

Government
Mr. Brian Orchard
12/4/13

Before I actually get into the study and ask God's blessing on the study. I do need to-- for this region-- to read an announcement that has been sent out by Mr. David Hulme. Mr. Peter Nathan was taken off the speaking schedule in Pasadena, last Sabbath, and called into a meeting with Mr. Hulme, on Monday morning. And this announcement is, in regard to, the result of that meeting. And I'm sure this word has gotten around, but let me just make it official.

Dear Brethren, in the Pasadena and Orange County congregations, (was the initial announcement went that has been sent to us to-- to pass on to all our regions.)

It is with much regret, I write to let you know that Mr. Peter Nathan has resigned from the employment of the Church. We had a conversation on Monday, December 2nd, at which Mr. John Anderson was present. It appears that Mr. Nathan has developed differing views on government in the Church. I pointed out to him that his views are incompatible with the Church's teaching and it became clear that he could not continue in his role as church pastor. While I had hoped that he would change his views, he chose rather to resign. Reluctantly, I therefore accepted his resignation.

Peter and I have shared many encouraging times in our working lives and I wish him well for the future.

Mr. Jerry de Gier will now assume pastor ship of the Pasadena and Orange County congregations.

As we go forward, it will be helpful to remember two passages from the writings of the apostle Paul:

And he quotes-- 1 Corinthians 1, verse 10-- about *no divisions among you being perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment*. And he also quotes-- Ephesians 4:1-3-- *I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the bond... of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.

With love and respect,

David Hulme.

So that announcement is going out to all the congregations and since we are all together here, tonight, I thought I would share that with you.

So let us begin the study with prayer.

Almighty God. Our loving Father. The Great God that sits, on the throne of heaven, overlooking everything that exists. And here we, as mere specks of dust, so to speak, on the face of this earth with the privilege of bowing our head before you and knowing we come into your presence that you hear us --that you desire a relationship with us and you are very-- very aware and concerned of

everything that is happening, on the face of this earth, and in particular, of course, with the body of Christ.

Father, we need you. We need your spirit. We need your power. We need your might to work with our minds. We need the spirit of truth -- we need the spirit of clear understanding-- wisdom and knowledge. So as we spend time together as your people, studying into your word, we ask that you guide our thinking, our thoughts, and our understanding and make this a profitable time for us and that we'll be grounded and stronger as the result of it. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Somewhere, back around 1970, I was a student at Ambassador College and at that time- I think it was around 1970 – it might have been '71. It doesn't matter. Mr. Armstrong was very focused on the subject of the spirit in man. It is not something that the church understood clearly up to that point. For him, as he looked into the subject, it was a work in progress. And I remember as he came to Ambassador College in Bricket Wood to visit and he was a fairly regular visitor there. He had set up a friendship, with King Leopold, and was coming and going-- reasonably often. He would visit our classroom, on occasions, or at least student assemblies and forums and Sabbath services or bible studies. And he would talk, about the subject, of the spirit in man. Every time he came, he would talk about it. And it would sort of be a recap of where he had gotten up to last time. And there was always some, little new, development in his thinking. And he was thinking out loud. He was sharing his developing thoughts with the church.

Tonight, I am going to do the same thing. And I have to tell you that this is a work in progress. I have been at this subject, for a few years now, but I am really focusing my attention on it a little more earnestly than I have-- given the nature of things in the church-- at the moment. I feel very compelled to develop a greater understanding of a subject that I believe lies-- at the heart and core of the breakup-- of God's church since the death of Mr. Armstrong.

So this subject, in my mind, I am viewing in that larger context. The way God called and developed, this later day doctrinal foundation, through this man, Mr. Armstrong, acted as a catalyst or a central rallying point for those God called. Mr. Armstrong was the glue, so to speak, that held things together. And his calling, and the time of his calling-- what was going on in the church, at that time, and how God used him-- was rather unique, at least, in the modern era of the church.

With his departure, people with other ideas surfaced. Now, if you were around in the 1970's, you would probably say, resurfaced. And these ideas began to erode the spiritual foundation of the church. I feel that there was one factor that allowed them a great latitude, to achieve this. And that factor was church government. That is what I want to talk about tonight.

What is church government?

Well, government within the church-- simply put. Well, since the church is the Church of God and it's a spiritual organism; then it has to be God's government; expressed within the spiritual body- the church. Church government is an extension of government in the divine realm into the human realm. Now that sounds simple—establish how God works as it emanates from the Father, in the heavenly

realm, and duplicate it where God is working, among humans, which at this time is His church. Sounds easy.

