

AUTHORITY

Godly government in today's world

John Fergusson

The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: 'When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings the grass from the earth.'

(2 Samuel 23:3-4)

JF Ministries

AUTHORITY

Copyright © John Fergusson 2010

The right of John B. Fergusson to be identified
as author of this work is hereby asserted.

All rights reserved.

Except for Appendix 2, this work may be copied and distributed in any form
free of charge provided that the text is not altered and the original
authorship is acknowledged.

However, no part of this publication may be reproduced or
transmitted in any form or by any means,
for the purposes of sale, profit or gain,
without permission in writing from the publisher.

Appendix 2 may not be reproduced in any form without written permission
from its author, Robert Fergusson of Hillsong Church, Sydney, Australia

Unless otherwise stated, Biblical quotations are from
The New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International
Bible Society.

KJV refers to King James Version, crown copyright.

MSG refers to The Message, © 2002 Eugene H. Peterson, all rights reserved.

NLT refers to New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004 by Tyndale
Charitable Trust, all rights reserved.

GW refers to God's Word to the Nations Bible Society, © 1995, all rights
reserved.

TEV refers to Today's English Version 2nd Edition, © 1992 by American Bible
Society, used by permission.

Emphases in Scripture references are those of the author.

ISBN 978-0-473-17774-4

Published by
JF Ministries, Auckland, New Zealand.
www.jfm.org.nz

Designed by JF Ministries

Printed in China (E). Arranged by KB Print Ltd, Auckland, New Zealand

Endorsements

‘My dear friend John Fergusson has done it again, this time a first class and thorough study on authority. He throws light on many dim areas and strengthens our position in Christ. John and I have stood and worked many years shoulder to shoulder and I can say that his whole life is behind his message. It is a must-read for all those who want more from God.’

Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke
Florida, USA

‘Love the book. So well written and very complete – a must for all Christians.’

Paul de Jong
Senior Pastor, LIFE, Auckland

‘This is a serious book which will take time and concentration to plumb its depths. But it will be well worth the effort.

‘It is one of the most comprehensive books ever written on the important subject of authority. Yet at the same it gets us to the heart of these great truths in simple, non-technical language, well illustrated with compelling, real-life stories.

‘The teaching of the respective roles of men and women in society and in marriage is a masterpiece that I wish every pastor and leader clearly understood so as to impart it to their people.

‘It carefully explains the call we each have upon us to live on a daily basis under the rule of God, just as Jesus did. Then, as his

ambassadors, we can speak his word as he directs with great authority.

‘If every Christian, or even a significant minority, were to put this teaching into practice, the kingdom of God would be visibly and powerfully manifest, resulting in revival and the transformation of our cities.

‘Individually, the devil would no longer be walking all over so many, but instead, we would be walking all over him in the joy and victory of the risen life of King Jesus.

‘May this book bless you as it has blessed me.’

Alan Vincent
Founder, Outpouring Ministries

‘A magnificent achievement.’

Robert Fergusson
Hillsong, Australia

‘Have you ever felt you were on an adventure, wondering what would come next? That is how I felt as I read this book. The more I read the deeper it led me into the in-depth study.

‘It is like the sun shining on a precious, carefully polished diamond, reflecting the beauty of its colours according to the angle of the sun’s rays.

‘It is a fountain of information and revelation that will refresh your spirit like drinking from a mountain spring.

‘Knowing John as I have for many years I am not surprised about the detail of this book, a man of integrity, with a deep passion and love for the Word of God that he not only teaches but lives as a lifestyle.’

Suzette Hattingh
Founder and Evangelist of Voice in the City

‘Thank you for this gift to the church.’

Warren Hokke
Cleansing Stream, New Zealand

Others have said:

‘Extremely helpful and very necessary insights and teaching.’

‘Thank you for taking the time and trouble to document truth with clarity, wisdom, maturity and boldness.’

‘Excellent research from Scripture.’

Thanks

Many have contributed to this book. First of all I am of course deeply indebted to the Lord for his grace, wisdom and revelation, and for giving me the time and resources to fulfil a dream. Secondly I want to thank my wife, Bron, for her endless encouragement and support, and for proof-reading the whole text twice, line by line.

