

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97401

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Greetings Brethren:

The Feast of Tabernacles is fast approaching. Plans are coming along pretty much on schedule. Thank you very much for your splendid cooperation and help in making this a pleasant feast — even at this early point in time.

We do not desire to become involved in the usage of old cliches, but we surely do hope and pray that this feast will be the very best we can make it, with the help of God and His magnificent added blessings. As time progresses and conditions become worse and worse (for they surely will), we are going to count moments we spend together as priceless blessings and as times to endear ourselves to one another. Those truly converted do radiate a magnificent spirit of kindness, teachableness, humility, and love. Someday, in God's Kingdom, it will be marvelous — when just the truly converted come together to fellowship with one another in Christ Jesus and to be nourished spiritually. But it seems that every time the people of God come together in today's world, another power and force takes every advantage of the situation to destroy — creating suspicion and doubt. And, some unsuspecting sheep are not sufficiently strong to resist the natural pulls of the flesh — pulls to believe the doubts conveyed and the false dogma proclaimed — or the desire to tolerate or accept fellowship of that nature. We live in the time of final testing. God wants only men and women of significant character — those who are able to resist the pulls and temptations of the Devil, exercising faith and remaining untouched by the forces which come to bear upon their lives.

Prepare yourselves now to resist all temptations and influences of the Devil. He is more eager to destroy you than to engage in any other activity, for the present. You represent his only real threat. If he can destroy any one of you, he is just that much closer to realizing his ultimate goal — the goal of destroying everyone who will yield to God and His way of life. As he views things, he has an interest in what you are doing. You are a real threat to him.

In another area of the world, events are taking a much more decided position. The Mideast is crucial to many of the prophetic situations of the last days. If these summit talks of President Carter with Israel's Begin and Egypt's Sadat produce positive results, there could be a fragile and transitory accord reached. If this transpires, we can be reasonably assured that

time is very limited. This fact, coupled with the change in the Catholic Church and the growing problems in the Church of God, has created a very interesting concern for us here in Eugene. We will be watching it closely.

Without further comments in this letter, let us get directly into the continuation of the subject matter which was begun three Monthly Letters ago. For this issue, we will cover the concept of government. Government is of God. It is a power and force in the universe. Such power and authority have never been abrogated. To exist in confidence and happiness necessitates understanding the subject and acting in accord with its intent and purpose. Therefore, let us proceed with the explanation. A host of texts is given. To thoroughly grasp the picture, it will be necessary to make this letter a study paper. You will not be able to digest it in a cursory manner.

Happy reading and studying!

Doctrine, as the very Word of God, is eternally binding. It is known and understood only by those to whom it is revealed. All others are left in blindness until God wills to call them.

Administration, about which we have previously written, is the manner in which doctrine — the verbal expression of God's laws, statutes, and words — is carried out or practiced in our lives. And that application, called administration, has changed from the old to the new. This change is one of the few changes found in the Bible. But this change does not affect doctrine. For, God's Word is eternal and unchanging. The only changes which can be made are in relation to doctrinal application. These administrative changes were made by Jesus Christ. No human being could or was ever authorized to make any change. And the problems which we experienced in the Worldwide Church of God were the result of faulty administration. Prophecy, both Old and New Testament, makes that principle abundantly clear. Upon careful and judicious evaluation of the causes of the problems in our time, the prophetic application of historical causes becomes startling and revealing.

The topics of doctrine and administration must be kept clearly in mind as we proceed with the subject of government. On the basis of those two concepts, we wrote the third of the letters in this series. From that premise, we were able to accurately evaluate the problems in the Church today. These were evaluated and explained for you in the last Monthly Letter. Now we must proceed to the next cardinal point necessary to understand the whole concept of government.

VII. Government Is of God

There is no area in life to which one may look in order to substantiate the presently prevailing belief that there is "no government." Government is

everywhere. Without it, there could be no universe, society, family or any other ordered and structured existence. All would exist in chaos. Anarchy and disorder would reign.

We will always be ruled. It is merely a question of, By whom? For, even when we stand against an established order, we do so on the basis of conviction — substantiated literally by God — or we act on the basis of carnality. We are ruled either by God or by human nature.

In order to properly understand the problems of our day — rebellion against all government and authority — it is essential to review and thoroughly comprehend government. Was Christ vested with authority when here on earth? Did government terminate with apostolic authority? We need to — indeed, must — be objective in seeking answers to these questions. Clouding the issue with preconceived ideas will be of no value to anyone.

A cardinal principle to remember is: If you cannot depart from that which does not exist, how can you abuse that which does not exist? Government was abused. Therefore, it did and does exist. The only legitimate questions are those which deal with the principles of "how" and "why." An amplification of these points will be given later.

Abuses do not render government null and void. For, government is as eternal as the Word. Why? The basis of all government is the Word of God. He brought into existence laws, commands, statutes, and ordinances. And those very injunctions of God explain the source, direction, and levels of responsibility of that government.

Government Is of God and Eternal

By power, God brought the physical universe into existence. He is the author of all that exists. Did He create it and leave it without any order or established responsibility? Is anarchy, in the physical and human realms, ordained of God? If not, and if government is the only sensible solution to an ordered society, what are the responsibilities God gave in relationship to that government?

God is Creator of all that exists (Col. 1:16). He has all power and authority. By virtue of being Creator, He is ruler supreme over all creation. He sustains it by His power. He rules and regulates the entire universe. All physical laws act in accord with the decree of God. The universe is a display of harmony, order, and obedience to God's expressed will — an abundant evidence of government, agreement, responsiveness, authority. He commanded. They (the components of the physical creation) obeyed.

