

The Rule of Christ

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Rebellion! In a word that is the spirit of our times. Compare for a moment the concept “rebellion” with what is euphemistically called “student unrest” or compare with it what is termed the emancipation of the woman. What is the so-called “underground church” which has as its cornerstone the “uninhibited exercise of worship”, but open rebellion against a church structure enjoined upon us by Scripture? The “underground church” despises and rejects the official means of grace as being an antiquated form of worship. There is something very subtle about the rebellion of today that makes it appear to be justifiable. The student claims he is fighting a corrupt establishment; the woman has been evilly treated and suppressed. The youthful “worshiper” has the same problem as the student; he sees hypocrisy on his right and left.

We live in a day of open rebellion and because of the glorification it receives it has an effect upon us. The urge to rebel rubs off on us!

Because of this I thought it would be beneficial to examine the concept of authority. What is it? Why is it necessary?

Authority can be defined as the “right to rule” or “the right to impose one’s will upon that of another.” He that is endowed with authority has the right to expect that his will is executed by all those under him. A father must demand and expect obedience from his children. The school teacher must demand and expect the same of his students. But if we say no more than this then authority soon becomes tyranny!

Authority, “the right to rule” is of God. He is the source, the fountain of all authority, whether that authority be of the church, the home or the state, it is all of Him. The father, the teacher, the office bearer of the church receives his authority of God through Christ Jesus the risen and exalted Lord. Christ must rule in our homes, Christ must rule in our schools and churches and that because He is Lord over all things to the glory of the Father!

If we use the figure of the human body to represent the spheres of the home, the school and the church, then the proper exercise of authority is analogous to the function of the muscles and ligaments of the body. The muscles and ligaments hold all the members of the body in their proper place and they make it possible for the body to function properly. How could our bodies function without these muscles; how could we go about our daily activities? So it is with the exercise of authority, without which the home crumbles, the school becomes pure chaos and the church becomes a manifestation of the anti-Christian church. Authority is of God and the exercise of which is absolutely necessary for the Church of Christ.

All of us, young and old, those in positions of authority and those governed, must be willing subjects in all things to the rule of Christ in every sphere of life. When our fathers command, we must obey for Christ’s sake; when our teachers make demands upon us, we must comply for Christ’s sake.

But to be more specific let us consider how this concept of authority that is “the right to rule”, receives expression in the exercise of Christian discipline by the church. The “right to rule” over the congregation is given unto the elders by Christ, for He has called them to that office through the church.

The exercise of Christian discipline has basically three objectives or goals. In the first place, the honor of our God must be maintained among us. For God, who has redeemed us from sin and who sanctifies our hearts by His Spirit, requires of us that His name shall be honored and

praised among us. If one walks in sin and after repeated admonitions refuses to repent, he must be set outside of the communion of believers in order that God's name be not dishonored. Secondly, the purpose of Christian discipline is to protect the body of Christ from evil influences. If a sin remains in the church it has a corrupting influence upon the whole church. An impenitent member must be cut off from the communion of believers. Thirdly, the purpose of Christian discipline is that the sinner may see his sin, be ashamed, and confess his sin to the church. By so doing, he removes the offense and the honor of God is maintained.

Only in the way of the love of God, the love of the brethren can this be accomplished among us. Only when the exercise of Christian discipline, when the authority of Christ is brought to bear upon our lives to the honor and glory of God, can we be proper instruments for the gathering of His Church. Christ, therefore, must rule in our lives for he has received a "name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:10, 11.

Originally Published in:
Vol. 29 No. 8 December 1969