

November 2020

Frank W. Nelte

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

During Mr. Armstrong's time one of the most emphatically accepted doctrines of the Church was the teaching about the "government of God", that the government of God supposedly existed in the Church of God. That is the teaching I am going to examine in this article. But up front I want to make a very clear distinction. And that distinction is as follows:

The question "**should there be some form of government in God's Church?**" is a completely different question from "**does the government of God exist in God's Church?**". Where the answer to the first question is "yes", the answer to the second question is "no". In fact, these two questions actually have nothing at all in common. They have no common ground. And we'll deal with both questions in this article.

So with that matter clarified, we are ready to examine the Church's "government of God" teaching. Here is a brief history of this teaching in the Church.

THE ORIGIN OF THE "GOVERNMENT OF GOD" TEACHING

Mr. Herbert Armstrong started Ambassador College in 1947 in Pasadena with just four students. By the early 1950s a handful of men had graduated from Ambassador College. In December 1952 Mr. Armstrong ordained five men as evangelists, and two months later, in early 1953, he ordained another two men as evangelists. Mr. Armstrong himself was 60 years old at that point.

So by the early part of 1953 Mr. Armstrong had ordained **seven** men as "**evangelists**". These men were in their **early to late-20s** at that time. Every minister in the Church at that time was "an evangelist". There were no other ministers of any other "rank". Mr. Armstrong himself was obviously in authority over these evangelists.

Since the Apostle Paul had ordained a very young Timothy as "an evangelist", therefore Mr. Armstrong likewise ordained these seven very young men "as evangelists". Had any of these seven men produced "**any fruits**" to justify their ordination to this high ministerial position? **No, of course not!**

When they were ordained as evangelists these men had barely finished four years of attending Bible classes taught by Mr. Armstrong. Going out on "baptizing tours during the summer", to meet with people who had made contact with the Radio Church of God, as a result of hearing "The World Tomorrow" program, wasn't really the same as these men themselves "producing good fruits". And giving a few (or a lot) of sermons wasn't really significant fruit either. The fruits of their ministries would follow later, after they had been ordained.

These men had learned everything about the Bible that Mr. Armstrong himself understood at that point in time. And they could speak fairly well. And they certainly were sincere, eager students and willing to learn from Mr. Armstrong. And so Mr. Armstrong ordained them as "evangelists".

As an aside:

We should recognize that **today**, in our 2020 context, **under no circumstances** would any Church of God leader ordain half a dozen men in their 20s, who had just completed a 4-year college course, **as evangelists**. No leader of any CoG group would do that today. Today we all understand that **such men simply don't yet have the maturity** to fill such very senior positions in the ministry. Today we understand that at graduation such men have also not yet been tested, and they only have very limited life experiences to draw on, even when they do have the right attitude.

But to go back to 1953:

So then there was a ministry under Mr. Armstrong, composed of seven men, all of them "evangelists". They were young and zealous, and also ambitious. **It was those young evangelists who then developed "the government of God" teaching.** This teaching did not exist until there were seven young evangelists in the Church.

Now here is the important thing we need to understand in this regard:

Mr. Armstrong himself was not involved at all in the development of this doctrine!

The proof for this statement is contained in a booklet written by Dr. Meredith. Here are the facts.

In 1993 (i.e. exactly 40 years later) Dr. Rod Meredith wrote a booklet which he entitled "*Church Government and Church Unity*". That title tells us that this booklet would explain this "government of God" teaching. And so regarding the development of this teaching, Dr. Meredith wrote on page 3:

"Even after several years of guiding the college, **Mr. Armstrong still did not understand much about Church Government, and said so openly a number of times.** Consequently, in the early mid-1950's, **Herman L. Hoeh and I** each were inspired to write articles along this line. As hundreds of our older brethren remember, I wrote the article, "*Judging and Discipline in God's Church*" and, later, "*Whose Opinion Counts?*" and one or two other similar articles." (my emphasis is in bold print)

The statement "even after several years" tells us that Dr. Meredith was referring to the situation in 1952 and in 1953. So 40 years later one of those original seven evangelists stated quite openly that the government of God teaching did not originate with Mr. Armstrong. But "several years" had gone by, during which time this teaching was being developed by these evangelists.

Dr. Meredith also very easily claimed "inspiration" for the articles he wrote at that time. Notice the reasoning that Dr. Meredith presented in this statement, which reasoning goes as follows:

"Because Mr. Armstrong still did not understand much about church government after several years, **therefore we were inspired to explain** this subject."

That statement establishes Dr. Meredith's credentials for writing with authority about this subject. But does that sound like the way God works with inspiration? So when God couldn't get through to Mr. Armstrong, therefore God just inspired the very young Drs. Hoeh and Meredith with this information? Is that how inspiration works?

Anyway today, more than 60 years after those articles, it is quite clear that "the fruits" of that particular teaching were really bad! That teaching caused a lot of problems. Would God ever "inspire" articles that produced bad fruits?

Anyway, here is a question we should address:

Why didn't Mr. Armstrong for "several years" understand what became a prominent teaching in the Church? **Why did it take "several years"** for Mr. Armstrong to understand something that is so simple that it can be laid out in one short booklet or article? Note that Mr. Armstrong in essence on a number of occasions openly said words to this effect: **"I don't understand this government of God teaching that you men are developing"**.

What this all means is that other men put this teaching into the Church, and **years later Mr. Armstrong's understanding finally caught up** to what these young evangelists had been "understanding" for years already. It means that these evangelists had to teach and explain this doctrine to Mr. Armstrong. And it took several years before Mr. Armstrong eventually got it.

That should raise some red flags.

Seriously, when it required several years for young novices in the Church (i.e. considerably less than 10 years in the Church) to explain a (supposedly) basic teaching to the man who was being used by God to restore many truths that had been lost, then something isn't really right. That would be like saying that it took a very young Joshua several years to explain some basic biblical teaching to Moses. That wouldn't make sense, would it?

Anyway, this government of God teaching became **a very important teaching for the next 40 years**, well into the 1990's. In the two decades or so since then it has receded to some degree into the background, though even today it is still a dominant teaching in some Church of God organizations.

But let's go back to Mr. Armstrong.

