



In this world into which God has placed us, there are a variety of lines of authority with which we must comply. There is the Supreme Law of God which is the Sovereign Law above every other law and which has no hint of ambiguity. There is also parental law which is the elementary law of our parents to us in childhood. There is the institutional law of governments which often bear the marks of human frailty to accomplish pure justice. And there is church law, often referred to ecclesiastical law, and in the Anglican church, episcopal law of church government.

All the above laws come with a 'line of descending authority;' and all are subject to error except the first which is God's Immutable Law.

In our daily lives, we encounter these laws which are intended to benefit the obedient by putting in good order the proper disposition of human life. Obedience to God's Law will always lead to a more perfect government because His Law is perfect.

Let us examine these four facets of law in order of importance.

God's Immutable Law

God's Law is always sovereign over any manmade, or man-legislated law. It is the Supreme Law of the Land of the Kingdom of God. Any subordinate law, whether parental, governmental, or ecclesiastical must conform to the Law of God else we cannot be righteous in obedience thereto. *It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.* (Psalm 118:9) *We ought to obey God rather than men.* Acts 5:29 (KJV) There is no law above that, or equal to that, of God Almighty. When parents dispute God's Law, it is still the duty of the child to obey God's Law. Doing so does not dishonor the father or mother but rather honors them in ways unknown to them in having a Godly child. When governments abrogate their instituted duty before God and enact laws that are abhorrent to the Law of God, those laws must not be honored by the Christian believer of the Church. Examples of such laws abhorrent to the Law of God would be the sin of sodomy (homosexuality) and abortion (the termination of innocent lives conceived by the gift of God) or murder!

God's Law has not been done away with by the sacrifice of Christ – it's penalty rather has been satisfied by that sacrifice for those who are His called and chosen elect people. Christ did not redeem us by abrogating or nullifying the Law, but by paying the penalty under the very terms provided in God's Law. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23) This is a death sentence for all sinners since the penalty is

death and must be paid by One who is qualified to be a propitiation for our sins by being without blemish or sin. That Person is the Lord Jesus Christ. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Romans 6:23) Remember: God's Law is Supreme above every other law.

Parental Law

This law is second in importance to the first in that it is the only law of which we know anything about when we are born helpless, bawling and screaming, into the world. Our parents are those to whom our very existence depends. The human is one of the few creatures born completely helpless to do anything for itself. God has perhaps intended this so that we could learn that God is our Great Parent upon whom we must trust and upon whom our very existence depends. We at first take our parents for granted. We cry and scream for milk, for comfort, and for attention. No baby is born loving its parents – it doesn't even know its parents. It only knows when it makes enough of a fuss that two hands magically appear to cradle or comfort it. As the baby grows into a child, it learns that its parents are important people to it. It begins to learn to speak, to crawl, to walk – all at the teaching and assistance of the parents. The child begins to know that its existence depends upon the good favor of the parents. Fear of parents is a beginning of love just as fear of God is a beginning of Godly wisdom. God gave us parents so that we could know that there is someone greater than us upon whom we **MUST** depend.

As we grow into our teen years, we have grown stronger and more self-reliant. We may even begin to believe that we know it all, and our parents are quite backward. Though our parents have lived a couple or more decades longer than us, we presume that we have learned more in a short space than they have learned all those years of life experiences. After many grave errors in judgment and even close calls with the angel of death, we begin to see the logic of our parents' counsel. Their love and counsel grow enormously in our minds. Our love is fed by the knowledge of all that they have sacrificed for us in love, sacrifice, and patience. We begin to respond with a deeper and broader respect for our parents. We may at first be drawn to obey them out of pure fear of retribution; but then by a greater fear of bringing shame and dishonor upon them. The same is true for the newly converted Christian. We may at first be drawn by inordinate fear of the Judgment; but then, as we learn of the love of our Lord more and more, we are imbued with the same fear of displeasing or dishonoring the One who died for us. *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."* Ex 20:12 (KJV) This Commandment is the fifth, and it is positioned intentionally between the duty we owe to God and the duty we owe to our fellow man. It is a transition Commandment between God and man since God is also our Father whom we must honor.

Civil Law and Authority

Though I refer to this topic as Civil, it is intended to cover the broad spectrum of manmade law from civil to criminal. On the Lord's Table of the Reformation Church of England, we find three symbols of God's Law and Gospel. We have two candlesticks on either side of the center of the Table. The Candlestick on the right (facing out) is the Gospel Candle representing the Light of Christ's Gospel going forth to lighten the darkness. The Candlestick on the left represents the teaching of the Apostles going forth to lighten the darkness. This Candle is subordinate to the first and is intended to simply further express the teaching of the Word of the Gospel. At center (behind the Lord's Table) is the Ten Commandments reaffirming that God's Law is immutable and unchanging. Forward of these three symbols of Law (for the Gospel is the Law of Love), is the Cross. The Cross is a symbol of God's redeeming love in the sacrifice of His only Begotten Son. Christ is not displayed on that Cross because He is risen.

The Founders of the American Republic (not democracy) were guided by the Hand of God to establish three branches of government. In a Republic, every law applies, without exception, to every citizen equally. They drew up a bible for governance called the U.S. Constitution. That instrument is the Supreme Law of the Land, but not of equal weight with God's Law. The Founders also established the right of trial by a jury of one's peers comprised of twelve members – much as the twelve Apostles who sit in judgment of the Kingdom of God. We owe loyalty, obedience and honor to this civil authority granted us by God. But when that government tramples upon the Constitution and her citizens, it is no longer acting upon that mandate given by God at her founding. UnGodly laws are not binding on Godly men. In this form of Constitutional government, there is also a hierarchy of law. Since all power descend from God, the Sovereign Law, whether recognized or not, is the Law of God. Then we have the President, the Congress, and the Supreme Court. Under these is an array of state, county, and municipal governments all of whom are subordinate to the Federal government, but only within the limits of power granted by the Constitution to that Federal government. So, law begins at the very top and descends to the lowest unit of government. From God Himself down to the last man or woman standing.

Church Government

Like any great business enterprise which has a Chief Executive Officer (or business owner), with subordinate department directors, managers, and foremen to insure the business operates smoothly; so the Church has bishops, priests, deacons, teachers, administrators and other subordinate staff to insure that the Church labors are conducted in good order. Every person has a great responsibility to God to see that their responsibilities and duties are performed in a dedicated and efficient manner. No one is of greater worth than another, but some have greater responsibility and authority than some others. *4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord* (Romans 12:4-11)

The Shepherd and Bishop of the Church is our Lord Jesus Christ. Bishops in the Church are under-shepherds whose responsibility it is to insure biblical doctrine is adhered to and no excesses practiced. If they fail that duty, they are not worthy of their stations as bishops. The tongue is not more important than the ear, and the ear of no greater importance than the eye; but all must function efficiently for a wholesome body and ability to perform the body's duties and functions. If a brick falls on the toe, it is not only the toe that is affected, but the whole body. So, each is a cog in the machinery of advancing the Gospel to the glory of Christ. Whoever has a position of authority in the Church must exercise that authority with patience, love, and wisdom. Likewise, the person under authority of another in Church must be responsive to the leadership under which he works. Without this principle, chaos is the result. *Let all things be done decently and in order.* (1 Cor 14:40)

God Provides the Summary of All

1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the

ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he 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. 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. (Romans 13:1-5)