

Editor's Note

Franklin E. Payne, Jr., M.D.

The treatment of minors continues to be an inflamed issue in medicine. Indeed, any indication just now that the matter is cooling is likely to be bad news, as the momentum is still in the direction of emancipating minors from the governance of their parents. Those who believe minors would then be out from under any governance at all fail to see that this "emancipation" is only a change in governance, from family to the civil state. Can a minor elect to undergo abortion without parental consent? Can a minor seek prescription of birth control without parental knowledge and consent? It is interesting that consent for major (or even minor) surgery is not so often the center of controversy - a clue to the underlying desire for license to do as one pleases without any constraints whatsoever.

All human authority is derivative from God. He has chosen a plurality of repositories for the authority He dispenses to human beings. These are:

* self-governance (1 Thess. 4:11,12; Nov. 16:17;19:16; Deut. 5:21; 1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5).

* family governance (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:7-9; Eph. 6:1-4, 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-21; 1 Tim. 2:13; 3:4-5; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1-7).

* church governance (2 Thess. 4:11-12; Prov 16:17; 19:16; 1 Tim. 2:11-15; 3:1-13; 5; Titus 1:5-9; 3:9; Ex. 20:12).

* workplace governance (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1,2; Titus 2:9, [0; 1 Peter 2:18,19).

* civil governance (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 17:14-20; Luke 20:25; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

Analogous to the complementary spiritual gifts in the body of Christ, these deposits of authority from God are intended to work together. The tools available to each locus of government, and the extent of authority of

each are different. The power of the death penalty belongs to the civil governor. Parents may not execute their children (Deut. 21:18-21). or punishment belongs spiritual authority and discipline (2 Cor. 10:3-6). on sion reigns when the various repositories raid each other's domain, usurping what is not theirs to have. The tortures, executions, and property seizures of the Inquisition in Europe are a blot against the Name of Christ, seizing civil authority. Through nepotism, family government has illegitimately usurped civil authority.

In our time however, it appears to be the civil state that is the chief usurper. Family governance, among other loci, is under heavy assault by the civil state. Voices abound which would allow minors to engage in sexual intercourse, even homosexual liaisons, freely, provided of course that they practice birth control or submit to abortion. Children already are tapped to become spies for the civil authorities within the sanctity of the home on the excuse that because some homes contain evil all homes are thus legitimate targets for surveillance. So also have physicians, teachers, and even baby sitters been statutorily enlisted into the Gestapo watching the family. Laws have made forcible intercourse between a husband and a wife a criminal matter. That the marital union is subject to ungodly and unrighteous imposition of the will of the husband upon the wife is certainly true, yet the governance of such matters is for individuals, families, and the Church to sort out (1 Cor. 7:2 - 9). The potential criminalization of marital intercourse has to be one of the most fundamentally destructive civil blows against the family in the lengthy list of recent decades.

Christians need to be careful that we are not enlisted into the wrong army on these matters. Pagans typically cast the social problems they wish to see solved in narrow terms and take a pragmatic approach. That horribly abused women and children exist in our nation is not to be denied. That something needs to be done is also true. That the civil authority is usually the

appropriate recourse is not necessarily true. The retort that the other authorities of family, church, and workplace "don't work" is pragmatically answerable in the observation that the civil authority is even more inept. As example, under the relentless growth of statist approaches, bastardy in the U.S. is 15 times what it was when I was born. Educational levels, which, by the way are clearly positively related to the health of a population, have steadily sunk as the state's hand has become heavier. The retort is answerable principally in that God has not left us without an outline of how things should be divided in parceling out authority and responsibility.

Issues abound on the civil state --family front which involve medicine. Should a physician perform a sterilization procedure on a married person without the knowledge and consent of the partner? Do confidentiality barriers run like a Berlin wall through the halves of a marriage? Is the state justified in requiring mumps vaccine in children over the parents' objection? May a school district require parents to have their children examined by a physician prior to an attendance mandated by law? What saith the Lord?