Let's back up, some, to the time before humans were created because I feel it's important. And this is going to be a fairly brief brush, at this point. Mainly, for some of our younger ones, amongst us to realize that when we talk about church government- we are not talking about something modern something made by man—something we've invented because we are the church. The development of government, within the church, started before man was created.

Let's go back and just ask ourselves a question. Was there government before man? And we'll look at John chapter 1. Let's just take the first four verses. This is a very-- very enlightening period... section of scriptures here from the Apostle John. We learn a lot about God and his relationship and how the relationship with man developed.

John 1 verse 1—we are told, essentially, there were two beings- that the verse essentially tells us there were two beings.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

So, clearly, we have two beings. One, we can identify, at this point, as God. The other, we can identify, as the Word.

All things were made through Him. This is the Word; and without Him nothing was made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

So the word, or Logos or Spokesmen, is simply a name. It's a descriptive name in terms of his relationship with God. There was always a deference, on his part, towards the one we will now begin to call the Father. But at this time-- as I just read here, these few verses-- there is no description of a father/ son relationship. However their relationship becomes clear as the Word becomes *the light of men* as it said in verse four.

If we drop down to verse 14-- it tells us that the *Word*, this one that was God and with God, *become flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace.* The word was made God's son, through the fact that He was begotten by the Father, to be born of the Virgin Mary.

So, here, we are looking at a family structure; a father and a son. As the Word became flesh, He was God and He was human. So, now, we have God's extension into the human realm through the one we know as the Word or the Son. As God interacts with humans via Christ- the government structure of Father and Son is injected into the human realm. We could call it a kingdom. We will here, in a little while, but just say, at this moment, with a family structure. A governmental structure identified by a relationship of father and son.

Now, for what reason, did the two God beings decide to inject the father/ son government structure into the physical realm? Why? What's the purpose of doing that? Well, simply, as we understand;

God is a family. And that family nature of God, in the spiritual realm, now is brought into the physical realm.

At some point, He created an angelic host--that point being long before man. We have no idea when the angelic hosts were created. But they were there-- when the earth was created because we're told in Job chapter 38 that; *the angels shouted for joy when the earth was created.*

So beyond the God and the Word; there was an angelic host. This is a family-- if you like. It is not the family that we are going to consider in the future, in our relationship with God, but it's still a family relationship. We do not know when the earth was created. But we are given a clear indication that a section-- of the angelic host-- were given authority or responsibility over the earth. Could we say, as Mr. Armstrong clearly did, they were given the responsibility of administering the government of God over the earth?

Now this-- we are talking here about before man. In Jude 6 and let's just do this rather quickly... Jude 6-- there's a statement made here about the angels not keeping their first estate or their proper domain or their own domain.

The angels, verse 6, who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode is reserved in everlasting chains unto darkness, for the judgment of the great day.

The proper domain-- and I am using the new King James here—first estate, in the King James Version, is the word arche and it means beginning corner. Indicating power, principality, rule. So they were given: power, principality and rule—which is described as their proper domain or their first estate. The word abode means habitation. So where ever their habitation was they were given power, principality and rule-- which would have been an extension of God's rule.

A section of the angels did not maintain God's government, over the area, they were assigned to. Now their place of restraint is, clearly, the earth. And so, the assumption is fairly strong, that their abode, or their proper domain, was this earth originally.

In Revelation 12, verse 9; we are told... in Revelation 12, verse 9; we are told *the great dragon was cast out*—and, of course, they challenged God and wanting to take over God's throne-- *the serpent of old called the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world: was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

Their place of restraint, according to Peter, in second Peter 2:4, is clearly the earth. They were cast out-- they were restrained, here, to this earth. If we add in, and we're not going to do it right now for the sake of time, Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28; it would lead us to understand that the government of God-- the family of God—invested, in this section of created beings, failed. The government of God failed.

Now God creates and God rules over what He has created. And He preserves, what He creates, by His government. He creates and then He places His government over what He has created and it preserves that creation. Where as Satan destroys; God preserves, protects and nourishes. But Satan,

in his attitude through this rebellion and rejection of his responsibilities of God's government, has taken on an attitude of destroying.

We need to understand when we talk about government-- and I understand, very clearly, how messed up, in human thinking, we are about government because of all the rotten examples of government that we are witness to, here in this world, in which we live-- that God's government is a government of love.

I had a young person talking to me, late this afternoon, said "Why do we have to talk about government all the time? Let's talk about love." Well, I had to point out that we are talking about love, if we're talking about government because it is the love of God. It's an expression of the love of God, as He preserves, what He has created. So government is love-- when we look at it from God's perspective. I realize that's not man's perspective.

