Session #1 Questions to Consider

1. ***What similarities and differences do you see in the reasonings of Mayhew and Paine?***
2. ***How might you account for the differences?***

Jonathan Mayhew, *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers*, 1750 (excerpts)

1. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God.

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 to 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.

After quoting the verses from St. Paul's letters to the Romans, in the New Testament of the Bible, Mayhew summarizes the apostle's position on man's duty to obey governmental rulers.

The apostle's doctrine, in the passage thus explained, concerning the office of civil rulers and the duty of subjects [the people] may be summed up in the following observations;

THAT the end of magistracy is the good of civil society, as such:

THAT civil rulers, as such, are the ordinance and ministers of God; it being by his permission and providence that any bear rule; and agreeable to his will, that there should be some persons vested with authority in society, for the well-being of it:

THAT which is here said concerning civil rulers, extends to all of them in common: it relates indifferently to monarchical, republican and aristocratical government; and to all other forms which truly answer the sole end of government, the happiness of society; and to all the different degrees of authority in any particular slate; to inferior officers no less than to the supreme:

THAT disobedience to civil rulers in the due exercise of their authority, is not merely a political sin, but an heinous offence against God and religion:

THAT the true ground and reason of our obligation to be subject to the higher powers, is the usefulness of magistracy (when properly exercised) to human society, and its subserviency to the general welfare:

THAT obedience to civil rulers is here equally required under all forms of government, which answer the sole end of all government, the good of society; and to every degree of authority in any state, whether supreme or subordinate:

(From whence it follows,

THAT if unlimited obedience and non-resistance be here required as a duty under any one form of government, it is also required as a duty under all other forms; and as a duty to subordinate rulers as well as to the supreme.)

AND lastly, that those civil rulers to whom the apostle enjoins subjection, are the persons in possession; the powers that be; those who are actually vested with authority.

THERE is one very important and interesting point which remains to be inquired into; namely, the extent of that subjection to the higher powers, which is here enjoined as a duty upon all christians. Some have thought it warrantable and glorious to disobey the civil powers in certain circumstances; and, in cases of very great and general oppression, when humble remonstrances fail of having any effect; and when the publick welfare cannot be otherwise provided for and secured, to rise unanimously even against the sovereign himself in order to redress their grievances; to vindicate their natural and legal rights: to break the yoke of tyranny and free themselves and posterity from inglorious servitude and ruin. . . .

But in opposition to this principle, it has often been asserted that the scripture in general (and the passage under consideration in particular) makes all resistance to princes a crime in any case whatever – If they turn tyrants and become the common oppressors of those whose welfare they ought to regard with a paternal affection, we must not pretend to right ourselves unless it be by prayers and tears and humble entreaties. And if these methods fail of producing redress, we must not have recourse to any other, but all suffer ourselves to be robbed and butchered at the pleasure of the Lord's anointed: lest we should incur the sin of rebellion and the punishment of damnation. For he has God's authority and commission to bear him out in the worst of crimes, so far that he may not be withstood or controled. Now whether we are obliged to yield such an absolute submission to our prince, or whether disobedience and resistance may not be justifiable in some cases, notwithstanding anything in the passage before us, is an inquiry in which we are all concerned; and this is the inquiry which is the main design of the present discourse. . . .

I now add, farther, that the apostle's argument is so far from proving it to be the duty of people to obey and submit to such rulers as act in contradiction to the public good, and so to the design of their office, that it proves the direct contrary. For, please to observe, that if the end of all civil government be the good of society; if this be the thing this is aimed at in constituting civil rulers, and if the motive and argument for submission to government be taken from the apparent usefulness of civil authority; it follows, that when no such good end can be answered by submission, there remains no argument or motive to enforce it; if instead of this good end's being brought about by submission, a contrary end is brought about, and the ruin and misery of society effected by it, here is a plain and positive reason against submission in all such cases, should they every happen. . . . Suppose God requires a family of children to obey their father and not to resist him; and enforces his command with this argument; that the superintendence and care and authority of a just and kind parent will contribute to the happiness of the whole family; so that they ought to obey him for their own sakes more than for his. Suppose this parent at length runs distracted and attempts, in his mad fit, to cut all his children's throats. Now, in this case, is not the reason before assigned, why these children should obey their parent while he continued of a sound mind, namely, their common good, a reason equally conclusive for disobeying and resisting him, since he is become delirious and attempts their ruin? It makes no alteration in the argument whether this parent, properly speaking, loses his reason; or does, while he retains his understanding, that which is as fatal in its

consequences as any thing he could do, were he really deprived of it. This similitude needs no formal application. . . .