God determined the bounds of the ocean. The waters cannot exceed that limitation (Ps. 89:9). He decreed gravitational and planetary control. And, to this day, the astrobodies behave in ordered fashion. As God ordained, the sun still commands the heavens during the day. The moon, with the assist of the stars, continues to control the night skies (Gen. 1:16, 18; Ps. 136:8-9). In orderly compliance, these physical bodies perform precisely as God decreed — as the governor of the universe planned, ordained, and commanded. For, He set (established) them in the heavens to perform His will (Gen. 1:17). In other words, God gave specific inherent responsibilities (government, if you please) to each physical body. And to this day, we still expect ordered performance on their part. Any denial of such on the part of man — whether a single individual, nation, empire, or the combination of all human agencies extant on earth — would be the ultimate idiocy.

Yet, man categorically rejects God in those areas which affect relationships with one another. The assumption is that God (if they believe in God at all) has left them to the whims of their own minds. Individualization is the proof of this human concept.

But, before we get into the area of human responsibilities, let us return to the physical universe for the moment. It shall serve as the basis from which to effect a thoughtful evaluation of government in our lives.

God set the astrobodies in the heavens to perform in accordance with His plan or design. And He commanded them to fulfill His decree. Yet, those very authoritative bodies do not possess power and authority exceeding the jurisdiction of the One who gave that responsibility! God did not — indeed, cannot — give power, responsibility, and authority which exceeds His own. How is it possible for one to give more than he possesses? Therefore, God — who possesses all power and authority — gave to various physical bodies inanimate powers of control, by natural laws which He created, over their vast dominions. But by His ultimate power, He can yet intervene at any time He wishes. And this special intervention is completely free, depending upon conditions and circumstances, to affect entities of greater significance by far. For, God can use the physical realm to bless or curse man — a potential god.

Moses wrote, "Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it [ground] shall bring forth fruit for three years" (Lev. 25:21). And again, he wrote, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods [rejection of God's power and authority], which ye have not known" (Deut. 11:26-28). And finally, Moses was inspired to write, "The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land

which the Lord thy God giveth thee. . . . The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand . . ." (Deut. 28:8, 12).

Natural laws (a force and power of government) controlled normal annual productivity. The rains came as ordained and commanded. Yet, at times and for specific reasons, the norm could be interrupted. This required greater power and authority. On the sixth year, a very special blessing was promised to those who obeyed the land-rest laws which required productivity during the sixth year to go beyond the normal pattern. For, on that year, man — if he obeyed God (government or law) as required — needed a special blessing in order to obey the land-rest laws imposed upon him. And as long as man obeyed, nature administered the special decree of God. However, on the other hand, if man disobeyed — refused to recognize this governmental responsibility — he came under the curses of his Maker: another form of governmental administration. The laws remained the same, but the results were quite different. Obedience to government brought administered blessings. Disobedience (rejection of authority) brought administered curses. The end result was the difference in administration. In this physical, natural context, administration was programmed. In man's case, there is one major difference. This concept will be covered later.

David was inspired to most beautifully write of this very principle. He said, "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word: Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl . . ." (Ps. 148:1-10).

David continues this theme in Psalm 150:1. He says, "Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power."

God decrees. The universe obeys. Bounds and limits are imposed. But order is maintained. When we truly understand the power, authority, and control which are physically, naturally manifested daily, we are struck with awe at the vast cosmological domain.

The manifested government (order) of the universe becomes an opening for a spiritual understanding of man's purpose. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, ". . . the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his

eternal power [government and authority] and Godhead [government, also]; so that they [humankind] are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). And Paul further stated to the Corinthians, ". . . God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6).

Order exists in all the physical realm. That very order and harmony foreshadows what God expects of man in his relationships.

However, before we cover government as it affects man, let us more comprehensively understand God's rule and authority in the universe. What are His powers? Are there any bounds or limitations to His rule? How does His rule affect peoples inhabiting the earth?

The Heavens Rule Over All

Nebuchadnezzar, of ancient Babylon, was told God ruled in all the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:26). Initially, he accepted this concept. But, as is true with men, "Out of sight, out of mind." Nebuchadnezzar could not see God. He lost what contact he had. He could see only himself and his egocentric ambitions. The results were catastrophic. He was driven into exile, where he ate grass like an ox. This curse continued for seven years — until ". . . he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will" (Dan. 5:21).

David was inspired to write, "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps. 103:19). Note also Psalm 22:28. The location of God's throne is established. The bounds and scope of His rule are determined. He rules over all — the whole of His creation. He rules over man, whom He created (Gen. 2:16). He is God over Jacob (Israel), regardless of time and place (Ps. 59:13). He has absolute power and authority over all the heathen, or Gentiles (II Chron. 20:6). He beholds all nations and rules by His power (Ps. 66:7).

Noah recognized the sovereignty of God. For, he obediently performed all that God commanded him (Gen. 6:22; 7:5).

As Creator and Sustainer of the physical universe, God exercises all authority over it (Lev. 25:21). By God's decree, the earth can manifest either benefits or violence to those who inhabit it. The result is dependent upon whether man recognizes this authority.

God's power is absolute. It reaches into the lives of all people, one way or another. But, for how long does such power and authority exist? Is there ever a time when God abdicates that throne of majesty (Dan. 4:3, 34)?

Has God ever vested authority in any of the created entities? For, as the one and only omnipotent God, He can delegate any responsibility He wishes.

