of Wesley’s evidences to support the legality of parliamentary taxation, he neglected to actually provide a quotation of the passage to which he referred, a fact Almon found decidedly suspect, along with the fact that Wesley did not explain whether said taxation was “internal or external; whether levied by

⁴² Ibid., 430.

⁴³ John Wesley, “A Calm Address,” 415-416.

themselves, or by others.” In other words, Almon claimed Wesley failed to clarify whether the people of the colony were to establish the tax through their general assembly of representatives or some other governmental entity was to have power to impose it. Now, it should be noted that Wesley did say the charter expressly allowed “taxation by Parliament,” which makes rather plain which entity Wesley anticipated would issue the tax. However, especially since Almon provided that direct quote from Wesley, Almon may well have proposed that dichotomy in order to set up a possibility which he explored in his discussion on the Massachusetts-Bay charter.

As already observed, Wesley had neglected to actually quote the reference he made to the Massachusetts-Bay charter, but, just as with the Pennsylvania charter, Almon was willing to grant that such passages might have existed since he had neither “time nor opportunity” to check those two charters for himself.⁴⁴ Although this is somewhat regrettable, as it detracts from the strength of his rebuttal—just as it regrettably undermined Wesley’s argument—the fact that both made the same omission puts the structure of each of their arguments on similarly uncertain foundations. Nonetheless, both arguments ought to be relayed so that, once those charters have actually been consulted, one or the other claim may be vindicated. Having established that, the focus may now return to Almon’s answer on the subject of the Massachusetts-Bay charter.

To begin, Almon pointed out that any promise in a charter must have been made by the one on whose authority the charter was established: the monarch. Wesley had himself established this very same political structure in his definition of a colony. As Almon had made quite clear, though, the monarch had no constitutional authority to levy a tax; therefore, what the

king had no power to enact, he had no authority to exempt from enactment. What then could that seven-year exemption clause in the Massachusetts-Bay charter mean?

A strong possibility was that it referred to “requisition”—the request for funds made by the monarch to whatever governmental entity possessed the power of taxation. In keeping with the nature of British taxation established by Almon, the English House of Commons—having none of its members chosen by the colony—could not have possessed said power, as Wesley insisted. Rather, the authority of representation and therefore the power of taxation in the colony was possessed—as Almon stated in no uncertain terms—“solely and exclusively” by the delegates who constituted the Massachusetts-Bay governing body. Such having been the case, Almon insisted that the exemption must have applied to royal requisitions, not parliamentary taxation. If it had applied to the latter, it would have established a precedent for “external taxation.” Such a politically convenient method of taxation for England would undoubtedly have been utilized at some point after the exemption expired, yet, for more than a century, it never was, and governments are not known for refusing a means of revenue out of their own good will.⁴⁵ To further support his argument, though he did not examine the charters aforementioned, Almon did provide an excerpt from an “agreement” made between England and Virginia.

Almon Continues: Example of Boundaries between the Colonies and England

Written over 100 years prior to the turmoil of 1775, this agreement—according to Almon—signaled England’s acquiescence to conditions made by Virginia prior to her acceptance of a governor appointed by England. Almon viewed this legal document as

⁴⁴ John Almon, “A Constitutional Answer,” 432.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 432-433.

an indication of the general colonial attitude toward “external taxation,” and, from it, he quoted, “Virginia shall be free from all taxes, customs, and impositions whatsoever; and none shall be imposed upon them, without consent of the general assembly.”⁴⁶ This illustrated Almon’s point exactly. The basis of taxation was to be consent; Virginia’s general assembly was the sole and rightful steward of the Virginians’ consent. Therefore, to circumscribe any future temptation on the part of an English governor to violate that constitutional principle and structure, the two established this binding agreement. From this and his requisition hypothesis, Almon was convinced that none of the colonial charters, either explicitly or by implication, sanctioned taxation by the English Parliament. As such, Wesley’s legal argument based on the charters was shown to be most likely groundless.

Analysis of Wesley and Almon

At this point, the arguments involving taxation and representation have been generally expressed for both the loyalist and the patriot position. Through bringing together each one’s presuppositions, depth and accuracy of detail, and soundness of reasoning, one can arrive at a reliable conception of the British Empire’s constitution. From that basis, the opposing actors and actions of tumultuous 1775 may be rightly applied to the precepts of Scripture, once those have been explored and understood.

In this context, the presuppositions of each author consist of each one’s definition of a colony and the reasons behind the establishment of the various American colonies. Wesley viewed a colony as a creation of the king by means of a royal charter, the purpose of which was largely economical, hence his description of colonies as corpo-

rations—legal entities subject to both the king and the English Parliament. Almon saw the American colonies as self-made societies consisting of people who had fled tyranny in Europe to establish themselves anew. Both express truth in that, generally, colonists had fled European oppression and had established their societies in America by their own efforts, yet charters were issued by the king to provide legal standing and political connection to the colonies. This means that the American colonies were legitimate political bodies connected to yet distinct from the mother country—England—the legal connection being through the king.

Granting the advantage of being the respondent, Almon did delve into greater detail, and he provided more frequent quotation of his sources, which further affirmed the accuracy of the details he presented. Regarding the charters which were not actually quoted, Almon was correct in his assessment. Far from affirming parliamentary taxation, the Pennsylvania charter of 1681 explicitly prohibited taxation external to the colony except with the consent of the colonial governing authority.⁴⁷ While the Massachusetts Bay charter of 1629 did contain an exemption from taxes for seven years, those taxes were explicitly in reference to goods being imported from or exported to England or her dominions—thereby also affirming that England was a political entity joined to yet distinct from the other political entities of the British Empire.⁴⁸ By 1775, however, this charter had long since become irrelevant, having been revoked in 1684; a new charter had been

⁴⁷ Charles II, “Charter for the Province of Pennsylvania – 1681,” The Avalon Project, Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed October 15, 2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/pa01.asp.

⁴⁸ Charles I, “The Charter of Massachusetts Bay : 1629,” The Avalon Project, Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed October 15, 2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/mass03.asp.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 433.

established in 1691.⁴⁹ In that charter, the king gave an explicit acknowledgment that the power of taxation rested with the colony's "Generall Court or Assembly" followed immediately by an explicit affirmation that the king would provide protection to the colonists.⁵⁰ This sways the balance of credibility significantly closer to Almon concerning the political facts and historical details surrounding the constitutions of England and her colonies.

Most of the contradiction between the two came from the difference in their presuppositions and understanding of the facts, but there were a couple instances in which Wesley's reasoning was less than sound. First, he neglected to provide reasons to justify his assertion that subjection to the king would necessitate subjection to the Parliament—which, to all other indications, was not the case. Second, he disproved his own insistence that those without suffrage were simply "idle and helpless spectators" by exercising such a great influence on people at all levels of English society in his ministry, all the while being without suffrage himself. As a result, this latter point further undermines his assertions about representation.

Clarifying the British Constitution

The British constitution, then, is made clear. Taxation was to be a process of granting a royal request, not submitting to a royal demand. This required the people's consent; the chosen vehicle for this was representation, which necessitated personal involve-

⁴⁹ "A Brief History of Massachusetts," *The Columbia Encyclopedia 6th Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), <http://www.usgennet.org/family/bliss/rehoboth/ma-history.htm>.

⁵⁰ William & Mary, "The Charter of Massachusetts Bay – 1691," The Avalon Project, Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed October 15, 2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/mass07.asp.

ment from those being represented. Furthermore, representatives of those to be taxed were themselves to be subject to the same tax. Circumstances rendered it impossible for the American colonies to exercise any of these components through the Parliament. Instead, those colonies were themselves legitimate political entities with their own power to tax, a power recognized by the king, the one by whom the charters and the colonial connections to England were established. Therefore, the English Parliament had no right to levy a tax on the colonies, they being neither represented in nor subject to that governing body. Rather, the colonies were subject to the monarchy in much the same limited way as was the realm of England. Having established that historical and political basis, it only remains to form a sound understanding of the scriptural principles to which the particulars of 1775 were and are to be applied.

