Brian Orchard -12/4/2013

Somewhere about 1970 when I was a student at Ambassador College, at that time, 1970-71 I think, it doesn’t matter, Mr. Armstrong was very focused on the subject of the Spirit in man. It was not something the Church had understood clearly up to that point. For him, as he looked into that subject, it was a work in progress. I remember as he came to Ambassador College in Bricket Wood to visit, and he was a fairly regular visitor there, as he had set up a friendship with King Leopold. He was coming and going reasonably often. He would visit our classrooms on occasion, and assemblies, forums, Sabbath services and Bible Studies, and he would talk about the subject of the Spirit in man. Every time he came, he would talk about it. It would sort of be a recap of where he had been the last time. There was always some little, new development in his thinking. He was thinking out loud and he was sharing his developing thoughts with the Church.

Tonight I am going to do the same thing. This is a work in progress. I have been at this subject for a few years. I am focusing my attention on it earnestly due to the nature of things in the Church at the moment. I feel compelled to develop a greater understanding of this subject and I believe it lies at the heart and core of the breakup of God’s church since the death of Mr. Armstrong. This subject I am viewing in that larger context. The way God called and developed this latter day doctrinal foundation through Mr. Armstrong, acted as a catalyst for a central rallying point for those God called. Mr. Armstrong was the glue that held things together. His calling and the time of his calling, what was going on in the Church at that time, how God used him was rather unique, at least in the modern era of the church. With his departure, people of other ideas re surfaced and these ideas began to erode the spiritual foundation of the Church.

There was one factor that allowed them great latitude to achieve this. That fact was Church government. That is what I want to take up tonight.

What is Church government? Government in the church of God simply put. And it is spiritual organism, and it has to be God’s government expressed within the spiritual body, the church. Church government is the extension of government from the divine realm into the human realm. That sounds simple. Establish how God works as it emanates from the Father in the heavenly realm and duplicate it where God is working with 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. This will be a fairly, brief brush at this point mainly for some of our youngsters among us to realize that when we talk about church government we are not talking about something modern or made by man, something we have invented. The development of government within the church started before man was created.

Let’s go back and ask ourselves the question, “Was there government before man.” Let’s look at John 1:1-4 this is a very, very enlightening section of scripture here from the Apostle John. We learn a lot about God and how the relationship with man developed. John 1:1 Essentially there were two beings in the beginning. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. “ There were clearly two beings; one we can clarify 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 light and the light was the light of men.” So, the Word, Logos or spokesman is simply a name, a descriptive name in terms of his relationship with God. There was always deference to God, whom we will now begin to call the Father; but, at this time there is no description of the Father- Son relationship. However, the relationship becomes clear as the Word becomes the light of men. We drop down to verse 14, and it tells us that the one who was God and the one with God, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of 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. 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. Now we have God’s extension into the human realm through the one known 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 in a little while, but just say at this moment, a family structure, a governmental structure, Identified by the relationship of Father and Son. Now, for what reason did the two God beings decide to inject the Father and Son governmental structure into the physical realm? What is the purpose of doing that? 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 are told in Job 38 “The angels shouted for joy when the earth was created.”

So, beyond God and the word there was an angelic host. This is a family but not the one we will consider in the future in our relationship with God, but it is 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 was given authority or responsibility to administer God’s government over the earth. Could we say, as Mr. Armstrong clearly did, they were given the responsibility over the earth. We are talking here, before man.

In Jude 6 there is a statement made here, about the angels not keeping their first estate or their proper domain, the angels (verse 6) who did not keep their proper domain but left their own abode, he has reserved in everlasting chains in darkness until the judgment of the great day.” The proper domain and I am using New King James here, First estate in the King James Version, it is the word *arche* and it means beginning corner, indicating power, principality and 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. Wherever 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 theirr proper domain was this earth originally. Rev 12:9 the great dragon was cast out (he challenged God and wanted to take over God’s throne) the serpent of old who deceives the world was cast out. He was cast to the earth and the angels were cast out with him. Their place of restraint according to Peter in II Peter 2:4 is clearly the earth, and they were restrained here to this earth. For the sake of time we will not go to Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. It would lead us to understand that the Government of God, the family of God invested in these created beings failed. The government of God failed. God creates and God rules over what He has created. God 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; whereas Satan destroys. God preserved, protects, nourishes but Satan in his attitude, through rebellion and rejection of his responsibilities and rejection of God’s government has taken on an attitude of destroying.

