

Authority, Accountability, and the Apostolic Movement

enforce them and his *refusal* to make them mandatory and conditional upon his involvement with people, lest the gospel suffer.¹⁷

In my experience I have never heard an apostle teach that not only do the “troops” have no mandatory moral obligation to support the apostle, but that the apostle should work with his hands to support the troops! If there is an obligation of support, it is not just to the apostles, but to the weak! The offering Paul was taking up in Second Corinthians 9 was not for himself, but for the poor!

I am not denying the admonitions to support ministry (apostolic and otherwise). I am asking why *no one mentions— will not even consider—* the biblical alternatives! The silence is deafening. The difference between a genuine fathering spirit and what is masquerading on the current apostolic stage is staggering.

Genuine apostolic fathers give their lives away for the children and ask nothing in return. Where a healthy atmosphere of mutuality exists, if they receive something in return, they accept it gladly and with thanks. However, true apostolic fathers do not use emotional IOUs, or spiritual manipulation on their children to psychologically extort financial support as if the children were morally obligated to do so.

In some networks and apostolic associations, the operational ethos is the exact opposite of genuine apostolic fathering. Membership in the association is sometimes contingent upon agreement and the duty of *mandatory* financial support to the overseeing apostle.¹⁸ The plans vary from dues of some sort to a mandatory tithe of ten or sometimes twenty percent of a senior pastor’s income going to the covering apostle. The issue is not presented in terms of mutuality of voluntary relationship, but as an allegedly obligatory divine order, along with the associated inferred spiritual risks and judgments should someone fail to comply with “God’s standard.” This is a Christian pyramid scheme.

The emphasis in these environments tends to be skewed toward the responsibilities of the subordinates to the apostolic head/father: the duties and obligations of acknowledging position, rank, loyalty, honor, authority, submission, headship, and support. The responsibility of the

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father to the subordinates is often ill-defined, unquantifiable, and impractical other than the alleged privilege of being under the individual's nebulous spiritual covering.

There is simply no way an overseeing apostle can functionally “father” hundreds or thousands of individuals. Even Jesus Christ limited His immediate circle to twelve! *Impartation* (preaching, teaching, inspiration, download, etc.) and spiritual blessing can occur for non-local hundreds and thousands. This is because the ability to receive impartation derives from a correct heart joining and the correct inner value systems of the individual being imparted to. The heart alignment and inner values systems allow for life transference beyond time and space.

Impartation is not defined by geographic proximity. Judas was geographically close to Jesus and heard teaching, as did all the other disciples, but he was not imparted to. Also, the age in which we live is characterized by facilitating media and communication technology we could not have dreamed of a generation ago. Even old technology can be impartational! The dead author of a book from fifty years ago can “impart” to you from beyond the grave, but he cannot father you! Impartation and relational fathering are not the same. The latter is not possible by remote signal feed. You can oversee and administrate a network from a distance, but you cannot father. It requires intimacy. Fathering takes place at an intimate and individual level rather than a corporate level; it is the dimension of mentoring.¹⁹

The themes of honor and submission to authority are, of course, legitimate. They are in God's Word.²⁰ However, they are subordinate themes. When presented in a priority and hierarchal way of obligation, rather than the mutuality found in the “one-to-anothers” of Scripture, and if void of a death and resurrection spirit, empty of love and service, they become hopelessly contaminated and betray the Spirit of Christ. It is not sound gospel ground.

When these subthemes are emphasized, a church environment can become like a spiritual plantation where the apostle is the master and production overseer of the plantation and subordinates are the slaves,

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not sons. The subordinates provide the resources (human, spiritual, and financial) to “fulfill the vision of the house.” If after ten to fifteen years of proven “loyalty” and “sonship” and “serving another man’s vision,” you *may be* invited to move up from being a field slave to a house slave under the guise of opportunity for intimacy with the leader and sanctioned release into your own ministry as reward for loyalty. The problem is a change in geographic proximity does not undo a fundamentally flawed system and ethos. You are still a slave working for the master. You just get to bring him his slippers in the cool of the night instead of pick his cotton during the heat of the day.

It is one thing to spend one’s self for someone. Specifics and degree of service are self-determined. It is all together another matter to be spent. That is not self-determined. It means someone else is using me up. And to experience both at a level that Paul describes as “most gladly” is beyond our reach naturally.

For example, when I go to the store and shop, I open my wallet and pay for what I want. That is spending. Going to the store, opening my wallet and saying, “Take what you want,” is being spent! Genuine apostolic fathers will manifest this quality of being spent. They will give, give, give, and give again. In the face of misunderstanding, they will give. In the face of rejection, they will give. Why? Because, if genuine in fatherhood, they have touched a quality and depth of revelation of the heart of the Father that cannot help but manifest. It is their new nature to do so.

An apostolic father is not someone who requires loyalty and submission to his governmental covering as the determinative quality of his fathering status. The essence of a genuine apostolic father is one who gives his life away for those who may not appreciate it. If emphasis is on the obligations of the children to the father over the manifestation of the spirit of Christ in the fathers to the children, it is opposite of a Pauline spirit and method and is not on Calvary ground. The kingdom of God operates on relationship and mutuality, not obligation, one way or the other (more on this later). This is especially true in circumstances

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where intimate relationship is not functionally genuine.²¹ A legitimate method with a bad spirit, or bad theology, underlying it becomes an illegitimate method. When requirement replaces love and relationship, gospel ground is lost.

