



The Authority and Submission of Love

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new creation publications inc.

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Published by
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.
PO Box 403, Blackwood, 5051
Adelaide, South Australia
2003

First published June 1982
Reprinted 1994, 2003

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ISBN 0 949851 99 X

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Printed at New Creation Publications Inc.
Coromandel East, South Australia
www.newcreation.org.au

1. INTRODUCTION: THE FACT OF AUTHORITY

No one could read the Bible without being struck by the fact of authority within it. Without doubt there is what we may call an hierarchy of personal authorities. The first pages of Genesis talk of two great lights, 'the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.' These pages depict man as made in the image of God, so that God says to man, 'Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' In this statement we see that God has authority over the sun and moon, and man, and of course all that He has created.'

As we proceed we see that for certain reasons man is to rule woman, and that all creatures are to dread man. Dominion or authority seems to have taken a somewhat different turn, but it is there. We very soon find kings and other authorities such as elders of the people. We soon discover a heavenly hierarchy, that is to say a special angel of the Lord, archangels, and angels of lower orders. There are other celestial creatures such as the four living creatures, cherubim and seraphim, and the like. On the earthly level we find that the father in the realm of humanity is head of his family. His wife is subject to him, and the children subject to the father. There is even an hierarchy amongst the children, the oldest son having precedence over the rest of the family, and even there authority is in order of birth.

With a little research we discover that the system of creation, both heavenly and earthly, is composed of a well-defined hierarchical order, commencing with God at the top and grading down to the humblest creature at the bottom. We discover, for example, that certain angels are called 'principalities and powers [authorities]'. This must mean that they have principedoms and areas or situations over which they rule. We find in chapters such as Romans 13 and I Peter 2 that obedience to all authorities is enjoined, where our own experience of some such authorities does not encourage us to do this, for they are often corrupt and cruelly dictatorial. Even so this order is insisted upon.

What then is the principle of authority from the Biblical point of view, and what is it all about? We will try to find some of the answers to our questions.

2. THE GENERAL VIEW OF AUTHORITY

For some reason or other man is ambivalent about authority. He both rejects and demands it. He requires authority to be what it ought to be in his estimation, yet he finds it difficult to accept authority when he finds himself, somehow, to be under it. People who resist authority are often called disobedient or rebellious. The world's history is that of men overthrowing authority and then setting up another system or set of authorities. Within the realm of human relationships wives and husbands fight being dominated by each other, and children likewise seek to throw off parental authority or to defeat the ruling of the parents. On the other hand there is great indignation when ruling authorities do not act according to the desires or ideals of those whom they govern. Sometimes those who are ruled demand care, protection, security, and even love from their rulers. Children demand this from parents. All demand competence, and at the same time are insistent that those ruling do not take away what are called human rights. Human dignity has a high priority amongst mankind.

Because of this ambivalence the problem of authority is a most vexed one.

3. WHAT IS AUTHORITY?

We quote *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* so that there may be no doubt about the meaning, and its varieties of nuances.

Authority: 1. Power or right to enforce obedience; moral or legal supremacy; the right to command, or give an ultimate decision. 2. Derived or delegated power; authorisation. 3. Those in authority. 4. Power to influence the conduct and actions of others; personal or practical influence. 5. Power over the opinions of others; authoritative opinion; intellectual influence. 6. Title to be believed; authoritative statement; weight of testimony. Occas.: Authorship, testimony. 7. The quotation or book acknowledged, or alleged, to settle a question or give conclusive testimony. 8a. The author of an accepted statement. 8b. An expert in any question.

We notice that the word 'authority' relates to the word 'author'.

Author means one who originates or promotes, or increases something; or he is an inventor, a founder or a constructor. If then we see that God is Author of all things, then we see He has His right to control all things. For our purposes we see that He is One who can delegate as He wishes. Any author—so to speak—has a copyright on what He has created. At the same time he must take responsibility for his creation. This is the case in the Scriptures. God delegates authority and control to certain creatures for the good ordering of His universe and for the good of all creation. His nature is such—He being love, holiness, righteousness, goodness and truth—that His authority can be trusted at all times. The various statements concerning God such as 'He is true', 'His word is truth', 'His truth reaches to the heavens', 'He is love', 'He is light', and 'He is holy' assure us that we have nothing whatever to fear from God's authority.

Authority, Truly Speaking is Love

The Bible is clear that from first to last God is trustworthy. Peter says we are to 'entrust our souls to a faithful Creator'. He means that God will bring His creation to a good conclusion or summation. Such is well set out in the Bible. If God is a faithful Creator, then His authority will be used to effect the best possible conclusion to the history of the universe.