If we calmly consider the nature of the thing itself, nothing can well be imagined more directly contrary to common sense than to suppose that millions of people should be subjected to the arbitrary, precarious pleasure of one single man (who has naturally no superiority over them in point of authority) so that their estates, and everything that is valuable in life, and even their lives also, shall be absolutely at his disposal, if he happens to be wanton and capricious enough to demand them. What unprejudiced man can think that God made ALL to be thus subservient to the lawless pleasure and frenzy of ONE, so that it shall always be a sin to resist him! Nothing but the most plain and express revelation from heaven could make a sober impartial man believe such a monstrous, unaccountable doctrine, and, indeed, the thing itself appears so shocking – so out of all proportion that it may be questioned whether all the miracles that ever were wrought, could make it credible that this doctrine really came from God. At present there is not the least syllable in scripture which gives any countenance to it. . . .

But then, if unlimited submission and passive obedience to the higher powers, in all possible cases, be not a duty, it will be asked, "HOW far are we obliged to submit? If we may innocently disobey and resist in some crises, why not in all? Where shall we stop? What is the measure of our duty? . . . "

To conclude: Let us all learn to be free, and to be loyal. Let us not profess ourselves vassals to the lawless pleasure of any man on earth. But let us remember, at the same time, government is sacred and not to be trifled with. It is our happiness to live under the government of a PRINCE who is satisfied with ruling according to law, as every other good prince will – We enjoy under his administration all the liberty that is proper and expedient for us. It becomes us, therefore, to be contented and dutiful subjects. Let us prize our freedom, but not use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness. There are men who strike at liberty under the term licentiousness. There are others who aim at popularity under the disguise of patriotism. Be aware of both. Extremes are dangerous. There is at present amongst us, perhaps, more danger of the latter than of the former. For which reason I would exhort you to pay all due Regard to the government over us; to the KING and all in authority, and to lead a quiet and peaceable life. – And while I am speaking of loyalty to our earthly Prince, suffer me just to put you in mind to be loyal also to the supreme RULER of the universe, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice. To which king eternal immortal, invisible, even to the ONLY WISE GOD, be all honor and praise, DOMINION and thanksgiving, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. AMEN.

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 14 February 1776 (excerpts)

Government by kings was first introduced into the world by the Heathens, from whom the children of Israel copied the custom. It was the most prosperous invention the Devil ever set on foot for the promotion of idolatry. The Heathens paid divine honours to their deceased kings, and the Christian World hath improved on the plan by doing the same to their living ones. How impious is the title of sacred Majesty applied to a worm, who in the midst of his splendor is crumbling into dust!

As the exalting one man so greatly above the rest cannot be justified on the equal rights of nature, so neither can it be defended on the authority of scripture; for the will of the Almighty as declared by Gideon, and the prophet Samuel, expressly disapproves of government by Kings. All anti-monarchical parts of scripture, have been very smoothly glossed over in monarchical governments, but they undoubtedly merit the attention of countries which have their governments

yet to form. *Render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's,* is the scripture doctrine of courts, yet it is no support of monarchical government, for the Jews at that time were without a king, and in a state of vassalage to the Romans.

Near three thousand years passed away, from the Mosaic account of the creation, till the Jews under a national delusion requested a king. Till then their form of government (except in extraordinary cases where the Almighty interposed) was a kind of Republic, administered by a judge and the elders of the tribes. Kings they had none, and it was held sinful to acknowledge any being under that title but the Lord of Hosts. And when a man seriously reflects on the idolatrous homage which is paid to the persons of kings, he need not wonder that the Almighty, ever jealous of his honour, should disapprove a form of government which so impiously invades the prerogative of Heaven.

Monarchy is ranked in scripture as one of the sins of the Jews, for which a curse in reserve is denounced against them. The history of that transaction is worth attending to.

The children of Israel being oppressed by the Midianites, Gideon marched against them with a small army, and victory thro' the divine interposition decided in his favour. The Jews, elate with success, and attributing it to the generalship of Gideon, proposed making him a king, saying, *Rule thou over us, thou and thy son, and thy son's son.* Here was temptation in its fullest extent; not a kingdom only, but an hereditary one; but Gideon in the piety of his soul replied, *I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you.* THE LORD SHALL RULE OVER YOU. Words need not be more explicit; Gideon doth not decline the honour, but denieth their right to give it; neither doth he compliment them with invented declarations of his thanks, but in the positive stile of a prophet charges them with disaffection to their proper Sovereign, the King of Heaven.