We need to understand when we talk about government, and I understand how messed up we are in human thinking in respect of government, because of the poor examples of human government we are witness to here in this world in which we live. God’s government is a government of love. One young person talking to me late this afternoon said, “Why do we always have to talk about government all the time, let’s talk about love.” I had to point out that we are talking about love if we are talking about government. It is 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, 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. David captures the moment in just one verse, Psalms 104:30. He captures the moment this way, Psalm 104:30 “You send forth your spirit. They are created.” Remember, Christ the Word, is 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. What we need to note is that God’s government has been with man from the beginning whether man has understood that, or not. Why would I say that?

I need to inject here, we will not develop in the fullness that it needs here, we will inject the concept and the idea here of Melchisedec in Hebrews 7:1 “For this Melchisedec, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, who met 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, and after that also King of Salem, which is , King of peace; (and then it identifies the nature of Melchisedec) without father, without mother, without genealogy , having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; remains a priest continually.”

The Word interacted with man 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. This is a connecting point between the God family and the human family. Let’s drop back to Hebrews 4:14 where it says about Jesus Christ, “Seeing then, we have a great High priest (Melchisedec was a priest) who passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, to let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot 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 we will not get there tonight because of time. I’ll make some comments at the end 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.

I have mentioned that to show God’s interactions through the Melchisedec priesthood with man. My attention tonight is the Church. The subject is Church government. I want to make the point that it is not a peripheral doctrine. It is a very central, important and major doctrine for us in the Church to understand.

Colossians 1:12 in verse 12 we address the Father and by the time we get to verse 18, we are talking about Jesus 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, the Church) He has delivered us (drawn us out from)from the power of darkness (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, and on down the line, Satan has turned this world into darkness, destroying God’s government as it existed among the humans. So we have been drawn out from that power of darkness, Satan’s world, and conveyed where? He has transferred us into the Kingdom of the Son of his love.

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 particularly 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 is 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 (we read that in John 1) that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether 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. (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.) And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church, which is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

Now the Church is not the literal Kingdom. In I Corinthians 15 it is very clear that Flesh and blood cannot 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.

It is representative; it is restricted, because we are still flesh and blood. It is not the fullness of the Kingdom.

Now, why this relationship? Well, the Church as the bride of Christ marries Christ upon His return. That’s clear, we understand that. After the marriage, we are then, in the Kingdom of God. 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 7:27 we are talking about a Kingdom and dominion, ruler ship, authority to rule. ‘Then the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the Kingdom ‘s under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.(Kingdom, dominion, power now is given to the people, the saints, in God’s family, under Jesus Christ, of course, after Christ’s return) His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”

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 the 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 even want to try to avoid it. I think it is something we have to embrace from a Godly perspective and not from man’s perspective.

As we have come down the line, some have said the government of the church now is not important. That’s for the future. How we govern ourselves now is somehow inconsequential. I beg to differ very strongly. 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. 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 has created. The human family relationship becomes the model for God’s government on earth. This is critical. I’m not saying anything that most of us haven’t thought and understood and know , but I am building on this. This is very important. The human family relationship is the model. It is not separate from. It is not just a matter of having children. There is a great teaching mechanism built in to the marriage, family relationship. It is very clear that the apostle Paul understood this.

I Corinthians 11: 1-16 this is a section which is a discussion on authority. It begins with a very important concept from Paul. This plays into government, He said, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” He is tying Christ who is the head of the Church, into this discussion that he is about to embark on, in terms of authority. 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. It has got to do with authority within the marriage relationship.

