

Authority and Submission

AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN AUTHORITY STRUCTURES AND THEIR LIMITS

Spheres of Institutional Authority

- ▶ “Institutional”—meaning:
 - (1) established by God
 - (2) expressed in human institutions
- ▶ Family
- ▶ Church
- ▶ State
- ▶ Industry

Family

Wives, be subject to your own **husbands**, as to the Lord. For the **husband** is the head of the **wife**, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the **wives** ought to be to their **husbands** in everything. **Husbands**, love your **wives**, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word (Eph 5:22-26)

Children, obey your **parents** in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR **FATHER** AND **MOTHER** (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG IN THE LAND. (Eph 6:1-3)

Church

Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion, but willingly, according to God; and not for dishonest gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You **younger men**, likewise, be subject to your **elders**. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. (1 Pet 5:1-5)

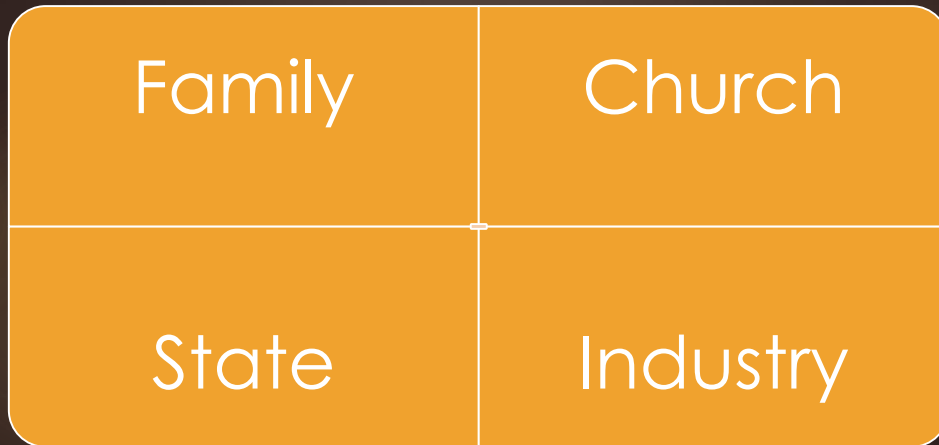
State

Be subject for the sake of the Lord to every human institution, whether to a **king** as the one in authority, or to **governors** as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do good. For such is the will of God that by doing good you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free people, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as slaves of God. Honor all people, love the brethren, fear God, honor the **king**. (1 Pet 2:13-17)

Industry

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your **masters** according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the integrity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, serving with good will as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. And **masters**, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. (Eph 6:5-9)

The “Foursquare” Model



“Bounded” Authorities

- ▶ Each sphere has its own limits
- ▶ The spheres ought to work together in a complementary manner
- ▶ Spheres do not impinge on each other, though they exist in close relation
- ▶ Each sphere is a form of stewardship—taking care of someone else's “property” → God as the rightful owner of all things

This Not That

- ▶ The Bible gives clear evidence that Church and State are distinct authorities with distinct responsibilities
- ▶ We must repudiate both extreme errors:
 - ▶ Anglicanism (State has authority over the Church)
 - ▶ Romanism (Church has authority over the State)

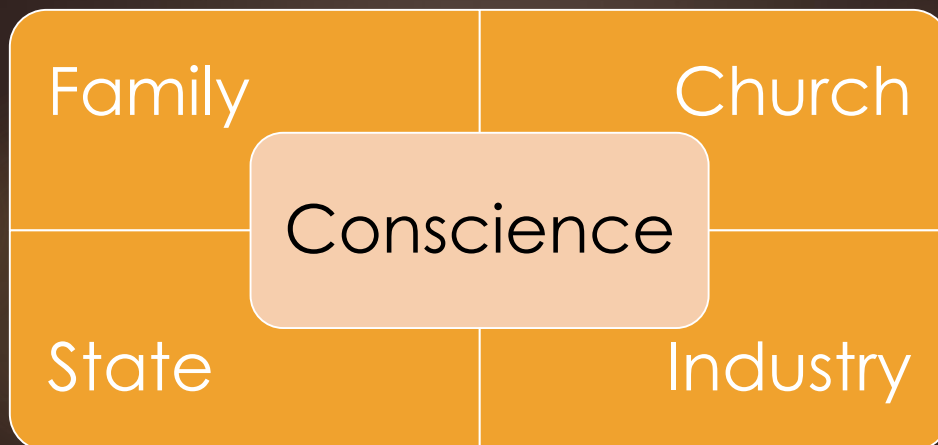
And, Oh Yeah . . .