About one hundred and thirty years after this, they fell again into the same error. The hankering which the Jews had for the idolatrous customs of the Heathens, is something exceedingly unaccountable; but so it was, that laying hold of the misconduct of Samuel's two sons, who were intrusted with some secular concerns, they came in an abrupt and clamorous manner to Samuel, saying, *Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways, now make us a king to judge us like all the other nations.* And here we cannot but observe that their motives were bad, viz. that they might be *like* unto other nations, i. e. the Heathens, whereas their true glory lay in being as much *unlike* them as possible. *But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, give us a King to judge us; and Samuel prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me,* THAT I SHOULD NOT REIGN OVER THEM. *According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other Gods: so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice, howbeit, protest solemnly unto them and show them the manner of the King that shall reign over them,* i. e. not of any particular King, but the general manner of the Kings of the earth whom Israel was so eagerly copying after. And notwithstanding the great distance of time and difference of manners, the character is still in fashion. *And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people, that asked of him a King. And he said, This shall be the manner of the King that shall reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them for himself for his chariots and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots* (this description agrees with the present mode of impressing men) *and he will appoint him captains over thousands and captains over fifties, will set them to ear his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers* (this describes the expense and luxury as well as the oppression of Kings) *and he will take your fields and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give them to his officers and to his servants* (by which we see that bribery, corruption, and favouritism, are the standing vices of Kings) *and he will take the tenth of your men servants, and your maid servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put*

them to his work: and he will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants, and ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen, AND THE LORD WILL NOT HEAR YOU IN THAT DAY. This accounts for the continuation of Monarchy; neither do the characters of the few good kings which have lived since, either sanctify the title, or blot out the sinfulness of the origin; the high encomium given of David takes no notice of him *officially as a King,* but only as a *Man* after God's own heart. *Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said, Nay but we will have a king over us, that we may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles.* Samuel continued to reason with them but to no purpose; he set before them their ingratitude, but all would not avail; and seeing them fully bent on their folly, he cried out, *I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain* (which was then a punishment, being in the time of wheat harvest) *that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which ye have done in the sight of the Lord,* IN ASKING YOU A KING. *So Samuel called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God that we die not, for* WE HAVE ADDED UNTO OUR SINS THIS EVIL, TO ASK A KING. These portions of scripture are direct and positive. They admit of no equivocal construction. That the Almighty hath here entered his protest against monarchical government is true, or the scripture is false. And a man hath good reason to believe that there is as much of kingcraft as priestcraft in withholding the scripture from the public in popish countries. For monarchy in every instance is the popery of government. . . .

I hold it to be the indispensable duty of government to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business which government hath to do therewith. Let a man throw aside that narrowness of soul, that selfishness of principle, which the niggards of all professions are so unwilling to part with, and he will be at once delivered of his fears on that head. Suspicion is the companion of mean souls, and the bane of all good society. For myself, I fully and conscientiously believe, that it is the will of the Almighty that there should be a diversity of religious opinions among us. It affords a larger field for our Christian kindness: were we all of one way of thinking, our religious dispositions would want matter for probation; and on this liberal principle I look on the various denominations among us, to be like children of the same family, differing only in what is called their Christian names.

John Adams to Jedidiah Morse, Quincy, 2 December 1815

Revnd. Dr Morse

If I ever comply with your request, I must make haste, & employ the few intervals of light which my eyes afford me. Where is the man to be found, at this day, when we see Methodistical Bishops, Bishops of the Church of England, & Bishops, Archbishops, & Jesuits of the Church of Rome, with indifference; who will beleive, that the apprehension of Episcopacy, contributed 50 years ago, as much as any other cause, to arouse the attention, not only of the enquiring mind but of the common people? And urge them to close thinking on the Constitutional Authority of Parliament over the Colonies? This nevertheless, was a fact, as certain as any in the history of North America.

The object was not merely to the office of a Bishop though even that was dreaded, as to the Authority of Parliament, on which it must be founded. The reasoning was this. the Archbishops, and Bishops in England, can neither locate & limit Dioceses in America, nor ordain Bishops in any part of the dominions of Great Britain, out of the realm; by any law of the Kingdom or any of the Colonies, nor by any Cannon law acknowledged by either. The King cannot grant his Congé d'elire to any people out of his realm. There is no power or pretended power, less than Parliament, that can

create Bishops in America. But if Parliament can erect Diocesses & appoint Bishops, they may introduce the whole Hierarchy, establish Tithes, forbid marriages & funerals, establish religions, forbid Dissenters, make Schism Heresy, impose penalties, extending to life and limb, as well as to liberty & property.

Here, Sir, opens an extensive field of investigation, even for a young historian who might be disposed to undertake so laborious an enterprize.

The opinion, the principles, the spirit, the temper, the views, disigns, Intrigues, and arbitrary exertions of power, displayed by the Church of England, at that time towards the Dissenters, as they were, contemptuously called, though in reality the Churchmen, were the real dissenters; this ought to be stated, at full length. The truth is that the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, the Anabaptists, the Methodists, or even the Quakers, or Moravians, were each of them as numerous as the Churchmen; Several of them immensely more numerous; and all of them together, more than fifteen to one.