In Ephesians 4:6 there is a verse which sums up the matter of true authority: 'one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.' Here Paul is saying that God is Father. This is most reassuring. As Father He loves and cares, and plans well for His children. We must not see God as we see an earthly father. He is uniquely Father, and as such is to be trusted. He is *above all*, which means He is in the place of authority, of directing, protecting, correcting and commanding. He is not locked into His creation, in which case He would be subject to it. Even so He is *through all*, meaning that 'in Him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). Thus He coordinates all things, causing them to operate functionally. They are unified by His being through all. Also this shows that He is not locked out of His universe, in which case the universe would be an entity separate from Him and not under His governance. Finally He is *in all* things. All things are not only in Him, but He in them. This means His personal presence to every atom and molecule of His creation. He is present not merely in a locational way but in the way of One who controls

all things, and is present for their true being and their well-being. He is of course present to do good to all things, and this may mean at times chastisement and even executing judgement.

Applying the Principle of Love-Responsibility to Authority

A father's task is to be a father and to care for his children. His function is to bring his children to maturity of life and appropriate wisdom. His function as a husband is to care for his wife, to love and cherish her. A mother-wife's function is similar. A son is responsible to be submissive to his father so that the task of his maturation can be effected. A headmaster's responsibility is to bring children to the maturation goal of his level of education, ie. kindergarten, primary, secondary, and so on. The responsibility of a king, a president, or the equivalent office is to be a father to the people, and use his authority for their good. This goes for political heads, judges and magistrates, police, and so on. Army officers in authority are there to train, guide, protect and aid their troops. So we could go on.

Thus we may conclude, 'Authority is that office or function given to persons whereby they are to seek the good of those committed to their responsibility.' Another way of putting it is this: 'Authority, rightly speaking, is the true exercise of love on behalf of those for whom authority is exercised.'

We may also conclude that authority, rightly understood, is the ministry of serving which is the purpose of the office. The one in authority serves those above him, and also those who have been placed under him.

4. AUTHORITY AND AUTHORITARIANISM

We have seen what authority really is. Unfortunately few people, either in authority or under it, can easily see this. Humanity is basically non-accepting of authority. Hence it often has a biased view of it. Those who dislike being ruled are often the harshest rulers if opportunity comes to them. They do what they think authorities over them have done. They seek esteem from the position they now have, and they also seek to take advantage of it. Such power-hungry and esteem-hungry persons are basically authoritarians, ie. they lord it over those under them, failing to serve them, but demanding service for

themselves. Authoritarian persons have further discredited true authority.

5. GOD'S AUTHORITIES IN THE UNIVERSE

Jesus once said to his disciples, 'All authority... is given unto me, go ye therefore...' He meant, 'I am in authority and so I delegate certain authority to you.' In Luke 9:1-6 and 10: 1-12 he delegates his authority to preach the Kingdom to first the twelve disciples, and 'then seventy other disciples. They preach effectively *under his authority*. It is this principle of authority that we have to examine. In Luke 7:1-10 we have the story of a Roman centurion who had high regard for one of his slaves, and as this slave was now sick he sent to Jesus asking him to come and heal the man. Jesus, for certain reasons, had not even reached the house when a messenger came from the centurion suggesting to Jesus that he should not come, but say the word where he (Jesus) was and the servant would be healed. This was quite remarkable, but what the centurion said in essence was, 'I *also* am a man under authority. Because I am *under* authority I can speak *with* authority. I recognise that you, too, are under authority, and so you can speak with all that authority, and what you say will surely happen.'

The universal principle of authority, then, is everyone is under one authority or other, and hence can also exercise authority. *He who is not under authority cannot exercise authority*, that is he cannot *properly* exercise authority. If we keep in mind that authority is primarily *for the benefit of others* then we will see that *submission to a higher authority is for the benefit of those under one's own authority*. On this principle then we may look at the orders of authority in creation.

God's Order of Authorities

What we must understand is that the 'heavens and the earth' are one. Whilst celestial things are for the most part unseen, yet they are none the less real for that. There is no essential division between the earthly and the heavenly, the seen and unseen. For example, angelic powers which we generally consider to be higher than human powers are described as 'ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation' (Heb. 1:14). Heavenly powers serve

humans, and perhaps humans heavenly. We must then understand the structure of heaven and earth to be one, the life lived by all to be one, and the authorities of the whole to be functional as they relate to the totality of creation, the plan and purpose of God. and the operations necessary for the history of creation.

From the Bible we see the following:

- (i) Within the Triune Godhead the Father is superordinate to the Son and the Spirit, and the Son is superordinate to the Spirit who serves both. God serves the entire creation.
- (ii) The highest creatures in heaven are the four living creatures. They appear to represent all creation. Also they have their function in worship of God, and in executing his will.
- (iii) It seems next are the twenty-four elders. Some see them as humans glorified, others as a group of leaders of all creation. They are occupied in worship of God as serving God in various functions.
- (iv) It would seem that next there are angels. It may be argued that 'the Angel of the Lord' is chief angel. It may even be that an archangel is this angel. There are two defined archangels—Michael and Gabriel—but Lucifer may have been the third before his fall. Angels have so many different functions, as seen in both OT and NT, but these functions, commencing with worship of God, are to do with the entire creation.
- (v) Romans 13:1ff., Titus3:1 and I Peter 2:13-14, 17 show us that there are earthly powers and that in many cases those such as kings, presidents, and governors have angelic powers behind them, or even over them (cf. Daniel chs. 10-11). Governments have grades of authority.
- (vi) Nations, tribes and clans have elders. These are a feature of all nations. They are those generally speaking who have maturity, wisdom, ability to govern wisely, to aid the people, help to care for them, etc.
- (vii) In the family unit the Biblical picture is of the husband being superordinate to his wife, although they are both one together. The parents are superordinate to the children. Within the children there are different levels of authority.
- (viii) In the OT covenant people (Israel) there is an hierarchy