He gave the sun — an astroboddy — rulership over the day. In like manner, He gave the moon rulership over the night. But what authority and government has God vested in intelligent beings?

The mindless elements of the physical universe obey. They are a witness to the whole Creation of God. For they respond to God, their Creator. Harmony and order still reign in the whole of the physical realm.

It is only angels and men, created with intelligence — mental powers and capabilities — who revolt against their Maker. Many angels, and the majority of mankind, are in violation against the will of God — the basis of all government. Their natures were not bent toward obedience. On the contrary, their natures were in opposition to God — not subject to government and authority.

Yet, strange as it may seem, these created beings (angels and men) were designed and made for governmental purpose. They were placed in differing offices of responsibility. And — in the case of human beings — as the family grew, the structure of the society changed, and so did the governmental needs. With more and more people populating the earth, the need for ordered existence grew.

Before we evaluate the government of God as manifested in human relationships, let us discern angelic government. God created angels. He gave them responsibilities and authority. Their creation, as well as assigned authority, was purposeful. They received these responsibilities not for the purpose of serving themselves but to serve mankind whom God had created.

Angels are ministering spirits, sent to help those God called to be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). They are greater in power and authority than man (II Pet. 2:11). Even so, they do not accuse or deride men — potential sons of God — even when those men walk in wickedness. They respect both the present conditions and the future potentiality.

As created subjects, angels were given freedom of choice. They could recognize God's purpose and implicitly obey, or they could choose to rebel. One third of these spirit beings — powerful and skilled — chose to rebel (Rev. 12:3-4). One brilliant and highly capable angel induced many to defy God and His purpose! To this day, these same supernatural beings have been influencing human beings to defy God by rebelling against constituted authority — against God as King of the Earth and against His Word which is powerful, authoritative, and unchanging. As a result, humanity has rejected God's great plan and the hope of the Kingdom of God in the restoration of all things.

Fallen angels, though greater in power and authority than men, are the enemies of truth — the unchanging Word of God. Human beings who are called and chosen of God, given that unalterable truth, must obey God — by obeying the truth — while at the same time respecting the office and power of those angelic beings, in spite of their disobedience. The only unalterable absolute by which called and chosen servants of God are ruled is the revealed Truth of God. The Truth of God cannot change — ever. It upholds the order of the universe. It is the way of life — eternal in all respects.

How does man come into contact with those spiritual rebels — called demons? Herein lies one of the significant areas by which God's chosen people prove themselves. Will they be influenced to rebel in like manner? Or, will they be faithful to God's call — and to His government as manifested in many areas of responsibility?

Luke wrote, ". . . the devil, taking him [Christ] up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke 4:5-6). Satan's area of responsibility was over the earth. And since Christ came to qualify to replace Satan as ruler over the earth, He had to meet Satan in mortal trial.

Other servants of God wrote of this exalted responsibility which Satan perverted. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that the Devil was the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). He further stated that Satan is the responsible influence, throughout the world, who blinds the minds of those who become incapable of manifesting true faith and belief (II Cor. 4:4). Satan and his cohorts are the rulers of darkness — the domain devoid of the illuminating effects of truth (Eph. 6:12). And since these beings are greater in power and might, man is helpless unless he is tendered unusual help to escape the clutches of such influence. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Who [Christ] hath delivered us from the power of darkness . . ." (Col. 1:13).

No power or authority arises superior to the expressed purpose of God. His Word is ultimate. It is our guiding light through all difficulties in life. That Word is unchanging and everlasting. A part of that Word is the manifestation of government and authority — the government and authority of God as vested in various human beings, agencies, and responsibilities. These powers sometimes rebel against and disrespect Him — the one who has all power. But we must at all times manifest respect for their authority — even when we cannot always obey, due to conflict with the Law of God.

The transition of government from Adam to the present time, and on into the Kingdom of God, should be examined next. What authority and control did God vest in Adam, as a created being?

Man Given Authority

Adam, the first created human being, was to bear responsibility. And God equipped him to properly handle that responsibility.

God said, ". . . Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26). And God continued, ". . . Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

The entirety of the physical earth was placed under the jurisdiction of man. He was given guidelines by which to exercise his responsibility acceptably. If he failed to use that charge properly, the whole of that domain would rise up in rebellion against him — in storm, famine, earthquake, etc.

Such authority was the beginning of man's charge! Did any other governmental jurisdiction befall him in fulfilling the authoritative command of God — ". . . Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth . . ."? Remember, the population grew. Either anarchy or an ordered society would exist. What was the will of God?

Government became inevitable as the human family grew. That government became necessary because of sin — rebellion against the government of God. The responsibility of human government will not be removed until Christ has fulfilled His total responsibility. We will see this more clearly explained later.

Notice how God repeats the charge vested in human beings (Gen. 9:1-2). Now an additional responsibility was given them. They had to govern themselves (Gen. 9:5-7). There would be leaders exercising control over the lives of all humanity. And this responsibility was by God's appointment, though most men who have borne that authority have badly abused it. God does not approve of abuse. But, in many cases, God did not — or has not yet chosen to — remove those powers which abuse office. All this attests to some awesome plan and purpose of God. That we shall see later.

Note how David expressed the length and breadth of man's jurisdictional responsibility! He wrote, "Thou madest him [man] to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Ps. 8:6).