So, when we come to the creation of man, we come to an earth that is in *tohu and bohu* (without form and void) because of this rebellion. Now, David captures the moment, in just one verse. In Psalms 104—verse 30. He captures the moment this way; Psalms 104 and verse 30. *You sent forth your spirit. They are created.* Remember Christ, the Word, was the one who created all things. *And you renew the face of the earth.* The government of God is now established, on the earth, by the extension of God's family into the realm of the human family. Satan has thwarted, sabotaged, the development of God's government through the human family at every turn. And it began, in the Garden of Eden, and has continued, all the way, down the line since. But what we need to note is that God's government has been with man, from the beginning, whether man has understood that or not.

Now, why would I say that? Well, I need to inject here... And we are not going to develop this in the fullness that it really does need... I want to inject the concept and idea of Mel-chis'e-dec. In Hebrews 7 and verse 1... Hebrews chapter 7 and in verse 1... Hebrews 7 and verse one-- *For this Mel-chis'e-dec, King of Salem, priest of the most high God, who meet Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being translated King of righteousness, then also King of Salem, meaning, King of peace-- and then it identifies the nature of Mel-chis'e-dec —without father, without mother—without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like the Son of God; remains a priest continually.*

The Word interacted with man. This is before He became the Son. He is interacting with man as a priest-- representing the God family to the human family. This priestly role continued-- when He was made human-- when He became Jesus Christ. And this is a connecting point between the God family and the human family.

Just drop back a couple of chapters—Hebrews 4 and verse 14-- where it says this about Christ: *Seeing then that we have a great high priest.* Well, Mel-chis'e-dec was a priest. *We have a great high priest, to pass through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, to let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who can not sympathize with our weaknesses; but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly, to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

This priestly role is an important one-- in the interaction of the God family with the human family. This priestly role is an aspect of God's government and you could... and we are not going to get there, tonight, because of time; but I'll make some comments, at the end, perhaps-- seeing where we are up to-- about the need to understand the role of a priest, in terms of relating to Israel, as a physical nation and God—what that role was. It was, in fact, a part of God's government. But I don't... I have mentioned that to show God's interaction through the Mel-chis' e-dec priesthood with man. But my attention tonight is the church. The subject is church government. And I want to make the point that it is not a peripheral doctrine. It is a very; very central-- and important-- and major doctrine for us in the church to understand.

Colossians 1 and in verse 12... Colossians 1-- and we'll just pick it up in-- verse 12. And with the subject, I have in mind, think about these verses. There are a number of different things, we can enlarge out of these verses, of course, but-- in verse 12-- we address the Father and-- by the time, we get to verse 18; we are talking about Christ and everything in between.

Giving thanks to the father, who has qualified us to, be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

So, the father is in the picture, as far as those who are partakers of the inheritance of the saints—this is the church. Now these people he has delivered. He has delivered us-- drawn us out from the power of darkness. That's, this world, as Satan has been able to destroy God's government at every turn. Right there with Adam and Eve-- coming up to Nimrod-- you know just come on down the line. Satan has turned this world into darkness. Destroying God's government as it existed amongst the humans. So we've been drawn out from that power of darkness-- Satan's world. And conveyed -- where? *He has conveyed us or transferred us into the Kingdom, of the Son, of his love.*

So there is a concept of kingdom. And we know we are talking about a father, son; family relationship. But from God's point of view-- and particular Paul, as he is explaining this to the church-- there is a kingdom aspect to our relationship, with God, in the church.

... in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Here's the God family-- being developed in the human family-- so that humans can become born into God's family.

For by him, all things were created—this is Christ. All things were created, we read that-- John 1; that are in heaven, and that are on the earth—visible, invisible—whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers—all things were created through him, and for him. And he is before all things, and in him, all things consist.

So, Paul is wrapping the church members up in this package of the Father, the Son and the kingdom relationship for those called into this relationship. Then, he makes this statement, relative to us in the church—*He, Christ, is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first born, from the dead, that in all things; he may have the preeminence.*

Now the church is not the literal kingdom. Because-- in 1. Corinthians 15-- it is very clear, that flesh and blood, can not inherit the kingdom. But the church is representative of God's kingdom. *He has*

delivered us, from the power of darkness and conveyed us, into the kingdom of the son of his love. And so it's representative... it's restricted because we are still flesh and blood. So it's not the fullest of the kingdom.

Now, why this relationship? Well, the church, as the bride of Christ, marries Christ upon His return. Right-- that's clear. We understand that. After the marriage, we are then in the Kingdom of God. Right-- we are born into God's family as fully spirit beings-- when Christ returns and marries the church. So what happens next? After Christ marries the church and we become in the Kingdom of God because we are spirit beings—what happens next?