While Mr. Armstrong himself was initially not really convinced of this teaching, **in time Mr. Armstrong became a very firm believer of this "government of God" teaching**. And so from around 1970 onwards Mr. Armstrong would frequently and emphatically appeal to "the government of God", and more emphatically so as he got older. In the last decade of his life he would repeatedly say something to this effect:

"The only place on earth where the government of God is in existence today is in the Church of God."

Some of you who were in the Church at that time may remember occasions when Mr. Armstrong said this. And since Mr. Armstrong was the leader of God's Church, his statement really meant that **he was (supposedly) the highest representative of the government of God here on earth**. He was (supposedly) a part of the government of God. And all the ministers under Mr. Armstrong were supposedly also members of the government of God.

Mr. Armstrong's "the only place on earth ..." statement was a claim that **the entire ministry of the Church is supposedly a part of the government of God**. That is the teaching which those original evangelists had developed in the early 1950's, at a time when Mr. Armstrong himself didn't yet get it.

Now Mr. Armstrong's statement was **100% wrong!** His statement on this subject has always been wrong. The government of God has thus far never existed on this earth. And the ministry has never at any time been a part of the government of God.

That is something I will show conclusively later in this article. But Mr. Armstrong's statement illustrates how strongly this statement came to be believed and taught in the Church. It was commonly seen as **the most important doctrine of the Church**. And if you didn't accept the "government of God" teaching, then you probably weren't converted, is how this was commonly viewed.

WHY WAS THIS TEACHING ESTABLISHED?

Without government we have anarchy. Without government everyone does what is right in their own eyes. That's what things were like in Israel during the period of the Judges.

In those days *there was* no king in Israel: **every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.**
(Judges 21:25)

That is what we get when we don't have any government; we get chaos and anarchy. Every country and every organization and every club and society needs some kind of authority structure. That includes church organizations ... they too need some kind of leadership structure.

Government is always about power!

Different forms of government give power to different people. And every government by definition requires submission. Without submission governments cannot function. For example, **every country must obtain submission** from its subjects.

Different countries have used different options to obtain submission from their subjects. And so:

1. In some systems submission is obtained **by force** (e.g. dictatorships, police states, etc.).
2. In other systems submission is obtained **by appeals to customs and to traditions** (e.g. monarchies, tribal chieftains, etc.).
3. In still other systems submission is obtained **by appeals to reason and to popularity** (e.g. democracies, systems where leaders are voted into office, etc.).

However the system of government is organized, the people in positions of power and authority know that they must obtain submission by the general population or membership. Without submission and cooperation every system of governing will break down.

Now the Church of God likewise must have some authority structure for the Church to function effectively and efficiently. This need should be self-evident. But the question is: **how can this need best be met?**

Should the Church have a strong central government, with all decisions being made **by executives** at some HQ? Or should decisions be made locally in each area? Should the ministry make all the decisions, or should there be congregational leadership, or perhaps congregational "input"? Are leaders going to be appointed, or should they be elected? Will offices in the church government be held for life, or will there be term limits? Will offices be voted on? Can the leadership be held to give account for their actions, or is the leadership above being questioned by anyone?

These are some of the questions that should be examined. And I myself will not be providing any answers for these particular questions. I personally believe that in some circumstances and in some ages the answers to these questions may be different from the answers that are best in other ages, and in other circumstances. More on this later.

Let's never forget that government is always about power, and who gets to exercise that power. And **once people have positions of power**, they almost always try to hang onto that power for as long as possible. In fact, people commonly try to perpetuate their positions of power, to the point of eventually **trying to pass the positions of power on to their own children.**

So now to our question: why was this government of God teaching developed, not by Mr. Armstrong, but by the group of young evangelists?

This teaching was established for the explicit purpose of entrenching and solidifying the positions of power these evangelists had received upon graduation!

Why was this teaching not developed by Mr. Armstrong himself back in the 50's? Mr. Armstrong was already in charge, and **his status was above challenge**. Mr. Armstrong did not need any kind of hierarchy under him to ensure his own position. At that point he didn't need to prove anything to anyone, to justify him being the leader in the Church. He was clearly in authority above all the men he would ever ordain into the ministry.

But not so for the young evangelists he had ordained.

There were seven of them, and noone was the undisputed leader amongst them, you know, like Peter amongst the 12 apostles. And so they devised a hierarchy which ensured that they all were on the top rung in that hierarchy. Anyone else who would be ordained after them would ideally have to start on a rung below them, or very occasionally at best on the same rung of the hierarchy they were on.

[Comment: Dr. Meredith used to tell the men who years later were also ordained as evangelists: "remember that you are still only a baby-evangelist", to let them know their place in the hierarchy.] But certainly, noone should ever be ordained to a position higher than the one they had received upon graduation from Ambassador College, i.e. **the position of evangelist**.

History over the past 60+ years has shown that "evangelist" was not actually an office which they ever fulfilled!

They themselves didn't really go out and "evangelize" anyone. No, history has shown that "**evangelist**" **was nothing more than a title**, and a rank in a hierarchal ministry, a title placed strategically below "apostle" and above "pastors" and other lower ranked ministers.

So let's ask a question: Should these men have become the top leaders in the Church under Mr. Armstrong?

Yes!

There was no problem at all in all of these men becoming the top leaders in the Church, as the Church started to grow. It was the logical thing that they would be put into the top positions within the authority structure of the Church. There was nobody else at that time who was qualified to fill positions of authority in the Church.

To repeat: **it was perfectly appropriate that these original ministers would fill the top positions in the Church**, as the Church's membership grew.

So far, so good!

But then they simply went too far.

Not only did they want the top positions within the Church; they also wanted to be above being questioned regarding their leadership. **They did not want to be accountable to the people over whom they would rule.**

And so they developed the idea that they, fairly young mortal human beings, were not just leaders in the

Church of God. Oh no, they were supposedly also representatives of the government of God here on earth.

And once you, the ordinary average church member, understood that the ministers were a part of the government of God, **you had better not question their judgments and their decisions**, no matter how dumb and stupid those decisions might have been at various times. You wouldn't want to be like Ananias and Sapphira, would you (see Acts 5)?