Patriarchs

Government was a responsibility placed upon man — not as a great blessing, but as a curse for disobedience! Yet, it is through the avenue of

government that the called of God are going to inherit everlasting life and the true responsibility of rulership. Multiple lessons must be learned. Man must come to realize how woefully inadequate he is to assume charges and responsibilities which appeared so appealing and desirous.

After Adam, what specific responsibilities were given to man?

Abraham was a man of integrity. He ruled a very large domain, through appointed servants. This same authority was borne by many of the mighty, powerful, and influential men of the earth's early history. In some cases, these men assumed significant governmental responsibility — over the heathen. Joseph became a dominant, influential leader in Egypt (Gen. 45:8). And this appointment was by the will of God (verses 5, 7).

Moses, A Chosen Ruler

In process of time, God willed the creation of a major nation — the nation of Israel (Gen. 46:1-3). To fulfill His purpose, He trained and equipped a human servant to rule and lead His people. He gave to Moses all power and authority to properly handle that awesome charge. God called him to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Egyptians (Acts 7:25). However, the mere fact that he was chosen of God does not mean the people understood, accepted, or responded to that charge and authority (Acts 7:35).

But, regardless of how the people reacted toward Moses, he was God's anointed to fulfill His purpose. He was instructed by God. And as a result of the instruction he received from God, he was accountable for proclaiming it to the people (Acts 7:37-39; Ex. 25:21-22).

The form of responsibility is significantly spelled out in Exodus, the 18th chapter. There were levels of rulership — predicated on talents and capabilities. And in all cases, the chief factor was a real, genuine love for God and the Truth.

Judges Bore Authority

Following Moses was Joshua, whom God appointed to rule and judge His people. Then, following the time of Moses and Joshua, a system of judges received appointment from God (Judges 1:1; 2:1-19).

These judges bore authority and rulership (I Chron. 17:10; Ruth 1:1). Government had come into existence from the beginning. God had transferred this rulership responsibility from the patriarchs to Moses, then to Joshua. After Joshua, God raised up judges to rule. Now, to whom did God transfer this authoritative rule after the period of the judges?

Kings Are Next To Bear Rule

Long before the establishment of the kingdom of Israel, God laid down the rules of conduct for kings who eventually would assume rulership over Israel. Moses wrote, "When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother" (Deut. 17:14-15). Other instructions are given in verses 16-20.

After the time of the judges, the people selected a king — King Saul. He reigned for forty years. But during the course of Saul's sovereignty, and after his defiance and rebellion against God, David was selected for a future regnal responsibility. He was put under training for his future rulership over Israel. God had appointed him to that governmental office (I Sam. 25:30; II Sam. 6:21; 7:8; I Chron. 11:2; 28:4; II Chron. 6:5-6).

Following David was the appointment of his son, Solomon (II Chron. 7:17-22). Then, following the forty years of Solomon's rule, the kingdom became divided by the decree of God (I Kings 12). For the sake of David — to whom God had given a promise that he would never want a man to sit upon his throne, and through whom Jesus Christ was to come — two tribes remained in the kingdom of Judah, under the kingship of Rehoboam, son of Solomon.

Prophets Bore Responsibility

Kings bore physical responsibility, primarily. As a result, most of them failed to effectively fulfill their kingly responsibility to keep the people in the way of God. Prophets had to be raised up and sent to the children of Israel to warn them of impending disaster. These prophets carried absolute authority. They were commissioned and sent by God. He gave them the message which they were to deliver. These historical messages form a part of the Bible and indicate a prophetic fulfillment in our days. Someone will be called and commissioned to proclaim these same words to rebellious people in the last days. Whoever is sent, to perform the will of God, will carry this same authority.

Prophets possessed a domain of authority. As servants of God, they were to be respected and honored. The fact most people did not KNOW or accept them as the chosen servants of God, had absolutely nothing to do with the fact they were commissioned by God. Disrespect, on the part of those who should have been cognizant of God's servants and the need to obey, is an evidence of their guilt and condemnation.

Prophets, whether the people accept them and respond to their words, are still prophets (Jer. 1:7-10). Note also Jeremiah 1:16-19. Being a servant of God has never been an easy and reassuring responsibility. There is no joy or satisfaction, under many circumstances — except in the realization of a job, duty, or responsibility faithfully carried out. The emphatic, emotional appeals of Moses, Jonah, Amos, and others attest to that fact.

As servants of God, they themselves were under authority and rule. They could do only what God had commissioned them to perform (Jer. 26:2). Whether the people were cursed or blessed depended entirely upon their reaction. If they accepted the rule of God — through His commissioned prophets — they would be blessed. If they rebelled — individualized, doing that which seemed right to them — they would be cursed (Jer. 26:3-7). Historically, the people generally did not accept God's rule. They mostly despised God's authority and control. As a result, they bitterly suffered the consequences. Yet, God appealed to them to turn back to Him (Jer. 25:1-7).

Even in the latter days, the prophets (ministers of God) bear authority and rule (Isa. 29:9-17). But, because of their failures, God has given them a sense of deep sleep and has blinded their eyes to the way — the responsibility which they possessed. Yet the people delude themselves into believing they continue to be His servants, as did the people of ancient Israel. And because of this deception, a very significant work must be done in the latter days. More about that later.

The next transition of power and authority was to Christ. The prophets continued to be active until about 400 years before Christ. That 400-year period was an interlude in the aggressive activity on the part of God.

All Power and Authority Comes Together in Christ

As Moses was God's called servant — placed over His chosen people, Israel (the Church in the wilderness) — so was Jesus Christ the appointed head of the New Testament House of God (Heb. 3:1-6). Moses was a type of Christ (Deut. 18:15-19).

