

The Christian and Human Institutions

Human institutions are all around us, and for good reason – we need them. We need schools, hospitals, banks, libraries, restaurants, gas stations, supermarkets, etc. These are human institutions because they are founded, operated, and overseen by men. This is different than the institutions of marriage and the church, which are divine institutions founded and overseen by God.

As human beings in this physical world, we use various human institutions for various reasons, and this is proper, as long as the institution does not involve one in sin (such as a strip club, casino, nightclub, etc.). We may pay for necessary services from, donate our time and/or money to, or work in such institutions. While all this is true, there are two cautions for Christians that need to be remembered.

First, we must be careful not to tie the church to any human institution that would compromise the authorized divinely-revealed work that God gave the church to do. On the one hand, the church may pay for services from human institutions to provide a place for worship (rent, bank loan, electric company, insurance), spread the

by Marc W Gibson

gospel message (printing service, newspaper column), or provide benevolent help to needy saints (food, doctor bill, etc.). On the other hand, the church has no authority to build and maintain a hospital, restaurant, college, or sports arena. As individuals we can own and donate to these things, but the church is not to own or support human institutions. It is without divine authority.

Secondly, while individual Christians can be involved in establishing and maintaining a publishing company, religious journal, or college, these institutions are human, not divine. A college geared toward a "Christian" atmosphere and faculty is still not the church. But those involved will often defend it from criticism at all costs. Religious colleges and papers can support error and those who teach error. If I am employed or an alumni of a college, or write for a paper, will I defend "my" institution from criticism instead of defending the truth? Personally, I prefer to keep my distance from such ties, lest I forget my true allegiance.



Classes This Week

Sunday Evening College devo and Singing at Jared Johnson's, Taylor Bethea teaching	Monday 7:00 PM Men's study at Walker Davis' home, on How to Change Yourself	Tuesday 10:00 AM ladies' class at Laura Humphrey's, "Seasoning Your Words"	Tuesday 8:00 PM Truth Seekers in room 2326 of the student center (Note changing room number!)
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March Birthdays				News and Notes	
Lisa Carter (Luke's mother)	Jesse Godwin (Troy's father and Mac's grandfather)	Nell Holcomb (Ben's grandmother, Joannetta's aunt)	Louise Pack (Anna and Christopher's grandmother)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Amanda Cagle 2-Maddie Norman 2-Chase Harrison 2-Bryan Golden 2-Angela Fowler 2-Joy Powell 2-Connell Hodges 3-Shaun Oliver 4-Morgan Cavender 5-Sophie Borden 7-Josh Pender 8-Carmen Herd 9-Richard Zacarius 9-Austin Bartlett 10-Pepper Humphrey 10-Parker Godwin 12-Brad Hartsell 13-Adam Holliday 16-Taylor Godwin 17-Susan Sullivan 18-MaKenzie Anderson 18-Alaina Barham 20-Jimmy Roberts 21-Carter Hunt 21-Rachel Bobo 22-Will Hollis 23-Sarah Embry 25-Sawyer Hall 25-Ethan Chandler 27-Shelby Freeman 27-Katie Jasper 28-Jacob Hagedwood 29-Rachel Simpson 29-Makenzie Neeley 30-Amanda Stephens 	
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Ruth Addison (gmom of April and Julie)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ - Group Meetings are tonight! ☒ - Phillip and Amanda welcomed Carly Beth to this world! She's 7lbs 12 ozs 21 inches long. Amanda and Carly Beth are doing well. ☒ - Please continue to pray for Fallon Hartsell as she recovers. ☒ - Please remember these family members of Orie Cecil as they battle cancer: his cousin, Tina Atnip, and her son, Caleb, and Orie's grandfather Charles Cecil ☒ - Please pray for our expectant mothers: Brooke Perkins, Fallon Hartsell and Jenna Vaughn. ☒ - Please continue to pray for Emma Ulrich's mom, Gay, as she will have a bone biopsy. ☒ - We rejoice in the baptism this week of Garrison Luther! ☒ - All audio is immediately posted on www.auchurch.com. Cd's are available immediately after each service! 	
Madeline Morton (Greg Lanier's g'daughter)	Alexander Locke (Jeremiah's cousin's son)	Betty Bradford	Hazel Gilliland and Sherry Carroll (Toni's relatives)		
Jean Buchanan (Abbie Harrison's grandmother)	Ermogene Laxson (Sara Lail's grandmother)	Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)	William Smith (Ken Sullivan's brother)		
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Arabelle Rich (Joannetta's aunt)	Sasha Rozier (Makenzie Reynolds' cousin)	Charles Hunt, chuck Hunt's dad		
Bonnie Rhodes Kirkley (Toni Herd's family)	Howard Vaughan (Mary Ann's Granddad)	Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephew)	James Palmer (Rachel Hobbard's grandfather)		