I am certainly not opposed to supporting apostolic ministers and *doing so well!* Being generous is a reflection of the nature of our heavenly Father. If someone sows spiritual things, it is entirely legitimate to expect that material things would be sown back in return.²² I am opposed to: a) codified tithe schemes of at best *dubious*, and more likely, *non-existent* exegetical base being presented as moral mandates b) the unwillingness to acknowledge other biblically-endorsed means of self-support, and c) the lack of creative financial endeavors even being considered as valid alternatives to the tithe. *Tithe schemes do not create inter-generational wealth.* They are merely *the transfer of wealth between individuals within a generation*: each generation's ministers become dependent on the current generation's tithes and offerings. There is no wealth-building future in it. Increase is only possible by adding more people: a situation begging for manipulation (conscious or otherwise). It is a maintenance model of finance. It was designed to meet the needs (maintenance) of the Levites in the Old Covenant, not as a method of generating working capital.

Jesus was spent and asked nothing for it. It was up to God the Father to decide what the Son was entitled to because of His service. In resurrection, and through the indwelling Spirit, the Son's reward is the nations.²³ A restored apostolic governmental order is not the necessary means of winning the nations. They will be won to Christ the same way as Christ received them in promise: by individual believers embracing and expressing death and resurrection life for others. This has always been, and will always be, the spirit and essence of God's governmental order.

The Old Covenant: Cinderella's Slipper

The Old Testament Scriptures frequently serve as the theological base for a good deal of teaching concerning leadership, government,

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and authority in the church.²⁴ Many view Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, and Elisha (and others) as leadership and governmental models for the believer and the church. There is a *significant* and *fatal* flaw in this line of thinking, and the flaw produces tragic results in the church. When reading the Old Testament, the interpretive challenge is to know what to apply and what not from these stories. In terms of the inner life of a leader, there are valuable and applicable issues to learn from these stories. However, as models for systems of government and relationship between leader and those led, they are inadequate and unsuitable for the New Covenant Age. Like Cinderella's slipper and the stepsister's feet, they simply do not fit. The first-century recipients of the letter to the Hebrews did not grasp the significance of the change from the Old to the New Covenant order. It is also lost on many today. Arguing for the continuation of Old Covenant structure, Carlton Kenney says, speaking of New Testament "silence" regarding the legitimacy of a single authoritative leader in New Testament churches:

On the other hand, if co-equality was not the way of things in the Old Testament economy, we should construe the "silence" to mean that nothing changed and *the principle is so obvious that the New Testament need not be explicit*. Indeed, if co-equality was not the way of Israel's economy, it is incumbent upon those who espouse this concept to bring forth plausible reasons for the change in the New Testament.²⁵

I will accept that challenge, uh, I mean invitation. First, I would reverse the argument and say the New Testament is silent because the *change* was so *self-evidentiary* that it didn't need to be stated! The reality of Spirit-filled, kingdom-life believers were living did not need an apostolic instruction manual about who was the boss! Anyway, an argument from silence is next to meaningless, as it can be argued either way. Besides, the New Testament is not silent as Brother Kenney claims but rather quite explicit on the Old-New Covenant transition.

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The Scriptures profoundly teach that when the New Covenant came into effect it was *entirely* and *qualitatively new*.²⁶ It is the *new* covenant. It was not “*according to*” the Old Covenant (Hebrews 8:9). This means “a *complete* and *full negation*, absolutely, intensely, objectively, deriving nothing from, downloading nothing from, or in opposition to.”²⁷ A lack of understanding of the change in order that took place as a result of the Calvary act characterizes the church at large and the emerging authority structures in the apostolic movement.²⁸ It is a serious weakness in the Bible school training received by most pastors in non-denominational and apostolic churches.

I teach a course concerning the New Covenant for a Bible school. I recently taught the course in a class with four pastors of visiting churches present. In the class I have an activity where I present different propositions dealing with fundamental differences between rabbinical theology and foundational New Covenant doctrine to the class, but I do not tell them my source! (What a sneak!) I then ask the class to privately write down, as a Christian, from a Christian doctrinal perspective, whether they agree or disagree with the premises. *Without exception*, everyone in the class agreed with the premises, including the four pastors, one in particular being rather strong in his agreement. *Everywhere* I go this is the *normal* and *common* response. Uh, Houston . . . *we have a problem*. The level of saturation of Old Covenant methods, thinking, and theology *is epidemic* in the church. The gospel of grace is not well understood, and believers live and operate in a mixture of therapeutic, deistic, moral, conservatism and the Bible and think they are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostolic/prophetic movement is no exception (as evidenced by the above quote). Our ignorance shows in our theology concerning church authority structures.

Quite simply, since the day of Pentecost we are not dealing with the same kind of humanity as in the Old Covenant era. On the Day of Pentecost, for the first time in history, the divine Spirit united and resided in humanity; believing humanity became the temple of the spirit of the resurrected God-Man. John 14:17 was realized on the Day