

do well." The rights and safety of those who are submissive to law must be secured by rulers. The greatest asset which law enforcement has is the presence of God-fearing, law-abiding citizens who are not only concerned with their "rights" but the "rights" of others as well. People who pay their debts, go to work on time, work hard, and observe the laws (whether the speed limit, the requirement for hunting or fishing licenses), rear decent and

honorable children, and who practice the Golden Rule are benefactors to the powers that be. They ought to be encouraged in right doing. Any time laws are slanted to punish people for doing right, then God's will is not done. When married people are taxed at a higher rate than those who simply "live together" then evil is encouraged and those who do well are disadvantaged. Instead of mocking and working to punish those who live by the law, not just

out of fear of punishment, but because they believe this to be the will of God, civil rulers ought to protect and praise those who do well, as Peter said. Something surely is out of whack in these times! What is the real problem? It is disrespect for God who authorized civil government. ~

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Divine Authority and Human Relations

by Connie W. Adams

When Satan tempted Jesus to make stones into bread, Jesus responded by saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). This was a reference to the incident recorded in Deuteronomy 8 when God gave the Israelites manna in the wilderness. He gave specific instructions as to how much to gather for a day's supply. Any more than that would breed worms and stink and they could not

use it. They were to look beyond the actual manna to the source of their very existence. God was their provider and they were answerable to him. So it is in all human relations. The God who made the world and who made us has the right to command, to direct, and to enforce obedience. He also has the right to enact punishment upon the disobedient.

Order in the Family

Concerning the family Jesus

said, "Have you not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6). Marriage was created by God, even as he created the universe and set in motion the laws by which it is ordered. As God made man and determined the bounds of his

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habitation, even so God made marriage and set in motion the laws by which it functions. Notice that "at the beginning" he made them male and female. That denies evolution, even the theistic brand. Both male and female were distinctly formed by God and that was done "at the beginning."

Notice further that in marriage male and female become one. There is a perfect and intimate union of mind, soul, and body. They function not as adversaries, or competitors, but with one heart and soul. This union is a divine creation and it is just as damaging to disregard that as it is to reject God's authority in the natural creation. For man to "put asunder" what "God hath joined together" is to invite great harm upon this relationship. The balance of moral behavior is poised upon the permanence and stability of God's divine order for the family. To "put asunder" what God has joined together is to tear

down the basic unit of all orderly human society. No wonder such violation of divine authority results in broken hearts, devastated children, rebellious behavior, hatred, and every evil work. Malice, bitterness, jealousy, envy, hatred, lying, cheating, stealing, and murder often follow in the wake of man's presumption in tearing apart what God joined together.

There is something else here worthy of note and that is that marriage is more than a social or civil ceremony. While the customs and laws of man require certain things which validate a marriage in any given culture (and devout people ought to respect such things), it is God who creates the bond. Only divinely expressed authority can sever that. Death severs this bond (Rom. 7:1-3). In the context of the passage we are considering (Matt. 19), Jesus taught that fornication grants the injured party the right to put away the guilty (v. 9).

But while we debate the exception, let it not be forgotten that there is a rule here. It is simply that God created marriage. He establishes the bond and man is not to put it asunder. Any violation of what he taught about it flaunts divine authority. That cannot be done without a price to pay.

Order in Civil Government

The same divine power that created the universe, made man in his image, designed the family and fashioned the laws by which each of these is ordered, designed civil government for the good of mankind. "Let every soul be subject to the higher power, for there is no power but of God and the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1). Without specifying any one form of civil rule over another, God still ordained "the powers that be." By divine authority they function. Peter clearly stated the design of civil government. "Submit your-

selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

It is the duty of civil rulers to "punish the evil doers." Lawbreakers, the rebellious, those who do not respect the rule of law, are not to be tolerated. They are to be punished. In every dispensation this principle is revealed. In Genesis 9:6 God said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." It is this same principle revealed in the law of Moses which contained over 30 instances in which capital punishment was to be inflicted. Ezra spelled out the demand for punishment upon the law-breakers, showing the punishment suited to the seriousness of the crime. "And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed

speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment" (Ezra 7:26). Note that whatever punishment was to be administered to suit the nature of the crime, it was to be done "speedily" (KJV, NKJV). The New American Standard Version reads "strictly." There was to be no dalliance. The offender was not to "get off." The punishment was exact, determined beforehand according to the offense and it was to be executed with speed. Solomon added that failure to carry out sentence against an evil work "speedily" would cause the hearts of men to be set on evil (Eccl. 8:11). Is strict punishment a deterrent to crime? The Lord thought so and revealed it through inspired men. The whole debate on this issue now springs from a lack of respect for the divine authority of the Almighty.

In the New Testament, Paul said the civil ruler is "the

minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4). The civil ruler has a "sword," a weapon of force. Who gave it to him? By what right does he use it? "He is the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath on him that doeth evil." Civil law exercised without prompt and certain punishment for those who violate that law, opens the door to anarchy. When policemen are stripped of power, when the system is rigged in favor of the criminal and his "rights" transcend those of his victims, then justice is perverted and an escalation in crime is inevitable. When cases are decided without regard to the evidence and verdicts are based on emotion in spite of clear evidence, then the rule of law has suffered a serious blow.

Peter said the rulers are also to "praise those who