Daniel 7, verse 27... Daniel 7 and in verse 27. We're talking about a kingdom and dominion – ruler ship, authority to rule. *The kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people—the saints of the most High.*

Kingdom, dominion, power is going to be given to those who are spirit beings, now, in God's family under Jesus Christ-- of course, after Christ returns. *His kingdom is an every lasting kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey him.* And so, the saints of the most High, having received the kingdom and dominion-- assist Christ in ruling over all dominions-- that shall be brought in under the ruler ship of Jesus Christ.

We, the church, have been drawn out from the power of darkness; conveyed into the kingdom-- in other words-- the church. If the church is not the literal kingdom-- which it isn't-- it must be the training ground for people; to qualify to rule in God's Kingdom. That's very – very important because I know a lot of young people have had, and probably still have, a great problem with the concept of government, and the amount of emphasis, we place on government. I don't know how to avoid it and I don't want to even try to avoid it. I think it is something we have to embrace-- but from a Godly perspective-- not from man's perspective.

Now, as we've come down the line, here-- in the last years-- some have said; the government of the church, now, is not important. That's for the future. How we govern ourselves, now, is some how inconsequential. I beg to differ- very, very strongly-- I might add.

God is revealed to us as a Father and Son-- the God family-- a ruling government; a divine family relationship. Man was created after the God kind. And, in order to perpetuate this kind, God made them-- male and female-- with the purpose of marriage. God is the author of the institution of marriage-- for the man and the woman-- which he created.

The human family relationship becomes the model for God's government on earth. This is critical.

Now, I'm not saying anything that most of us hadn't thought and understand and know, but I'm building on this. But this is very important. The human family relationship is the model. It's not separate from. It's not just the matter of having children or whatever. There's great teaching mechanisms built into the marriage; family relationship. And it's very clear that the apostle Paul understood this.

I. Corinthians 11 verse 1... I. Corinthians 11 and in verse 1. In fact, it is a section and I'm not going to read it word for word. But it is a section, here, from verse 1 to verse 16 which is a discussion on authority. It begins with a very important concept from Paul. And this plays into government, he says *imitate me just as I also imitate Christ*. So he is tying Christ, who is ahead of the church, into this discussion that he is about to embark on in terms of authority. And the discussion involves a man and a woman, and their relative positions of authority, demonstrated, by of all things, hair length. And, sometimes, our young people don't seem to understand why hair length might be something that we would want to emphasize or focus on but it's got to do with authority within the marriage relationship.

We'll drop down to verse 7. *For man, indeed, ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. The man was created in the image of God- the woman was taken from the man, for man is not from woman, but the woman from man, nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man and for this reason the woman ought have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels.* And it talks about long hair and the covering that's discussed here is long hair. In verse 15, *her hair is given to her for a covering.*

So this is a section, on authority, within the marriage relationship. Now, if you can hold your place there, I'm going to come back to it. But I want to insert Exodus 18, verse 19 through 25, as a description. A very clear description of God's government structure because we're going to read about it from the Apostle Paul. But before we do, let's go back to Exodus 18 and pick it up in verse 19. And it's interesting that Moses, here, is being addressed. And Moses is God's servant. He is the one over Israel, to lead Israel, at this time, but the father-in-law is able to come to Moses and discuss a certain situation with him. Verse 18, *both you and these people that are with you surely wear yourselves out for this thing is too much for you. You are not able to perform it by yourself. Now listen to my voice. I'll give you counsel and God will be with you.*

And a little later, he's going to say, it's a command. *What I'm telling you, it's a command from God.* So Jethro goes to his son-in-law and says: *"You shall teach them the statutes and the laws and show them the way that they shall walk and the work they must do.* And there, if I can remember to refer back to it, is the purpose of government. To make a connection between the laws, the statutes, that God himself has given and the people to whom He has given the law to.

But my point here is in verse 21; *Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, qualified-- spiritually qualified people-- such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness-- so they are spiritually sound-- and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens.*

Alright, now, I can't get around that structure. It is very clear. It's a hierarchal structure of government that Jethro is suggesting here to... but it's more than a suggestion. He is going to tell him here, in verse 23, it's a command. Verse 22, *let them judge the people at all times: that it will be, that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge: so it will be easier for you, and they will bare the burden with you. If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all his people will also go to their place in peace. So Moses heeded the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. And so he*

chose able men out of all Israel. He made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of ten. And they judged the people at all times.

God's government structure is, undeniably, hierarchal. Alright, now come back to I. Corinthians 11 and we'll reinforce that through this model: the family-- husband and wife role model-- that we are talking about. Verse 3 of I. Corinthians, chapter 11... *I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ. Christ is the head of the church*, we have already read out of Colossians. *So the head of every man is Christ, but the head of every woman is the man*—that discussion follows as we have just looked at. *And the head of Christ is God.*

This is hierarchal. Again, there is no question of it. It starts with the Father. It comes to the Son. It comes to the man. It comes to the woman and by association any children that are a part of this relationship. This is a marriage relationship. This doesn't mean that any man has authority over any woman... some men might like to think of it that way but it's not. This is a marriage relationship.