I also want to honour those who have kindly given commendations, and especially Paul de Jong for the foreword. While you may read their comments, you don't see the hours of checking that they have also undertaken. I owe special thanks to my brother Robert for his invaluable wisdom, and David Jesze for considerable help with chapter 19, where I was very much out of my comfort zone. I also want to honour publicly those who have asked to remain anonymous but whose support has made this publication possible. They know who they are, and so does the Lord.

Any work is the product of many years of gleaning from the teaching and lives of those around us and those who have gone before. We are part of a procession of saints and draw and benefit hugely from their faith and revelation, from the authors of Scripture to the latest CD. It is a privilege to be able to share my own contribution, and I pray that this book will similarly be a help for others.

Dedication

I dedicate this book to Reinhard Bonnke, who has been a spiritual father to me, as he has to many thousands of others. I know of no other man who has influenced the world for good more than he has done in his astonishing life. Ministries spin from his like stars from a galaxy.

Contents

	Foreword	11
	Preface	13
	Introduction	17
	Part 1. The nature of authority	21
<i>Chapter 1</i>	Human authority	21
<i>Chapter 2</i>	What is authority	35
<i>Chapter 3</i>	The authority of God	47
<i>Chapter 4</i>	The authority of Scripture	71
<i>Chapter 5</i>	False authority	87
	Part 2. The restoration of authority	105
<i>Chapter 6</i>	Mankind's original authority	105
<i>Chapter 7</i>	The fall and decline of man's authority	123
<i>Chapter 8</i>	The restoration of man's authority	135
<i>Chapter 9</i>	The authority of the believer	151
<i>Chapter 10</i>	The kingdom of God	169
<i>Chapter 11</i>	The keys of the kingdom – Part 1. Forgiveness and overcoming satan	181
<i>Chapter 12</i>	The keys of the kingdom – Part 2. Unlocking the kingdom	193
<i>Chapter 13</i>	Authority not delegated	219

Part 3. The principles of godly authority	229
<i>Chapter 14</i> How godly authority works – Part 1. Its parameters	229
<i>Chapter 15</i> How godly authority works – Part 2. Its protection	251
Part 4. The application of godly authority	267
<i>Chapter 16</i> Authority in the family	269
<i>Chapter 17</i> Authority in society	291
<i>Chapter 18</i> Authority in the church	303
<i>Chapter 19</i> Authority in business	325
<i>Chapter 20</i> Authority in the New Eden	341
<i>Appendix 1</i> The authorities of Jesus Christ	349
<i>Appendix 2</i> The church of the Lord Jesus Christ by Robert Fergusson	351
Bibliography and references	353
About the author	357

Foreword

I have come to discover that revelation in any form becomes a foundation and indeed a catalyst to birthing revelation in others.

A great Christian book is one that contains fresh insight and understanding which captures the reader while moving them to greater insight.

I have found John's book on authority to be both a compelling read and hugely helpful in my understanding on this most important subject. His ability to bring depth of Scripture coupled with everyday experiences and historic insights leads you as the reader to want to learn more.

I have never read anything on the subject of authority that gives such a full range of insight to every aspect of what authority is and how it works.

I believe if the truth contained in this book became a part of our manual to life and leadership we would see freedom and God's purpose materialize at an increasing rate.

I recommend John's book to every person, especially every leader committed to releasing God's plan in and through their lives. It is insightful, well written and destined to bring releasing revelation.

I have known John Fergusson for many years and he lives out what he believes while committing to the growth of those around him. Well done, John.

Paul de Jong
Senior Pastor, LIFE
Auckland

Preface

One blistering August, I was holidaying with friends in Scotland when we were invited to dine with friends of theirs. After the meal they offered, ‘Do you like jigsaw puzzles? We have one on the go.’

My family had been brought up on jigsaws. Over many winters the dining room table was cleared after Christmas dinner and the latest puzzle laid out, sometimes taking until Easter to complete! So I thought I knew how to do them.