As the counterpart of Moses, Jesus Christ was commissioned, sent, and empowered to do the will of God. He was a prophet, a priest, and a future king. Let us initially note the scope of power and authority which He possessed as God's servant in the flesh, almost 2,000 years ago.

Jesus Christ was prophesied to be born as a ruler (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:6). He was born to rule over the people of God. He was born miraculously of the virgin Mary.

At the appointed time, He began His public ministry. He was moved by the Holy Spirit. Having received instructions from His Father, He spoke

with authority and conviction (Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32). For, the Father gave Him a commandment as to what He should speak and do (John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 7:15-17; 8:25-29).

But true to human nature, when what was said did not agree with their rationale, the religionists of His day took exception to Him and His words. They demanded to know who sent Him, by what authority He spoke, and who gave Him that authority (Matt. 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8).

Since the Old Testament church had departed from much of the truth which had been given to them, they did not know God. Though seated in the office of Moses, they were self-appointed leaders who did not recognize Christ by the truth taught or the work performed. Regardless of their blindness, Jesus Christ continued to teach by the power and authority of God the Father. For, the Father gave the Son the power and authority to fulfill His commission (John 5:27).

What powers and authority did God vest in His Son, Jesus Christ? For, the Father did not commission Christ to do a work without the necessary tools for faithfully performing that office of responsibility.

Christ was given power and authority over the spirit world (Mark 1:27; Luke 4:36). He had power over all flesh (John 17:2). And as the called of God, He was given authority and rulership over all called and chosen servants (John 15:14). He had the power and right to forgive sins and to heal the sick (Luke 5:32; Matt. 9:6, 8; Matt. 2:10; Mark 2:10-12). The authority to execute judgment according to the will of God (John 5:27). The right of control over both His life and His death (John 10:18).

Since Christ was sent by the Father to perform a specific work, the scope and limits of that responsibility were imposed by His Father (Matt. 15:24; John 5:30; 17:4). Within the scope of that charge was the necessity to call and train future ministers — those who would be commissioned and sent as He was (Matt. 10:5; compare John 17:18). Therefore, as their teacher, Christ exercised total control over them (Luke 9:21; Acts 1:4; Acts 10:42).

Having successfully completed the work God gave to Him, Christ received virtually unlimited authority (Rom. 14:11; Ph'p. 2:10). The only limitation? The domain of the Father's responsibility (I Cor. 15:27). Jesus Christ is above all earthly power and authority — not only now, but for all eternity (Eph. 1:21). For, from the beginning all offices of authority, power, and responsibility were created by and for Him (Col. 1:16).

The world-ruling kingdom of the future is Christ's. He will have all power and authority (Matt. 6:13; I Pet. 5:11; Jude 25). Note especially I Peter 3:22.

The specifically assigned work completed, the tragic death accomplished, and the resurrection a reality, a gift was presented to Him at the conclusion of His earthly ministry. What was it? He became the recipient of all power, both in heaven and on earth.

What did Jesus do with that power and authority? Was it bottled up within His life? Does it lie dormant, unused at this moment in time?

The Apostles Properly Equipped

As stated earlier, one of the responsibilities shouldered by Jesus Christ was that of teaching and training His successors. After that training, did He leave them helpless, without necessary equipment to do the work for which they were called? Remember, God gave Christ the abilities and powers to perform His work! Jesus was not derelict in His responsibility, either! He gave power and authority, initially, to the called and chosen under His tutelage — even while they were in training (Luke 9:1-6; Matt. 10:1; Mark 6:7; 3:14-15).

After Jesus' ascension into heaven, the trained and commissioned apostles bore authority and power over those called of God (II Cor. 10:13; Acts 8:17-21; Matt. 28:18-20). But, they were not empowered to abuse or take advantage of the people — the called and chosen children of God. Christ gave authority to His ministers. And that rulership, power, and authority was granted for the sole purpose of serving His children (II Cor. 10:8).

Did the true ministry have the right to employ their given powers according to personal concepts or beliefs? Did they function under restraint? Or, were they free to make individual determinations, in the exercise of those powers and that authority?

The true ministry is under absolute authority. That authority is the Word of God — the force of God's authority — which is unalterable. That Word speaks with authority. It is not subject to reinterpretation, reevaluation, alteration or change by those called and commissioned to preach it. It is the basis of all ministerial authority — for, there is no authority outside of it! Ministerial authority is inherent in the commission to preach the Gospel — the Word (I Cor. 7:10; II Thess. 3:6). But, once any man departs from the revealed Word — the Truth of God — and preaches a false doctrine (a dogma of his own invention), he has absolutely no authority.

Ministerial authority is over God's called servants, only (I Cor. 5:9-13; II Thess. 3:10-12; I Thess. 4:11). Ministers have no jurisdiction over the unconverted. The fact is that ministers of God are, themselves, under much greater power and authority. For, that power limits the power given to the chosen instrument. Any limitation presupposes greater and mightier power and responsibility from above.

Revolution, anarchy, defiance, and rebellion emphatically indicate the need of a crucial ingredient for successful government. And that ingredient — confidence — cannot be coercively produced. It must come from hearts and minds. It must be personal volition. And such an ingredient has never really existed in the realm of human government, from the time of Adam to the present. All history is a proof of that fact.