CHAPTER THREE: Jonathan Mayhew on Scripture

Prologue to the Sermons: Shared Commemorative Context

As a prologue to the sermons selected to elucidate the precepts of Scripture—Jonathan Mayhew's *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers* and Charles Inglis's *The Duty of Honouring the King*—the commemorative context shared by the two ought to be briefly explained, being relevant to the type of conflict that was breaking out in 1775. In the middle of the Seventeenth Century, the English Civil War was waged by the king and the Parliament against one another. King Charles believed himself possessed of divine right to rule and therefore deserving of authority unrestricted by Parliament. Parliament, on the other

hand, held to constitutional restrictions on the monarchy and, to the degree possible, steadfastly opposed the king's measures. Tension—including a controversy over the power of taxation—increased, and, by the end of 1642, the king had raised his standard for war against the Parliament. Largely due to Oliver Cromwell, parliamentary forces eventually defeated the royalists and held the king prisoner. Ultimately, the Parliament determined King Charles to be guilty of treasonously waging war against the people and their rights and had the defeated king beheaded on 30 January 1649.⁵¹ The anniversary of that day served as the backdrop for both of the sermons to follow, yet each author's conception of the event was antithetical to the other.

Further Background of Mayhew

Jonathan Mayhew was born in 1720 on Martha's Vineyard, just offshore from Massachusetts. His education—while definitively Christian—did not particularly emphasize tenets of the “accredited orthodox creed.” As a result, he adopted a discernibly less tradition-bound theological perspective. Graduating with honor from Cambridge in 1744, he spent a few years teaching and conducting further study before accepting a position at West Church in Boston. His weekly lectures soon garnered increasing interest, pushing him to study even harder and become even more adept at formulating his arguments, making him one of the most prominent orators of New England. This earned him the respect of several notable figures and the acquaintance of men such as Robert Treat Paine, James Otis, John Hancock, James Bowdoin, Samuel Adams, and John Adams.

⁵¹ John Richard, “English Civil War, first (1642-6),” *HistoryofWar.org*, accessed October 31, 2017, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars_ecw1.html.

Though he did not live to see the outbreak of violence between England and the American colonies, Mayhew did face the controversial trend to which Almon alluded: the rising English interest in exerting influence—both religious and political—in the colonies. It was in this context that Mayhew composed *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers*. Therein, he provided a deep and thoughtful exegesis of New Testament passages which enjoin submission to government, challenging the doctrine of governmental divine right and clarifying many of the precepts which would later serve as the foundational principles of the patriot cause.⁵²

Mayhew's Purpose and Primary Passage Context

The primary purpose of Mayhew's sermon was to make known the duty for all Christians to know the will of their Lord concerning subjection to the governing authorities as well as the duty for Christians invested with governing authority to know the will of their Lord concerning the nature and purpose of their role. Since the first half of chapter thirteen in Paul's letter to the Romans is the “most full and express [passage] of any in the new-testament” on that subject, Mayhew selected it as his primary reference:⁵³

1. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power

⁵² “Mayhew, Jonathan (1720-1766),” *HarvardSquareLibrary.org*, accessed October 27, 2017, <http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/biographies/jonathan-mayhew-1720-1766/>.

⁵³ Jonathan Mayhew, “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers,” in *American Sermons*, ed. Michael Warner (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1999), 384.

but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God.

2. *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation.*

3. *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:*

4. *For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.*

5. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

6. *For, for this cause pay you tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.*

7. *Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour.*⁵⁴

To put this passage in its historical context—which Mayhew considered vital for properly understanding its meaning—there were some First-Century Christians who were convinced that Christ's kingdom superseded the authority of earthly dominions to the extent that it abolished the duty of subjection to those dominions. This led to—as Mayhew quotes from Peter—the

cultivation of “*them that—despise government—presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*”⁵⁵ In other words, the problem which Paul and Peter were striving to counteract in their respective letters was a tendency to reject all earthly authority. With that in mind, Mayhew examined each verse of the Romans passage in turn.

Examining Each Verse of Romans 13

Verse one plainly enjoins submission to earthly governing authorities—the Greek word for “power” here denoting rightful authority as opposed to brute force. The justification for this command lies in the fact that these authorities derive their rightful authority from God, He being the source of all authority. Worthy of note is the fact that no specific rulers or even types of government are mentioned; the focus is not the organization of power but the purpose of power. This has two effects: one, it cannot be said that this command applied to specific Roman rulers in whatever commands they gave or actions they took; two, governments could not be considered illegitimate solely based on their constitution—arrangement of power. Mayhew also noted that, though the “*powers*” are established by God, this does not necessarily mean that God commissions specific individuals for the various positions of government.⁵⁶

Verse two directly addresses the problematic persons by declaring their blanket renunciation of all earthly authority to be a simultaneous rejection of God's authority since the civil powers are established by Him. Resisting God's authority—being the essence of sin—results in condemnation. Is subjection to earthly powers then to be as absolute as submission to God Himself? No. History is full of examples in

⁵⁴ Ibid., 383.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 384-385.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 386.

which the wills of the two were diametrically opposed, rendering mutual submission impossible. What then are the parameters?⁵⁷

Verse three, coupled with the first phrase of verse four, establishes the positive parameters. Civil authorities, even “pagan” ones, praise those who do what is good and punish those who do what is evil, and that is their divine purpose. God invests them with authority to act as His “minister” in order to bring about “good.” With such a beneficent design, Mayhew considered it utterly “unreasonable” to refuse to “reverence and honor” the governing authorities. The rest of verse four then balances the scale with the negative parameters. God has invested the earthly authority with His sword of vengeance along with a duty to use it for administering God’s wrath upon those who choose evil, either by commission or omission. All rulers, in their rightful capacity, are therefore to serve as ministers of divine authority, which means both “protect[ing]” and “encourage[ing]” what is good and punishing what is evil, thereby cultivating “peace and order” throughout their domains.⁵⁸ Indeed, it is for these very things that all Christians are to pray as they fulfill the command to pray for those with governing authority, as Paul made clear in his first letter to Timothy.⁵⁹

Verse five, building on that thought, then insists that it ought not to be only from fear of incurring righteous wrath that one submits to those in authority, but, knowing the good which God intends by the design, one ought to understand the moral rectitude and reasonable duty of such submission, attending to it willingly and gratefully. This leads to the justification of taxation for the benefit of rulers.

Verse six points out that another part of the design for civil authorities, “*God’s ministers,*” is that they bear continual responsibility for their none-too-small task. It is therefore necessary and proper that those for whom the service of government is rendered—the people—contribute what is needful in order for those occupying those positions of authority to be able to carry out the functions of their respective offices, similarly to ministers of the gospel. Now, Mayhew emphasized that this support is by no means to be for the purpose of enabling the officeholders to “indulge” in “luxury” or to receive sycophantic adulation. Rather, since their position is “no less laborious than honourable,” it is most reasonable that they should be able to fulfill their ministry without it being unnecessarily onerous.⁶⁰ Again, as Scripture proclaims concerning ministers of the gospel, “The laborer deserves his wages,” and “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.”⁶¹

Verse seven, from the justifications established in the two preceding verses, then demands that the people grant to the authorities all things which are rightly their “*due,*” whether “*tribute,*” “*custom,*” “*fear,*” or “*honour.*” In a footnote, Mayhew mildly chastised colonists who called themselves Christians yet engaged in evasion of customs through illegal trade, a blatant violation of this scriptural precept. He then concluded this initial elucidation by calling on his audience, as Christians, to be “peaceable and dutiful subjects,” willing to provide what is “justly demand[ed]” and to “cheerfully” respect the civil authorities to the degree proper.⁶²

⁵⁷ Ibid., 386-387.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 387-388.

⁵⁹ I Timothy 2:1-6

⁶⁰ Jonathan Mayhew, “A Discourse Concerning,” 388-389.

⁶¹ I Tim. 5:18 ESV

⁶² Jonathan Mayhew, “A Discourse Concerning,” 389.

Summary Lessons from Romans 13

So, to those Christians who sought to reject all earthly authority, Paul made it abundantly clear that Christ willed no such thing, that they rather ought to gladly subject themselves to the ordinances of and even taxation by the governing powers, powers which God ordained for the people's good. From the same passage—as well as the very nature of such a divine command—however, Mayhew showed that submission to civil authority cannot be unlimited.

