

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Majorities and Manners

All civilized countries recognize the necessity of government. Different forms of government hold sway in various lands but all admit the necessity of some final tribunal and ultimate authority. Chaos and confusion prevail where no rule obtains. Whether we study the civil, domestic, or religious realm authority must be vested and recognized as existing somewhere if peace and order are to be realities.

Authority Of Christ Is Supreme

In the church of Christ all authority resides in Christ. He is the Maker, Giver, and Judge of His law as well as the Discerner of hearts of His subjects. On earth there is no superorganization of all Christians with authority stemming from some central headquarters. In view of plain Bible teaching one of the simplest and most revealing tests of the scripturalness of any professed religious organization is the question: Does it have some national or international head on earth? If the

answer is in the affirmative such within itself shows that religious body not to be the Lord's body for His church has no such organizational structure.

The only organization which Christ has on earth is the church in some given locality generally spoken of as a congregation of disciples or baptized believers. The law of Christ governs believers in their congregational relationships. As the individual disciple cannot disregard the Will of Christ in his individual activities and remain sinless, so the congregation cannot violate the law of God in its congregational or collective activities and remain sinless.

Bishops And Expediency

In the local church God has made provision for bishops to govern in matters of expediency. These officers are sometimes called elders, overseers, and presbyters. In matters of faith, i.e., where God had definitely spoken, bishops are under exactly the same obligation to obey implicitly the Word of God as are all other

Christians. They have an additional responsibility of faith not bound upon all saints, viz., they are to "feed the flock." This is not a matter of judgment but a solemn obligation devolving upon them as a result of the relationship they sustain to those whom they oversee.

In matter of judgment or expediency those meeting the divine qualifications of bishops are supreme and their word is final. The Holy Spirit has appointed them and to resist their authority is to rebel against the Holy Spirit. God knew that final decisions in the sphere of expediency had to be made by somebody and divine wisdom has provided for them in the eldership. Regardless of the individual's judgment, it becomes his solemn obligation to acquiesce in the bishops' rule when that rule is announced. For all practical purposes their decision is God's decision, and therefore, must become the disciple's decision. To admit otherwise is to nullify the office of elders and reflect upon God's purpose in providing them. If their decisions can be disregarded their office can be ignored, God's Word can be set aside for it makes provision for bishops in the churches.

The Spirit Of Rebellion

Sad to say, many feel today that God's Word can be set aside. They will not admit it but their actions betray their true sentiment. When rebellion breaks out and the judgment of qualified, God-fearing elders becomes the target of invectives and harsh criticisms of loose thinking and looser talking church members, the

Lord's Word has been set aside and His own government attacked. Either elders are to rule or they are not to rule. If they are to rule, they must be obeyed. If they are not to rule, divine wisdom was mistaken in commanding that they be obeyed.

When the spirit of rebellion begins to foment it generally finds expression in overt acts. Absalom became the victim of his own vain ambition to rule in David's stead before the people were stirred to help him consummate his evil designs in dethroning his father. Hid dissatisfaction with the existing order, first, and his conceited notion that he could successfully replace God's appointed king, next, formed the framework of his scheme to usurp the throne of Israel. His foolish folly is best seen in the overthrow of his plan and the loss of his life.

A disposition to throw out the elders and change the existing order is the thing of the day in some localities. It is the mind of Absalom and the spirit of Korah. When it takes tangible form it is overt rebellion against God and the gospel. It denies the authority of Christ and brings His body to open shame. Within the last decade churches all over the land have witnessed such heart-rending spectacles and the cause at large has suffered irreparable damage as a direct result of this spirit.

Majority Manners

Most always the situation resolves itself into majority rule versus elder rule and eventually into open division of the congregation. Christian principles and decent manners fall prostrate

before majority vote. The would-be rulers take over and the men who only a short while before held the confidence and respect of all are now ambushed by ambition, scouraged by scoffing, and crucified by calumny. Majority rule in the church has no manners -- decent manners that is. And those who constitute the majority are usually so blinded by pride that they can see no sin of their own and so infatuated with their own importance that they do not listen to reason and will not heed revelation.

Where gospel preachers are willing to submit themselves to the judgment of elders when they fire as will as when they hire the situation will rapidly improve. If preachers and elders will hold faithfully and constantly before the congregation its responsibility and proper attitude toward the elders the disciples will not likely get out of control. This is one sure way to honor the divine arrangement and preserve the peace of God's people.

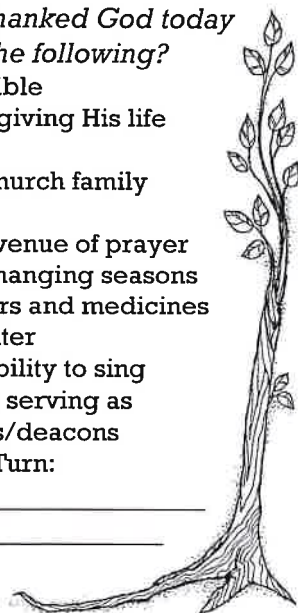
Majority rule is not God's plan for His church. If it is right part of the time, it is proper all the time, there is no room for elder rule. If there is no place for elder rule there is no place for Christ's rule. If there is no place for Christ's rule there is no place for Christ's church and if there is no place for Christ's church there is no room for Christ. Beware of the man or men, preachers or otherwise, who will dissipate the divine plan for their own purposes. Such persons are too liberal for the progress and prosperity of the Lord's people in spiritual affairs.

James R. Cope

God gave you a gift of
86,400
 seconds today. Have
 you used one to say
THANK YOU?

*Have you thanked God today
 for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- Jobs
- The avenue of prayer
- The changing seasons
- Doctors and medicines
- Laughter
- The ability to sing
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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WELLSBURG CHURCH OF CHRIST

92 Rose Cottage Lane
 Wellsburg, WV 26070
 304-737-1422

<http://www.truthandright.org>



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The Transfiguration

K G G L Q K O S U D B U N Z R O U T E J
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DIRECTIONS: Look up the scripture in the Bible, and find the answer in the crossword above.

Matt. 17:1, Jesus led Peter, James, and John up a high _____

Matt. 17:2, His _____ became white as light

Matt. 17:3, There appeared to them _____

Matt. 17:3, ...and _____, talking with Him

Matt. 17:4, Peter suggested putting up _____ tents, one for each of them

Matt. 17:5, A voice from the cloud said, "This is my _____ Son..."

Matt. 17:5, "...with whom I am well pleased; _____ to Him."

Matt. 17:6, The disciples, hearing this, were _____

Matt. 17:7, Jesus came and _____ them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear."

Matt. 17:8, When they _____ up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only

Matt. 17:9, Coming down the mountain, Jesus _____ them, "Tell no one..."

Matt. 17:9, "...the vision, until the Son of Man is _____ from the dead."