But when we moved into the puzzle room of that Scottish lodge, I was in for a surprise. Here was no 3,000-piece, boxed puzzle with interlocking pieces and a picture on the cover to crib from! Instead I was confronted by a myriad of tiny, hand-sawn, irregular slivers of plywood. The picture was apparently a pointillist painting, the pieces cut around the colour points. I managed to fit just one piece over the course of the entire evening. But my meagre efforts drew a round of applause from the assembled company, who often had ‘blank’ nights.

I am neither expert nor theologian – just an ordinary Christian, so this book in no way pretends to be an authority on authority! Quite the reverse, for in God the more you study the more you realise how little you know! *The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know.*¹ It is, rather, a single piece of the jigsaw of the mystery of God. But we cannot in consequence fail to insert our piece simply because tomorrow or next year we will know more or understand better. Nor can we, in false humility, shy from what the Lord has given us because others have worked harder or longer through ‘the heat of the day.’ All contributions, however small, are valued in the economy of the kingdom of God. It is not about being

¹ 1 Corinthians 8:2

better or smarter, but about sharing what we have, for without it the picture may be incomplete.

‘Revelation releases authority,’² declared my own pastor recently. As much as God has given me revelation it carries the authority of the Spirit. I have tried, as I am sure everyone else has who has attempted to unravel Scripture, to present a coherent theology, one that is logically sound and Biblically consistent. I confess I have been unable to. Do not be surprised if conclusions reached in one chapter do not fit tidily with those in others. But if it stimulates further study, and if it draws praise for our Father, and if it causes us to reflect and change the way we use authority, and above all if it leads some to Christ, then it will have served its purpose.

A brief note on the presentation of this book – firstly, I have reverted to the old-fashioned style of including the notes at the bottom of each page. For some decades, in the cause of ‘flow’ I suppose, these have been banished to the back of many books, and usually listed under chapter numbers. This means that to discover the reward promised by the little number ^x, you must first determine which chapter you are in (not always obvious!) then trawl through the appendices to find your hidden treasure. Instead, a quick glance to the bottom of the page is all that is needed.

Secondly, I am conscious that many prefer to speak of humans as ‘mankind’ rather than ‘man’, in recognition of the equal importance of men and women under God. I fully agree with the sentiment, but in this book I follow the style of the NIV and often refer to ‘mankind’ as ‘man’. I don’t wish to alienate female readers, who in fact will soon see that I prefer not to take sides on contentious issues, but simply lay things out as I see them.

Underlining of Scripture is my own emphasis, while spelling satan’s names with small letters is deliberate. For the sake of space, Bible references are often abbreviated, that is, the whole verse is not always included, but I have tried to remain faithful to the intent.

² **Paul de Jong**, *Jesus is Lord*, sermon preached at LIFE, Auckland, 13 June, 2010

I have occasionally used the Hebrew word *selah*, which many believe means to pause, and is often found in Psalms. I like the idea. There are moments when we need to stop and reflect. Usually this is natural, but at times it is useful to be prompted to do so. Please stop and reflect when you meet *selah*!

Introduction

*Nothing is greater than authority in the universe: nothing can surpass it. For this reason, if we want to serve God, we must know God's authority.*¹

God invented authority. So it is good, wise, loving, honest and necessary. But these are not words that we normally associate with it!

Sadly it has been corrupted, almost beyond recognition at times, until today it is the subject of more bad press than almost any other. For when did you last read a newspaper article in praise of authority? Unless, of course, you live in a country with an authoritarian government...

And if you are a churchgoer, how many sermons have you heard on authority? And when it is preached in our churches it will probably be from an authoritarian leadership in fear of losing control, or as a band-aid to a situation of abuse. Through the prism of pain we then over-react and authority itself becomes besmirched as not of God. So if our papers and pulpits are silent, is it any wonder that we don't really know what it's all about?

But if it seems to be a 'heavy' subject better left to theologians and sociologists, I believe we have been misled by incorrect understanding of what it is. True authority is actually both exciting and liberating!