within the worshipping structure. A high priest is followed by priests and they by serving Levites. Not even the king is allowed to serve in this entity. In the NT church there is an hierarchy of gifts (I Cor. 12:28f., cf. Ephes. 4:7-11). especially of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. There are elders (sometimes called rulers), deacons, and the remainder of the people of God. The relationships of these, especially in their order, are stated in I Timothy 5:1-3, I Peter 5:5, Titus 2:1-5. Servants are also told to be submissive to masters.

6. THE WHOLE QUESTION OF RULE AND AUTHORITY

(i) Introduction

We have presupposed that authority is necessary in order to have harmony in the universe, and for it to function properly. ie. in harmony. Is this in fact the case? Could not the universe operate, in love, on the basis of equality of all creatures whether celestial or terrestrial? Is not God's love impugned when it cannot effect this kind of harmony?

A Problem of Rebellion

Some hold the idea that we only have authorities because some angelic powers, and (in Adam) humanity, have rebelled against God. They suggest that had there been no rebellion there would have been no authorities. This idea is not viable on a number of scores. In Genesis 1: 16 we see that the sun is said to 'rule' by day, and the moon to 'rule' by night. Obviously the stars are subordinate to these two authorities. The word 'rule' is used prior to the Fall, although as such is recorded after the Fall. Doubtless too the rule is a *functional* one, and not merely domination. Creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 suggest that the lower orders were first created, leading up to the higher, the highest being man. In Psalm 8 man is a 'little lower than God', and in the NT it is said that he will judge angels. Finally man is depicted as reigning on the earth, and reigning forever in eternity. God's elect are to constitute a 'kingdom of priests', doubtless within an eternal hierarchy, thus showing that powers will still be operative. and this in love!

From certain accounts it seems that angelic powers were present at

creation (eg. Job 38:4-7), and that the orders of living creatures and angels were already established. It is to be doubted then that rebellion has caused the formation of authorities. It simply means that whereas their function had not primarily related to rebellion, it now had to take this into account in function.

The Problem of the Rebellious

More to the point of our discussion is *the attitude* which we have to authority and authorities, especially the idea of hierarchy. It is a self-evident fact that human beings find submission to authorities something to which they do not naturally come. Acceding to authorities is always a problem. Curiously enough the taking or exercising of authority is something most humans like. Not necessarily, of course, that they are competent to exercise it.

Without understanding the rebellion of celestial powers (eg. Revelation 12), and of man (Genesis 3:1-6, Romans 1:18-32) we cannot comprehend the attitude of man to authority. It is clear from the Scriptures that Satan has under his control certain angelic powers who rebelled with him against God, and has man in thrall (I John 5:19, cf. Ephes. 2:1-3). It is not possible for these evil powers or man to take a true view of God. Satan and his forces are in evil and do not know the truth (John 8:44f.). Man has exchanged the truth of God (ie. the truth which is God) for a lie, and so does not understand the nature of God, man, and the universe, much less the nature of sin.

The problem is that when we talk about authority the natural thing for fallen man to do is to oppose it. Hence he cannot be rational concerning it, especially as he does not understand the true nature of it. For this reason true discussion of authority is almost wholly precluded. Man must have guilt concerning his rebellion and opposition to true authority. Thus he cannot see the matter clearly, and must justify himself by criticism of authority.

The Denigration of Authority and Authorities

It is common thought that at the best only worthy authorities deserve obedience—if we must have authorities! In the Biblical view all authorities have been ordained by God (Rom. 13:1ff.) and for a purpose. The altering of these authorities belongs in God's hands (Daniel 5:19, Proverbs 8:15). The office of the authority, being delegated and set by God, must be honoured. An example of this is the injunction to

honour parents (Exodus 20:12, Lev. 19:3, Deut. 5:16). There is no exceptional clause, ie. 'if your parents are not honourable do not honour them.'! Not to honour parents is not to honour God. In any case I Peter 2:17 has it, '*Honour all men.* Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.'

We see then that all those in authority are called upon to exercise their authority properly and for the benefit of those over whom they have been set, and (b) those under authority are called upon to respect the office of the authority and to obey it. The only exception for obedience is when the authority given by God clashes with the authority of God Himself. Probably this is what Jesus meant when he said, 'Render to Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God that which is God's.' Jesus paid tribute (tax) to the authorities although he might have claimed to be above them.

At this point we should read Romans 13:1-7:

'Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute His wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due.'