Though nations, organizations, and group activities usually begin with honorable objectives, purposes, and the vital ingredient of confidence, that perspective and orientation is soon lost. Human beings are carnal. And carnality soon takes advantage of any given situation. Therefore, the initial element of confidence and cooperation on the part of all who are involved, soon becomes lost. The results are defiance, rebellion, bitterness, and contempt. In the national plane, revolution takes place. In all other areas, a form of revolt — coupled with pursuits of self-justification — transpires. Then, no one trusts anyone else. Accord and agreement are not possible. Individualization is placed on a pedestal, justified and respected by all injured parties.

With respect to our Christian call and experience in God's Church, we all had confidence initially. Confidence in what? Confidence in our conversion! And, conversion is manifested in contempt for self, coupled with an equal respect for the will of God — obedience to the revealed Word of God. Then, it manifests itself in respect for the true ministry of God — those called and commissioned to proclaim that Word (Heb. 13:7, 17). Christ said, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. 10:40). Successful government requires an intricate balance in power, authority, rule, law, honor, respect, and responsibility. Such a balance can be achieved only through conversion — the reduction and subjugation of self. And continuity of such harmony is entirely dependent upon continuation of all ingredients involved — perpetuation of the Word, Law, honor, trust, and respect. Continuation of the principles of spiritual conversion (II Thess. 3:4).

Conversely, one of the most damaging actions is that of abuse. The result — manifested in bitterness, contempt, and hate — is individualization. This is virtually beyond repair, redirection, or renewed objectiveness. And for this reason, Satan employs the principle of change and abuse to the maximum.

Our only defense is faith — faith in our call and conversion. Faith in the way of life which we received at the beginning (Heb. 3:6-15). And, that faith is manifested in total obedience to what we were taught — the revealed Word of God. As it was in the days of the apostles and other ministers of Jesus Christ, a recognition of those called, chosen, and commissioned to proclaim that way of life. Although the Bible indicates many will depart from

the responsibility which God gave, there must be a few who will remain faithful. Your responsibility, like that of the first-century church, is to KNOW those who are faithful over you in the Lord.

Responsibility in the Millennium

Government is the central theme of the Bible. Many are the offices of responsibility! And the whole human experience is preparatory to the establishment of a world-ruling order. What is that government? Who is responsible for it? What is our present relationship to it?

In His first appearance, Christ came to accomplish several things. Among them, He qualified to receive a kingdom and to rule. Because the people could not comprehend this operation, Christ explained it by a parable. He said He was as a noblemen who had gone ". . . into a far country [heaven] to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:11-12). See also Revelation 4:11!

At this very present time, Christ has qualified. He is far above all human governments, power and authority (Eph. 1:21). Because of God's plan and time, Christ has not yet received the kingdom for which He qualified. He presently sits with the Father on His throne — at His right hand (Rev. 3:21). And, there is significant reason for the interlude of time between His first appearance and His second coming. It is during this time that chosen servants are qualifying to sit on Christ's throne — on the earth — and rule with Him (Rev. 3:21; Matt. 25:21-23).

Christ has all power, authority, government, and rule (Col. 2:10). By this power and authority, He can intervene and/or use governments and individuals to favor His servants and bring to perfection His purpose.

When Christ returns, He will take His kingdom and throne (Rev. 4:11; Isa. 40:10-11). And at that time, He will begin to gather together His sheep — who have been scattered, due to abuse of government and authority. He will sit upon the throne of His glory and rebuild the temple — the House of God (Zech. 6:12-13).

When Christ sits on that throne, He will begin a major work of restoration — the restoring of all things (Acts 3:19-21). He will rule over all nations (Ps. 67:4; Rev. 12:5; Isa. 14:5). And Israel, under Jesus Christ in the Millennium, will rule over all the Gentile realm (Isa. 14:2).

Central in the plan of God is man. Why was he created? To rule with Christ (Rev. 3:21; Matt. 25:31-34). Therefore, man is presently qualifying to rule. How? By being under rule! His station and level of responsibility is entirely dependent upon how well he subjugates himself NOW. He cannot

rule others unless he first learns to be ruled. God does not intend to create another situation, in the Kingdom, which would be no different from the past 6,000-year history of man. If we — who have been called to understand the purpose of God — grow restless, resentful, and contemptuous because of experiences in the Church which should have aided our spiritual growth rather than destroyed us, we will NEVER be given authority and responsibility tomorrow (Heb. 6:5)!

We must qualify to rule and reign. We are to share the throne of Christ (Luke 19:17; Dan. 7:26-27; Rev. 1:6; 2:26-27).

How long will Jesus Christ rule? Till He has restored all things (I Cor. 15:24-25). After Christ has completed the work of restoration, exiled the power and influence of Satan (the god of this world), and brought all enemies under control, He will return the throne to the Father — "that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15:28).

What is the basis of Christ's all-encompassing power and authority? The eternal, unalterable Word of God (Rev. 19:15). It is the same Word which controlled in the past — the Word to which all must eventually subscribe. That Word has never changed. The plan of God was completed from the foundation of the world. Only men, under the influence of the rebellious Devil and his cohorts, seek to change it and justify themselves in the process. Nothing is more certain than government, power, and authority. All the Creation testifies to that fact.

Authority, Today?

God is the author of government! He is ruler supreme! As the ruler with all power and authority over His Creation, He gave part of that responsibility to human beings. By the exercise of that responsibility on the part of man, God can and will evaluate all that men do. Failure to exercise responsibility is not acceptable (Luke 19:20-27). What God wants is judicious, kind, and acceptable rule — rule by love, mercy, and compassion. For, the sting of authority must exist only when rebellion arises — and then, only for the benefit of those involved. It is not a power to be used for the benefit of the bearer.