Dr. Meredith wrote the following in the covering letter for that 1993 booklet:

"So please read this overview of Church Government with an open mind and heart. Yes, **many of us have made terrible mistakes in this area, including me.**" (bold emphasis is mine, italics are Dr. Meredith's own form of emphasis) (quoted from page 2 of the January 20, 1993 letter by Dr. Meredith, which letter promoted this new booklet)

Note that Dr. Meredith didn't just mean one or two ministers "occasionally" made a terrible mistake. He acknowledged that "**many of us**" have made **terrible mistakes** in regard to the government of God teaching. According to Dr. Meredith it was the many, not the few, who made these terrible mistakes.

Next, think about what Dr. Meredith said for a while. There is a big difference between "**stupid mistakes**" and "**terrible mistakes**". In the letter Dr. Meredith acknowledged "terrible mistakes", but the few examples he then actually presented in the booklet were not "terrible" at all; they were only "stupid" and indicative of immaturity.

Correcting someone about violating the government of God because the person had turned up the volume on the car radio without permission, or because the wife didn't have the husband's suit pressed on time, etc. ... those are not "terrible mistakes" at all! **Those are only "stupid mistakes"**, which vividly illustrated the utter lack of maturity of those young ministers.

No, those weren't the terrible mistakes. **The terrible mistakes** with this government of God teaching enacted by immature young men were the mistakes that **ruined many people's lives!** The terrible mistakes led to **people leaving the Church** and turning their backs on the truth of God ... because they couldn't handle the way they were treated by their ministers. The terrible mistakes were **the many marriages that were seriously damaged**, because naive husbands tried to practice in their own marriages the government of God teaching they were being taught at church services.

Those were some of the many terrible mistakes that were made. But correcting someone for turning up the radio volume in the car without permission was nothing more than a stupid mistake. So when Dr. Meredith acknowledged "terrible mistakes" in this area of the government of God teaching, then **let's not trivialize that acknowledgment** with references to stupid, but harmless mistakes.

Anyway, to continue:

Since these ministers who made these terrible mistakes were supposedly a part of the government of God, the logical conclusion of Dr. Meredith's statement has to be that **the government of God will on occasion make "terrible mistakes"**.

But that somehow doesn't sound right, does it?

The point we need to understand is this:

When people appeal to the government "of God", then **they are appealing to absolute power which**

will not tolerate being questioned or challenged. If it is God's government, then you can't argue with it, because you obviously cannot challenge God.

So in plain language, any appeal to the government of God says: **don't question what I do** and the decisions I make, because I am responsible to God alone and to no one else. And in fact Mr. Armstrong in his later years used to at various times make statements to that effect. So the government of God teaching was zealously **promoted by men who did not want their authority questioned by anyone.**

That strongly suggests some underlying selfish motivations by those who vociferously claim to represent the government of God. It is to **their personal advantage** to promote this teaching. This teaching only benefitted the hierarchy in the ministry; it didn't at any time benefit unordained church members in any way. It only benefitted the ministry, specifically those in the upper echelons.

As I will shortly explain, there is no "government of God" anywhere on earth; and there has never at any time in the past been any "government of God" on earth or in heaven. What this means is that **it was a huge case of presumptuousness** to claim that some mortal human being represents the government of God, which government has in actual fact thus far never even existed. Consider the following hypothetical conversation:

A HYPOTHETICAL CONVERSATION

A church pastor is speaking to a clear-thinking baptized member of the Church.

Ordained minister: "I am a representative of the government of God here on earth."

The unordained member: "But there is no government of God today. So how can you possibly represent a government that doesn't exist?"

The minister: "Well, Jesus Christ represents the government of God, and I am one of Christ's ministers. So I am in that chain of government below Jesus Christ."

The other person: "You don't get it, do you? Since the creation of the universe there has never been a government of God, let alone one here on earth."

The minister: "So do you reject that Jesus Christ is the Head of God's Church?"

The other person: "No, of course I don't reject that Jesus Christ is the Head of God's Church. But being the Head of the Church doesn't mean that Jesus Christ is ruling through a government hierarchy here on earth."

The minister: "So are you saying that there is chaos in heaven right now, because you say that there is no government of God in heaven either?"

The other person: "No, of course I am not saying that there is chaos in heaven. Here is your problem: you think of the government of God as some form of hierarchy, where everyone in the chain of authority below God is supposedly a part of some "government". And you want to include yourself on a lower rung in that hierarchy. But the idea of such a hierarchy is very contrived.

The truth is that up to this present point in time God has never ruled through a government with a hierarchal structure. The government which God is going to establish is still future. It hasn't been

established yet.

Thus far God has always ruled without any official "government" assisting God. **God has ruled like a benign and absolutely fair dictator.** God has 24 "elders" or "counselors" advising God (see Revelation 4:4), but those "elders" don't form some type of government structure. And at this time there is no authority structure beneath God's rule. Currently that "structure", if that is what you want to call it, ends with God the Father and Jesus Christ. **Currently there is no hierarchy below these two God Beings."**

The minister: "Well, all those are just your opinions. But you can't prove them from the Bible."

The other person: "Just stick around, and I will prove my statements to you in the rest of this article."

Okay, so much for our hypothetical conversation.

IT WAS INDOCTRINATION

Forcing this teaching of the government of God upon the Church was plain indoctrination. It wasn't ever proved to be a biblical doctrine. No, **it was assumed to be self-evident.** And it was something that every church member was required to accept. It was repeated like a mantra.

Now there is a difference between indoctrination and teaching, when used for educational purposes. Do you know what that difference is?

Satan uses indoctrination, and God uses teaching. While indoctrination most certainly involves repetition, not all repetition is indoctrination. Teaching also involves repetition. Now God does not want any people in His Family who are "indoctrinated". That is because **indoctrinated people cannot build godly character.** Indoctrination is in fact a character-killer.

In our context the difference between indoctrination and teaching is this:

Indoctrination never gives you a choice. Indoctrination never allows for another opinion. Indoctrination demands that people don't use their own minds to think for themselves. With indoctrination someone else has already done your thinking for you.

Teaching always presents you with a choice. You are free to accept or to reject the teaching. Teaching always leaves room for individual choices. Teaching seeks to present the facts, and then it allows the hearers to reach their own conclusions. God always wants us to be aware of the choices we have. As God told Israel:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: **therefore choose life**, that both you and your seed may live: (Deuteronomy 30:19)

God presents the facts. He spells out what is right and what is wrong.