Government exists for divine purposes. It has a commission from God that it is to fulfill; it is not made into a copy of God Himself, with all authority and no outside restraints. Rather, government, like every other part of creation, is itself subject to the Creator. Since no person or institution is immune from turning itself against God—and God's will must be the standard for every Christian—no Christian may proclaim absolute submission to government, yet, even if this would seem to be true based on the passage in Romans, does the other preferred passage of loyalists—I Peter 2:13-17—affirm this conclusion?

Does I Peter 2 Agree?

Peter wrote, "*Submit your selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.*"⁶³ That word "every" would indeed indicate an absolute nature to the command, yet Mayhew countered that interpretation with two points. First, the original Greek for the phrase "*ordinance of man*" did not mean every single order or law issued by an officeholder; rather, Mayhew translated it as literally "*every human institution,*" which means the general authority of a society's governmental constitution. In other words, as Peter explained, submission to "*every ordinance*" is enjoined, "[w]hether it be to

⁶³ Ibid., 394-395.

the king as supreme, or to governors, as unto them that are sent." Human institutions—such as a king or his governors—are the objects of submission to which Peter was pointing, not every order the occupant of such an office might issue. What is the significance of this? A ruler's authority only goes so far as the authority of the institution. Governors may not act beyond the authority of their office established by the king, and neither the king nor the governors may act beyond the authority of their offices established by God.

Second, Mayhew reminded his audience of the context in which Peter was writing: addressing those who, "*despising government*" and "*speaking evil of dignities,*" had decided to reject all earthly authority.⁶⁴ Christians of that mold believed themselves, as subjects of Christ's kingdom, to be free of obligation to earthly powers. If the belief in need of correction had been a conviction that obedience to government was to apply in some cases yet not others, Mayhew conceded that one might be able to argue that the apostles enjoined unlimited submission, for these passages clearly constrained greater submission than what had been occurring. As it stood, however, the message pointed from no submission to qualified submission rather than from qualified to unqualified submission. That is why Mayhew considered the context so important to rightly discerning the passages' true meaning.

Obedience Even to Tyrants?

What, then, if established rulers were to become tyrannous—intentionally acting against their God-ordained purpose and resolutely refusing all peaceful measures at correction? Would the people be left with no other recourse than passive disobedience—to endure being "robbed and butchered" at

⁶⁴ Ibid., 395.

the whim of the tyrant—as some contended, or would the people in such a case be justified in actively resisting the tyrant?⁶⁵ Mayhew argued for the latter.

The basis for the apostles' commands to be subject to civil authorities was that God ordained such authority for the people's good. If a ruler was to become a tyrant, actively pursuing measures which "devour" and "destroy" the people, not only would that basis for submission be removed but Christians would be obliged to stand against such abuses. To illustrate this, Mayhew employed a "*similitude*" using the relationship between a father and his children.⁶⁶

God orders children to submit themselves to their father, the role of a parent being invested with authority by God. The purpose of this authority—and the basis for obedience to it—is to benefit the whole family. If a father, whether through corruption or madness, were to begin brutalizing and killing his children, would it not be absurd to insist that the children continue to obey their father's will or at most simply stand aside, seeing that he is violating his purpose, the very basis of his authority and his children's obedience? Would the children not rather be compelled to actively resist such wickedness? So too, according to Mayhew, it would be utterly foolish to insist that people suffering under the oppression of a true tyrant ought to offer no resistance.⁶⁷ For some, however, this was precisely what they believed.

Pacifists' Primary Passage

One of the most-cited passages of Scripture among those who subscribed to a pacifist stance was Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel account. In that passage, as Mayhew recounted, Jesus tells

⁶⁵ Ibid., 392.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 403.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 403-404.

the people to "*resist not evil*" but to "*turn... the other [cheek]*." Based on the words of Christ Himself, then, pacifists argued that those who suffer oppression ought not to rise up in resistance, though they may refuse to actively participate in the evil perpetrated by the tyrant.

Though not a primary focus, this view was addressed by Mayhew in his sermon, and there was a significant pacifist presence in colonial America; so, the subject is worth noting. The basis for the counter-argument to the pacifist view was that there is a difference between "private injuries" and those committed by civil rulers against their own people. The former involves wrong being committed between individuals who are mutually subjected to the civil authorities; the latter involves one side employing that overruling power to commit wrong against those who are under it. What one in the former context is supposed to relinquish—and relinquish willingly—is explicitly one's own honor, pride, garments, time, or labor. Those in the latter context must endure having everything, potentially even life itself—both their own and others'—forcibly taken from them. So, on account of the context specified by Jesus and the plain reason derived therefrom, one cannot use this passage to enjoin unqualified non-resistance to government.⁶⁸ Alongside the pacifist position was another prevalent non-resistance view which Mayhew addressed more thoroughly: belief in the divine right of kings.

Divine Right Doctrine

Those who subscribed to the divine right of kings doctrine formed what seems to have been the most coherent view of unqualified obedience because they acknowledged the capacity for one official to con-

⁶⁸ Ibid., 393.

tradict the will of another, which would render obedience to all civil authorities impossible. Instead, the doctrine invests the king alone with the right to demand absolute submission and makes him the “original source of all power and authority in the state.”⁶⁹ Should any other official then take tyrannical actions, the people would have the right to resist—even “*forcibly*,” if necessary—the abuses of those officials, at least until a petition could be submitted to the king.⁷⁰ Some of those who sympathized with the patriots held to this view to some degree. As such, while general hostility toward the Parliament rose rather quickly in the colonies, animosity toward the king required more time and provocation to develop. That specific situation was over twenty years beyond the scope of Mayhew’s 1750 sermon, yet he discussed divine right doctrine because it was also a central component of the conflict with King Charles I, and, in spite of Charles’s demise, the doctrine persisted. Other than the fact that such a system elevates the monarch to essentially the position of God, there is a fundamental flaw between its line of reasoning and its claim to scriptural authority which Mayhew exposed.

In order to prevent a contest of wills among those supposedly invested with absolute authority, that authority would have to be contained in one person, hence the designation ‘divine right of kings.’ As Mayhew previously explained, however, the apostles wrote of governing authority generally, signaling no divine favoritism for any particular system or even discernment between levels of authority within a government. True, Peter gave an example of kings or their governors, but it was simply an example and one that did not in itself distinguish between obedience owed to the king and that owed to the governors, the object of obedience being “*every human*

institution.”⁷¹ Consequently, the divine right doctrine is inconsistent with Scripture.

Showing Divine Right Doctrine’s Inconsistency with Scripture

To be consistent with the universality of scriptural submission to government, divine right would have to apply to aristocratic and republican systems as well as monarchical, thereby opening the door to the impossible expectation of obeying conflicting wills. To be consistent with the generality of the command to be subject to civil authority, the same level of obedience and non-resistance would have to be enjoined to all who wield that authority, for they are all “*ministers of God*,” again allowing for the impossible expectation of obeying conflicting wills. More importantly, to be consistent with the wording and intent of the passages, no earthly authority could be divinely sanctioned to violate divine will; this too would involve the impossible expectation of obeying conflicting wills.⁷² Worse, it would divide the divine will against itself. As such, Mayhew rejected the divine right of kings—or of any form of government—doctrine as utterly unscriptural.

Mayhew’s Arguments Synthesized

From a desire to have Christians understand their divine duty to governing powers, Mayhew, through his sermon, conveyed a thorough scriptural case for qualified obedience to and proper resistance against civil authorities using the very passages to which most loyalists would later appeal. By understanding that the historical context for the apostles’ respective letters was an attempt to correct some who professed to be Christians while rejecting all earthly authority, the intent of those passages may be more

⁶⁹ Ibid., 404.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 405.

⁷¹ Ibid., 394-395.

⁷² Ibid., 406.

accurately discerned as pointing from no submission to qualified submission rather than qualified to unqualified submission.

