

WHAT LATTER DAY SAINTS BELIEVE
ABOUT AUTHORITY

Evan A. Fry, Radio Director
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter Day Saints
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If you lived today in Nazi Germany, or in any Nazi occupied country of Europe, you would not need to be very philosophical about the question of "authority" of any kind. In Nazi Europe today there is a devastating authority of FORCE, of fear, of terror, of violence, of compulsion. It is based on a foundation of lies about racial and cultural superiority, and strengthened by the flattery of an ersatz state inspired and state-sponsored religion. You obey the authority of force, or you are liquidated in a concentration camp or before a firing squad in Nazidom today.

But even the Nazis, with all their authority of force, have found it impossible to exterminate another kind of authority - the authority of "power." There is a difference between power and force, though the words are often used interchangeably. Some synonyms for "force" are: violence, compulsion, coercion, restraint, (constraint). Some synonyms for "power" are: Potency, strength, vigor, ability, capacity. Power comes from a word root meaning "to be able". And all over Nazi Europe today there are those who in spite of the outwardly imposed authority of force, have the inward authority of power, potency, strength, vigor, energy, capacity -- mental and spiritual as well as physical. These are the patriots who fight on under cover, whose only authority is the authority of ability, or capacity for leadership. These are the Niemollers who defy the authority of force so successfully that even force must stop and reconsider. This authority of power is wielded in hope, in faith, in love. It is based on truth -- not on a fiction of lies.

But there is still a third kind of authority in Nazi Europe today, feeble though it may be. That is a "legal" authority, which says that according to national and international law, certain acts and policies of the Nazi conquerors have been and are wrong. Some day, a legal court, assembled under the laws of that country, will sit in each of the countries (that have been under the Nazi heel), and according to the law of that country, and to international law, the offenders against the humanity and the decency of the world will be tried, found guilty, and sentenced.

There are then, three kinds of authority, at least: namely, (1) an authority of FORCE; (2) an authority of POWER; and (3) a legal authority, (or an authority of law). It is not always possible to separate these absolutely. They are often blended or interdependent. The authority of force always invokes a supposed authority of law. An authority of force or of law may or may not be accompanied by an authority of power.

The highest authority in the world is God, for he made the world. He rules it, He is absolute within it. He has all legal authority. No one can successfully dispute His claim. He also has all authority of power, for He is omnipotent. Except in rare cases, in dealing with

wickedness and open rebellion, He does not stoop to use the authority of force. The authority of God, and the authority of Jesus, though certainly legal, are primarily the authority of power -- an authority of capability, of capacity, of strength, of energy, of vigor in serving and helping unselfishly. Jesus said (Matthew 20:25-27) "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant, and whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister." There is no finer authority than this authority of power -- the authority of ability, and knowledge, and strength, and moral and spiritual energy, which makes it possible for us to serve others with no thought of our own advancement in rank or station.

But desirable as the authority of power is, there is another authority that must accompany it. Jesus plainly inferred that there would be a great many who called him Lord, professed to be his disciples, acted in his name, who had no right to act for him, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Many of the works done by these professed servants of Christ were good in their way; but the fact that they were done "in his name" but not in his way, and without his authority, made the workers of them iniquitous because they were usurpers of authority, and their works had no legal standing.

An authority of power is good and necessary, but it is not enough. A legal authority must accompany it -- a divine commission. Paul, in speaking of priesthood and its authority (Hebrews 5:4) says "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron. May we note in passing that Aaron was called of God through God's prophet, Moses. He was not called by the people, for the people scarcely knew him, and would not have had him had Moses not commanded it. The call did not come to Aaron personally, for he doubted his own ability to fulfill the responsibility. Authority must come from God, through a legal channel of succession, as typified by the priesthood of Moses, handed down in part to Aaron.

This brings us to a further consideration of authority -- that it can be, and many times is, delegated to someone else. The authority of the President of the United States, or of the Supreme Court, or of the dog-catcher in the smallest village, is the authority of the people -- you and me -- delegated to those we have chosen and commissioned to perform certain tasks in our name. In the matter of priesthood authority, I think we may all agree that God is the supreme authority. I think we can all agree, too, that he delegated that authority to his Son, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:2 speaks of Christ as being appointed "heir of all things". At Jesus' baptism, John heard a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him," indicating a delegation of authority to speak. Matthew 28:18 records the words of Jesus concerning his commission, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Christ, in turn, delegated his authority to the apostles. The closing verses of Matthew record one of his commissions: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Teaching them to ob-

serve all things, whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." John 15:16 says, in the words of Jesus, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." On two occasions, Jesus tells the apostles that their acts in his name on earth shall be binding in heaven. (Matthew 16:16-19, and Matthew 18:18)

When Christ ascended, leaving the apostles without his physical presence, he promised them another Comforter, the Holy Spirit of promise, which should guide them into all truth, and teach them all things. Without that Comforter, they were to have no authority to preach -- for they were instructed to tarry in Jerusalem until it came to them, which it did on the day of Pentecost. Now the chain of authority is, God -- Christ -- Holy Spirit -- Apostles. Does the chain stop there? Was there no more authority after the apostles? Did the Comforter guide and bless and commission no one after the last of the twelve had been claimed by death? Let us go to the record and see.