The marriage relationship connects the human realm, to the heavenly realm, from the woman; the man in the physical realm, to Christ and the Father in the spiritual realm. There is a continuation. The marriage relationship is, also, the model for church government.

Now take this model--verse 3-- and let's superimpose it, on the very well know section of scripture, in Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5 and we come to verse 22... and we are talking about a marriage relationship but, now, it's going to be expanded. Its not done away with. It's now expanded into the realm of the church. *Wives, submit to your own husbands.* And we've already read that because the woman was taken from the man with the additional concept of, *as to the Lord*. So there is something in the relationship, of a woman's submission to a husband, that's got to do with the relationship between man and God.

For the husband is ahead of the wife, as also Christ is ahead of the church: and He is savior of the body. Therefore just as the church is subject to Christ, so let their wives be to their own husbands in everything. This is the hierarchal structure of government which is being brought into the spiritual realm. *Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.* This is a development of I. Cor. 11, verse 3, that we've read.

Now the hierarchal structure is given spiritual life. Spirit life. God's government, within His church, must be driven by the spiritual intent of His law. By that, I simply mean, you know that there is a letter of the law. When God's spirit is added-- it builds it-- into a concept, we refer to it, as spiritual intent. The physical becomes spiritual. Now the physical relationship of a husband and wife becomes spiritual; it's given great life.

If we superimpose man's concept of government into the formula, God's spirit driven model will fail to deliver. If we superimpose man's concept of government-- and man has many concepts of government that do not fit the model that God has given to us-- then this model fails to deliver. And there are many marriages that reflect that.

If the government structure (and I'm thinking about within the church now); it doesn't connect to Christ and to the Father (and the government structure only remains in the physical realm) there's going to be a problem.

This section, that we are looking at, begins in verse 21. I didn't read it and I got into the model but let's go back up and add in verse 21; *Submitting to one another in the fear of God*. The discussion of government in God's church begins here. Submit to one another means to subordinate. To submit self. A yielding submissive spirit. Not domineering. Not advancing oneself over another and that flows into not only the church but also into the marriage relationship. It is the attitude that each person, in the hierarchal, structure is to have.

It doesn't matter at what place you have been placed in the body by God. You are to have this attitude of being submitting or being able to submit one to another. Christ submitted himself to death on behalf of the wife. That was a great act of submission. And a husband is to submit and in a right way; I don't mean that he abdicates his authority that is not the point. It's an attitude with which he exercises his authority.

So how does marriage play into the purpose of God's government in the church? Let's drop down to verse 30. Here is the relationship between church members and Christ. The Body. We are part of His body for we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. We become... Christ lives His life within us. We become one with Jesus Christ. And marriage teaches us that because in verse 31-- *for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two one flesh*.

Right-- now that is the sexual union within a marriage relationship and he says *this is a mystery because what I am really speaking about is Christ and the church*. So marriage plays into the purpose of government... in as much... when church government is properly exercised this concept of one flesh is produced but it is produced in a spiritual way.

If we look into Ephesians 4-- verse 1. Go back a chapter; Ephesians 4, verse 1, and we're talking about a relationship between church members and God. *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called*. Being called out of darkness, translated into a kingdom like relationship, with this attitude of submitting one to another *with all lowliness and gentleness, and longsuffering, bearing with one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*.

Now, what is the description of the next three verses, if it's not the description of a husband and a wife becoming one flesh. *There is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all*.

In a family structure, hierarchy exists to nurture the family. The husband is to love his wife, the one under his authority, as he loves himself. His authority should provide security, a sense of belonging, a sense of self-worth and a connection to the one over the man—Jesus Christ. And if you are connected to Christ; you are connected to the Father. *The Father and I are one*. And it should produce this oneness that Paul is talking about, here, in Chapter 4.

His authority, if exercised properly, produces one spirit. Not one flesh in the physical marriage, but one spirit-- bonding all members of the body together with the head --Jesus Christ or all members of his family together with Jesus Christ.

The word authority is an interesting one. And we are talking about authority, when we talk about the government of God, and the hierarchal structure of that government. The word authority is taken from the Latin and here is what it means—and just really focus your mind on this—to create, to enlarge, to make able to grow.