We will drop down to verse 7.” For a man indeed ought not to cover his head since it 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, but the woman was taken from man. For man is not from woman, but the woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman but the woman for the man. And for this reason, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”

And, it talks about long hair; the covering discussed here is long hair. In verse 15, “her hair is given unto her for a covering.” So, this is a section on authority within the marriage relationship. Now, hold your place there, I will come back to it but I want to insert Exodus 18:19-25 as a clear description of God’s government structure. We will read about it from the Apostle Paul, but before we do, let’s go back to Exodus 18.

Moses here is being addressed as 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 this people with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you. You are not able to address it by yourself. Now listen to my voice. I will give you counsel. God will be with you. (A little later he will say it is a command.) What I am telling you is a command from God. Jethro goes to his son-in-law and says, you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. There, if I can remember to refer back to it, is a 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.

But, my point here is in verse 21 “Moreover, you shall select from all the people, able men, and spiritually qualified people such as fear God. Men of truth. Hating covetousness, spiritually sound, and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifty and rulers of ten.”

Now, I can’t get around that structure. It is very clear. It’s hierarchical structure of government that Jethro is suggesting here, more than a suggestion. He will tell him here verse 23 that it is a command. Verse 22 “Let them judge the people at all times, 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 bear the burden with you if you do this thing; and *God so commands you*. Then you will be able to endure and then all this people will go to their place in peace. So Moses heeded the voice of His Father, and did all that he had said. And so he chose able men out of all Israel. He made them heads over all 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 hierarchical. Now, please come back to I Corinthians 11 and we will reinforce this through this model; the family, husband and wife, the role model we are talking about. Verse 3 “I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ (Christ is the head of the Church we have already read in Colossians) so the head of every man is Christ but he head of the woman, is man. (That discussion follows) And, the head of Christ is God.” This is hierarchical! Again, there is no question of it. It starts with the Father, it comes to the Son, it comes to the man, and it comes to the woman, by association, any children that are 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 feel it that way but it is not. This is a marriage relationship. The marriage relationship connects the human realm to the heavenly realm. From the woman and the man in the physical realm to Christ and the Father in the spiritual realm. There is a continuation.

The marriage relationship is also a model for church Government. Now take this model (verse 3) and let’s superimpose it on a very well known scripture in Ephesians 5:22 we are talking about a marriage relationship. Now, it is going to be expanded. It is not done away with; it is now expanded into the realm of the Church. “Wives submit to your own husbands (we have already read that, 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 her husband, that has got to do with the relationship between man and God) For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the Church, and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” This is the hierarchical structure of government that has been 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 ! Corinthians 11:3.

Now, the hierarchical structure is given spiritual life. Spirit life! God’s government within his Church must be driven by the spiritual intent of His law. You know there is a letter of the law, and when God spirit is added, it builds it into a concept that we refer to as “spiritual intent.” The physical becomes spiritual. Now, the physical relationship of a husband and wife becomes spiritual. It is 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, 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 that within the Church now, doesn’t connect to Christ and the Father, and the government structure only remains in the physical realm, there is going to be a problem. This section that we are looking at begins in Eph 5 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. It means to subordinate, to submit self, 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 into the hierarchical structure is to have. It doesn’t matter at what place you are being 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. A Husband is to submit in a right way. *I don’t mean that he* *abrogates his authority*. That is not the point. It is an attitude with which he exercises his authority.

So, how does marriage play into the purpose of God’s government within a 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, the members of His body, His flesh and of His bones. Christ lives His life within us. We become one with Jesus Christ and marriage teaches us that because Eph 5 verse 31, “for this reason, a man shall leave his Father and Mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. (That is the sexual union within the marriage relationship, and he says) This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” So, marriage plays into the purpose of government inasmuch as when Church government is properly exercised. This concept of one flesh is produced but it is produced in a spiritual way.