In Virginia the Church of England, was established by law, in exclusion, & without toleration of any other denomination; The British Statute called, The Act of Uniformity, was acknowledged, as law & carried into Execution, by the Magistrates; It is worthy of enquiry, whether the same law, was not in force, in Maryland the Carolinas and Georgia. In Pensylvania, the Quakers, the Presbyterians, the German Lutherans, & Calvanists, the Anabaptists, the Methodists the Dunkers, the Marianists and the Roman Catholicks were so numerous & the Church of England so few that the latter found it difficult to support their cause, & the ridiculous Incarnations, & [Tergiversations] of the Proteus, Dr Smith, & that other weaker Proteus, Du Shu & the Bigotry of Covents, shewed their awkward struggles, to preserve their cause from Contempt. White, now Bishop, then young, behaved with uniform candour, moderation and decorum.

In new York the Church of England, displayed its essential character of Intolerance. The royal Governors, Counsellors, Judges &c had such overbearing influence, that they dared to grant, large tracts of fertile lands, to the Churches of England, and laid the foundation of the ample riches they still hold, which no other denomination could obtain any. Even Dr Rogers' Congregation, numerous, & respectable as it was, could never obtain a legal title to a spot to bury their dead. The writings of Livingston & Smith, furnish evidence enough, of the spirit of these times. Great exertions were made in New York, to propogate Anglican Episcopacy in Connecticutt, & a famous Dr Cutler, and a more famous Dr Johnson, & his still more celebrated Son, were employed with success in that service. With such success, indeed, that an English Church, and an Episcopal Priest, now appeared in all the towns from New Haven, to New York. The efforts in New Hampshire & Rhode Island, though they ought to be recorded, I pass over, and hasten to Massachusetts. And here I want to write a volume; Here the Clergy, and principle Gentlemen among the Laity, were high Churchmen, indeed; Passive obedience, and non resistance, in the most unqualified and unlimited sense, were their avowed principles in Government, and the power of the Church, to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and the authority of the Church, in Controversies of faith, were explicitly avowed. I know not where to begin, nor where to end. The Anecdotes, which I could relate, as an eye, & an ear witness would be innumerable. This North Precinct of the large, and Ancient town of Braintree, now called Quincy, in which I was born, and bred and in which my Father, Grand Father, Great Grand Father, & Great, Great Grand Father, lived, died, and lay buried, was a very focus of Episcopal Bigotry, Intrigue, Intolerance and persecution. I could introduce here a Dramatis Personæ of names, which I will not now commit to paper, & entertain you with plots, & Intrigues, which would compose a Comedy, equal to any of Moliere or Shakespeare, if corruption prostitution & Dupery can compose a Comedy. leaving this for the present, we will proceed to Cambridge; Several branches of our Braintree family of Vassals, had removed, and planted themselves in the very front of the University, & they must have an Episcopal Church. Our Braintree family of Apthorps, instantly turned their attention to that seat of muses and dissenters— Mr East Apthorp hot from

Oxford, and still more warned by holy orders, from Episcopal hand, returned to his native Country; and soon after, arose a splendid Edifice, as it was then thought; which every body immediately concluded, was intended for an Episcopal Palace, & in time for a Lambeth. All sensible men knew, that this system could not be effected, but by act of Parliament. And if Parliament could do this, they could do all things; and what security could Americans have, for life, Liberty, property or religion?

The society for propagating the gospel, had long perverted their Revenues, from their original design to the support of the Church of England Ministers. Upon the death of Dr Miller of Braintree a satirical Irony appeared in a Newspaper, the point of which, turned upon this abuse, of the Societies resources. This Jeu d'Esprit soon produced an explosion. Mr Apthorp came out with an eloquent & zealous pamphlet. Dr Mayhew appeared with his comparison, between the charter, and conduct of the society, shewing their non conformity with each other. The Controversy soon interested all men, spread through America, & in Europe, brought forward the aged Dr Johnson, & at last the Arch Bishop of Canterbury. All denominations in America became interested in it, & began to think of the secret latent principle, upon which all encroachments upon us, must be founded, the power of parliament. The Nature and extent of the Authority of Parliament, over the colonies, was discussed every where, till it was discovered, that it had none at all; a conclusion, still more forcibly impressed upon the people by the Canada bill, by which the Roman Catholic religion, & Popish Bishops, were established in that province by authority of a British Parliament. The people said, if Parliament can do this in Canada, they can do the same in all the other Colonies; & they began to see, & freely say, that Parliament had no authority over them, in any case whatsoever.

John Adams