- ▶ . . .being subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Eph 5:21)
- ▶ Odd. . . .
- ▶ In what sense do men in all places of authority “submit to one another”?

One More Authority Worth Mentioning

- ▶ **Individual conscience**
- ▶ necessary consequence: we cannot be individually responsible moral agents unless there is freedom of choice
- ▶ conscience demands submission, but not blind faith
- ▶ we deduce that conscience is the highest *human* authority with the potential to overrule all others
- ▶ conscience, in turn, is governed by Christ through his word
- ▶ it is necessary to obey conscience even in matters of indifference
- ▶ Luther: "Here I stand"—against church and state and all

Conscience and Authority



Authority as *Derivative*

- ▶ All authority is from Christ: established by him, governed by him, and judged by him
- ▶ We deduce an important order of precedence from scripture: marriage/family as the first institution, and the *most powerful*
- ▶ All other "authorities" are subsumed into family when society is small
- ▶ Husband/Father assumes the authority of prophet and priest (church), king (civil ruler), and "master" (industry)

- ▶ see: Adam; Noah; Abraham; Job

Authority as *Complementary*

- ▶ If God establishes all **authorities** (plural), then there must be distinctions between authorities and limitations on the exercise of authority
- ▶ Would God create authorities that are naturally in competition?
- ▶ What are the limits of authority? Is any authority "absolute"?

The Triangle Model

- ▶ how are we to understand the relationship between **authority**, **responsibility**, and **accountability**?
- ▶ sphere boundaries are defined by the associated responsibilities
- ▶ performance of duties and responsibilities requires authority
- ▶ authority is checked by accountability

The Triangle Model



Who Checks Authority?

- ▶ apparently, just about everybody
- ▶ within spheres of authority
- ▶ side-to-side (among equals)
- ▶ up-and-down (between superiors and inferiors) → DOLM
- ▶ between spheres of authority
- ▶ the “doctrine of lesser magistrates” says that inferior magistrates have both the authority and the duty to check abuses by the superior magistrates (see e.g., Jer 36)

Who Checks Authority?

- ▶ The paradox of accountability:
- ▶ Diffusion of responsibility—when everyone checks authority, no one checks authority
- ▶ Accountability ultimately depends upon each person doing his part (as if no one else is going to act)
- ▶ *If you see oppression of the poor and perversion of justice and [of] righteousness in the province, don't be astonished at the situation, because one official protects another official, and higher officials protect them.* (Ecc 5:8 CSB)

Who Seeks Authority?

- ▶ Paradoxically, *the one who hates it the most*
- ▶ Those who "despise authority" and "speak evil of dignitaries" will become the worst kind of despots (2 Pet 2:10)
 - ▶ they are "presumptuous" and "self-willed"
- ▶ Consistent with Marxist doctrine—those who see themselves as "oppressed" also see themselves as "entitled" and are eager to turn the tables on their masters (greed and revenge as driving motivations)
- ▶ *When the righteous increase, the people are glad, but when a wicked man rules, people groan. (Prov 29:2)*

What is Abuse?

- ▶ Easy peasy:
 - ▶ Neglect of assigned responsibilities, and/or
 - ▶ Abuse of delegated authority (use for illegitimate purposes)
- ▶ Abuse is all about having the authority while rejecting the responsibility ("lording it over" another)
- ▶ Those who despise authority will also reject accountability

The Question of Ultimacy

- ▶ When the state refuses to recognize its authority as derivated and specified, it begins to see itself as **absolute**—unlimited and unaccountable
- ▶ Our current events are explained easily enough: the secular state operates on the power principle—that it can and will overthrow every other sphere of authority
 - ▶ family must be destroyed
 - ▶ church must be destroyed
 - ▶ industry must be overtaken (*ownership and/or control*)
- ▶ Any questions? (Ha ha. Just kidding. You're not allowed to ask.)