Not only is it seriously misunderstood, we dare not relegate the subject to the limited agenda of politicians or psychologists, because authority is actually a fundamental part of all our relationships. If

¹ **Watchman Nee**, *Authority and Submission*, (1998 edition), Living Stream Ministry, p.9

you and I were to meet, it would probably be on equal terms – we would speak as colleagues or fellow Christian believers. If you were a student in my class, the relationship is inevitably changed by a subliminal understanding of authority. If you were my son, or my pastor, or boss, or the Prime Minister of my country, that relationship changes again. And if you are a combination of any of those...?

Society copes with these unwritten understandings reasonably well until something goes wrong. But sadly that seems to be increasingly the case, and it is authority itself, not ourselves, that generally gets the blame. One of the main purposes of this book is to re-establish a godly concept of authority, because relationships suffer at every level when we abuse it.

It is precisely the failure to understand what true authority is and how it should work that has led to so many breakdowns in society. Families fall apart, violence escalates on our streets, businesses crash, churches split, governments are corrupted and wars are fought. All because we mishandle authority.

That we, the church, have also failed in this area is not just obvious, it is tragic for two reasons. Whether from misunderstanding or human weakness, worldly principles of authority have infiltrated the church for centuries. This has sterilised much of the church today rendering her infertile and fruitless and the subject herself of ridicule because she so evidently lacks the authority she is supposed to have. Those in the church know this, even if only subconsciously, but don’t seem to see the way out.

Secondly, one of the responsibilities of the church is to set an example to the world of how godly authority should function. If you are already reacting with a ‘humph’, my point is made! How can the world know how to handle this critical issue if God’s own ambassadors on earth are not doing it well either? Not only has secular government suffered, but so have all relationships, without the godly precedent they needed.

So the second main purpose of this book is to encourage us to raise the bar. God has restored to the church unprecedented authority far

beyond her capacity to either grasp or exercise. I am not saying that the church should govern the world, at least not yet! Quite the opposite, as will be seen.

There is therefore a desperate need today to return to God's word and discover his original plan! I believe, indeed I know, that what we discover there, if put into practice, will revolutionise both church and society.

We will soon find that authority is not just a God idea, but a fundamental life principle. It is therefore one of the bedrock themes of Scripture upon which much other truth is based. It is simply too important to dismiss as relevant only to those in leadership or the college classroom. Every single person on earth is affected by it, and every single believer has far more authority than he or she realizes.

Part 1 – The nature of authority

Human authority

*But man, proud man,
Dressed in a little brief authority ... like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As makes the angels weep.¹*

*I against my brothers, I and my brothers against my cousins, I and my
brothers and my cousins against the world.²*

The seeds of rebellion

I hated sport. At the age of eight I was small, slow and un-athletic. But thrice weekly we were forced to don boots like clamps and spludge across icy football fields until our shins smarted, our ears stung from cold, and our feet burned with chilblains. Along with the physical discomfort there was the humiliation of being made to do something I was bad at, apparently to no one's advantage. The masters shrilled whistles, and my team mates screamed abuse at my ineptitude.

Until one day I had had enough. Getting dressed for the fray once more, I decided that it would be much more pleasant to simply stay in the changing room. And so I concocted an unlikely tale that I had been tied up by my team, a football shirt around my neck that almost strangled me. I bunked the game.

'Where was Fergusson?' the referee was asking as he came in after the match. 'Where were you?' he glared. I explained my carefully

¹ **William Shakespeare**, *Measure for Measure*, Act 2, Scene 2

² Bedouin saying

woven tale. He looked surprised, but said nothing. I was free! I had got away with it!

But an hour later, I was summoned to the Headmaster’s study. It was a privileged room with panelled walls, leather armchairs and books, and masculine smells of ink, polish and papers. The Headmaster was a kindly but stern man whom we saw frequently but rarely face-to-face. I trembled.

‘So what happened, Squirrel?’ He had a nickname for everyone. ‘Why did you miss the games?’ Peering above his glasses, his face was expressionless. Having once escaped, I retold my cock-and-bull story, with rather bolder elaborations. He too looked surprised, and when he finally dismissed me, I remember the heart-thumping surge of relief.