God ordained government for the good of mankind and invested it with authority to administer His justice by praising good works and being a terror to evil. It is then for the people's own good as well as "for the Lord's sake" that they should submit themselves to every human institution.⁷³ On the other hand, all civil authority, regardless of constitutional organization, has a commission from God which it is to fulfill, which means it is possible for said commission to be violated and the authority abused. Such trespass puts the tyrannical entity outside of the source and foundation for its authority, which is also the source and foundation for the people's duty to obey—God's commission. Should such a case arise, Mayhew believed it would be blasphemous to refer to such rulers as "God's ministers;" rather, he thought they would be more appropriately labelled "the messengers of satan to buffet [the people]."⁷⁴ When true tyrants arise and all peaceful measures to bring about change have failed, active resistance—which may take many forms—to such evil is not merely permissible for Christians; it is a divine duty. Even if a tyrannized people should rise up and with unanimity overthrow the tyrannous entity, it would be a "reasonable" use of God-given means for "mutual and self-defense."⁷⁵

CHAPTER FOUR: Charles Inglis on Scripture

Further Background on Inglis

Charles Inglis was born in 1734 and received a private education in Scotland before immigrating to the American colonies. In 1758, he was ordained a deacon and priest in the Church of England and served as a missionary for six years in Dover, Delaware, before accepting a clerical position at Trinity Church in New York City. While there, he advocated the establishment of colonial bishoprics and took an active interest in missionary work amongst the Iroquois, all the while continuing to supplement his education through the many academic resources available in such a prominent city.

As tensions between England and the colonies rose, Inglis—along with several others in New York—argued for continued loyalty and submission to the British Crown, which earned him a degree of hostility from patriots. He was convinced that the deteriorating religious and political situation was the result of weakness on the part of the Church in the colonies and the failure of Great Britain to fully integrate England's political design into the colonial polities. Following the establishment of British occupation in New York in September of 1776, he was made the rector of Trinity Church and granted British military chaplaincies.⁷⁶ In 1780, after years of war and suffering on both sides—and on the anniversary of King Charles I having been beheaded at the end of the English Civil War—Inglis composed *The Duty of Honouring the King*, in which

⁷³ Ibid., 395.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 399.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 410.

⁷⁶ Judith Fingard, "INGLIS, CHARLES," in *Dictionary of Canada Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/ Université Laval, accessed October 27, 2017, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/inglis_charles_5E.html.

he aptly argued from Scripture the injustice of the patriot cause.

Inglis's Primary Passage Context

Unlike Mayhew, Inglis chose Peter's passage as his primary text, particularly verse 17: "*Fear God. Honour the King.*"⁷⁷ These five words present a concise yet powerful joint declaration of Christian duty, and Inglis deemed submission to God and the king to be inseparable, joined by God through Peter. To show the continuity of this theme across the Old and New Testaments, he also quoted a proverb of Solomon—"My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change"—and a command of Jesus—"Render unto C[ae]sar . . . the Things which are C[ae]sar[']s; and unto God, the Things that are God[']s."⁷⁸ Perceiving a parallel between the "tragic Event" being commemorated—the execution of King Charles I—and the "[r]ebellion" then being waged in America, Inglis rather aptly purposed to expand on the latter half of the dual duty he introduced, exploring both the reasoning behind it and the implications of upholding it.⁷⁹ To begin, however, Inglis sought to establish the historical context for Peter's epistle.

To the larger Roman world, Christians had been considered a Jewish sect and were often associated with the "[c]rimes" committed by Jewish groups.⁸⁰ Of particular concern to Inglis was the crime of "frequently raising [i]nsurrections," and Peter wrote his epistle just prior to a Jewish revolt which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people.⁸¹ As such, it was important for

Christians to distinguish themselves from the seditiousness of the Jews, thereby being a light to the Roman world, and Inglis believed it was to that end that Peter penned this passage, which Inglis quoted:

Dearly beloved . . . I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul, having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles: That whereas they speak against you as evil Doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation.

Submit yourselves to the 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 the Punishment of evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well. For so is the Will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to Silence the Ignorance of foolish Men. As free, and not using your Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciousness, but as the Servants of God. Honour all Men; love the Brotherhood: Fear God. Honour the King.⁸²

Inglis believed the precepts of this passage—and its sister passage in Romans—were critical for discerning genuine Christians and supporting the gospel in 1780 America as much as in the Roman Empire of the First Century, and the character of the ruler had no bearing on the requirement of submission. After all, Nero, who was of a most "vicious" disposition, was the Roman emperor during the time Peter wrote these commands.⁸³ What would make the risk of having to endure such rulers worthwhile?

⁷⁷ Charles Inglis, *The Duty of Honouring the King* (New York: Hugh Gaine, 1780), sermon heading, <http://anglicanhistory.org/charles/inglis.html>.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 3, 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 6, 8, 11.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 14.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, para. 13.

⁸² *Ibid.*, para. 16.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, para. 16-17.

Reason and Method for Honoring the King

Inglis put it succinctly: the “only [m]eans” for achieving “human Happiness” is government. For this reason, and based on the aforementioned passages, civil authority ought to be understood as God’s provision to attend to the “[g]ood” of the people.⁸⁴ Honoring the king, then, would include submitting to, eagerly supporting, and assiduously defending “his Authority and Person,” and Christians are further commanded to offer “fervent Prayers” on the ruler’s behalf, all from a sincere heart.⁸⁵ Now, it is important to note that Inglis acknowledged the absence of a constitutional prescription for governments in these passages of scripture, there being rather an emphasis on the general principle of governance. Honor would then be immediately due from everyone within a society to whoever wields “supreme Authority,” whether it be “One ... a Few, or ... Many.”⁸⁶ This principle being a divine command, it would be binding in all instances which “did not contradict the express Will of God.” To support this assertion, Inglis quoted from Tertullian—an early church leader—as an illustration of how “primitive Christians” thought and acted toward their rulers.⁸⁷

Tertullian: Example of Christians under Rome

In a public presentation by Tertullian, given around the year 200 on “[b]ehalf of the persecuted Christians,” he referenced Jesus’s command in His Sermon on the Mount to love one’s enemies and pray for one’s persecutors and then asked if there were any that fit the designation of enemy and persecutor more than Roman emperors. By Christ’s own words, then, His followers

were to answer oppression with love and prayer, refusing to “wish ... do ... speak ... [or] think [i]ll of any one” and recognizing that rulers are given authority by God. In this way, Christians were to stand apart from those who maintained all the outward forms of idolatrous devotion to the emperor while insidiously enacting treason. Christians were to do good with no expectation of reward from man, knowing that God saw all and would Himself give reward.⁸⁸ From both Scripture and the testimony of a reputable early church leader, then, Inglis showed that Christians were given a divine duty to submit to those invested with civil authority over them, yet Inglis insisted that, even were there no such command from God, it would be in the best personal interest for people to abide by those principles.

Reason Affirms Divine Command

As already mentioned, Inglis described government as the “only [m]eans” for achieving happiness. In a world corrupted by evil, evil would reign if left unchecked: those with strength, deception, and selfish ambition would be relentlessly vying with one another and trampling those in their path. There would be nothing to restrain those with the ability and will to perpetrate all manner of oppression and wickedness from doing so. All would be chaos. Such are the “[e]vils of [a]narchy.”

Government alone possesses the requisite strength and interest in justice to hold the chaos at bay, providing the peace and security which are essential for human flourishing. Of course, the only way government can be effective in its purpose is if those in authority are “honoured and obeyed” by the people. Failure to honor the king, then, would present a grave danger.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Ibid., para. 18-19.

⁸⁵ Ibid., para. 21-24.

⁸⁶ Ibid., para. 25-26.

⁸⁷ Ibid., para. 34.

⁸⁸ Ibid., para. 38-41.

⁸⁹ Ibid., para. 45-47.