Authority means to create, to enlarge, to build, to strengthen, to make able to grow. Authority generates life. It is a positive force for creating. Authority, in a family, creates children in a relationship with God. Isn't that the role of child rearing-- that we have authority over our children, to bring them into a relationship with God? Isn't the authority that a man has- authority to bring his wife into a relationship with Jesus Christ and the Father?

I feel, very strongly, and notice I said I-- that it is the purpose of authority that has been lacking in our understanding and practice of government in God's church. The purpose of authority. We've understood the structure very well. It's undeniable. It's hierarchal. You can not get around that. It's clear. It's precise.

In the past, I have referred to it as the nature of government that we need to focus on. The government of God exists in the church to facilitate, support and strengthen the relationship of members to the Father through Christ thus allowing God to create sons for His kingdom. To make able to grow. Government in God's church must not place anything between God and His people. *You shall have no other God's before me.* Nothing is to come between God and his people. The position of authority is to facilitate a relationship between his people and God (whether that his people be wife, children or whether it be members of the body of Jesus Christ).

Come back to Colossians 1 and in verse 18. Colossians 1, we've read up to verse 18 but let me include it here, in the next section. *He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning.* He's the beginning—the first born from the dead; that in all things He may have the preeminence. And we are to connect everybody, within the body of Christ, to that head. But then Paul references the Father and the Son—that relationship we started with. *It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself by Him.*

Now-- the him(s) -- here are the Father and the Son. That through Jesus Christ... *He is to reconcile all things to the Father, by Christ, whether things on earth, or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.* And through his sacrifice and paying the penalty for sin, men and women are able to come into a relationship with Christ; and through Christ a relationship with the Father. The Father is not absent from this picture. Everything, Christ did, draws people to the Father.

It tells us that-- *we were once alienated enemies in our mind by wicked works.* Alright-- that we were separated-- we were not in a relationship with the Father but now; *we have been reconciled by Jesus Christ. In the body of His flesh through death to present you (that's us) holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight. If indeed you continue in the faith—grounded and steadfast—and are*

not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven of which I, Paul, became a minister.

This is a connection; between the body, to the head, to the Father-- a relationship-- a family relationship. Authority, at the human level, must facilitate this relationship. That's what it is there for.

We understand Satan is hostile to God's authority. Now, we read Revelation 12, a little earlier. I want to go back to Revelation 12, and just pick up verse 4. Revelation 12 and in verse 4... this gives you, Satan's attitude and his hostility towards God and what God is doing on this earth. It says in verse 4 *his tail drew a third of the stars of heaven* and it is from that, that we make the assumption that one third of the created angelic beings followed Satan in his rebellion; *And threw them to the earth; and the dragon stood before the woman, who's ready to give birth to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

Satan could not destroy Christ either as a child or baby, you know, in the time of Herod, or as an adult through temptations. He could not get at Christ but the woman is fair game. If you drop down to-- verse 13. Now *when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman, who gave birth to the male child—to the male child.* He went after the woman. My eye might fall on another verse where it says that but he has gone after the woman who produced the male child-- Jesus Christ.

One way, to cause catastrophic damage to the church, is to sever the branch of the vine from its roots. Christ said that such a separation will cause the branch to wither. John 15 and verse 6. And He is about to die. He's about to be crucified. So what He is focused on is incredibly important and he says here that He is the vine. *He is the true vine. My father is the vine dresser.* There is the father--son relationship again but there is-- the branches that run from the roots, (you know) of this...this vine—this true vine.

And in verse 4, *abide in me and I in you.* The connection to... to Christ is important... *the branch can not bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine; neither can you unless you abide... abide with me.* So we have to be attached to Christ; that's the source of nourishment. Without it (it says in verse 6) *if anyone does not abide in me, he's cast out as a branch, and is withered.* They just gather them to throw them in the fire. They are burned. They ... if you are connected; you are connected to a source of growth. A creative growth, if I may say that, but if we are not connected then we wither and we die.

So how might Satan deceive God's people, into a situation, which can bring about this kind of a separation? Well, Christ warned us about human government—in terms of lording it over—a type, or a style, of government based on the carnal human mind—power and so on and so forth.

The line between authority, which I just presented to you, in a very positive form—to create, to enlarge, to make able to grow. The line between authority and authoritarianism is very fine. But they are too different animals.

In the past, and again I... this is a work in progress—I am thinking my way through this. In the past, it is my estimation that we have often transposed authoritarianism over authority and we've called it God's government. It's not difficult to do when the structure of government is hierarchal and you bring that hierarchal structure into the realm of man.

Government, in the church, has not been an easy subject to get a handle on. And for evidence, I simply put forward the example of Mr. Herbert Armstrong, and his wrestling, with the issue of church government, for many, many years. And some people want to go back and pick up an article, on church government, that he would write say in the 30's or the 40's and... and say... well, look at this. Well, it was a work in progress for him-- continuing to try and develop an understanding of how this government works.