If we look at Ephesians 4:1, we are 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 to one another “with all lowliness and gentleness, with 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 3 verses if it is not the description of a husband and a wife becoming one flesh? “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, and through all, and in you all.”

In a family structure hierarchy exists to nourish 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 Jesus 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. This authority, if exercised properly produces one spirit; not one flesh as 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 of the government of God and the hierarchical structure of that government. The word, authority, is taken from the Latin. Here is what it means. Really focus your mind in 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 to bring his wife into a relationship with Jesus Christ? And the Father? I feel very strongly, and notice I said I, that is the purpose of authority that has been lacking in our understanding of government in God’s Church*. The purpose of authority*!

We’ve understood the structure very well. It’s undeniable it is hierarchical, you cannot get around that. It is clear, it is 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 to 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 gods 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 His people be wife and children or whether it be members of the body of Christ.

Colossians 1:18 “And he is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. “ And, we are to connect everybody who is in the body of Christ to that head. 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 we were once alienated, enemies in our mind by wicked works. 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 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, and 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 12:4 a little earlier, but I want to go back to Revelation 12:4 It gives you Satan’s attitude and his hostility towards God and what God is doing on this earth. “His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. (That is how we make the assumption that one third of the angels followed Satan, in his rebellion) And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.”

Satan could not destroy Christ, either as a child, or a baby, 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.” *He went after the woman.* 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 such a separation would cause the branch to wither. John 15:6 He is about to die, about to be crucified so what He is focused on is incredibly important. And, He says here that He is the vine, the true vine; the Father is the vine dresser. There is the Father-Son relationship again. There is the branches that run from the roots of this vine, this true vine.

In verse 4 “Abide in Me, and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.” The connection to Christ is important. We have to be attached to Christ. That is the source of nourishment.

Without it, it says in verse 6 “If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered, and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” If you are connected, you are connected to a source of growth—a creative growth if I may say that. If we are not connected, then we wither and we die.

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

The line between authority which I have 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 two different animals. In the past, and again, this is a work in progress, I’m thinking my way through this, In the past, we have often transposed authoritarianism over authority and we called it – *God’s government.*

It is not difficult to do when the structure of government is hierarchical and you bring that hierarchical structure into the minds 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 in the 30’s or 40’s and say well, look at this. It was a work in progress for him continuing to try to understand how this government works.

I’m convinced that in the early, formative years in the current era of God’s Church the US military model of government was used. The US military model hierarchical structure of government was embraced. We were coming off two major wars; World War II and the Korean wars, for example.

We saw the biblical model, hierarchical we couldn’t deny it. So, when we looked at that as government, God’s government is hierarchical. “ I understand that. I’ve been in the military.” And ask anybody who had been in the military if there is not some truth to this. The military model matched the hierarchical 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 it 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. 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 at Big Sandy, this was before Orr, MN.

I looked at that and I realized, this was military boot camp. This was the way they approached the original SEP program. 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 in the hand of a leader or small elite that is not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people.

In all that I have discussed so far about the structure of government, can you see we have a problem here? The whole concentration of power into the hands of one person or just a few people that is not responsible to the body? I’ve been 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 from the One over him. The line to God is broken, and if it is broken, the branch will suffer. It will wither because the branch requires attachment to the root which is attachment to the Father. Those two things are inseparable. I will give you an example and this was told to me this afternoon by a man who was counseling for baptism. He is listening to me tonight and he will verify this if you wish.

He was counseling for baptism. He wanted to be baptized. The minister who was counseling refused the baptism because of one thing. The minister said to him something along the lines of “Would you do anything I told you to do?” The answer was “no. I would only follow you as you follow Christ.” He was denied Baptism because he would not submit to the authority of the minister in *all* things, anything that the minister told him. I’m sure there are many stories that others could add. That is how we saw government.

Our responsibility is to keep open the hierarchical 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 is not bestowed on me so that I can lord it over a group of people. My responsibility is to connect the congregations to Christ and to the Father, not to me, to Christ and the Father. If I fail to do that, there will be suffering. Something will go wrong.

