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## Human and divine rights

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It was considered landmark legislation. In April 1848, New York State passed the Married Women's Property Act, granting women some property ownership rights if divorced. The same year saw the first convention on women's rights at Seneca Falls on July 19. There women's suffrage and other volatile issues were discussed.

Yet the empowerment of women is in more than conventions and legislation. Human rights, such as free speech, voting privileges, inheritance, are like the bud that blossoms into the full flower of divine rights. The bud is a necessary stage before the blossom. Yet the bud is not the final or full unfoldment. Human rights are the hint of fuller freedom that lies in one's divine rights.

The bestowals of our heavenly Father include health, intelligence, peace. These rights are ours regardless of gender, nationality, or cultural origin. All who turn to God and reject societal limitations are equally able to claim their heavenly heritage. As the Bible says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord . . . and [I] will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17, 18).

Promoting human rights can open the way to seeing more of our divine rights. Then we begin to realize God as the source of true rights. Divine Love is the ultimate source of power and authority. Through God's impulsion, one's rights are revealed and protected.

One of my favorite stories on human rights involves Abigail and David (see I Sam. , Chap. 25). David knew the tenuous state of human rights in his society. He had no recourse from King Saul's jealous rages and attempts to kill him except to flee into the wilderness. Pursued by Saul and his army,

David found his faith in justice sorely tested. Yet he trusted God to restore his rights.

While in the wilderness, David protected a wealthy landowner's sheep and herdsmen. According to custom, this entitled David to request provision during harvesttime. The landowner, Nabal, refused to acknowledge David's rights or need. David snapped. Abandoning his reliance on righteousness, he determined to annihilate Nabal's household.

In the meantime, a servant informed Nabal's wife, Abigail, of his contemptuous dismissal of David's request. As a woman, Abigail had no authority, little status - and few, if any, rights. Yet she ordered the servants to load food on donkeys and set out to intercept David.

When they met in the wilderness, it was an army of 400 angry men versus one woman. Abigail began by proclaiming David's divine right as the beloved of God: "A man [Saul] is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord [David] shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God . . . ." What a beautiful way to summarize his relation to God and God's care for him.

She continued by acknowledging his human right to the throne: "And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, [he] shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel . . . ." Abigail realized David was divinely authorized and his rights were bestowed and protected by God. She then gently reminded him of his higher responsibility to defend the rights even of his enemies: "That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself . . . ."

What wisdom! Abigail stated David's divine right, acknowledged his human rights, and then reminded him of the obligation to afford others the same rights of which he had been deprived. She saved their household and inspired David without the benefit of legislation, conferences, or societal empowerment. Her authority was God-bestowed. Abigail's confidence in the supremacy of divine right - and its ultimate manifestation in human justice - healed David's anger. David then went forward with renewed confidence in the power of righteousness, and was ultimately established as king of Israel.

Whether we are male or female, our rights are established by God. Let us look to divine Love for the protection and manifestation of individual rights. "What cannot love and righteousness achieve for the race." (Mary Baker Eddy, "The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany," Pg. 292)