God instructs us to teach our children. And then God requires us to make a choice of our own free will. And in our present age penalties for wrong choices are mostly delayed, which eliminates the carnal mind's fear of immediate penalties. Penalties being delayed in very many cases makes it easier for the carnal mind to reject the right choice. But God always requires us to choose.

Indoctrination, on the other hand, never gives us a choice at any time.

So when all church members were required to accept the government of God teaching, then **that was pure and simple indoctrination!**

Indoctrination is very hard to overcome, because indoctrination does not respond to factual information. Indoctrination does not accept sound reasoning. Indoctrination refuses to let go of wrongly accepted premises. It is futile to attempt to argue with indoctrination.

The fact is that the government of God idea is not supported by the Bible. **It is a false teaching!** False teachings can only become perpetuated within the churches of God through indoctrination, meaning that false teachings must be repeated endlessly, while other explanations are invariably rejected out of hand. And that is what was done.

The point is that the government of God teaching was established within the Church of God by means of indoctrination. Superficially it seemed to make sense and be self-evident, and therefore it was never challenged.

But it has no biblical support, none at all.

EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

Let's examine the Bible regarding "the government of God".

For a start, we see that this expression "the government of God" is never used in the Bible, not even once. In fact, the word "government" itself appears only four times in the KJV of the Bible, three times in the OT and once in the NT. Those references are: Isaiah 9:6-7 and Isaiah 22:21 in the OT, and 2 Peter 2:10 in the NT.

Apart from these four verses the word "government", singular, never appears in the KJV of the Bible. So here we have what was one of the most important teachings in the Church for about four decades, and the key word for that teaching is barely even mentioned in the Bible.

Let's examine those four verses.

ISAIAH 9:6-7

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and **the government** shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of **his government** and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

The Hebrew word translated "government" in both these verses is "misrah". These are the only places in the OT where this Hebrew word is used. In Isaiah 22:21 we will see a different Hebrew word.

Now "misrah" is a root word that basically means "**to have power**". Let's recognize that "a government" is not something that would ever sit on anyone's "shoulder", i.e. if we are talking about a government structure that includes a hierarchy of other individuals. But "power" can certainly rest on someone's shoulder, expressing that the power is vested in that individual. So these two verses should really be

translated as follows:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and **the power shall be upon his shoulder**: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. **Of the increase of his power and peace there shall be no end**, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

The translation "government" is totally misleading. Back in Isaiah's time nobody would have recognized what we today mean by "a government". Israel didn't have "a government", and neither did Egypt or Babylon or Assyria or any other nation. Back in Isaiah's time nations were ruled by kings who ruled without any kind of government structure. All their servants were just that ... servants.

These two verses are not in any way a reference to the "government of God" teaching that was taught in the Church of God during the second half of the last century. These verses present to us nothing more than a rather misleading translation. So let's look at the next verse.

ISAIAH 22:21

And I will clothe him with your robe, and strengthen him with your girdle, and I will commit **your government** into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. (Isaiah 22:21)

Here the Hebrew word translated "government" is "memshalah". This Hebrew word means "dominion", which in turn means "**supreme authority, sovereignty**". To illustrate this meaning, this Hebrew word is first used in Genesis 1:16, where it is twice translated as "**to rule**".

And God made two great lights; the greater light **to rule** the day, and the lesser light **to rule** the night: *he made* the stars also. (Genesis 1:16)

Obviously, neither the sun nor the moon have any kind of government structure, of which they are somehow the leaders. This Hebrew word here doesn't automatically refer to any kind of "government". The sun "rules" without any kind of government.

Isaiah 22:21 is addressed to a man named "Eliakim", and this statement refers to a man named "Shebna" who was "a treasurer" for the king and "over the house" (see Isaiah 22:15). Shebna ruled over the house, and he controlled the finances. In Isaiah 22:21 God is saying "I will commit **your rule** into his hand", referring to Shebna's rule "over the house" being committed into Eliakim's hand. Once again, Isaiah 22:21 has nothing whatsoever to do with any "government of God" teaching.

So here is the point we need to recognize:

"Government", implying some formal hierarchy of leadership, **is never referred to anywhere in the Old Testament.**

So the key word for this "government of God" teaching (i.e. the word "government") is never mentioned at all in the Old Testament, once we translate those three verses correctly. That should make us think!

Can you picture what our teachings would look like if the words "Sabbath, feasts, tithing, clean and unclean meats", etc. were never mentioned once in the Old Testament? Why, those teachings wouldn't

even exist, would they?

Right, let's look at the use of "government" in the New Testament.

2 PETER 2:10

But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and **despise government**. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. (2 Peter 2:10)

The Greek word here translated "government" is "kuriotes". This word has been derived from the word "kurios" which means "lord".

The Greek word "kuriotes" is only used four times in the NT (i.e. also in Ephesians 1:21, Colossians 1:16, and Jude 1:8), and in those other three places it is translated as "dominion(s)". Basically "kuriotes" in Greek means the same as "memshalah" in Hebrew. It means "rulership".

In 2 Peter 2:10 Peter is telling us that these presumptuous people **despise rulership**. But the Greek word in this verse is certainly not a reference to any "governmental hierarchy". So when we have a correct translation here in 2 Peter 2:10, then we once again find that the word "government" isn't used in the New Testament either.

Now we do find the plural "governments" in one place in the KJV, and that is in 1 Corinthians 12:28.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:28

And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, **governments**, diversities of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)

The Greek word here translated "governments" is "kubernesis". The related Greek word "kubernetes" means "a helmsman, a shipmaster". Both these words are led back to the Latin-derived verb "kubernao", which means "**to steer**".

In 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul was not speaking about some kind of "government in the church". Not at all!

Paul was simply enumerating **different functions** that were being fulfilled. As we can see, this particular function is quite low on the list Paul provided. With this word Paul was referring to something like **administrators, counselors, guides**; i.e. people who would look after some of the non-preaching functions that would also need to be taken care of, similar to "helps", the previously-listed function. So a more appropriate way to translate this verse would be:

And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, **administrators**, diversities of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Later I will comment on 1 Corinthians 12:28 in more detail. But for now let's move on.