Those who have borne authority have been outlined in this letter. God rules over all. Angels bear jurisdictional authority. Men are to rule over men. The patriarchs exercised God-given authority. Moses was established in a rulership responsibility by God. Judges assumed rulership over the people of Israel. By the will of God, kings were ordained. Prophets bore rule, by the very message God gave to them, and were sent to proclaim it to Israel. Christ was empowered to do the will of God — thereby qualifying to receive a kingdom and to rule over all nations, people, and languages. In turn, Christ

gave authority to His called and chosen apostles. Then, the apostles gave authority to those trained under them. And rule will be absolute in the Millennium.

Does it seem logical, in light of the above, that rule or authority should not exist today — in the realm of either the physical or the spiritual? Many, today, relegate what they do not like to hear or face to either the past or the future. Many willingly admit the validity of government in the past (Israel, Christ, the apostles, and others — as well as the requirement of the coming Kingdom), but they will arrogantly and illogically assume — yes, in some cases demand — the absence of government today. Today is reality, whereas the past and future are ethereal and obscure to them. Many admit or allow that which does not immediately affect them. But all should remember this: Both the past and the future must represent "the present" for someone. When those people answer — following the resurrection — illusion and deception will have lost their power. But you and I, by faith, must live today the same reality of tomorrow. Government is of God today. And those who accept it, properly exercising it now, will be called upon to employ it tomorrow in the restoration of all things.

Jesus said, just before His ascension to heaven, ". . . All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end [consummation] of the world . . ." (Matt. 28:18-20). The authority borne by the original twelve apostles was to continue to the consummation of the age — a time synonymous with the second coming of Jesus Christ. Since the original twelve apostles died long before the present day, other called and chosen servants were destined to carry the same authority and power. From the time of Jesus Christ (in the flesh) until His second coming, responsibility has been given to God's servants. Some have been faithful and some were unfaithful (Luke 19:13-27; 12:41-44; Matt. 24:45-51; Mark 13:32-37). To perform their work, the chosen servants of Christ were given authority (vested in the unalterable Word — the Gospel). Verse 34 specifically says that Christ gave authority, "and to every man his work" (Mark 13:34).

Just before the return of Christ, those who bear spiritual responsibility are to misuse their powers. They will turn everything upside down. Since they are not honest with the people, they will teach a kind of fear according to the precepts of man. For, they will have nothing else with which to hold the people together and substantiate their human concepts.

Studying Isaiah's statements, it becomes most obvious that one cannot turn anything "upside down" unless it originally has been "right side up." Further, men cannot abuse that which does not exist! The government of God does exist today. But it has been abused.

As a final point, regarding authority today, please read and study carefully Matthew 21:33-36. The vineyard is the Church of God. The Church has been put under the care of husbandmen (ministers) while Jesus Christ resides in heaven. At given times, specific individual servants (including Christ) have been sent to instruct the people. And, for their efforts, they are usually rewarded with death. As a whole, people do not want to respond to the authority and government (the force and power of God's Word) which He gave to His ministers.

Authority and government do exist. Today. But, because of dishonesty, assumption, and craftiness of men, we must KNOW the true servants. That responsibility is incumbent upon each. Failure to do so is a serious mistake. Hiding in anonymity is not acceptable. So, how can you know? By the fruits of those who are faithful to the revealed way of life — as they were taught.

What Are the Areas of Government?

God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). He is the author of order — of government and peace. How did God purpose to rule the vast universe and the myriad responsibilities extant?

First: He is ruler supreme! He has all power and authority. He sets up and removes established offices of power. His will is carried out in all the universe (Ps. 103:19; 66:7; Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; Isa. 41:1-4; Gen. 45:8; Deut. 4:1-9; 8:1; 12:32; 18:18; Jer. 11:1-10).

Second: Angels are servants of God. They are even greater, in power and might, than are human beings — though they serve those who are potential gods (II Pet. 2:11; Heb. 2:13-14; Dan. 12:1). Angels are in high offices of power and responsibility. They serve those called to be born into the very Family of God. God gives them charge to perform their work. Note the example of Christ (Matt. 4:6). Ultimately, God's born Sons shall judge angels — on the basis of job performance (I Cor. 6:3).

Third: Physical rulers are over the nations. God is the author of nations (Acts 17:26; Deut. 32:8-9). He determined the lineage of rulers in Jacob (Gen. 49:10). God also rules among the nations, by the rulers He chooses (Dan. 4:22, 25; 2:37; Luke 20:20; John 19:10-11). And, those rulers whom God allows to be established in their respective responsibilities must be respected (Rom. 13:1-7).

Fourth: God called and empowered His ministry. This responsibility existed virtually from the beginning. Abel was a righteous servant. And for his obedience to God, he paid with his life. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the patriarchs bore responsibility. Moses was chosen of God. Power and authority were given to the Levites. The prophets bore rule by a divine commission. Christ was empowered to fulfill His mission. Authority was given

to the apostles. And that same responsibility exists until the second coming of Christ. (Read carefully and study the following: Luke 9:1-2; I Cor. 15:24; Titus 2:15; I Tim. 4:11; I Thess. 4:11; II Thess. 3:10; Luke 10:17-20; I Cor. 9:12, 18; II Tim. 1:8; I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; Matt. 24:45, 47.) That rule was for the sole purpose of edification and good for God's people. Never did it involve dictatorial power, to be used for personal advantage.

