

CHRISTIANS AND GOVERNMENT



Biblical Basis

Romans 13 (NIV)

1 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

4 For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

Jonathan Mayhew

- Argued that Romans 13:1-7 required Christians to actively oppose tyranny when the government was frustrating ordered government

American Revolution: Resistance to Tyrants is Obedience to God



Problems with Mayhew's Interpretation

- Where do you draw the line between a government promoting order and a government frustrating order?
- Was the British government really that bad?

What is different about our
political position today?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Bonhoeffer's Take on Christians and Government

⦿ Options:

- 1. Question Government to keep it accountable:
- “[*The Church*] can ask the state whether its actions are legitimate and in accordance with its character as state”

- 2. Help the victims of government action

“[The Church] can aid the victims of any ordering of society, even if they do not belong to Christian community.”

◎ 3. Stop the government

“The third possibility is not just to bandage the victims under the wheel, but to jam a spoke in the wheel itself.”

Bonhoeffer Acted

- After trying the first two options for years, Bonhoeffer ended up being involved in a plot to kill Hitler
- Attempts to kill Hitler failed
- Bonhoeffer was hanged without trial by the Nazis in 1945 shortly before the war ended

In a Democracy, how can the church “stick a spoke in the wheel”?