We have now examined all the places where "government" is mentioned in both the Old and New Testament. None of those places are speaking about "a government" as we think of it today. That's because "governments" (referring to several different levels of leaders) were basically unknown during biblical times. The Persians in the days of the Prophet Daniel came the closest to having some kind of hierarchy, by dividing the whole kingdom into 120 provinces. But the Persian system was far removed from what we today understand by "a government".

Here is the sum of the matter:

When we correct all the mistranslations, then not only is the expression "the government of God" never mentioned in the Bible, but **even the word "government" on its own is never mentioned in either the Old or the New Testament**. Let's not confuse references to "dominion" or "rule" or "power" or "guide" with a government which involves **different levels of officials in ruling capacities exercising authority**.

The point is: the biblical statements we have looked at don't really refer to what we mean by "a government".

THE WORD "ISRAEL"

Now while the word "government" is not used anywhere in the Bible, **the concept of a government** is certainly implied in the word "Israel". Notice the account when Jesus Christ changed Jacob's name to Israel.

And he said, your name shall be called no more Jacob, but **Israel**: for as a prince you have **power with God** and with men, and hast prevailed. (Genesis 32:28)

"As a prince" here means "as a ruler, as a leader".

Jesus Christ here tells us that the name "Israel" means: to have power as a ruler with God. So the name "Israel" itself refers to ruling with God. And **"ruling with God"** refers to **being in a government with God**.

So wow, right here we have an implied reference to "the government of God". That's what we have been looking for, right? And now we have it.

The problem is that the government of God, which is implied by the name Israel, doesn't exist yet. **It is still future**. God has not yet formed a government.

Here is a very basic point:

God had never had "an Israel" before God gave this name to Jacob! This means that God had never had a group of individuals who "had power with God", i.e. a group of individuals who would "govern with God".

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

In the beginning there were only two God Beings: God the Father and Jesus Christ. God the Father was in charge, but there was no "government" in existence to somehow control Their relationship. And there was no need for any government.

Then They created all the angels. All the angels were created to be servants of God. But there still was no government in existence. Paul tells us about the angels:

Are they not all **ministering spirits**, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

(Hebrews 1:14)

"Ministering spirits" are serving spirits. But none of the angels have ever been a part of "the government of God" for a very simple reason, and that is this: **the government of God is not going to be made up of servants!**

The government of God will be made up of rulers, not of servants. The purpose of the government of God will be **to rule!** And so all those who will be a part of the government of God will be **kings and priests**, not servants. All those who will be a part of the government of God will have their own thrones! The thrones indicate that they are a part of the government of God.

So here is another fact we need to consider:

Anyone who does not have "a throne" is also not a part of the government of God. So if anyone does not have "a throne" (e.g. all the ministers in God's Church) then that individual is with absolute certainty not a member of God's government. So it should once again be obvious that no minister of the Church of God has ever been a part of God's government.

God rules over His servants, the angels, who are ministering spirits. But they don't have thrones, and they don't feature in the government structure.

At some point **after the creation of the angels** God the Father and Jesus Christ created human beings, setting in motion the plan to create an enormously huge Family of God. It was **at that point that the concept of "government" came into being**. Here is what we need to understand.

The purpose of government is to coordinate and to regulate to some degree the conduct amongst equals.

Think about this statement, and let the ramifications of this statement sink in. This is something that everybody should understand. Yes, those in the government will "rule", but they will rule over equals. And the purpose of that ruling will be to regulate the conduct amongst equals.

The purpose of government is not to regulate the conduct between masters and servants. Regulating the conduct between masters and servants (or employees) follows a different authority structure, one that does not involve a government.

Now in our world the people we elect to government positions are our equals. Both we and they are mortal human beings with freedom of will and choice. All the heads of governments in this world (i.e. kings, presidents, prime ministers, etc.) **are only the equals of the people they rule over**, in the sense that those leaders are also only human beings, just like the people they rule over.

Now **the government of God is going to be established over those who are equals with God.**

I obviously do not mean equal in authority, certainly not. By "equal with God" I mean that the government of God is going to be established **with those and over those** who will also be "Gods", i.e. the sons and daughters of God.

So once God the Father and Jesus Christ had determined to create a Family with multiple billions of sons and daughters, then at some point They decided to create a government to rule over **that huge Family of equals**. The very purpose of the government of God is **to rule over the Family of God**.

Think of the human family. In the human family the father is in authority. And he is the ruler over equals

... his wife and his children are just as human as he is. They are his equals in the type of beings they are. But they are not his equals in authority within the family.

Now after the creation of Adam and Eve, and up to the time before the flood, things did not go as God had hoped.

So after the flood God implemented a revised plan. This revised plan called for specifically training every single individual who will become a part of the government of God.

It is going to be the perfect government, consisting of God the Father, and under Him Jesus Christ, and then under Them the 144,000 members who will complete the government of God. The government of God must be trained and tested **before** being inducted into office.

Now during the millennium that government of God, consisting of Jesus Christ plus the 144,000, will rule over human beings. And then for another 100 years they will also rule over the people in the second resurrection. That rule during those 1,100 years will produce a huge number of "children" for the Family of God, billions upon billions of "children".

When Jesus Christ said that He will grant those in the first resurrection to sit with Him on His throne (i.e. during the millennium, see Revelation 3:21), it means that **Jesus Christ will share the government of God with all those in the first resurrection**. In that way they will all be "sitting" with Jesus Christ on His throne. Sitting with someone else on their throne represents the privilege to share in their rulership.

Then after that the lake of fire will consume the wicked, and God the Father will create the new heaven and the new earth and the New Jerusalem. At that point Jesus Christ will formally hand over the entire Family of God to God the Father.

Then *come* the end ones, **when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father**; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. (1 Corinthians 15:24)

That will then be the time when Jesus Christ will also "sit" on God the Father's throne, which tells us that God the Father will share His specific rulership status in the Family of God with Jesus Christ, though God the Father will always be greater than Jesus Christ. And the 144,000 from the first resurrection will then complete the government of God over the entire Family of God for all future eternity.