We conclude then that generally speaking all authorities should be obeyed. However, we should also understand their functions, and the passage above tells us (a) that rulers have been instituted by God, (b) they are not there to be a terror to those who are obedient but to those who are not, (c) that they do have to execute God's judgements upon evil, (d) that therefore taxes should be paid to them, and honour and respect given where it is due.

(ii) FUNCTION AND PURPOSE OF ALL LIFE

If we wish to read the mandate given to man for his work in this world it can be seen in Genesis 1:28f. Man is to be fruitful, to multiply and to fill up the earth. He is to subdue it, (ie. its dynamic elements) and to rule over it. Something of-the goal is here implied. In the NT God's

goals (already prophesied in the OT) are more explicitly outlined, such as is seen in Ephesians 1:3-14, and which include the consummation of the Kingdom of God, the family of God's elect, resurrection, glorification, inheritance of all things by God's people, and their reigning upon the earth and in eternity.

We conclude from this that *man is always forwards-moving*. He is a creature of hope. Moreover the Scriptures represent God as having planned all things before creation, so that even the rebellion of angels and men is not only no surprise to Him but is somehow incorporated into His design. Given that authority and authorities are formed before the rebellion of men and angels, then those authorities must be functionally essential, and function must be related to purpose and goal. The negative side of this can be seen from II Peter 2:4, and Jude 6-9 (cf. Rev. 9:1-11, 20:1-3, Daniel 10-11, John 1:51), where rebellious powers refused to use their authority in the way demanded by God, and in that sense use them wrongfully, or neglect their true functions.

God has His goal, and He has ordered His whole universe in a certain way. Psalm 148:5-6 and Jeremiah 31:35-36 both indicate that the universe has a *fixed order*. 'Fixed' does not mean static, but what is ordered is truly functional and dynamic. It means that nothing can change this order, even though the fall of men and angels may make its impact upon the universe. If we add to this the fact we have noted above—that the creation is moving towards its appointed goal (cf. Ephes. 1:9-11, 3:9, Col. 1:19-20, Rev. 10:7, 21:1-5, 22:1-5)—then we will see that authorities are not concerned so much with maintaining an unchanging *status quo*, but rather since all life is linked with purpose then authorities too are linked with this action of God. They, too, are present for purpose.

We may note that all mankind seeks to know what is ahead. Certain cultures, philosophies and religions see history as cyclic or without end, but man himself is always preoccupied with the near and distant future. He is a creature with an eschatological sense and drive. We should note also that since those in authority and those in submission are integral to the forward-movement of God's plan, then both wrong use of authority and refusal of submission would be reprehensible. Not to submit to and obey authorities is not to submit to and obey God, excepting of course where authorities are going contrary to the expressed will of God.

7. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

We have seen that the supreme authority is God, and that He has delegated this authority to men and angels, if not in fact all creatures, since there are laws of life amongst fish and birds and animals. Only the *rational* creatures such as angels and men seem to rebel. Rebellion brings problems to the matter of authority, and to the correct viewing of authority. We have seen from Jude and II Peter that punishment comes for wrong use of authority. The Book of Daniel extensively develops this point, especially in the cases of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. The 'burden's or 'oracles' of the prophets (cf. Amos chs. 1-3) against countries who do not fulfil God's will are included in this principle. James 3:1 shows what happens to teachers who do not fulfil their roles: 'Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness.' The Book of the Revelation speaks much of authorities, and particularly of evil authorities and how they abuse the power given. They shall be deeply judged (chs. 13-20). Also most of the Book shows the judgements which will come upon rebellious mankind. The principle is made clear, namely that God's justice is true, and His judgements righteous (Rom. 2:4-5, Rev. 5:3-7, 18:20, 19:1-3, cf. Luke 19:27). Only God may rightly avenge (Rom. 12:19t. We must be careful not to take judgement into our own hands for the Lord will speedily avenge His elect (Luke 18:1-8, Rev. 6:9-11, 19:2).

We have already seen that punishment is meted out to those who do not obey authority. There may be many reasons for this, such as going against the true order of God's creation (Rom. 1:18-32), being at enmity with God (Rom. 1:30, 5:10, Col. 1:21) and so impeding His righteous, loving, holy and good purposes for His creation.

On the positive side the correct use of authority (cf. Daniel 4:36-37, I Thess. 5:13, Heb. 13:17, Luke 19:16ff.) is enriching to both those who are subordinate and superordinate.

8. AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION

(i) INTRODUCTION

If we take the view that God is the supreme authority and exercises His authority for the good of His creation, then we see that apart from

Him all created authorities will have someone (or ones) over them, as also someone (or ones) under them. If we accept the principle that to have authority is to serve, then the idea of 'bossing', 'lording', 'dominating' or 'domineering' will be absent. At the same time we must not miss the true principle of true lordship and true subjection. In many cases loving lordship is mistaken for harsh domination because of rebellion within the subject. In some cases loving leadership is taken for weakness and the one subject seeks to exploit it. None of these elements, however, invalidate true leadership and authentic submission.