Sedition's Small Beginnings Spiral to Civil War

Though that failure in its initial form might seem to be individualized and directed solely against the king, Inglis recognized that it was from just such small beginnings that sedition would develop and the government's "[e]nergy" would decline, opening the gate to civil disruption. Such civil disruption, if left unchecked, would then devolve into outright rebellion and civil war. Ruling authorities would then be forced to exert all their might to secure their power, producing either the "[c]alamities" and bloodshed of anarchy or the "[i]mpieties and [e]normities" of "[m]isrule," depending on the course of the conflict, a conflict which by its very nature would be unparalleled in savagery.⁹⁰

To lend clarity to this process: from its infancy, sedition feeds on "[d]eceit, [v]iolence, and [p]erjury." As it matures, "dark, malevolent [p]assions" overpower filial bonds and virtue; hatred and desire for vengeance inflame the heart to a "tenfold [r]age." The result is a form of war far more "cruel and barbarous" than any between nations. Finally, even if a rebellion should succeed, such triumphs typically end in "the most grievous [o]ppression." If it should fail, the reestablished government would likely overcompensate and "misrule" in its attempt to prevent such a nightmare from ever arising again. In the shadow of such a threat, Inglis insisted that no seditious speech or even thought could be permitted, for sedition in thought and then speech "wants only an [o]ppportunity" to take action.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ibid., para. 47-51.

⁹¹ Ibid., para. 53, 52

Final Points from Inglis

For much of the remainder of his sermon, Inglis linked the English Civil War with the conflict then raging in America, extolling King Charles I and King George III along with their loyalist supporters while blasting those who aided in taking up arms against them. In closing, however, he made a couple points that—for this examination—bear mentioning. First, as the History recorded in the Old Testament revealed, God works His will over and through everything, even using nations of "[i]dolatrous [h]eathens" as instruments for fulfilling His purposes and administering His judgments. It is therefore by His providence that "[c]alamities" such as those then afflicting America and Great Britain arise, whatever the "secondary and visible [c]auses" might be.⁹² Second, Inglis was convinced that America's transgressions had been the root cause of those providential calamities and believed genuine repentance by loyal colonists to be America's only hope. On this basis, he urged his hearers to turn from their sins to God with penitent hearts, acknowledging His righteousness as well as His supreme power and actually *doing* all within their ability to fulfill their divine duty to honor the king and to exhort others to do the same.⁹³

Analysis of Inglis and Comparison of Sermons

Like Mayhew, Inglis thoroughly and soundly established the divine ordination of government and the divine duty for all Christians to submit themselves to those appointed to be God's ministers, but, while Mayhew emphasized submission to the offices of civil authority, Inglis focused more on submission to the persons

⁹² Ibid., para. 73-82.

⁹³ Ibid., para. 83-93.

occupying those offices. Inglis also focused his clarification of the historical background of the passages on Jewish sedition and the character of Nero, whereas Mayhew chose to focus on the intended audience and the issue which the apostles were directly addressing. While both presentations are historically true, Mayhew's accounts for the more immediate context of both the authors and the audiences, which would have likely had a greater effect on the passages' meanings than the more expanded context given by Inglis and Tertullian.

Since he did include Tertullian's endorsement to disobey idolatrous outward displays of loyalty to Rome, it would seem Inglis did not quite subscribe to divine right doctrine, yet he did pronounce the duty to fear God and that to honor the king as divinely inseparable. He came even closer to it by constraining unqualified non-resistance to whatever entity wielded the supreme civil authority, regardless of how horrendous the character of said entity might be. This means that, while people might be able to passively refuse to commit an ungodly action, they could not actively resist the ungodly actions of those in power.

In a general sense, Inglis never directly addressed the potential of being confronted with the impossible expectation of obeying conflicting wills, either between various governing officers or between the civil authority and God. The closest he came to the latter was the passive refusal to act derived by implication from Tertullian. Even this, however, did not address the possibility of a ruler assaulting innocent lives. In such a case, unqualified non-resistance would compel those who could counter such atrocities to passively do nothing, even if one's own life should be the target. Mayhew did consider such a scenario and used his similitude of a father with children to convey his horror that such a possibility could be seriously thought of as being divinely ordained. For

Mayhew, the preservation of one's own life and the defense of others' lives were also divine ordinations, which necessarily meant that there had to be qualifications to non-resistance. Inconvenience was certainly to be no justification for insubordination, but to stand and—if necessary—take action against outright wickedness was with equal certainty to be considered a divine duty.

Interestingly, even though Inglis included the portion of Peter's passage which affirmed the purpose of kings and governors to be "for the Punishment of evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well"—a phrase Mayhew did not include when he quoted Peter—he did not delve into detail concerning the possibility of and ramifications for rulers working directly against this divine purpose.⁹⁴ Mayhew quoted the sister passage in Romans 13 and held it to be a direct commission which limited legitimate civil authority to that express purpose alone and provided a standard for judgment against the conduct of governing powers. To the extent that Inglis would have granted the presence of any such commission, he would have given it a strong flavor of divine right doctrine by making it an investment of divinely sanctioned authority into not just the office but the person of the one chosen to occupy it. Since character did not matter and non-resistance was unqualified for Inglis, a nefarious person would retain divine authority and the people would not be permitted to resist beyond passive non-compliance.

Pertaining to the conduct of governing powers in the American situation specifically, Inglis did not even entertain the possibility that Great Britain was in any way to blame for the conflict or that her own corruption might have brought providential calamities against her or that her conduct in the war had been anything but just, even

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 15.

though—as Mayhew affirmed about every nation—Great Britain was certainly not immune from fault. Considering Inglis's final points, this is rather ironic. He clearly acknowledged the providential judgment of God against the wickedness of nations throughout history and even affirmed that the calamities then being wrought within the British Empire were providential, yet he assigned all of the blame to the colonies without even considering that his own points could have easily applied to England.

So, Inglis did not address the possibility of facing the impossible expectation of obeying conflicting wills, the possibility of rulers turning tyrannical by destroying and devouring their own people, the Christian duty of standing in defense of others' lives, the God-given right of self-preservation, the specified purpose for governments which he even quoted from Peter's passage, or the fact that his own points about providential justice could have applied to England. In light of these deficiencies as well as the notable potential for bias based on his devotedly Anglican background—the head of the Church of England being the English monarch—Inglis's arguments fail to undermine those of Mayhew where they differ, though they do provide noteworthy support where they agree since he focused more intently on Peter's passage. Ultimately, it is Mayhew's conception of God's will concerning submission to the governing authorities which stands forth as the stronger. Having established the political and religious framework upon the foundational historical context, America's case may now be presented, and, from that, it will be determined whether the crown is upheld or cast down.

CHAPTER FIVE: Moses Mather Making America's *Appeal*

Further Background of Mather

Moses Mather was born in 1719 to a Connecticut family of clerical tendency, one to which he himself conformed. A Yale graduate of 1739, he assumed his first ecclesiastical post in Darien, Connecticut, in 1742 and would serve there for the next 64 years. As to his prominence, he did have a certain notoriety among the British and Loyalists, being put in confinement by them twice during the war.⁹⁵ Among his own community and the connections that spread beyond it, he was known to have had a “great and good influence” as a “most earnest patriot” in the struggle against Great Britain.⁹⁶ In fact, such was his zeal that he was invited by the Connecticut General Assembly to give the election sermon in 1781.⁹⁷ It is unknown exactly how far the influence of specifically *America's Appeal to the Impartial World* spread, but Dr. Morgan Smith noted that the same essential message and underlying principles were being preached and published from pulpits across the colonies—especially in New England—and it was that widely sustained effort to articulate the proper response to the state of affairs that carried the greatest influence.⁹⁸ So, while Mather was one in a chorus of voices, his was particularly thoughtful

⁹⁵ Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons*, 440.

⁹⁶ William Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit, Volume 1*, (New York: R. Carter and brothers, 1859), books.google.com/books?id=L3IUAAAAYAAJ&q=moses+mather#v=snippet&q=moses%20mather&f=false, 427.

⁹⁷ Mark Noll, “Moses Mather (Old Calvinist) and the Evolution of Edwardeanism,” *Church History*, Vol. 49, No. 3, (1980), 128.621.72, 275-276

⁹⁸ Sarah Morgan Smith, interview with author, March 7, 2018.

and thorough, and the timeline for the writing of this specific piece grants it a certain distinction.

