

Review of *The Sovereignty of God and Civil Government*
by John Weaver (PO Box 394, Fitzgerald, Georgia 31750)
xiii, 176 pages, Scripture index.

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The phrase that kept coming to mind as I read John Weaver's *The Sovereignty of God in Civil Government* was Dagnet detective Joe Friday's words: "Just the facts, ma'am". This short treatise is a relentless defense of Divine sovereignty as it pertains to a nation's government affairs. The book's content is succinct, straightforward, and always to the point. Never any jokes, fluffy comments, or adventures down irrelevant "rabbit trails". The tone is direct and serious, intent on persuading the reader of the pervasive scope of God's sovereign rule.

Weaver aims at presenting his thesis in a thoroughly Biblical, yet basic, manner and in the shortest time span possible. Covering seven short chapters, the book can easily be read and comprehended in one sitting.

In the initial chapter, the author lays his foundation by stating that "one cannot act rightly unless he believes rightly" (p. 2). An accurate view of the God of Scripture will lead His people to be holy overcomers in an ever-increasing age of ecclesiastical sentimentality. Further, Weaver calls upon the reader, in entertaining right views of Divine sovereignty, to recognize that all men (from the ordinary citizen to the highest civil magistrate) are equally accountable and responsible to God. Therefore, with regard to a nation's government of its citizens, in light of the supremacy of God's rule, the State's authority is always to be regarded as limited in its nature and boundaries. The United States, as a republic, is to be governed by law - rather than by the opinions of the a majority. Since his thesis builds a Biblical defense of the infinite control of God over the governmental affairs of men, the law of the land must reflect that of the Divine Lawgiver. Any other law code will inevitably result in some form of tyranny, which the author contends is the case today. Thus, the believing citizen must rely on the assurance of Providence to undergird him in his struggles against such tyranny, even to the point of property confiscation, incarceration, or death.

Chapter two is a discussion of the often-asked question of the relation between Divine

sovereignty and the problem of evil. Weaver turns to a number of useful Biblical historical accounts to bring the matter to rest: Samson's deliberate rebellion of acquiring a wife among the Philistines (Judges 14), God's use of Rahab's sinful occupation to secure the Israelite spies (Joshua 2), Joseph's Egyptian enslavement for the providential purpose of preserving the seed of Jacob (Genesis 37), Abraham's lying confrontation with Abimelech (Genesis 20), God's employment of the wicked Assyrians to punish His people for their covenantal unfaithfulness (Isaiah 10), and His use of evil men to execute the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 2:22-23; 4:26-28). The author succeeds in differentiating between God's revealed will and the secretive will of His eternal counsel. Weaver summarily states: "God permits evil, but does not cause it... God controls evil, but does not condone it... God judges evil, but does not excuse it" (p. 53)

In chapter three, the author sets forth the endowment of Christ's authority as the King of the nations of the earth (Matt. 28:18). Not only does our Lord have the Father's authority, but He wields the supreme power to rule as well. This is exercised through the effectual preaching of His gospel, the guardianship of His Church, His establishment and dethronement of national governments, and His sovereign overrule of national leaders. In calling upon Christians to demand the crown rights of King Jesus, Weaver insists that since Christ is the true Ruler of the nations of the earth, then all governments are required to submit to Him—rebels and enemies will ultimately be crushed underfoot.

The implications of Christ's kingship are discussed in the fourth chapter. Since absolute sovereignty necessarily implies that there can only exist one Supreme King, who rules by His law, the author exhorts the reader to obediently submit to the right of Almighty God, rather than to the usurped authority of the State whenever there is a mandate to breach Biblical commands. Obedience to God's law, for the redeemed, is never on a voluntary basis.

So, what's a Christian to do when the State rebels against the sovereign rule of God? Based on the OT account of King Ahab/Queen Jezebel vs. Naboth (1 Kings 21:1-16), Weaver lays out a succinct defense of the Biblical limits of civil governmental authority. Chapter five is an enlightening discussion of the State's use of "eminent domain" to level property taxes, inheritance taxes, and ultimately, to confiscate private property for what it deems the 'public good'. While the civil government may have the *power* to wield this unbiblical sword, it does not have the *authority* to do so. The State, in its actions, actually subverts the ownership and title of the earth from God Himself (Ps. 24:102). The author contends that where the civil government can tax private property, the State can confiscate private property if those taxes are not paid. Thus, there is no 'private ownership' of property. When a nation's government can rob its citizens of their property, then those helpless citizens are not free. Weaver continues in this train of thought to insist that the destruction of private property is tantamount to the destruction of the family, for property in the Bible is family-oriented rather than government-oriented. As the State continues as a giant welfare agency, it usurps the authority of the family by taking the position of parent. No longer will individuals look to the family for help in times of trouble, but rather to the parent State. When a nation's government will not live up to its

divinely ordained rôle as God's minister, then God's people must be ready to “obey God rather than men”: (Acts 5:29). We must be governed by God's law rather than by fear of the State's threats, for suffering at the hands of wicked governments will ultimately purify the children of Jehovah and bring honor and glory to His name, while working out for our own good.

In chapter six, perhaps the most homiletic portion of his thesis, Weaver turns to the encounter between Samson and the Judahites (Judges 14-15) to describe the “slave mentality” which results from an individual's failure to govern himself according to God's law. The slave mentality is defined as the inclination of “worshippers of the State” to be more concerned with personal comfort than with justice, liberty, and freedom. As long as he is not negatively affected as an individual, as long as he receives all the conveniences from the welfare State, as long as his slavery is as comfortable as possible, then the slave is not concerned with what may happen to anyone else. “Just don't rock the boat”, the Judahites responded to Samson, “Or else I'll turn you over to my Daddy!” The slave mentality is total selfishness.

The final chapter deals with the believer's faith in his Sovereign God. Based upon the faithful actions of Amram and Jochebed (Hebrews 11:23) to defy the edict of Pharaoh in preserving their infant son Moses, Weaver calls the reader to obedient faith in the supreme power of God. Faith is the Biblical remedy for overcoming fear, for “perfect love casts out all fear”: (1 John 4:18). The question is: Will God's people exercise a defiant faith, willing to stand up for principled convictions before a godless State, as they follow King Jesus in the fear of Jehovah?

The Sovereignty of God and Civil Government is an excellent source for small-group Bible studies to discuss the modern issues of our statist society. Its succinct, nontechnical portrayal of the Biblical parameters of civil government's God-ordained rôle will be useful to the young Christian who may be unaware of the conflict between God's law and statist autonomy. From the foreword, it will serve as a valuable tool for “those who have little or no knowledge of the truth of God's absolute sovereignty. It will likewise be a blessing and encouragement to all who hunger for truth and seek to know and understand their responsibilities in light of God's sovereignty and His orderly way for civil government.”