If we take the relationship of the first man and woman, we see it is they were 'one flesh'. The man was first created, and then the woman. The woman was to be a 'helpmeet' for man, ie. one fitted to suit him in every way. She was not an afterthought or a mere appendage to the man, but together they constituted what is man. Genesis 5:1-2 says, 'When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and named them Man when they were created.' From this we gather that man (not merely the male) is male-female, and that the entity of man is a male-female unity. All masculinity and all femininity go together to make man fully. Only one of these relationships, ie. man-wife, has sexual expression. Thus a male is son, brother (cousin, uncle), husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather. A female is of course daughter, etc. In any given relationship there is subjection or authority or both. In other words, authority and submission are built into familial and other community relationships.

(ii) PRINCIPLE OF SUBMISSION

If we remember that the entire creational mandate requires all of humanity to co-operate, then we need to see that the primal couple were one together, but as Paul points out in I Corinthians 11:3-16 there is an order of authority. The Father is the head of Christ, Christ the head of the man, and man the head of his wife. The reason for this is that man was made first, and then the woman. But both are one in Christ, yet there is superordination and subordination. Neither must be viewed apart from the other, for in creation both are the one, sharing the one task, and in Christ this relationship is renewed. In no sense is the man superior to the woman, nor inferior. They are not equal any more than they are Unequal, for one is masculine, the other feminine

and both form (together) what is called 'man'.

Notice that there is an hierarchy of authority. The Father is over the Son, the Son over the man, the man over his wife. Hence in Ephesians 5:22 the injunction is, 'Wives be subject to your husbands as to the Lord.' I Peter 3:1 says, 'Wives be submissive to your husbands.' It adds (verses 5-6). 'So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you.' Sarah was not reluctant to call Abraham, 'Lord!'

The same principle obtains for the congregation and its elders. I Peter 5:5 says, 'Likewise you who are younger be subject to the elders.' Hebrews 13:17 says, 'Obey your leaders and submit to them.' I Thessalonians 5:12 has it, 'But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you'. If we add to these I Peter 2:13-14 (in the light of Romans 13:1-2), 'Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right', then we see that submission is indeed a principle of the Scriptures.

What then is submission? It is certainly not 'toeing the line'. It is not enforced subjection. Submission comes from an act of the will, as strongly as does disobedience. It is as positive as the other is negative. The truth of submission is willingness and not coercion from another. In the Biblical sense submission springs from acceptance of the true order of things, ie. from love. *There is no doubt that love is presupposed in familial situations, and within the people of God.* To honour parents or authorities is 'to give high esteem' to them. Honouring and esteeming, as also loving, does not depend upon the (so-called) honourableness or lovableness of the objects. It is what is due and those under authority render respect and esteem.

(iii) THE PRIMARY PARADIGM OF SUBMISSION

The Son is undoubtedly the primary paradigm. In John 8:49 Jesus says. 'I honour my Father...' Nevertheless it is not just his words which speak of his submission, for his whole life was glad submission to the Father. It was his food and drink to do the Father's will (John 4:34). He did nothing but what the Father showed him (John 5:19). The Father was always with him because he did what pleased the

Father (John 8:29). He said nothing from himself (John 14:10). He accomplished the Father's will (John 9:4, 17:4). The writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 40:8 which, when directly used is: 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.' In Hebrews it is: 'Lo, I have come to do Thy will, O God.'

Hebrews tells us 'He learned obedience through the things that he suffered' (5:8), whilst Philippians 2:8 says, '... he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.' We notice that his submission came out of love. John 14:31 has it, '...but ! do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know I love the Father.' He also speaks of the Father as 'greater than I', yet does not hesitate to say, 'I and the Father are one' (John 14:28, 10:30). In other words, *in true superordination and subordination there is mutuality*. This mutuality springs from, and is, love. Jesus loves the Father; the Father loves the Son (John 14:31, 17:23, 26, 3:35). Hence true superordination and submission lie not only in the acceptance of God's order for creation, but also in the knowledge that this order is essentially required in the purpose of God, and for His true ends. In the era of human fallenness and rebellious supernatural (superhuman?) powers it takes into account the disorder brought into operation by evil, and understands that the exercise of authority has to accommodate and handle elements which are posterior to its intrinsic ontological nature and functions. We mean that whilst we say this authority-submission order is of the truth, we need to see it has to be exercised in the context of evil which was not originally present.

(iv) SUBMISSION AS IT RELATES TO SUPERORDINATION AND SUBORDINATION

We see that fallen man has an intrinsic objection to authority. It does not mean that he will not use the principle of authority-submission, for in this world he cannot escape it. In revolutions the ones subject to authority seek to overthrow authority, but they then impose their own (new) authority. Even if theoretically they look for anarchy as a way of life, or for equality as a mode of living, they find themselves forced to impose authority in order to get through to no-authority. This latter—no-authority—never happens. We say this by the way, for it is not our subject. What we wish to examine is the Biblical principle of authority-submission.