Context of Mather's Appeal

There is no exact date given for Mather's composition of *America's Appeal to an Impartial World* beyond being published sometime in 1775, but there are a few internal clues as to its timeline. He referenced the Quebec Act of June 1774, mentioned a compulsion for Americans to take up the sword—which could well have been a reference to the outbreaks between the British soldiers and Massachusetts minute-men in April of 1775 or the appointment of George Washington as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army in June of 1775—described the escalating situation through the king's eyes as a raging civil war, and offered a last appeal to the king, even mentioning an olive branch—perhaps a reference to the Olive Branch Petition adopted in July of 1775—all of which seem to indicate that he wrote the main part of his *Appeal* sometime between June and August of 1775, between Congress's adoption of the Continental Army and King George's *Proclamation of Rebellion*. Mather's *Appendix*, which references the king's treachery, clearly depicts the king as an enemy, and declares America “necessarily independant [*sic*],” was therefore likely written sometime in November or early December, since the Congress did not receive news of the king's response until at least the end of October, yet Hartford printed the *Appeal* in its entirety prior to the turn of 1776. This one publication, then, catalogues the critical shift in perspective over the course of 1775 and foreshadows the historic measures of 1776 and beyond. As such, this piece—alongside, of course, the Declaration of Independence—is ideally suited to serve as the represen-

tative of America's case, “under God,” before the world.⁹⁹

God's Ordinance for Mankind and Government

To supply the cornerstone of his argument, Mather began with God's investment in both mankind and the governing powers. For humanity, the founding principle and right is free agency: “a rational existence, with its powers and faculties, and freedom of enjoying and exercising them.” This is the absolute, God-given right of every human being, and no one can call into question the right of the divine to bestow this gift or the validity of His granting it. Being invested in mankind by the Creator Himself, no one may legitimately violate another's free agency, and everyone is responsible before God for the use of that right. Moreover, what a person gains by the use of free agency becomes that person's rightful property, and no one may lay claim to another's property without the owner's consent, though that consent may not be explicit. Government involves such an arrangement.

By becoming part of a governed society, one grants to the government by implicit consent the right to make laws to which one agrees to be subject in exchange for the boons of government, such as protection from foreign threats and the enforcement of justice. It is on this foundation that the God-ordained civil authorities are established. By the people's consent, a portion of their God-invested free agency is entrusted to a governing body to fulfill its God-given role.¹⁰⁰ Mather pointed out that, in Scripture, the Greek word for civil authority is *exousia*. According to Mather—in agreement with Mayhew—this Greek word indicates a “rightful authority,” not a

⁹⁹ Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons*, 443.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 444.

“natural power”—which would be signified by the word *dunamis*.¹⁰¹ The implications of this are monumental.

No Basis for Divine Right Theory

As previously noted, the divine-right theory asserted that governments—and monarchs in particular—are directly granted divine power from God as His representatives on earth to grant whatever rights to and exercise whatever authority over the people said governing entity might desire, and the people have a God-ordained role to submit to that rule. In stark contrast to that notion, Mather here revealed from both reason and Scripture that the inverse is true: authority is originally invested by God in the people and governments have a God-ordained role to be ministers “*for the good of the people*.”¹⁰² So, instead of government possessing the God-given right to divine rule and humanity bearing a God-given role subjected thereunto, humanity possesses the God-given right of free agency and government bears a God-given role derived therefrom. What humanity rightfully possesses, it may also rightfully defend from usurpation, even if it becomes necessary to counter force with force.¹⁰³ This is the cornerstone of America's case, and to this principle may now be applied the particulars.

The Situation for Settlers in America

Setting aside the issue of charters by the king for a moment, Mather considered the relationship between Great Britain and the settlers who had reached America. As he saw it, there were two possibilities: either the settlers were still part of that realm and subject thereunto or they were entirely removed from its jurisdiction and, thus, no

longer its subjects. If the former was true, the settlers would be entitled to full participation in the functions and liberties of their British countrymen, but, if the latter was true, the settlers would be free to form their own governments. As was thoroughly shown by Almon—and ably revealed by Mather as well—it was logistically and constitutionally impossible for the settlers to remain subjects of the kingdom of Great Britain. Here, Mather introduced another concept fundamental to America's case: allegiance.

Allegiance: Meaning and Application

Allegiance is essentially a binding relationship between a ruler and the ruled, from which comes the notion of a “liege lord” and “liege subjects.” The subjects are bound to obey the lord, and the lord is bound to protect the subjects. Allegiance has three varieties. Natural allegiance is that which is established at birth between the person and the realm into which he or she is born. Acquired allegiance is established when a government grants a foreigner's request to be accepted as a citizen of that realm. Local allegiance exists between a government and a person who temporarily resides within a foreign realm, during which time the resident respects the host nation's laws and the host nation provides protection for its guest. In every instance, it is a mutual agreement, a form of contract. If one part should cease to be relevant or applicable, the allegiance itself is dissolved. After all, if that were not the case, acquired allegiance could not exist since no one would be able to divest themselves of their natural allegiance, yet most countries—then and now—accept the concept of acquired allegiance. From this, it became abundantly clear to Mather that the settlers could not have possibly been subject to the kingdom of Great Britain because it was, at that point, beyond that kingdom's power to convey the protection—as in the

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 444 footnote.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 444-445, 474.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 445.

maintenance of law and order via a police force—and benefits of governance to the settlers.¹⁰⁴ What, then, was the relationship between America and Great Britain? To answer that, Mather first introduced an additional component of allegiance within the British Empire: it was possible to owe allegiance to the king without owing allegiance to the Parliament of Great Britain.

British Parliament consists of two representative houses: Lords and Commons. Representation is the sole source from which parliamentary authority has been held to be genuinely derived, and protestations otherwise have usually come from monarchs who sought to restrict that authority. Because of its representational basis, any attempt by the Parliament to exercise authority over a people it does not represent would be blatantly unconstitutional. The monarchy, however, is not representationally based; so, the constitutionally limited authority of the British monarchy—limited foremost by Magna Carta—would be able to extend beyond the representational realm. In such a case, one monarch would occupy multiple monarchical offices, each office being over a different realm. For example, if the King of Great Britain were to have claim to the throne of Denmark and succeed to it, the two nations would not simply meld into one under the Parliament of Great Britain. The Danes would be a distinct people with their own government under their own King of Denmark alongside the people of Great Britain. It would just so happen that the same person occupied both monarchical offices. This was not confined to the realm of theory; Mather pointed to more than one period in which this occurred in British History. For a time under King James I, Scotland owed allegiance to him yet not to Parliament; he was King of England and King of Scotland. The same was true for

Normandy during the reign of King William I; he was King of England and King of Normandy.¹⁰⁵ Such was the case for the American colonies as well, and Mather referred to the colonial charters and constitutions to prove it.

Purpose of Charters and Constitutions

Recall: a constitution is the arrangement of power in a polity's system of government, and those who settled in America—not being under the British polity's constitution—had the right to form constitutions for themselves. What, then, was the role and the purpose of colonial charters granted by the king? It should be noted that the charters were granted to companies or lords for the purpose of authorizing settlements and providing some basic societal guidelines. Not every settlement operated on the basis of a charter, however; the Plymouth settlers, for example, formed the Mayflower Compact among themselves. As settlements grew into thriving communities, the need arose for constitutional government. Constitutions were then drafted and governments formed from them, and, in recognition of the great toil and sacrifice invested in the cultivation of the colonies, the monarch affirmed the legitimacy of said constitutions and governments. Royal decrees and the constitutions themselves bore witness of this, and they also explicitly confirm that the colonists, while in full possession of the rights and protections of citizens, were not subjects of the realm of Great Britain but of their common monarch.¹⁰⁶ So, the charters were largely provisional measures to provide an initial structure and legitimacy from which the inhabitants could then grow to form their own constitutional governments.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 453-454.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 454, 470-471.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 458-460.