I look around at all of the various, so-called, churches of God. I see something is wrong. I do not see Ephesians 4 being the fruit of all of the various structures that are out there, all the various types of governments that have evolved since Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong.

I made this statement at the beginning and you may not have understood what I meant when I said the factor that caused the latitude to people to bring about the destruction of God’s church was church government that is because all authority was vested in one man. It was a corporate sole type of approach. All authority was vested in him and there was nothing anyone 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 to Ephesians 3 and verse 8. “To me who am 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 the apostles exercised church government in the New Testament church. 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. A fairly serious issue and no 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 Paul and Peter ever became “buds”, real real close friends by virtue of their personality. But when they came together, they expressed their strong opinions, their strong ideas, but then they submitted one to another. Such that at the end of the day, the man in charge of the church at Jerusalem where they were meeting, James, could get up and say, “we have heard all sides of this argument, I am now telling you what the end result of this is. They all were of one accord. They all said “amen” and there was unity, there was oneness and the church experienced great growth. 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 I am the least of all the saint, it reminds me of that particular episode. Eph 3:8-13 “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; (to tie back to where we began with God and the Word and one becoming Jesus Christ reaching into the human realm.) to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by 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 which are mentioned in there. “That the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the church.” How? Through the actions of the government within the church, through the apostle Paul at this stage and his connecting of the church to Jesus Christ. “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” It is a clear connector. He didn’t say “follow me.” 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. That is what Paul was trying to do. Draw the church, to cut off wrongheaded ideas that were coming into the church. People wanted to assert authoritarianism into the church. People 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. That is what part 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*. Church government is all about our relationship “to 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) may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height (is this authority? Is this to create? Is this to enlarge? Is this 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 that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

Think about verse 14 to verse 21 in the mold that we have created here with church government. You have the Father. You have Jesus Christ. You have people who are being strengthened through his spirit in the inner man and through that relationship. The Apostle Paul is drawing people into that relationship. There are many, many instances where Paul did not exert his authority that he had and could have 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 is strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man. The vine analogy of Jesus Christ comes into play and the whole church functions as per chapter 4 verses 4-6.

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, and through all, and in you all.”

There is a lot more to this subject. I can see that as I develop it, but I had that one focus that I wanted to share with you of the structure, not the structure, we have the structure, we know it is hierarchical; but what I have been calling the nature, the spiritual nature. And, in my experience of 40 some years in the church, I do not believe we have practiced this properly. I do not see it being practiced in general among the churches of God. I see a withering. And, it concerns me.

There are a lot of God’s people, scattered, hungering, thirsty and we need to develop God’s government in such a way that we can begin to reconnect people to God. That is our challenge and I am going to try to step up to that challenge. This has been the basis for something I want to write. I want 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 to collectively to correct this wrong and begin to nourish and strengthen the church the way God intended it to be.

That’s a big task and I would ask you to join me in fasting and prayer. I might be able to get my Head around this in such a way that it might be beneficial to the healing of God’ church.

I’m not going to go into it tonight but I will ask you to maybe do your own personal study and advance the subject a little further in terms of what I skipped over *the role of the priest in ancient Israel.* All I did there tonight was to make you begin to see a connection between the priestly government of the ancient nation of Israel with the priestly government which still exists today through Jesus Christ. I think if we understand the role of the priest in ancient Israel, it will help us to appreciate God’s government a whole lot better. Because the priest stood between God and his people. You might want to begin with Deuteronomy 10:8 and Deuteronomy 17:9-10 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 the Melchisedec priesthood rolling over into Christ’s priesthood read out of Hebrews 4? What can we learn from the role of the priest in functioning in God’s government in the church today?

Any of you so inclined to write something 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 am totally moved by it and I hope some way I have shared that with you tonight. Let us on our knees before our God, approach Him with repentance of what we have not done in the terms of promoting his government, and I will be the first to admit that, say that and let us study it, embrace it and 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.