We have already seen it in the paradigmatic relationship of the

Father and the Son. The Son is subject to the Father, not only in his manhood but in his deity. I Corinthians 15:24-28 shows him working to put all enemies under his feet (aided, incidentally, by the Father), which, having done, he then turns and gives the Kingdom to the Father that God may be all in all. Likewise 'at [or, in] the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to *the glory of the Father*' (Phil. 2:1-11). If we put together the substance of Philippians Chapter 2 and all of John's Gospel we cannot escape the fact that at the behest of the Father the Son came to earth having two things in view, (a) the will of the Father to redeem mankind, and (b) the need to empty himself (not of his deity but) of his prerogatives that pertained to heavenly being and *become subject to earthly powers*, some of which were hostile, in order to serve mankind, since he put this mankind even before himself. This shows that *in his subordinate submission he was wholly one with the superordinate Father*.

The Question of Inferiority and Superiority

We have already said that no human being is superior or inferior to another. Even so we know that probably all human beings feel inferior on one score or another. From this vantage point they consider superordination to be the *place* and therefore the *state* of superiority. Life is mainly a battle to get to such places by fair means or foul. Humanity is in competition with itself for this purpose. What is not recognised is the fact of two powerful drives in fallen humanity, (a) the drive to succeed, compounded of the nature of lordship given to man (Gem 1:28, cf. Psa. 8:3f.) and his desire to counteract his inferiority flow self-esteem and self-image), and (b) his fear of death which continually drives him to seek security against it. Romans 3:23—'all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God'—really informs us that through sin we have fallen short of true human glory when we have fallen short of God's glory, and hence we feel inferior. Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us—amongst other Scriptures—that we live in fear of death all our lives. Since this fear of death is linked with guilt (I Cot. 15:55-56, I John 4:16-18) our desire to secure ourselves against death is continually compounded. We are not truly rational in this area. Those more secure than us (ie. those above us who have a natural advantage) increase our opposition to superordination. Hence we are not rational in our consideration of authority and submission.

The Need to Know the Reality of Submission-Service

It is a curious thing that mankind generally is angry with God. Man argues that God does not handle, control and direct His world for the highest good of all. This of course is not true. The Judge of all the earth does right, and He works all things for good, especially for those who love Him, and love Him or not He sends His rain and sunshine on all mankind, whether it be good or bad, just or unjust (Gen 18:25, Rom. 8:28, Matt. 5:43-48). He is love and works as love (1 John Acts 14:15, 17:24-28, Psalm 104). Angry sinful man does not see things this way. Nor does he see Jesus as the incarnation of the loving Father, coming to earth to serve mankind in redemption and to renew him through the Atonement and the Holy Spirit so that he is renewed in true manhood and ultimate glory, thus destroying the inferiority and banishing his (irrational) rebellion.

What man has missed is that it is natural to him to serve all others before himself and that this is part of his created humanity. This understanding is renewed for Christians (a) in the fact and paradigm of Christ, and (b) by such teaching as we find in the Gospels and Epistles relating to the subject. Jesus taught by actually serving men, not only in acts such as washing his disciples' feet and dying for mankind on the Cross, but by all that he did and said. He revealed the very truth which man had originally, exchanged for the lie, living out that truth. He taught that 'the greatness of man lay in serving. He himself was not only a servant of God but of man. His followers likewise taught that one should consider others before oneself. In fact the whole of love lies in serving one another. In this sense to love is to live, which brings us to the point that *it is innate in created man to serve others*. In fact *not to serve others is to deny one's essential self and to deny the joy of human fulfilment that goes with service of others*. *

It is not curious to man that he views service of others as a burden. He generally regards this as a difficult and unwelcome task. He fails to see it is the source of very beautiful joy, and—in the ultimate—the only *true expression* of love. For this reason he must view Jesus' claim and teaching regarding the greatness of serving with suspicion, disbelief and, perhaps, cynicism. He fails to see the immense joy it was to Jesus, and doubtless still is as he and the Father continue to serve humanity out of love.

* The material in this section has been more fully dealt with by the author in his book, *The Sons of God are the Servants of All*.

When then we apply this principle to true life we find the Father loves the Son for serving His humanity, the Son is joyful and proud to serve the Father and man, man is delighted to serve Christ, God and man, the wife is glad to serve the husband as the parents are to serve the children, brothers to serve brothers and sisters, servants to serve their masters and masters to serve their servants. In one sense the more the authority the more the opportunity for service, and in another the more the subordination the more the opportunity to serve. The wife gladly submits to the husband in order to serve him out of love, but finds him loving, nourishing and cherishing her, purifying and making her lovely. The husband is delighted with her caring for him, but both find themselves fully (as husband and wife) in 'the mutuality of service to God and man, a wholesome part of which is in procreation and the rearing and training of a family as they serve their children. Where, however, there is rebellion, insistence on one's own (imagined) 'rights', then there is rejection of the authority-submission complex, and insistence upon human autonomy and independence. Such persons miss the joy of functional harmony, obedience and service. In self-love they miss true love. One can understand that in not being fulfilled their anger grows, God is further misunderstood, the person is further frustrated, and opposition to authentic authority is compounded continually.