I'm convinced that in the early formative years, of the current era of the church, that the U.S. military model was embraced. The U.S. military model, of hierarchal structured government, was embraced. We were coming off two major wars—World War 2, the Korean war-- for example. We saw the biblical model-- hierarchal. You couldn't deny it. So, when we looked at that—there is government... God's government is hierarchal... I understand that—I've been in the military. And ask anybody, who has been in the military, if there's not some truth to this. The military model matched the hierarchal structure that we saw in the bible.

I really got to thinking about this a few years ago, and I can't remember the exact circumstances, but I was down in Texas at the time. And somebody had either a small film clip or black and white photographs—I think it was a film clip. And it was a very, old grainy black and white film clip of one of the first SEP camps. And if my mind serves me correctly, they were held in Big Sandy. This was before Orr, Minnesota. And I looked at that and I realized-- this was military boot camp. The first... the way we approached the original SEP programs and if you doubt that is the case, ask somebody, who was there. We adopted a more authoritarian approach to church government. Now according to the Encyclopedia Britannica... authoritarianism is the principle of blind submission to authority. Concentration of power in the hands of a leader, or a small elite, that is not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people.

Now, in all that I have discussed so far, about the structure of government. Can you see we have a problem here-- that the whole concentration of power, in the hands of one person or just a few people-- that are not responsible to the body? I just spent some time, trying to show you, that we are to connect the body to Christ and to the Father. Authoritarianism prevents that-- at least, as we take it, from a human point of view. In other words, as it relates to God's government; a human who cuts off the people under him to the one over him. The line of hierarchal authority, from God or to God, is broken and, if it's broken, the branch will suffer. It will wither because the branch requires attachment to the root which is attached to the Father. Those two things are inseparable.

I'll give you an example. And this was told to me this afternoon... of a man. This is going back in this era that I am talking about here. Who was counseling for baptism—and he's listening to me here, tonight, and he will verify this-- if you wish. He was counseling for baptism and he wanted to be baptized. The minister, he was counseling him, refused him baptism because of one thing. The minister said to him, something along the lines of, "Would you do anything I told you to do?" And the answer was, "No—I would only follow you as you follow Christ." And so he was denied

baptism because he wouldn't submit to the authority of the ministry-- in all things. Anything that the minister told him. And I'm sure there are many, many stories that others can add to that kind of a concept. That is how we saw government. Our responsibility is to keep open the hierarchal structure which begins with the Father and flows to every member of the body.

I have authority as a church pastor; that authority is bestowed on me for one thing. It's not bestowed on me so I can lord it over a group of people. My responsibility is to connect the congregations (given to my responsibility) to Christ and to the Father. Not to me -- to Christ and the Father. And if I fail to do that there will be a suffering—something will go wrong.

As I look around, at all the various, so called churches of God, I see something is wrong. I do not see Ephesians 4 being the fruit of all the various structures that are out there... all the various types of government structures that have evolved since Mr. Herbert Armstrong. And I made this statement, at the beginning, and you may not of understood what I meant. When I said the factor that caused... that gave great latitude to people to bring about the destruction of God's church— was church government. That's because all authority was invested in one man. And he had—it was a corporate soul type of approach. All of authority was invested in him and there was nothing anybody could do to stop, or change, what was coming down the line from his administration. That's why I made that statement.

Let's go into Ephesians 3. Ephesians, chapter 3. We'll pick it up in verse 8. Ephesians 3 and verse 8... *to me whom less than the least of all the saints--* would that be an attitude of submission one to another? And what we need to throw into the mix here—perhaps to consider is the way that the apostles exercised church government in the New Testament church. And a model that I am very impressed with is the Acts 15 conference that was held in Jerusalem. There were some very serious issues, in the church, at that time. Whether salvation was offered to the Gentiles or not—that was a fairly big one—fairly serious issue... none doubt there were other things.

But the apostles came together, in Jerusalem, for a conference. The contention, between them, was sharp. These were men with pretty strong personalities. And I'm not sure that some of them, like Paul and Peter, ever became buds—you know real, real close friends by virtue of their personality. But when they came together—they expressed their strong opinions, their strong ideas, but they submitted one to another such as at the end of the day—the man, in charge of the church, in Jerusalem, where they were meeting, James, could get up, and say we've heard all sides of this argument. I now am telling you what the end result is. They all were of one accord. They, all, said Amen and there was unity... there was oneness. And the church experienced great growth. You know the creation aspect of authority was very present—to enlarge, to make able to grow—the church grew because of the attitude of these men.