Because Judas had fallen from grace, and had sought death as an *escape* ~~easy way out~~, there was a vacancy among the twelve. The first chapter of Acts tells of the choosing and ordination of Matthias to fill the quorum or group. The 13th and 14th chapters of Acts give us some pertinent information here. Acts 13:2 tells how the Holy Ghost (to whom Jesus had delegated his authority) said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. The next chapter, verse 14, then mentions the APOSTLES, Barnabas and Saul. James, the Lord's brother, was not one of the original apostles, but Paul mentions him as one in authority in Jerusalem, and infers that he is an apostle, in Galatians 1: 18-19. All in all, New Testament scripture makes mention of no less than NINE apostles in addition to the original twelve, indicating that the authority of that office was handed down from man to man in an unbroken chain; that the OFFICE of apostle was continued in the church even after the original twelve had all suffered martyrdom.

But the chain of authority did not stop there. It extended on down to other ministers and officers in the New Testament church. Paul instructed Titus (1:5) to "ordain elders in every city." Paul himself had done the same ~~on~~ at least one portion of his journeyings, according to Acts 14:23..."And when they had ordained them elders in every church,etc." Stephen exercised authority, when, because he was full of faith and the Holy Ghost, he was ordained, and proceeded to do "great miracles and wonders among the people." When in disputation with the Libertines, "they were not able, to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." ^(Acts 8:5, 8, 10) Here was true authority of power, coupled with a legal call and ordination by the laying on of hands. Titus was advised by Paul to "rebuke with all authority". Paul exercised his authority as an apostle in promulgating and enforcing an authoritative decree from the church at Jerusalem (Acts 16:4,5)

So, our chain of authority has gone one link further. Did it continue? Consider this example. If a judge of the Supreme court, or the President of the United States, ignores the law and the constitution, and disregards the wishes of those who have chosen and commissioned him, he is impeached: he loses his authority. Any agent who fails to carry out the orders and wishes of his master, loses his commission. It would make no difference that he was a good fellow,

well educated, likable, capable, powerful, efficient. All these things would help him in his work, IF HE HAD AUTHORITY. But take away his commission --his authority -- and any act he does is no longer binding on his Master, or efficacious for the one he serves.

This is what happened in the Christian church. Men forsook and perverted the teachings of Christ and the Apostles. They ignored and refused the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Clergy were chosen for political and practical reasons, rather than in the manner God chose Aaron. When men no longer revered the teachings and ordinances of Christ, when they ostensibly revered but actually perverted the teachings of the old apostles, when they were no longer guided by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, their authority died. Their authority of power diminished, too. No longer did the signs follow the believer. No longer were the promised gifts and fruits of the Spirit received in the church. Some authority from men remained. But authority from God was dead.

Reformation could not restore Authority, or re-connect the missing links in the chain which we have shown you tonight. It was necessary to get back to God, and to receive a RESTORATION of authority, so that the links of the chain might again be forged in their proper order. Joseph Smith went direct to God. He received the same instruction as did John: "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him." Angelic ministers restored the authority of priesthood in the name of Christ. As in the days of old, apostles were chosen, commissioned, and sent into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. Wherever they went, they added other links to the chain of power, ordaining other apostles as vacancies occurred, ordaining "elders in every city," ordaining seventies, pastors, evangelists, teachers, deacons, and bishops under the guidance and compulsion of the Holy Spirit. These men were called not by the people whom they were to serve; not by themselves; but by someone already in authority, who could pass his authority along at the express command of God, as Moses was the instrument in calling and ordaining Aaron.

Paul told Timothy (2 Tim. 3:5) that in the last days there should be men "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Does it not seem reasonable to believe that if authority was once followed by power, it will always be? That if any man claims authority but lacks power, he has no authority? If Christ has all power in heaven and in earth, delegation of even a portion of Christ's authority should bring with it an accompanying power, which like Stephen's, would make it impossible to resist the wisdom and power by which the one in authority spoke, and which would bring the signs that follow the believer, the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12, and the fruits of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:19.

(Have you this kind of authority in your church? Or is it a form of godliness which DENIES the power?) In this church, the ministry is called of God as was Aaron. The chain of authority, from the Restoration to now, is unbroken. The signs do follow. The power of that authority is manifested unto righteousness. The gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit are enjoyed. Why not come and enjoy them with us?