The colonies were not originally and never did become subject to the Parliament. As an example, when Virginia submitted a remonstrance against the “imposition of duties on their trade” in the latter half of the Seventeenth Century, King Charles the II expressly proclaimed that no taxes were to be laid on the colonists “but by the common consent of the General Assembly.”¹⁰⁷ For this reason, as Almon revealed and Mather also pointed out, the kings would submit requisitions to the colonial General Assemblies, who would then usually comply. If the people were part of the realm of Great Britain and therefore subject to parliamentary jurisdiction, every king would have simply gone through the Parliament, yet they did not because they recognized the legitimacy and authority of the colonial constitutions and governments. In fact, when desiring to enact a measure against treaty violations, King Charles II sent to the Connecticut General Assembly, “[O]ur will and pleasure is, that you take care that such a law (a copy whereof is herewith sent you) be passed within our colony, under your government.” Colonies were genuine polities with their own constitutional governments which were recognized by their kings. The monarchy went further than that, though.

Royally Sanctioned Right of Defense

Monarchs expressly affirmed the right of the colonies to defend themselves by any means against any and all who should attempt to invade or subjugate them. This was a culminating point for Mather to prove beyond all doubt that the colonies were guilty of neither “treason” nor “rebellion,” and, as such, a portion of the full citation he provided ought to be here reprinted:

And we do for us, our heirs and successors, give and grant unto, &c. and their successors, by these presents, that it shall and may be lawful to ... assemble, martial array, and put in warlike posture, the inhabitants of the said colony ... to encounter, expulse, repel and resist, by force of arms, as well by sea as by land; and also to kill, slay and destroy, by all fitting ways, enterprises and means whatsoever, all and every such person or persons, as shall at any time hereafter, attempt or enterprise the destruction, invasion, detriment or annoyance of the said inhabitants.¹⁰⁸

Should any entity, whether domestic, foreign, or even the Parliament itself, carry out a contrivance to destroy, invade, harm, or harass a colony, the inhabitants of that colony have an unquestioned right to use whatever means at their disposal to resist such violations. From this, the situation then facing Great Britain and America in 1775 becomes clear.

Presenting the Crisis Situation of 1775 and Making the Appeal

There were two realms: Great Britain and America. Technically, America was made up of thirteen realms, but the colonies were becoming increasingly united in opposition to Great Britain and had even formed a general Congress; so, for the sake of simplicity, the colonies may be treated as one entity. One of these realms, by means of its government—a representative body called Parliament—had persistently sought to impose legislative measures on the inhabitants of the other realm, irrespective of that realm's governments. Meeting steady resistance to such unjust encroachment, the Parliament then took steps to enforce

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 461-462.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 462-463, 472.

compliance through its military arm, employing both army and navy to occupy American cities and blockade American harbors. America, however, would not be deprived of its constitutional rights so easily and signaled its intent to steadfastly defend its integrity as a body politic. Mather even went so far as to point out that, by violating its own constitution, the Parliament was truly the entity deserving of the charge of treason. America, meanwhile, was displaying true allegiance to both its constitution and its king. Both of these realms shared a monarch, meaning the King of Great Britain was also the King of America. Since previous efforts by America—both individual and collective—to resolve the disputes with the Parliament had failed, the conflict only having grown worse, the duly appointed representatives of America now turned to their king, their liege lord, beseeching him to vindicate his liege subjects' cause and rise in defense of their rights.¹⁰⁹

Mather lamented the state of affairs, drawing a connection between those forced to leave Boston and the exiles of Jerusalem who had been oppressed and expelled by a foreign power and then asked by their conquerors to sing one of their native songs, much in the same way the Parliament seized Boston and expected the citizenry to be grateful for such 'deliverance.' No, as far as Mather and many others were concerned, it was a constitutional—and conjointly a scriptural—duty to steadfastly resist such injustice. He then called upon his American countrymen to "repentance toward their maker" and "vengeance on their adversaries." From the rectitude of their cause, the vastness of their resources, and the "unanimity of their hearts," he urged them to the "necessary defense" of their rights for the sake of their posterity and as a resounding testament to the world of the

"irrepressible spirit" of a free people. The preservation of liberty for not only themselves but of countless millions yet to be born was an endeavor more than worth the sacrifice of all material wealth. To the king, therefore, and to the impartial world, Mather turned for the vindication of America's cause.¹¹⁰

A Sober Prognostication

Even in his main section, however, Mather was not overly optimistic concerning the king's response, and he forewarned what would happen should the king side with the treasonous Parliament. Mather explicitly acknowledged that treason would be the proper charge for subjects who make war against their liege lord; however, for a king to make war against his liege subjects would be an act so terrible and "unnatural" that he had no name for it. Should a king commit such a "crime of royal magnitude," would the people remain bound in subjection to him? Would resistance to him be justly decried as treason or rebellion? Would it not rather be just adherence to the God-instilled principle of self-preservation?¹¹¹ All eyes were turned to King George III, King of Great Britain and America, who alone had an opportunity to avert his kingdoms from the maelstrom of war.

The King's Decision

With a folly to put King Rehoboam to shame, King George III sided with the oppressors.¹¹² By royal proclamation, he branded the American patriots rebels and not only authorized but commanded all "obedient subjects" in the colonies to use any means necessary to "suppress such rebellion,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 474-475, 480-481.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 481-483.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 475, 481.

¹¹² For the account of King Rehoboam, see I Kings

and to bring the traitors to justice.”¹¹³ He then went to the Parliament and stated his intention to put a “speedy end” to the rebellion “by the most decisive measures,” for the purpose of which he was greatly augmenting his naval and land forces, and, as such, he requested of the House of Commons the requisite “supplies” to carry out his designs to the fullest and of the Parliament entire its support in this endeavor. Somewhat ironically, in the fifth paragraph of his address, King George III referred to his multiple “kingdoms,” one of the critical components of the patriots’ argument.¹¹⁴

Hope in the king had failed. What were the politics of America to do? Politically, constitutionally, the answer would seem to be clear at this point. The scriptural position, however, is made more questionable by the fact that, even though the Parliament was shown to have no jurisdiction over the colonies, subjection to the king was expressly affirmed. This is the point at which all that was previously discussed concerning scriptural precepts that involve government becomes critical, and this is the point at which Mather’s *Appendix* applied the final arguments to America’s case.

Where America Stands

Civil society, while potentially the “greatest temporal blessing,” is not God. The powers of the earth do not possess a divine right of unlimited authority over their peoples. Certain unassailable rights are given by God to mankind. It is “under God”

¹¹³ George William Frederick III, “Proclamation of Rebellion,” *Britannia: Historical Documents*, 1775,

www.britannia.com/history/docs/procreb.html.

¹¹⁴ George William Frederick III, “His MAJESTY’s most Gracious SPEECH to both Houses of Parliament,” *Eighteenth Century Collections Online: Text Creation Partnership*, 1775, quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eccodemo/K124613.0001.01/1:1?rgn=div1;view=fulltext.

and from the consent—explicit or implied—of a community of people that governments are originally invested with their rightful authority. While there is no divinely prescribed form for a society’s constitution—though there have been strong arguments made from Scripture in support of certain arrangements—there is a divinely commissioned purpose, as revealed in Romans and I Peter: governing authorities are to be God’s ministers for the good of the people and the administration of God’s justice.¹¹⁵ Allegiance binds ruler and ruled; a liege lord is duty bound to be the protector of his liege subjects, who are duty bound to render due respect and obedience to their liege lord.

By not only refusing to protect his subjects but actually proclaiming them traitors and joining himself to their oppressors, the King of America violated in a most egregious manner his God-ordained duties and the fundamental bond of allegiance with his people. God’s minister for good had chosen to become—as Mayhew would put it—a messenger of Satan to destroy. The liege lord had made himself a tyrant. By the workings of Providence, Mather concluded, “[W]e are become necessarily independant [*sic*].” America’s monarchy—both the man and the office—had betrayed her and thus severed the compact between king and subjects, leaving America without a monarchy. So, it only remained for the colonies—now states—to acknowledge as a fact that which had already been enacted by the king: independence. Ironically, the states even had royal sanction to defend themselves with force against just such an invasion as the king intended. Mather, however, went further.

A Call for Constitutional Government

Mather noted that necessary modifications to the state constitutions would need

¹¹⁵ Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons*, 486-487.

to be made to reflect the new reality, and he called for an “explicit constitution” which would establish a national representative body and grant to it powers needful for the management of “all matters of common and general concernment.”¹¹⁶ In 1775, prior to the Declaration of Independence of 1776, the Articles of Confederation of 1777, or the Constitution of 1789, Mather was earnestly looking toward the unification of the states of America under a supreme, written constitution as one free nation under the one true God. Providence, working through such pious and farsighted men as Moses Mather, then wondrously made that hope a reality.