They, the 144,000, will then for all future eternity be known as "the Israel of God", meaning **those who rule with God**, and they will be structured into the 12 tribes of Revelation 7, comprising 12,000 in each tribe. For all future eternity **the entire government of God will reside in the New Jerusalem**; and all the other members of God's Family will reside in all the other cities on the new earth.

So for all future eternity the government of God (God the Father plus Jesus Christ plus the 144,000) will rule over the rest of the whole Family of God, which will be structured into "the nations of them which are saved" (see Revelation 21:24). In other words, that government will regulate and coordinate the conduct amongst equals, the conduct amongst members of God's Family.

That is what "the government of God" will be like!

EXCLUDED FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

There is something very basic that we need to understand about "the government of God". And that

basic fact is that **only "Gods" can be a part of the government of God!**

It is impossible for any human being to ever be a part of "**the government of God**". The government of God is perfect! The government of God doesn't make mistakes.

The government within the Church of God, on the other hand, has made hundreds upon hundreds of mistakes over the past approximately 2,000 years. Some of those mistakes are alluded to in Revelation chapters 2-3. Other mistakes include baptizing thousands of unrepentant people, starting with baptizing Simon Magus.

You know the Scripture that says that God doesn't change, right?

For **I am the LORD, I change not**; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (Malachi 3:6)

We need to understand that there is also something else that never changes, and that is this:

The government of God will never change!

God does not place individuals into His government, and then later remove them from His government. That just doesn't happen! To ever change the composition of His government would imply that God made a mistake when He added someone to His government at an earlier time.

For example, I have in the past heard some ministers claim that Satan had supposedly represented "the government of God" when God had sent him to this earth with one third of the angels. **Such a claim is completely false!**

Satan was not at any time in any way, shape or form a part of any government of God. Thus far God has never yet established a government. The angels of God have always been "ministering spirits", i.e. servants. God's rule over the angels has never involved some kind of "government".

Satan was sent to this earth as a leader of servants of God. And Satan didn't have some government of angels assisting him. No, Satan ruled over those angels like an autocratic king. To show this status, he made himself an extremely fancy "throne" (see Isaiah 14:13), which he intended to elevate above God's throne. But God then defeated Satan.

It is only at the first resurrection that God will form a government. And

the marriage supper is the time when the government of God will be inducted into office. Right now Jesus Christ is preparing the positions in the government of God for all of the 144,000 individuals who will be a part of that government. That's what Jesus Christ was referring to in John 14:2-3.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you.** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. (John 14:2-3)

Some people seem to think that God does things rush-rush, that God can't get something done soon enough. So once the angels had been created, then God supposedly had to **quickly** establish a government of God, so that God could then deal with those angels through some kind of government structure.

But that's not how God works!

God is very methodical, and God is never pushed for time. So after Abraham had lived a faithful life, God in effect said: okay, Abraham, **you can now sleep for over 3,500 years**, before I will give you immortal life. There's no hurry to get this done.

Likewise, once God had decided that He wanted to have a government of God, then God allotted a long time for testing every single individual who will become a member of that government. In fact, **the first approximately 6,000 years of human existence have been set aside by God to test those who will be in that government.**

If anything, it is even more important to thoroughly test all those who will become a part of the government of God, than it is to test all the rest of humanity for their opportunity to become a part of "the nations of them which are saved" (Revelation 21:24 again).

You understand the significance of Romans 8:17 and Revelation 21:7, right?

And if children, then heirs; **heirs of God**, and **joint-heirs with Christ**; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8:17)

He that overcomes **shall inherit all things**; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. (Revelation 21:7)

What do you mean ... "heirs of God" and "inherit all things"? Look, it's not that God the Father is just giving it all away and then retiring, is it? So how will those in the first resurrection actually "inherit all things"?

Those in the first resurrection will be "heirs of God" because God will share His government over the whole Family with them. By becoming a part of the government of God, **they get to have a say in the future of the new universe**, and in that way they "inherit all things". God will be open to input, ideas and suggestions from all those who will be in His government. As the name "Israel" implies, **they will have power with God.**

That's what the government of God will be like.

But there is never a place for any mortal human being in the government of God. **I believe that it is extremely presumptuous for any human being to think of himself or herself as already "a part of the government of God"**. God hasn't even formed that government, and you decide that you are already right now a part of that government?

Wow, who told you that you are right now already a part of that "government"? Oh, you figured that out on your own, because you are an ordained minister? **So you think that God includes mortal human beings, who are still subject to sinning, in His government?** And do you also believe that Satan, who was also very capable of sinning, was once a part of the government of God, but that he was then kicked out after he sinned? So **is there a turnover of personnel** in the government of God, what with Satan first (supposedly) being in it and then being removed from it?

To reply to Mr. Armstrong's statement quoted at the start:

The government of God has never existed in any era of the Church of God. And it has never at any time existed anywhere on this earth. God does not lightly and without thorough testing add anyone to the government of God. That "thorough testing" is the testing for becoming a part of the first resurrection.

However, simply because the Church of God has never had the government of God in it, that does not mean that therefore there should be no government at all in God's Church. **There is assuredly a need for some type of government in God's Church**, even though it will not be "the government of God".

GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE CHURCH OF GOD

So **what type of government should there be** in the Church of God?

It is clear that when we do things that are right before God, then God will bless us. And when we do things that are wrong before God, then God will punish us. It is a matter of cause and effect.

And **God's blessings will be totally unrelated to whatever form of government God's Church may be using**. It is not that God will bless His Church if we have one form of government, but that God will not bless us if we have a different form of government.

Whatever government we may have in the Church of God is not really the issue. The real issue is: are we applying the laws of God in our lives and in the affairs of God's Church or not?

Now we need to **be careful that the motivation** for whatever form of government we accept and practice **is not selfish!** Let's not forget that Jesus Christ said:

But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, You know that **the princes** of the nations **exercise dominion over them**, and they that are great **exercise authority** upon them. (Matthew 20:25)

Jesus Christ said this in response to the brothers James and John wanting the top positions in God's Kingdom (see also Mark 10:35). It was obviously a very selfish request. They wanted those top positions because they wanted to exercise dominion and authority. Their selfish motivation was very obvious. James and John were saying: "**we want to be a part of the government of God**, and we want the top positions right next to You, Lord".