The Auburn Beacon



A weekly publication of the University church of Christ in Auburn, Alabama

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Volume 8, Issue 24 February 26, 2017

Divine Authority and Human Relations

By Connie W. Adams



Thoughts to Ponder

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

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.

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.

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 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

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Elders
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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Sunday
Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM
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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 di-vine authority they function. Peter clearly stated the design of civil government. "Submit yourselves 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 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.

Guardian of Truth - January 18, 1996



Are We Just Lazy?

By Dee Bowman

Rest is reserved for the worker. There is no lawful rest for the person who does not work; he is a leech on society, be that society physical or spiritual. He takes and gives nothing in return.

The balance of trade is a complicated matter. I don't understand much about it. And I'm not too sure anybody else does from the way it looks. I noticed today that the Japanese are now saying American workers are not only illiterate, but lazy. Reckon that's so? Is such a criticism justified? Some are, that's for sure. We have so long lived in opulence that leisure time is more important than about anything else. And that's made some lazy. And that, in turn, has had an adverse effect on the quality of what we produce—not just automobiles, mind you, but everything we produce.

I am convinced that too much leisure time is bad for the cause of Christ, too. First, because lots of different kinds of sins come out of boredom. If there's nothing constructive to challenge the mind, it will turn to things which are not and be challenged by them. People who sit around most of the time tend to get involved in thinking that eventually takes them in the wrong direction. Busy people, on the other hand, just plain don't have time to get into too much trouble. That's not to say they never do, but the likelihood is much less.

Laziness is condemned in the Bible. The sluggard of the Proverbs is an unsightly, slovenly sort of character. He is sometimes ludicrous, sometimes repulsive. The scriptures say he is hinged to his bed (**Prov. 26:11**) and that his excuses are bordered on the ridiculous (he won't work because "there's a lion outside" **Prov. 26:13**).

This sort of inaction and lethargy sort of creeps up on folks it seems to me. They don't set out to be lazy. They just don't stay active and first thing you know, they have become indolent, inactive. And once they get used to it, there's hardly a thing that can be said to get them active again.

It's the same way with folks that are spiritually lazy. They have the exact same mannerisms.

The Lazy Person Won't Begin

Oh, he plans to, but not right now. "When?" you ask. That's too definite for him; he just doesn't want to be pinned down right now. "Wait," he says, "I'll get around to it one day." He doesn't commit himself to outright refusal, he just won't give any specific time about start-

ing. Procrastination gradually erodes purpose and waiting until tomorrow will never make a burdensome task any easier.

The Lazy Person Won't Finish

Even if he one day gets in the mood and starts a project, chances are he will never get around to finishing. Solomon says, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting...." He brings in the bacon, but cook it he won't. He likes the hunt, but he won't do what he doesn't like. Does that sound like anyone you know? Lots of people participate

in the things they enjoy, but when there is something demanded they don't particularly like, they won't finish. And how often the passion of the original plan burns low. To restore the fire of enthusiasm in one who has abandoned the plan is difficult indeed.

The Lazy Person Will not Face Up to Difficulties

The wise man says "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold" (**Prov. 20:4**). If it's hard, he won't do it. If it makes him uncomfortable, he just doesn't get involved. And if there is any chance at all that he could be made to look bad he will not participate. It's just certain that the person who tries will sometimes be uncomfortable, sometimes be embarrassed, sometimes fail. But all of that is part of pulling against the tendency to become shiftless and good-for-nothing. It's all a part of trying to better oneself as well as providing for the general welfare. We don't need one more lazy person.

Consider the Ant

Solomon says we should consider the work habits of the ant (**Prov. 6:6-11**). First of all, the ant works without oversight or guide. The real worker works "not with eye service," but because it's right to do it. The ant takes due consideration of time. Rest is reserved for the worker. There is no lawful rest for the person who does not work; he is a leech on society, be that society physical or spiritual. He takes and gives nothing in return.