9. THE AUTHORITY & SUBMISSION OF LOVE

THE PLACE OF LOVE IN ALL THINGS

We have seen that if indeed authority roles are part of God's original creation, then rebellion has destroyed our rational understanding of them, by nature of the case. We agree that authority roles have to take on tasks that would not be necessary if there were not rebellion, and we have also to see that authorities stand in constant danger of being evil where they should be good, domineering and dictatorial where they should have the good of their subordinate constituencies at heart, and so on. For this reason we need to emphasise the primary place of love.

Creation and History are Love

Love must have constituted the essential nature of all creation since it

was created by God. It must still constitute that nature if God is love. Since all creation—so to speak— goes through the hand of the Triune God of love, then it must have the unity of love in its nature. Angelic and human rebellion is primarily against love. The functional nature of creation must correspond to love. The law which we call moral is undoubtedly that of love. Christ sums it up as love to God and neighbour. and the NT Epistles confirm this.

The history of mankind may seem little like love, but then we are seeing history in its context of rebellion where subordination becomes insubordination and superordination is used by evil for evil purposes. So without the eyes of faith we will never see love. Even so we are often surprised in creation by various deeds and actions which spring from love, and We are driven to see that the greatest *need* of the human heart is. love, and its greatest complaint that God does not order all things love within His creation. This charge is not correct of course, but certainly to human sight it does seem that God is remiss.

Nothing will win the rebellious human heart other than love. God's love is shown in creation. It is shown in His providential care for creation,-but few ever ponder this matter. It is shown in His covenant actions in history which are general, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and then operative in Christ 'the Son. Most of all His love is shown in His redemptive action. A study of passages such as Romans 5:5-10, 1John 4:7-10. Romans 5:12-21, and It Corinthians 5:14-21 brings us to see how deep is that love.

Love is the Order of Life for the Redeemed

The order of love is (a) we see that God loves us. Indeed we feel and know the impact of that love in forgiveness and regeneration, (b) we love God because He first loved us and our rebellion is dissolved in reconciliation with God and then with man, (c) we now love both God and man, and so (d) we obey God out of responsive love and gratitude, and keep His commands. This means—in all—that we accept His order of the creation, and His plan for its ultimate consummation. We are part of it. As a result we wish to do God's will. We accept His authority orders, and we understand the true nature and function of submission. We wish to serve God and all men. We find our true nature in serving.

Love is that which Consummates History

We also understand the process and progress of love in history as the plan of God moves towards its fulfilment when God will (a).unify all things in Christ (Ephes. 1:9-10), (b) fill up all things in Christ since creation is 'empty' (Rom. 8:18-25), and His filling will be from Himself, His love, etc. (Ephes. 4:10, cf. 1:22-23), (c) reconcile all things in Christ (Col. 1:19-21), and (d) harmonise all things in love (Col. 3:14, John 17:20-26). Although in the drastic events recorded concerning the last days (Matt. ch. 24, Rev. 5: 1—22:5) the end things seem to be other than love, they nevertheless result in love. The principle of Romans 1:18 that God must be wrathful at all which seeks to subvert, pervert, and destroy His true creation will hold right up until the end, otherwise justice would be perverted and righteousness discredited.

Love is the only true Basis for Authority and Submission

It can be seen/that since love is the basic thing of all (holiness, righteousness, goodness and truth are all part of it), then true authority is exercised in love for love, and likewise submission. We have seen this both exemplified and actuated in Christ and the Father, the Church and Christ, and equivalent human relationships. No true authority can be fully exercised apart from love, nor can submission be effected apart from it.

In a sinful world—before the eschaton—authority and submission must always take into account the nature and exigencies of sin. Hence the need for love to exercise itself in both grace and correction, and even judgement. Justice is never apart from love, or love apart from it. Light does not have communion with darkness. Love and light are never separate. Hence there will be a need for strong authority, and virile submission. Authority must never be weak, nor submission servile. As we have said, the mutuality of authority and submission must be complete in love for it is indispensable to the true working for which both have been created.

10. THE HONOURABLE NATURE OF BOTH AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION

The Demand for Anthropocentric Thinking

Because of the aggressive opposition of rebellion to authority, and the

constant accusation against God and the gospel that the Creator is not in fact loving and caring. there is the constant temptation to soften what seem to be the harsh lines of God's authority and His judgements. Some modern thinking wishes to emphasise anthropocentric thinking* rather than theocentric. Humanism has penetrated into much Christian thinking. Authority is therefore looked upon as outdated and barbaric. Hence what is called 'contextual thinking and interpretation'. It is suggested that the concepts of authority as set out in the Bible do not stem from a creational ontology but from the social and cultural contexts of their day. Whilst there is no doubt that in every generation social and cultural ideas have changed and developed, that does not mean that the word of God does not have basic principles which arise from the nature of God and the creation He has brought into being.