But half an hour later, he called me back. He was unsmiling still, but his eyes were softened with compassion. ‘Now, John, tell me the real story.’ I burst into tears.

He disciplined me wisely, but it was my first memory of what we would call a brush with authority. But what do we mean?

For most of us, authority is control, a requirement to do something against our wishes. Behind it is the implied threat of the consequences of failure to obey. As Victorian satirist Thomas Haliburton wryly observed, ‘Wherever there is authority, there is a natural inclination to disobedience.’³ We then face a choice of either submitting or confronting authority, depending on the strength of our rebellious streak! It is a force that appears to work against us – an enemy. For many of us, it is bad enough to have to do something that we dislike that someone else wants us to do. Far worse is the threat to our own personal freedom of choice. It is MY life!

We don’t even like to identify with it. We speak of ‘the authorities’ or ‘the powers that be’ as *them*: *They* need to fix the road, *they* didn’t give me my pay rise, *they* changed the order of service! By our language we distance ourselves from the responsibility inherent in

³ **Thomas C. Haliburton**, (1796-1865), from *Sam Slick the Clockmaker* series

their decisions. ‘Distrust of authority should be the first civic duty,’ declares Norman Douglas in *An Almanac*.⁴ *We* are not *them*.

But this distancing is the social norm: from an early age children are taught by both parents and peers that authority is bad. ‘You can’t trust this government!’ ‘The police are pigs!’ ‘The council is useless.’ ‘This president / prime minister / chairman / bishop / headmaster / marriage is a disaster.’ These negative remarks are all-pervasive in our culture – in fact, let us be honest, we are all guilty of them! But by small degrees young children in our hearing are learning disrespect of those in authority. (Please understand, I am not defending the behaviour that earns it!)

The seeds of subversion sown into fertile hearts will, if left unchecked, sprout into rebellion and lawlessness. A few years down the track, we discover that stubborn bravado wins the respect and admiration of our peers. Gangs form, and push society’s boundaries to prove that we can. I know; I was a rebel myself. If I was told ‘Go left!’ I would go right, not because it was better, but just to show who was in charge of my life! Fanned by this rebel spirit, pranks become vandalism becomes crime becomes anarchy becomes terrorism. Society haemorrhages.

Nor do *they* (i.e. we!) foster an environment to stem the tide. Our media not only thrive on this seditious soup of negative attitudes towards those in authority, they consider it their bounden duty, ‘holding them to account.’ Cynicism and ridicule is their daily dish, served up in the name of accountability and justice, the very things that ironically will become the victims of their (sorry, *our*) barbs!

The honest newspaper admits that it is done ‘because it sells.’ But why should it? Why do we seem to have such an insatiable appetite for news of wars, rebellion and violence? Why do we find it so important to know what is going on *now*, glued to the breaking news of terror and insurrection? Why is it that so many media stories take the side of the individual’s ‘rights’ against the authorities of the day,

⁴ **Norman Douglas**, *An Almanac*, (1945), Chatto & Windus with Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd

the government or the police? Is it because, deep down, it feeds the root of rebellion inside each one of us, thereby justifying our instinctive attitudes against authority? Though we shake our heads and suck our teeth, we rarely do much to stop it, and will be back in front of the ‘news’ again tonight.

But is it this simple? Surely we cannot blame a few careless, and quite possibly justified, remarks about our authorities for Al Qaida, for 9-11, for school mass murders? Of course nothing in life is that simple, or that fixable. In fact our usual ‘fixes’ only make matters worse.

Authority diseased

Youthful rebellion soon yields its bitter fruit. We spend our formative years tossing our ‘don’t-tell-me-what-to-do’ heads at ‘the system,’ in whatever guise it comes. But no sooner are we invested with some authority of our own than we adopt the ‘I’ll-tell-you-what-to-do’ mindset that we had once so loathed! Rebellion breeds authoritarianism. Authoritarianism foments rebellion, and the cycle continues. *They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.*⁵

Authoritarianism is a disease of authority, a carcinoma of leadership. Pinned to the workshop door of a motor parts supply department was the following notice:

Rule 1: The Boss is always right.

Rule 2: When the Boss is wrong, refer to rule 1.