CONCLUSION

Recalling the Historical Context

With the assistance of Dr. Mark Noll, Dr. Thomas West, and Dr. Sarah Morgan Smith, it was established that, following the Protestant Reformation, there were essentially two sources from which republicanism began to rise: the thoughts produced or revived by the Reformation itself and some residual yet powerful Machiavellian concepts. Due to the established hierarchical order so prevalent among both political and ecclesiastical spheres in Europe, republicanism often found itself pitted against Christianity to some degree, but that was not the case everywhere. In Protestant environments—especially Great Britain—Christianity and republicanism were far more closely aligned or even outright allied, even though distinct emphases were maintained.

Because of the persecution against religious dissenters in Europe, many who came to America were deeply devoted to protecting, upholding, and sharing their religious convictions, and they proceeded to

establish societies that were thoroughly non-hierarchical, both ecclesiastically and politically. A sincere, biblically based Judeo-Christian theology of republican liberty was then forged in America, and, through difficult trials and patient growth, it produced a ubiquitous sacralization that stood in stark contrast to the ideological battlefields of Europe. While a kindred respect for each other’s perspective still remained between Great Britain and America leading up to the Revolution, the controversy escalated to the point of crisis throughout the 1760s and 1770s.

Resolving the Political Controversy

Having examined the four framework sources, a reasoned evaluation of the crisis situation may be formulated. John Almon established that England’s constitution was purposefully based on representation of the people, with special protection regarding taxes—which were given by the House of Commons, not taken by the king or anyone else. American colonists, though establishing themselves on the continent for various reasons, were largely self-sufficient for most of the colonies’ existence and were themselves under legitimate governments, each with its own stipulations regarding its relationship to the monarchy of Great Britain and America. Among the colonies, there was no acknowledgment of parliamentary jurisdiction over internal colonial affairs because there was no possibility of any genuine representation—which depended upon ability to interact and influence, not upon having the right of suffrage and always voting with the majority. Contrary to John Wesley’s claims, the colonial charters did not sanction internal taxation either explicitly or implicitly, and, as Almon pointed out, a Virginia resolution firmly declared the opposite. Therefore, the English Parliament had no constitutional right to levy taxes on

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 489-491.

American colonies, and the king had no constitutional power to grant such a right, much less attempt to maintain it by military force.

Resolving the Religious Controversy

Jonathan Mayhew showed from his exegesis of Romans 13 that the civil authority is not God—having all authority and no outside restraints. Rather, it is part of God's creation, and, as such, remains subject to Him. The purpose for which God created government was to bring about good for the people, using His divinely appointed sword of justice to praise and cultivate that which is good as well as to condemn and punish that which is evil, by means of which peace and order are to be established and the people thereby enabled to flourish. Earthly government being divinely ordained for good, those who are governed by it are to willingly submit to its authority and make provision for its operation. On both sides, however, there are limitations. God's purpose for government is a divine commission, and that commission is the limit for both the authority of government and the obligation of obedience by the people. Should that commission be egregiously and resolutely violated by the rulers, said rulers will have gone beyond their divine authority and to that extent nullified the divine duty of popular submission. Mayhew, along with Inglis on certain points, demonstrated that I Peter 2 affirms this understanding of Romans 13. The pacifist's use of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount as a counterargument by which to constrain unqualified non-resistance removed Jesus's words from their context—private injustices. An insulting slap by an individual is a far cry from tyrannical oppression by a wielder of governing power. Finally, Christians have a divine duty to stand against and counteract evil, particularly in defense of others' lives,

and they have a right to preserve the life God entrusted to them.

Summarizing the Scriptural Principles

Based on the understanding of Scripture derived from Jonathan Mayhew and Charles Inglis, the colonists truly did have a divine duty to submit to government, but that submission was divinely limited. Where oppression—rulers intentionally acting against their God-ordained purpose—is perceived, all peaceful measures toward righting the wrong should be pursued. When oppression is confirmed as tyranny—oppressive rulers who resolutely refuse all peaceful measures and enforce their illegitimate will with the sword which they are commissioned to wield for God's justice—martial defense is not just permissible; it is a duty for mutual defense and self-preservation.

Summarizing the Political Particulars

From the political context established by John Wesley and John Almon, it is clear that the colonial governments were being consistently wronged by the English government. Colonial attempts to reason with the English Parliament, though occasionally making small gains, ultimately proved ineffective, and repeated pleas to the king were all absolutely rebuffed. All of this culminated in the engagement of the British army and navy in operations against the colonies by the royal command and the parliamentary purse. These operations did not abate but rather intensified, leading to mounting death and destruction in New England.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ See "Further Reading" section of Bibliography, especially: Jonas Clark, *The Fate of Blood-thirsty Oppressors, and GOD'S tender Care of his distressed People* (Boston: Powars & Willis, 1776) (1)-(7), Boston College Library Collection, Archive.org.

Presenting the Case

Being familiar with the historical context and the intricacies of the then-present controversy, Moses Mather skillfully presented America's case to the world. In agreement with Almon and Mayhew, Mather illuminated the God-given rights of mankind, the divinely ordained role for civil government, the constitutional situation between the realms of Great Britain and America, the treasonous violations of that constitution by Parliament, and the meaning and nature of allegiance, by which he affirmed the Americans' loyalty to their king as they pleaded with their liege lord to vindicate the justness of the American cause and rise up to protect his liege subjects. Hope in the king was subsequently dashed by his *Proclamation of Rebellion* and the address by which he made himself a co-conspirator with the Parliament. On the basis of the historical record as well as the political and religious principles thoroughly defended by Almon and Mayhew, respectively, and sincerely held to be true by Christian republicans, Mather proclaimed America—betrayed by the man and the office of her monarchy—to have necessarily become independent of that monarchy and, as such, called for the unification of the newly made states into one nation by an explicit constitution based on the consent of the people under God.

The Verdict

Since the foundation and framework clearly support the crowning edifice so skillfully crafted by Dr. Mather, a judgment may be issued concerning America's case for revolution. The monarchy of America and Great Britain had betrayed its divine purpose by levying unjust war against its own subjects and thereby undermined the people's divine duty of civil obedience.

Liege lord had obliterated the bond of allegiance with his liege subjects. Furthermore, the king and his oppressive allies in Parliament proved themselves tyrannously resolute in such oppression, impervious to pleas for peaceful resolution. For the sake of self-preservation, for the sake of mutual defense, for the sake of resisting relentless injustice, for the sake of preventing the unlawful and unconstitutional imposition of absolute and unrepresentative English authority in the colonies, and for the sake of rendering due obedience to colonial governments and to God, the American Revolution was indeed justifiable, politically and scripturally.

Present Application

Let it therefore be known to Christians the world over that God has not consigned the rights of His peoples to the oppressive whims of tyranny. God gives to all mankind the right to life, to liberty, to the fruit of one's own labor. Governments are given a divine commission, not divine right, and, being conducted by human beings, they are ever subject to corruption. Allegiance—first to God, then to the governing authorities—must always be esteemed a bond of surpassing value, and, insofar as Christians have any bearing on the matter, peace ought to be maintained with all mankind.¹¹⁸ Should a government violate its divine commission by becoming demonstrably tyrannical, however, it is the sacred right and duty of every Christian to stand for what is true and right, choosing to obey God rather than men and to defend others with godly, sacrificial love.¹¹⁹ For Americans in particular, it is most fitting to conclude with an admonition from John Wesley following the conclusion of the Revolution: “[O]ur

¹¹⁸ Ref. Romans 12:18

¹¹⁹ Ref. Acts 5:29; Psalm 82:3-4; John 15:12-13; Romans 5:7-8

American brethren . . . are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free.”¹²⁰

¹²⁰ John Wesley, “God has so strangely made them free,” *Drew McIntyre: Plowshares Into Swords*, 1784, drewbmcintyre.com/2013/07/04/god-has-so-strangely-made-them-free-wesleys-letter-to-america/.

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