Cultures and communities may indeed change. On the basis of Romans 1 :l 8-32 we ought to be surprised to find any culture or society which is based solely on truth. We would expect to find a large variety of social structures; which we do. What is certain is that authority and submission are based on creational principles and not on contemporary ideas of societies. This goes for the moral law, and for the law of love as found in the NT It also goes for the matter of family relationships. We have seen that celestial and terrestrial relationships in essence are not determined by changing societies, but by God's-hierarchical order.

The Kingship of the Father

We saw that kings have their rule by God. God is Creator and as Author has His own rights over His universe. He is Father, but then the Father is King, as the King is Father. He is neither sentimental nor emotional. He is not soft in His thinking, nor can afford so to be. The facts of rebellion never surprised Him, for these He knew, but He does have to counter them.

It is surprising how many times in the Bible God offers juridical

* Anthropocentric thinking is that with man as the centre-point of consideration. We ask. 'How does all this affect us, or benefit us?' We expect God to minister to man. and place man as primary in the universe, rather than God. Man is a creature of pleasure for the large part. and requires God to keep him in pleasure and not in states of pain or suffering. The shift in theology has been very gradual, but then, very real.

proof (witness) of His truth, ie. His faithfulness and reliability, against man who sinfully acts in arbitrary manner. Finally He sends His Son to be the total witness to His truth and nature. The Son does this by his life and atonement, and the Holy Spirit then communicates the basic truth of this incarnational witness to God. It is not that God is worried by the accusations of evil or man, but He insists on leaving these accusers without a shred of excuse when they themselves come under judgement.

The Lordship of the Son

The early church had a basic message, 'Jesus is Lord!' They knew him to be Lord by right of being the Logos, the eternal son. But here his right is by the human action of his incarnation and atonement. He has defeated all the principalities and powers which went astray, including their leader, Satan. Hence he is 'King of kings and Lord of lords' and his Kingdom is eternal, and over all creation.

In other words the basic authority of God—Father, Son and Spirit—must not be questioned. Likewise the authorities God has placed for the good of His creation must not be called in question. The personal failure of many authorities does not invalidate the principle of authorities and subordination. Such are essential to the right ordering of time and eternity. Whatever sin may have done in the midst of this hierarchy is not the point.

The main point is whether we are indeed submitted (in love) to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and delight to do the will of God which is to serve Him and the creation according to His nature and His purposes. Nothing less will be sufficient. The failure of others to do so has nothing to do with the matter.

The Honourable Nature of Authority and Submission

We saw that man's trouble began when he did not honour God, '... for although they knew God they did not honour Him as God or gives thanks to Him...' (Rom. 1:21).' The word for honour here is in fact 'glorify', which means 'give the glory due', that actual glory that is God's.

It is clear that those in subordination honour those in authority. We are to honour our parents, to give honour to governmental powers such as kings and leaders. We are to honour the elders of the church. We are to honour our masters.

On the other hand those in authority are to honour those in subordination. The Son honours the Father, but then the Father honours the Son. The Son honours the Holy Spirit—let no man speak a word against *him!* Husbands are to honour their wives as the weaker vessels. They are to take their wives in honour. Widows are to be honoured. All servants of the Lord are to be honoured. In fact we are to honour all men.

We have seen the device of evil powers and evil men; they seek to dishonour honourable powers so they may feel under no obligation to obey them. Hence God is dishonoured. His creation is dishonoured, and His authorities are dishonoured. God's purposes are denigrated, and His plans mocked. God has never sought to take vengeance in emotional hatred, but He is bound to declare His righteousness and justice in judging the despoilers of the creation.

The Ultimate Fruits of Obedience

We have seen that ultimately all things will find their unity in love. True retribution will come to evil. The universe will be cleansed. There will be renewed heavens and a renewed earth. True judgement will have been effected, because in God's judgement there is no partiality.

Then will come the reward of obedience. 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!' 'Henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they shall rest from their labours. Yes,' for their deeds do follow them!' 'Come, beloved of-my Father. Enter the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

These fruits will not only be personal, but they will be corporate. In accordance with Ephesians 1:3-14 there will be the unification of all things, and the elect of God will be not only to the praise of the glory of His grace, but to the praise of His glory. That is, all will be in the likeness of the Father-Creator, and reflect Him fully. It will be seen that this people of God ('a multitude that cannot be numbered') which has been taken from incorrigibility and asinine rebellion, now voluntarily, ie. *from the heart* (Deut. 30:6, Rom. 6:17) obeys the Father. As such it takes up its authority as a kingdom of priests (or, 'kings and priests') to serve within the creation. Doubtless it will serve God and creation in both a royal and priestly way as it gladly carries out the work for which it was created. Its service will be one with the service of all others to whom God has given the gifts of authority and obedience.

FOR FURTHER READING

Articles in Bible and Theological Dictionaries.

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LFS.5, *The Nature of Authority & Obedience* (Blackwood: NCPI, 1976).

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Where I Love I Live (Blackwood: NCPI, 1977), for the principle of love in authority and relationships.

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