Fifth: The ministry was given power over unclean spirits. In order that they fulfill their work, God gave His servants authority to banish these rebellious spirit beings who set themselves against the will of God (Eph. 6:12; Matt. 10:1, 8; 12:24-28; Mark 6:7, 12-13; I Cor. 12:10; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 4:36; 8:29).

That power and authority are not substantiated in error. In other words, once a minister goes contrary to the giver of all power and authority, he has no authority. For, authority in every domain is "in the Lord." The ministry must obey God (Dan. 3:16-18; Acts 4:18-20; Acts 5:29). However, the office must be respected, despite any abuse which exists.

Sixth: In a general sense, men were given certain responsibility over women. From the rank and file of men are to come specific leaders. Any structure contrary to that basic order is destined to chaos and failure — for both men and women, as well as the society in which they live (Isa. 3:12; I Tim. 2:9-13; I Cor. 14:34-35).

In no way does this imply women are "second class" in God's eyes. On the contrary, they must be respected and honored. In like manner, from God's viewpoint, a man who is under a king or other ruler is not a second-class citizen. Yet, he owes all respect and obedience (within the Law of God and the law of the state). Happiness and satisfaction come only by implicit and total obedience.

Seventh: God gave the husband responsibility in the home. That authority is for the purpose of order, success, and service. The husband serves not himself, but the family. His responsibility is by the authority of God the Father (Gen. 3:16; Esther 1:12-22; I Tim. 3:4-5; Gen. 18:19; Eph. 5:22-25; Col. 3:18-19; I Pet. 3:1-7).

Eighth: Children must obey and respect parents. Those who bear rule and responsibility, by virtue of being parents, are to do so by the decree of God. This is a link in the established order of God (I Tim. 3:4-5, 12; Gen. 50:16; 18:19; Col. 3:20-21; Eph. 6:1-4; Isa. 3:4). If children are to obey and respect parents, the obvious implication is that parents must teach and care for their offspring. All true and properly used authority is a two-way street.

Ninth: The employer has authority over the employee. God ordained it thus (Ex. 18:23; Deut. 8:11; Col. 3:22-25; Eph. 6:5-9; Gen. 24:2; 43:16; I Kings 5:13-18; 9:22-23; I Chron. 9:11, 20; 26:24; 27:4; John 2:9).

Tenth: God gave the mind authority to rule over the flesh. By will and God's power, we can live honest, acceptable lives. Or, because of a very base nature, we can allow the flesh to dominate. God's intent is that the mind rule, regardless of whether one is converted or unconverted. (See the following: Gen. 4:7, RSV; Prov. 25:28; Gal. 6:16; Ph'p. 3:16; Col. 3:15; Prov. 16:32; Ps. 119:133; Gal. 5:17.)

Eleventh: By virtue of circumstances, the successful will bear rule over the derelict. Beyond the transitory (the present), that principle holds true for successful Christians. They will bear rule, under Christ, over all the earth. Study the following texts: Proverbs 12:24 and 19:10; I Chronicles 26:6; I Kings 11:28; I Chronicles 5:2; Proverbs 6:7 and 22:7.

Twelfth: Good will rule over evil. What appears as proliferation of evil, for the present, will not last for eternity! (Psalm 37:34-40.) Good, truth, and right will ultimately be victorious. See Psalm 49:14; 72:8; 68:35; John 1:12; Acts 1:8 and 26:18; I Corinthians 7:37; Proverbs 17:2; Deuteronomy 4:5-8 and II Timothy 3:5.

Thirteenth: Sometimes, because of circumstances, one brother has control over another. For such considerations, God decreed various conditions (Lev. 25:39-43, 46, 53-55). The first-born males were assigned certain responsibility (Gen. 29:26; 43:33; Ex. 13:2; Deut. 21:15-17; Num. 8:16-18; Ex. 13:2-15).

Fourteenth: On a national plane, Israel was to bear rule over all other nations. This responsibility was by an assignment from the God of all power and authority (Lev. 25:42-46; Ezek. 19:10-14; Lam. 5:8; Deut. 4:1-9).

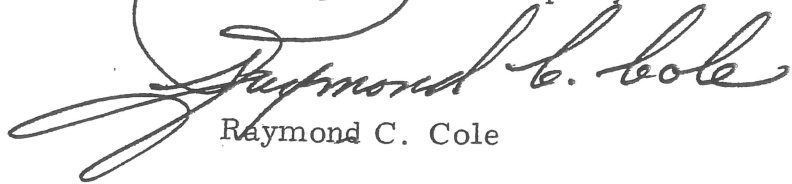
There is no area of the universe where government does not exist. It is of God. It was instituted for the purpose of order and peace — the object being to serve all those under such authority. No government was ever instituted for the purpose of aiding self-seeking leaders.

Surely, no one can deny the validity of government. To defy or rebel against any area of government is to deny all government. For, the source of all power and authority is God. To rule this vast universe, create peace, and establish a system by which the saints will qualify for exalted positions in the Kingdom, God distributed power and responsibility according to His will. That will is revealed in all of its aspects.

Next time, we want to analyze all areas of doctrine, administration, and government. How do they dovetail with one another? Why do men resist the concept of government? Hopefully, the whole picture will emerge in the fifth letter of this series.

Until next month, may God's great blessings be with you all. We continue to pray for you and trust you will remember us in our needs. For the assurance of those prayers, let us heartily thank you.

In deep love and respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name. The word "Raymond" is written in a larger, more prominent script than "C. Cole".

Raymond C. Cole