They weren't even leaving any room for Noah or Abraham or Moses or David or Elijah, etc. to perhaps be in those top positions. No, they wanted these positions for themselves. Okay, so at that stage James and John were still somewhat carnal. They only came to a real repentance somewhat later. But that's not our issue.

Our issue is that in a Church of God context it is **the ministers** who are "**the princes**", right? And claiming to be a part of the government of God is a very clear expression of **wanting to exercise dominion and authority**. That's no different from the apostles James and John.

And it is a matter of record that back in the 1950s and 1960s, and even later, the ministry in many cases did indeed exercise dominion and authority over the membership. That approach was entirely due to the government of God teaching.

In time we came to see that **the results were bad**, but **the teaching** that caused those bad results **was somehow okay**. We failed to logically make a connection between cause and effect. We didn't connect the dots.

When church members were taught to seek their minister's advice or approval, or even permission, for **all the personal decisions in their lives**, then the ministry was indeed exercising extreme authority over the lives of the members. Most of those personal decisions were not the minister's business one

way or the other.

In the next verse Jesus Christ warned against this approach.

But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (servant). (Matthew 20:26)

But it actually "was so amongst us"!

And that was entirely due to the government of God teaching. The main purpose for that particular teaching was to establish a hierarchy for exercising authority and dominion. There was no other purpose for that teaching. Anyone who goes back that far in God's Church, and who does not recognize that "it was indeed so amongst us" is willingly ignorant of the way ministers frequently exercised their authority back then.

I don't want to mention specific examples, because that is not the point. I simply wish to highlight the point that **our motivation** for accepting a particular form of government **must never be selfish**. The reason for a particular government structure in the Church must never be selfish.

Okay, so what is the best form for an authority structure in God's Church?

Answer: **That depends!**

Here are the reasons for why I say that.

There are a number of factors that will influence the "best" (i.e. most suitable) form of government for God's Church. For example:

1) **The time period** in which the Church is functioning. The type of governance that might have been suitable during Paul's ministry might not be the best 300 years later, or in the year 1000 A.D., or at the time of the Pilgrims, or in our age today. The circumstances in society in general may impact on the type of government for the Church. In Paul's time slavery was commonly accepted, and the general environment in that age influenced the opinions of church leaders.

2) **The size of the Church** has a major impact on the form of government. When the total worldwide membership is only 50 people, all of whom live within a day's journey, then a certain type of government may be very suitable. But when the size of the Church is 1000 people, a different type of government may be more suitable. And when the size of the Church is 100,000 people, scattered around the world, then a still different form of government may be more suitable.

3) **The size of the ministry** may also impact. As long as there is only one minister (e.g. Elijah in his day, or Mr. Armstrong during the 1940s), and only one small congregation, a certain type of government may be very appropriate. But once there are 300 ministers, or 500 ministers, then a different type of government may be needed.

4) **The means of transport** available may also influence the type of government. When people relied on taking a ship, that would stop for 3 months for the winter in a harbor on the way, then travel was obviously difficult. And when people relied on walking to get to the next town (or riding a donkey), then the relationship with "outlying members" might be different than if ministers could get to those members in a one-hour car ride. And when people can fly halfway around the world in little over a day, that too might have an influence.

5) **The means of communication** might also enter the picture. When you knew that your letter might take 3-6 months to get to the person you were writing to, that was completely different from picking up the phone and speaking immediately with the person. Today you could also send an email to anyone anywhere else in the world, and they would get your message pretty well instantly.

6) **The location of the Church's congregations** might also influence the type of government that might be best. Are all the congregations in a small area in Palestine (at around 50 A.D.), or are they all in a small area in the Alps? Or are the congregations scattered around the world?

Now none of the above factors deal with any form of government directly. But all of those factors might affect the churches, and they might have some influence on the type of government that would be best for the Church in those circumstances. And these factors are very likely to influence some of the decisions that will be made by church leaders.

At the time of Moses a government structure involved "rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" (see Exodus 18:25). That was a different time, and **the circumstances were completely different** from today. And so what was suitable then would not really be suitable today. Circumstances do have an impact on what type of government might be best in various circumstances.

That's why I think that **the best form of government** for the Church of God **depends on the circumstances** in which the Church finds itself. And changes in the circumstances may necessitate changes in the way government is practiced in the Church.

But there isn't really one form of government for the Church that would represent "the government of God". **It will always be "the government of men"**. And if it's good and conducive to producing godly traits in the membership, then God will bless it. But even then it will still only be the government of men.

Once we get rid of the false notion that we are going to have "the government of God" in the Church, and we accept that whatever form of governance we may choose, it will not be "God's government", then that opens up the opportunity to evaluate every form of authority structure on its own merits, to fit in with our specific circumstances.

Now let's take another look at 1 Corinthians 12:28.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:28 EXAMINED

Here is this verse again.

And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, **"governments"**, diversities of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Is this supposed to be some kind of government structure? **Obviously not!** And when this "government of God" teaching was developed in the 1950's, there was no attempt made to establish a hierarchy where "the chain of authority" (another popular expression in the government of God teaching) went as follows:

1st = apostles

2nd = prophets

3rd = teachers

4th = those who perform miracles

5th = those with the gifts of healings

6th = those who were "helps"

7th = administrators or counselors

8th = those who had the gift of speaking foreign languages

For those who claim that Paul's use of "first ... second ... third ..." defines a chain of authority, then we need to present **the whole chain that Paul presented**. The "chain" Paul presents in this verse has **eight links**, and not just two or three. If this is supposed to represent "the government of God", then we need to accept the whole chain, and not just pick and choose those links that happen to suit us.

Next, let's face the facts! If we today really had "men who perform miracles" in the Church (i.e. #4 in the above list), **they would not be in 4th place in the hierarchy!** No, **they would assuredly be in 1st place!** Why? Because there is nobody in the world today who has access to that kind of power. And so we would look up to such people as leaders.

Similarly, if we today really had people who had been given the gift of speaking multiple foreign languages, not because they learned a number of languages over many years, but because **that gift was given to them from one day to the next**, then such men would assuredly **not be in 8th position** on the totem pole. No, they would be very close to the top of the chain of authority in the Church. We would be enormously impressed if we understood that some men in God's Church had really **spontaneously** received the gift to speak multiple languages, to give influential sermons in those languages. We would also see such men as being near the top of the chain of authority, not down in 8th place.

