

## QUESTIONING AUTHORITY

Provided by COPE Ministries and authored by Minister Angela Smith

Many who seek assistance, direction, or guidance forget their own authority when doing so. It's as if perhaps those seeking help have been conditioned to be passive subjects to the influences of others or through their own ignorance end up trusting the wrong people and believing false claims of authority. Priest John Ball of 14th Century England is a major inspiration for COPE Ministries. His position predates Martin Luther's protests and he protested church hierarchies claiming only God was above us and all human beings are socially equal. And, the beauty part is the law in the US sees everyone that way too as a matter of law.

So, what that means for you is that if you are a non-adjudicated adult who has reached age of majority and have no legal guardians other than yourself, you are the authority in your life and only God is above you while you also are answerable at law in the justice system. So, if you relinquish your freedom passively, impliedly, or expressly to serve anyone's interests but your own and/or God's (can be both or just God's, God is the Abstract Archetype of the Absolute Truth and ALL Virtues (i.e. kindness, diligence, generosity, love, humility, honesty (including intellectual honesty), etc) combined in a perfect and perpetual hero) without breaking any laws and understanding you have the right to challenge unconstitutional laws in court and seek to get laws made, repealed, or amended that currently exist, then you may be suffering undue influence and being oppressed by someone taking advantage of your passive subjugation. But, if not adjudicated, you should be able to reclaim it. And, COPE Ministries wants to help you do that.

So, you have three authorities if you are a non-adjudicated adult, God, yourself and the law. But, as far as consequences, the law is reflective of God's reported policies. If you are virtuous, honest, and just you should be able to avoid penalty at law. If you are vicious, deceptive, and unjust then you will be penalized at law. So, you are free as long as you exercise free will with respect to the law, you won't go to "hell" aka prison. But, if you break the law in a manner that causes significant harm to others and are found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt you go to "hell" aka prison. As above, so below.

And, if you are adjudicated, see the last paragraph if confused. Also, recall the first paragraph and understand that taking Priest John Ball's position, we are all equal and when mutual respect isn't clear by one's actions where one party's actions are illegal/criminal and cause harm that the victim also has rights and the right to justice. Justice is one of the many names of God. And, everyone is equal. So, if you cause harm then you have to pay for that. No "magic word" freebies because Justice deserves service too and that requires you not be a hypocrite. If you say "But, people hurt me and didn't have to pay and now I want to hurt others and I should get away with it too" you are overlooking something in most cases. Did the people who hurt you break the law? Most likely yes. Did you report it to the proper authorities in a timely fashion with sufficient evidence? Most likely no. See, if you did then you would've gotten justice. But, if you did not, you forfeited justice and now just use that as an excuse or rationalization for harming others and expecting not to be turned in because you gave the perpetrator a pass and then took it out on someone else. That's paying forward vice and not responding appropriately. So, stop rationalizing like that if you do that.

And, if you are a minor, your legal guardians have legal responsibility for you and there are limits on what they can do to you. So, the issue is that your options are limited and you can try for emancipation if living at home is unbearable and you qualify. But, once emancipated you have the rights and responsibilities of an adult which currently your legal guardians have because of your minority status. The other options are to report your legal guardians if you are being abused and perhaps end up in foster care which will likely be segregated congregate care due to the lack of available foster family homes. And, segregated congregate care is often used for adjudicated youth convicted of serious crimes with prison-like living conditions. So, if too young to get emancipated, accept that your parents rules may suck but you only have to put up with them until you are 18 or old enough to get emancipated. And, if your parents break the law, you can turn them in, however you may want to make sure extended family or someone you know is ready to take you in as a foster child or else you will go to a private-prison setting in most cases where you won't get a proper education, won't see any friends, and likely won't have internet access. So, respect for house rules, emancipation, or some private-prison if entered into the system voluntarily or as a result of adjudication. But, any violations of the law in any setting should be reported to the proper authorities. It's easier to report outside of segregated congregate care, particularly private ones. So, it's best to learn to cope. A sense of humor helps.

The good news is whether you are a minor or an adult, often showing mutual respect and exercising virtue will get you through any situation without being placed in a "hell" (prison) beyond the reach of the devil you know. But, you may have to put up with the devil you know if they are your legal guardian and want to avoid the devils you've yet to meet before you are recognized as the sole legal guardian for yourself at law as a matter of emancipation or reaching age of majority. And, if you think the laws don't apply to you, you need to do more studying and familiarize yourself with the law. Even President Ulysses S. Grant was arrested while president in DC for speeding. Many senators and members of congress have gone to jail for corruption and more. Corrections Officers have been tried and convicted too for crimes committed on the job, same for police officers and even FBI agents. No one is above the law. So, if you've ever been with your parent when they've gotten a ticket for speeding or heard them sigh when opening a notice letting them know a traffic cam caught them, then you know the law holds them accountable too. So, face reality and accept rules exist and we all get penalized depending on jurisdictional authority. But, if a city violates your civil rights you can tell the Department of Justice and they'll investigate it. So, if you parents criminally harm you, you can notify law enforcement and press charges. But, if you think your parents aren't as bad as what you've read about the alternatives, then, hang in there until you can file for emancipation or reach the age of majority. Exercising the correct virtue for the situation helps, in this case, the ones to focus on are diligence and patience. Figure out what you need to get emancipated and work towards that then file for emancipation when you are ready and meet the age requirement. Otherwise, be diligent and find extended family who will take you in and get that worked out. Or, report it and take a chance on foster care placement. But, that's the limits on your authority given you are a minor and your parents are legally responsible for you and have limited rights associated with that responsibility in regards to you. But, if you take full legal responsibility for yourself and the law recognizes that as a result of your being emancipated or reaching age of majority, then parents no longer have authority over you and you are solely accountable at law for your actions with no in-house penalties for violations.

So, is freedom scary? How about autonomy or full free will authority over your own life? I don't think freedom is scary. But, for those who fail to exercise mutual respect in the spirit of Priest John Ball of 14th Century England, they are hypocrites for asking for or demanding more than they are willing to give in return in regards to respect. And, Jesus strongly dislikes or hates hypocrites. So, hypocrites are typically vicious and/or deceptive while expecting everyone else to be virtuous and honest. And, the law finds both vice and dishonesty related to vice criminal and often tortious too. So, as above so below. Intellectual honesty matters and the first thing to do to protect yourself is to question anyone claiming authority where such is not recognized by law on any issue and think for yourself.

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