Think About It

- ▶ **IF** . . . family is the first and most important institution . . .
- ▶ **AND IF** . . . the state desires to have all authority to itself . . .
- ▶ **THEN** . . . family is the most important institution to be destroyed
- ▶ **It is axiomatic that the first act of every tyrant is to use his authority to destroy his opposition**

Or to Put it Another Way

- ▶ The authoritarian state is not in the business of protecting the institution that could overthrow it
- ▶ But ironically, the state is derived from the family and no amount of state power can perpetuate a society where the family has been destroyed
- ▶ Which only proves that there is no substitute for the family

Not *Just* The Family, But . . .

- ▶ the "patriarchy" must be destroyed
- ▶ which means, men must be destroyed
- ▶ how? masculinity has been labeled "toxic"
- ▶ every expression of true manliness is depreciated and ridiculed
- ▶ (IMO, this is actually the definition of *toxic feminism*)

There's Just One More Little Thing

- ▶ Once the institutional authorities are destroyed or overtaken, there is just one more form of authority left to crush: conscience
- ▶ Does any authority have the authority to overthrow conscience?
 - ▶ **No**—which means that conscience must always be surrendered
 - ▶ ergo, brainwashing and torture are necessary tools of tyranny

There's Just One More Little Thing

- ▶ We might notice that freedom of speech is downstream from freedom of thought which is downstream from freedom of conscience
- ▶ Conscience becomes the final battleground of the despot who demands absolute submission—even a stray thought becomes a form of treason

Crash Course in 3rd John:

The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

For I rejoiced greatly when brothers came and bore witness to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever work you do for the brothers, and *are doing this though they are strangers*; and they bore witness to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, receiving nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

I wrote something to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not welcome what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his deeds which he does, unjustly disparaging us with wicked words. And not satisfied with this, he himself does not welcome the brothers either, and he forbids those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has received a good witness from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our witness, and you know that our witness is true.

I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write *them* to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.

Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

The **Bad** Elder and the **Good** Elder

Diotrephes (BOO!)

Demetrius (YAY!)

- ▶ What are the “authority structures” in this epistle?
- ▶ How does the “bad elder” fit the model of abuse? What is the pattern? (vv 9-12)
- ▶ What motivates the “good elder”—and for that matter, the author of the epistle?
- ▶ How is abuse antithetical to the conduct of an elder? What principle is violated?

WLC #125 (Fifth Commandment)

Q125: Why are superiors styled Father and Mother?

A125: Superiors are styled Father and Mother, both to teach them in all duties toward their inferiors, like natural parents, **to express love and tenderness to them, according to their several relations**; and to work inferiors to a greater willingness and cheerfulness in performing their duties to their superiors, as to their parents.

The Spaghetti Model of Authority and Submission

- ▶ We can be in many positions of authority and submission at the same time
 - ▶ in the same sphere
 - ▶ in different spheres
- ▶ example 1: the Roman Centurion:
 - ▶ a man “under authority” with “men under me”
- ▶ example 2:
 - ▶ David as (1) husband (2) father (3) king—who previously was responsible for overseeing the family enterprise (sheep)

Now it Gets Interesting

- ▶ When we consider all of our “several relations” to authority, the question of submission becomes even more difficult
- ▶ Conflicting orders are inevitable
- ▶ *Which* prevails—even when the conflict is coming from within one sphere (like civil government—local, state, federal)?

Resistance Theory

- ▶ Now we turn our attention to the question of civil disobedience
 - ▶ Dan 1: refusing to violate *conscience* in the matter of food/drink
 - ▶ Dan 3: refusing to do what is *forbidden* by God's word
 - ▶ Dan 6: doing whatever is *commanded* by God's word
- ▶ The **general principle** in view is that we have a duty to resist when an institutional authority exceeds its appointed boundaries
- ▶ The aim of resistance is to *restore lawful authorities to their lawful boundaries*—in other words, to hold them **accountable**

Questions and Discussion