That we are apparently helpless in handling it is evident both throughout history and across the breadth of society, from the battered wife too afraid to seek help, to whole nations systematically destroyed by tyrannical dictators. The world sits on its hands, confused, indifferent, or worse, ‘passing by on the other side.’

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda in which almost a million people were slaughtered, mostly by machetes, could have been prevented. That the Rwandan government had been making preparations for four

⁵ Hosea 8:7a

years to massacre its own citizens was well-known to both the United Nations and Western powers. They (i.e. we) chose not to intervene.

This is not a new phenomenon. *Show me a righteous ruler, Solomon wrote, and I will show you a happy people. Show me a wicked ruler and I will show you a miserable people.*⁶ King Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end.⁷ How could Judah have put up with him for fifty-five, bloody years?

More recently, it has been estimated that the Soviet Communist regime was responsible for the deaths of over sixty million people during its seventy year rule, of whom fifty-five million were its own citizens.⁸ We look despairingly at the social and economic disintegration of nations ruled by authoritarian dictators and wring our hands in helplessness. In an article on how Europe had been paralysed by President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, the Economist writes, ‘A global vacancy exists for somebody with good plans for handling tyrants.’⁹

Authority discarded

Disillusioned, many attempt to withdraw altogether. American educationalist George Bancroft believed that, ‘The best government rests... on the free development of public opinion and not on authority.’ Fine words, but it is the path to anarchy. Today’s equivalent of course is a website devoted to anarchy where you can find the slogan, ‘we are only as strong as the power we give ourselves!’¹⁰

⁶ Proverbs 29:2 (TEV)

⁷ 2 Kings 21:16

⁸ **R.J. Rummel**, *Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1917*, (1990), Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, USA

⁹ Economist, *Europe’s despot dilemma*, 13 October 2007, Vol. 385 Issue 8550, p.58

¹⁰ www.anarchy.net

My generation witnessed the rise of flower power, hippies, and the ‘free love’ experiments of communal living and shared partners, but social withdrawal is as old as the curse of Cain, who was ‘a restless wanderer on the earth.’¹¹

Down the ages gypsies, Bedouin, and similar itinerant cultures have marginalised themselves from traditional authority, preferring instead their own tribal laws and customs. More organised forms of the same process can be seen in secret societies, communes and exclusive religious communities. The irony is that they become more authoritarian than the authority they spurned, because they have not identified the root of the problem, which is within us all. Nietzsche described it as ‘Wille zur Macht,’ or ‘will to power,’¹² believing it to be stronger even than the will to survive.

Lenin himself said, ‘Authority poisons everybody who takes authority on himself,’¹³ a prophecy that proved terrifyingly true in the following decades, and a sound answer to the aspirations of the anarchists! George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* showed that ‘Utopian society is made impossible by the corrupting nature of the very power necessary to create it.’¹⁴

We agree that it’s true, but why should it? Why is it that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely? For as long as there has been society, there has been need of authority. Someone has got to run things! Journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner, Walter Lippmann, noted rather cynically that, ‘Most men, after a little freedom, have preferred authority with the consoling assurances and the economy of effort it brings.’ Behind this comment lurks an oxymoron that will become clear later on!

¹¹ Genesis 4:12

¹² **Friedrich Nietzsche**, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, (1883)

¹³ **Vladimir Ilyich Lenin**, *Tamara Deutsche, Not By Politics Alone*, (1973), chapter 2, To Kropotkin in May 1919

¹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_Farm

About the author

John & Bron Fergusson worked for many years as International Crusade Directors for Reinhard Bonnke's team, Christ for all Nations, before launching their own ministry, JF Ministries.

Formerly farming in the United Kingdom, they were called into full-time ministry in 1990, and have served around the world, organizing gospel campaigns, preaching and teaching in Schools of Healing, conferences and Bible Colleges. They now live in New Zealand, and attend LIFE, Auckland.

John has written a number of books and booklets, including *Holy Fire*, *So What Happened?*, *So What Next?* and a *School of Healing Manual*.

For more information on these, their ministry or to contact them, visit www.jfm.org.nz.