We need to recognize that this list of eight things in 1 Corinthians 12:28 represents a list that Paul made up on the fly. That is, **Paul made up this list spontaneously to illustrate a point** he was trying to explain. That point was that the one body is made up of many different members (verse 20), and they all fulfill different functions.

Paul was not trying to present a hierarchy of authority. Just the opposite. The hand and the foot and the eye and the ear (verses 15-16) are not competing for importance; one does not have a higher authority than the other. Paul's point is: **they all fill a need!**

And that is also Paul's point with the eight things he lists in verse 28, that they all fill a need in the Church. But that doesn't mean that one has authority over those lower down the list, any more than the eye has authority over the ear. They all simply fulfill different needs.

This leads us to Ephesians chapter 4.

EPHESIANS 4:11

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he made up a different list. Here it is.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (Ephesians 4:11)

So let's compare these two lists.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul lists: apostles, prophets, teachers, etc.

In Ephesians 4:11 Paul lists: apostles, prophets, **evangelists, pastors**, teachers. And here we don't have any first, second, third.

Why the difference between these two lists? They show differences because **Paul made up both lists on the fly**. Neither list was intended by Paul to represent a hierarchy of authority in the Church.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS REGARDING CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Consider these questions:

Question: Do some offices in the Church involve a certain amount of **authority**?

Answer: **Yes, absolutely!**

Question: With that being the case, can we place all the offices listed by Paul in a **strict hierarchy of authority**?

Answer: **No.**

Question: So are you **opposed to a hierarchy** of authority?

Answer: **No, absolutely not!**

Question: So are you actually **in favor of a hierarchy of authority** in the Church?

Answer: **Yes, absolutely!**

Question: So **what is the problem**?

Answer: The problem is **claiming some godly status** for the hierarchy of authority that is established. The problem is claiming scriptural support for whatever hierarchy someone wants to establish. The hierarchy of authority that is then established may be acceptable, but that doesn't bestow on it a "government of God" status. Claiming a government of God status is **extremely presumptuous!**

Question: So **what should the Church do**?

Answer: Establish a structure of authority that works in our present circumstances (i.e. compared to something that may have been suitable 2,000 and more years ago), but **drop all appeals to "the government of God"**. A top-down authority structure is perfectly acceptable, provided that there is no selfish motivation underlying that choice, without needing to attach some godly status to it.

Question: What is **the main consequence** of your approach?

Answer: The main consequence will be that the Church can **no longer claim God's automatic approval for all the decisions that the Church makes!** This means that all decisions made by the Church can be evaluated **on their own merit**; and then some will be found to be good decisions, and others may turn out to have been bad decisions. Taking the automatic approval implied by a "government of God" claim out of the picture allows for a much more realistic assessment of all the decisions that are made by the Church. And it opens the way for accountability to be expected of those who make decisions.

Question: Can you show us **some practical examples?**

Answer: This understanding means that it was not the government of God that decided to establish a college campus, or to buy an airplane, or to build an auditorium, or establish offices around the world, or publish any number of magazines, etc.

It was a government made up of men that made these decisions. **Even when God guides some or many of those decisions, it is still not "the government of God" that makes those decisions.** It is still simply a government of mortal human beings that makes the decisions. Some decisions may be good, and others may turn out to have been bad. It is only human beings making decisions.

Recall that God said (paraphrased): I set before you a choice, therefore choose life. God guided Moses, and God also guided Joshua after Moses. But when Joshua was then deceived by the men of Gibeon, it wasn't "the government of God" that made a treaty with the Gibeonites (see Joshua 9:14-15). No, it was "the government" of man that made that treaty. God gave the Israelites at that time the freedom to make their own decisions, including ones God did not agree with.

And God likewise gives His Church in New Testament times the freedom to make their own decisions. But a **"government of God" does not have complete freedom of choice**, because a government of God is absolutely restricted to the decisions that express the will of God. No decisions that go against the will of God are acceptable for the government of God. Nothing that the government of God will do will ever be less than perfect.

Now simply because decisions and policies are not expressions of the government of God, that doesn't make those decisions and policies bad or wrong. They must be evaluated on their own merit. And they may very well be good decisions and good policies. But they can be scrutinized far more closely when they are not claimed to be expressions of the government of God.

Question: So **does the ministry have any authority** from God?

Answer: **Yes**, God has given His ministry a certain amount of authority. But that authority has nothing to do with "the government of God". And that authority is not somehow an expression of the government of God.

IN CONCLUSION

So, as far as the government of God is concerned, let's keep the following things in mind:

- 1) No human beings can ever be a part of the government of God.
- 2) Only those who are also "God" can be in that government. This means that angels are not and will not be a part of that government.

- 3) God is in the process of testing and training the people who in the future will be in that government of God.
- 4) But that government is at this time still future. It will only be formed at Jesus Christ's second coming.
- 5) God has given authority to His ministers. But that authority has nothing to do with the government of God. It is the authority to regulate the conduct amongst equals.
- 6) There must be an authority structure in the Church of God.
- 7) But that authority structure has nothing to do with the government of God which will be established at Jesus Christ's second coming.
- 8) That structure for church government may look different at different times. What was the best system in the days of Moses may not have been the ideal in the days of the 12 apostles. And the system employed in the days of the apostles may not be the best system in the year 2020. In other words, there is no merit in trying to recreate some system that was used 2,000 years ago, or even 3,500 years ago.
- 9) The conditions extant in our world today need to be taken into account in establishing the most suitable form of government for the Church of God today.
- 10) And since I am not responsible for organizing any part of the Church of God, therefore I also see no point in trying to make any suggestions regarding what government in the Church of God today should look like. But whatever form of government may be accepted in the Church of God, it should never be based on any selfish motivations by anyone in the leadership hierarchy.

And there should never be any appeals to the Church of God today somehow representing the government of God on earth.

Let's understand that when something is an expression of the will of God, or when something clearly has God's approval, that doesn't somehow make it "the government of God".

Frank W Nelte