So when Paul says— *whom less than the least of all the saints*. That reminded me of that particular episode. *This grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ.*

We tie it back to where we began, with God and the Word, and the one becoming Jesus Christ, reaching into the human realm. *To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might make*

known to the church. To the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus, our Lord. In whom, we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him. Therefore, I ask that you do not lose heart at any tribulation for you which is your glory.

Now think about some of those things that are mentioned in there... *that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the church.* How-- through the government... actions of the government within the church, through the apostle Paul, at this stage, and his connecting of the church to Christ. *Imitate me as I imitate Christ* is a clear connector. He didn't say; follow me period. He said follow me as I follow Christ and he did his level best to draw the church into a relationship with Christ. The whole book of Colossians is essentially about Christ being the head of the church. And that's what Paul was trying to do-- draw the church-- to cut off wrong headed ideas that were coming into the church. People who wanted to insert authoritarianism in the church. People who wanted to take away the loving, creative authority of the Apostles and replace it with human authority and cut the church off from its source—the Father. And that's what a lot of that was about.

Verse 14... *for this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ—I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ.* Its church government is all about; our relationship with the Father. *From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory; to be strengthened with might through His spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love (and God's government is a government of love). Rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints- what is the width, the length, the depth, and the height.*

Is this authority? Is this to create? Is this to enlarge? Is this to be able... to make able to grow? I believe so. *To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all things... all that we ask and think accordingly to the power that works in us. To him, be glory, in the church by Christ Jesus, to all generations, forever and ever.*

Think about verse 14 to verse 21, in the mold, that we have created here, this evening, with church government. You have the Father. You have Jesus Christ. And you have people, who are being strengthened through his spirit in the inner man, through that relationship. And the Apostle Paul is drawing people into that relationship. There are many, many instances, where Paul did not exert his authority, that he had, that he could of exerted over the church. He didn't do that so that he could lead people into a relationship with God the Father.

When the connection functions from the Father through the Son... the head of the church to each member of the body... the inner man is connected to the Father and he is strengthen with might through his spirit in the inner man. The vine analogy of Jesus Christ comes into play and the whole church will function as per chapter 4, verses 4 through 6. When we do that-- when we have that structure in place—*there is one body and one spirit just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism-- one God and Father of all-- who is above all through all and in you all.*

There is a lot more to this subject, I can see that as I develop this, but I had, tonight, that one focus that I wanted to share with you of the... not the structure. We have the structure. We know it's hierarchal but what I've been calling the nature of God's government- the spiritual nature. And in my experience of forty some years, in the church, I do not believe we have practiced this properly. I do not see it being practiced, in general, amongst the churches of God. I see a withering and it concerns me. There are a lot of God's people scattered, hungry and thirsty, and we need to develop God's government, in such a way, that we can begin to reconnect God's people to God. That's our challenge. And I'm going to try to step up to that challenge. This is going to become the basis of something, I'm going to write. I'm going to write it to Mr. Hulme and I want to write it, in such a way, that it can go to any member, in any organization, and hopefully, maybe, strike a chord with them. And we can begin, collectively, to correct this wrong, and begin to nourish and strengthen the church, the way God intended it to be. That's a big, big task and I'd ask you to join me in fasting and prayer that I might be able to get my head around this-- in such a way-- that it will be beneficial for the healing of God's church.

I'm not going to go into it, tonight, but I would ask you to, maybe, do your own personal study and advance this subject, a little further, in terms of what I've skipped over—the role of the priest in ancient Israel. And all I did there, tonight, was to make sure you can see a connection between the priestly government of the ancient nation of Israel (where the priestly government still exists, today) through Jesus Christ. Because I think if we understand the role of the priest in ancient Israel, it will help us appreciate God's government a whole lot better... because the priest stood between God and his people.

And you might want to begin with Deuteronomy 10, verse 8, and Deuteronomy 17, verses 9-10. What was the role of the priest as God intended it as He governed His people. What was the nature of their function? Does it have any bearing on the role of Mel-chis'e-dec priesthood, rolling over into Christ's priesthood, which we read out of Hebrews 4? What can we learn from the role of a priest, in the functioning of God's government in the church, today? And if any of you are so inclined to write some thoughts up, and send them to me, I would be very appreciative to have you share them with me.

This is a subject I feel very, very deeply about and I'm totally moved by it. And I hope I've been able to share some of that with you tonight. Let us, Brethren, on our knees before our God, approach Him with repentance-- for what we have not done in the terms of His... His; promoting His government. I will be the first to admit that and say that but let us study it. Let's embrace it. Let's get the spirit flowing back into the body and get some life. And, let us get on with preparing for the soon coming Kingdom of God.

So with that I shall say good night to you all.