

WHEN CIVIL AUTHORITIES ARE MINISTERS OF GOD AND WHEN LAWS ARE LAWFUL

by Thomas W. Jacobson (24 October 2015)

Those who serve in civil government function as a “minister of God” *when* they exercise lawful authority that is delegated by God to encourage (not force) good and punish (by force) those who do evil. This is true of those who act accordingly in making laws and policies (legislators and parliamentarians) consistent with the Laws of Nature (evident in creation) and Laws of God (written in the Bible); or implement or enforce the same (the Head of State, officials, ambassadors, administration, police, and military); or administer justice through the court system. Whenever one of these “authorities” acts contrary to the Law of God, or the Constitution or Penal Code where consistent with His Law, at that point ceases to function as a “minister of God.” The passage in Romans 13 brings clarity:

“Let every person be in subjection to the governing **authorities**. For there is no **authority** except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists **authority** has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of **authority**? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a **minister of God** to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a **minister of God**, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil” (13:1-4).

The word translated in English as “authority” or “power” (depending on the version of the Bible) is the Greek word “exousia.”

Exousia [G-1849; used 102 times]: power; authority; right; ability; privilege; force; capacity; liberty; jurisdiction; strength; the power of rule or government. [from G1832]

From **exesti** [G-1832]: it is lawful. [from G1537 & G1510 = origin, from out of]

Thus, to be “governing authorities” functioning according to the Divine purpose for civil government requires exercising lawful authority in ways that conform to and reflect the righteous and just character of Almighty God.

Sir William Blackstone, author of Commentaries on the Laws of England (1765-1769), which guided Great Britain and the United States in their understand of law, wrote:

“This law of nature, being coeval [same age] with mankind and dictated by God Himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other – It is binding over all the globe in all countries, and at all times; no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this: and such as are valid derive all their force, and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original” (Intro., Sec. 2, *Of the Nature of Laws in General*).

Human laws that conform to the Laws of Nature and Laws of God are lawful law, but those that contradict are not lawful law. Opposition is guaranteed, but cannot change this reality.