

THE TRUE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

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Who makes up the Church? Those who look to the Head, those who seek the Head, those who are united to the Head. The number of members makes no difference: even if it were just you and me, each at one end of the earth, we would both move and act together, since the Head, Jesus Christ, acts in both of us.

The Scripture says:

Therefore, brothers, look for ... men among you (Acts 6:3).

How can we know who are the right people to fill a certain office? We must ask God to open our eyes, to anoint them with heavenly eye salve so that we can know who are those whom God has already called. He has prepared them. All those whose eyes God has anointed will be able to discern Him.

God gives authority to men, whether or not they have a position or office. Jesus was on this earth when He said, "All power [authority] has been given to Me in heaven and on earth, "yet He had no position. The Pharisees, the priests, the scribes, and the doctors of the law had position, they had office. They could lord it over Him, they could summon Him, and they could judge Him. But what was their authority? They had no authority. Jesus said to His hearers, "They sit on Moses' seat . . . but you shall not do according to their works." There was authority in Moses when he sat on that seat, but there was no authority when a Pharisee or a scribe sat on that seat.

It was said of Jesus that all "were amazed at the gracious words which proceeded from his mouth." Why? "Because he taught them as one having authority, not as the scribes." All that the scribes could speak was borrowed, but when Jesus spoke all knew that what he said was not borrowed but was the very substance. The word dwelt in him; he himself was but the expression of the word which he spoke. And as he spoke the word impressed the ears and revived the hearts of those who heard.

The Pharisees, who lacked "authority," became so jealous of him that they could no longer bear it. They had to cast him out of the world to "save their position."

If we leave it like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy our holy place and our nation (John 11:48).

Where was Jesus' authority, since he had no office or position? Where true authority always is: in the truth of God that he preached. All true and genuine authority in the church comes from the truth of God.

The measure of truth a man possesses is the only measure of his authority.

Jesus said:

The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it will not be so among you (Matthew 20:25-26).

What do the rulers of nations do? They exercise authority.

God has not given authority to any man in His church to exercise authority. That is the difference between the rulers of nations and the princes of God. The princes of this world exercise authority, though they lack true authority. The princes of God, possessing true authority, never exercise it. The authority of God's truth is self-executing.

Therefore, there is no such thing as dominion among the princes of God. There is no lordship, there is no one with the spirit of command [in the words of Ellen White]. There are no territorial boundaries among the princes of God, such as 'this is my Association. It is God's Association! It is not my territory, but God's. The princes of God possess authority, but they do not exercise authority, and that is satisfactory to them. God takes care of the rest, so that no one is the greatest. Only One is the Master. All the rest are brothers.

Let us make sure that our authority comes from God, and that we never exercise authority. Nevertheless, we must speak with authority, since authority is in the truth we speak.

To each of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift (Ephesians 4:7).

Remember that we have been called to put aside all that is childish, to stop being like children tossed here and there, not knowing whether we are on solid ground. God wants us to build on the foundation--the truth--that sets men free, and that we know is the truth.

What person, what group of people, can select a worker here and a worker there, and arrange for them to work together for good? This work of directing the cause of God is the most delicate work in the universe, for it has to do with minds. How can we unite living souls harmoniously in the Spirit with the life of God? Only Christ, the Head, can do this. He will use us in this work of knitting--not weaving, but knitting--together. In knitting, different threads are held together, but in knitting, there is only one thread strung together so that each stitch holds the neighboring ones together.

That is what God intends to do with us. He has woven us together, united us and compacted us, in such a way that the church grows by building itself up in love.