God's Laws of Authority

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INTRODUCTION

God is a God of authority. That may not be the first thing you think of when you think about who God is, but it is true nonetheless. Take the great flood of Noah, for instance. Sure, God had the *power* to destroy the earth with water, but he also had the *right* (or, authority) to do it. The Psalmist tells us, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." (Ps. 24:1). In other words, God owns the world He made, so He can do whatever He wants to with it. Ownership is authority - and absolute ownership confers absolute authority.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use?" (Rom. 9:20-21). God's authority over people is absolute.

God's concern with authority extends to every area of human behavior. "For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; he will save us." (Isa. 33:22). All of these things speak of the Lord's authority over our daily lives. As Judge, He has authority to hold us accountable for all of our deeds. As Lawgiver, He has authority to prescribe the rules for our conduct. As King, He is the great governor of the universe, having authority to execute and enforce His laws.

God has also, through the law of nature and his various covenants with men, *delegated* authority to various people for His purposes from time to time. Part of our task is to discover and describe what authority has been given to what people, and what purposes are to be carried out in what places among men. This question of who has what authority and to what extent, is what lawyers refer to as *jurisdiction*. Because one thing we know for certain is that everyone is <u>not</u> authorized to do absolutely everything they want, anywhere they want. Everyone has limits on what they have a right to do. Everyone has a limited jurisdiction.

So the study of human authority is essentially a study in jurisdiction, that is, the *limitations* on our authority. It is every bit as important to know - *more* important, really - what things anyone is *not* authorized to do, as it is to know what they can rightfully do. History is one giant object lesson in what happens when people *usurp* authority, or exercise authority that is not really theirs. And of chief concern to us are those limits to authority prescribed in God's laws.

It is crucial for us to understand these limits if we are to understand how each of us fits into God's authority framework, especially the laws of nature and nature's God (or, *lonang*). For lonang is both the foundation of all human laws, and the supreme law to which all human laws must conform. To the extent lonang limits the authority we have, we had better pay attention. At a minimum, that requires us to carefully discover and accurately describe the limitations God has revealed.

All laws - whether God's or man's - ultimately have two primary functions: 1) to declare which behaviors are right or wrong; and 2) to declare who has the authority to remedy or punish the wrongs (and protect rights). It is the second of these which concerns us in this essay, namely, who can punish wrongs or protect rights, and to what extent. For the most part, I will leave all questions of

right and wrong *behaviors* to another time. It is man's *jurisdiction* that we want to define at this time, not scope out a general morality.

This is the great neglected area of legal analysis, government policy, and moral or religious teaching. Everyone wants to jump straight from determining what is right and wrong to the assumption (actually, an arrogant presumption) that anyone can do anything they want about it. No one wants to go through the intermediate step of determining whether the matter is any of their business. As a consequence, people today are all getting into each other's business - and it's pure chaos.

That is not the way God intended for us to go about things. He cares deeply about questions of jurisdiction. So yes, authority is a big deal with God. *How big*, I intend to show in what follows.

AUTHORITY IS A PRIORITY WITH GOD

Authority vs. Power

The Creator God is the ultimate source of power and authority in the universe. That He holds this infinite power is generally acknowledged when people refer to God as being omnipotent, all-powerful, or as the Almighty. People are much less inclined to acknowledge God's infinite authority. It's funny how we have convenient words for God being all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), and existing everywhere (omnipresent), but no convenient word for Him as the source of all authority. Perhaps that betrays the human tendency to view ourselves as the ultimate source of our own authority.

Power and authority often go together, of course. "And he called the twelve together and gave them *power and authority* over all demons and to cure diseases." (Lk. 9:1). "Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, *authorities, and powers* having been subjected to him." (1 Pet. 3:21b-22). "These are of one mind and hand over their *power and authority* to the beast." (Rev. 17:13).

However, power and authority are not the same. *Power* primarily refers to strength and the ability to act. *Authority* normally signifies the lawful right to act. The word *authority*, in English, is derived from the word *author*, which helps explain its meaning. The phrase *the author of our being* is a common reference to God as Creator, who has all ultimate authority over us, because He alone has made us.

People have always craved power and authority. They want power to make things happen according to their own will, but they also want some semblance of authority as a way to stifle challengers. It's not very enviable to be the king of the mountain, if anyone can knock you off the top at any time simply by using raw power against you. Authority, whether civil or moral, is a way to help make people submissive to your will even if they have the superior power. However, just because a person has either power or authority, does *not* mean they have the other.

The question is, which one is most likely to lead to the other? The *might makes right* school of

thought (the preferable choice historically) says, in essence, grab as much power as you possibly can, then change the laws to keep you in power. However, God is more aligned with the *right makes might* perspective, as we will see.

But this helps explain the strategy long used by the power hungry. While grabbing power, use all the tools at your disposal, such as running for office and choosing "a life of public service" - often just a euphemism for feeding at the public trough. And to the extent possible, make things appear like God is on your side. Or at the very least, make an effort to be perceived as a religious person (actual religious belief is not required). If you can do both, so much the better.

That is why the preferred method of achieving great power historically was to use both civil authority and moral/religious authority as a means of keeping people in line. (Which is contrary to the modern evolved mind set of keeping government and religion completely separate.) In other words, to suppress the most opposition, convince people that your position of power is approved both by the laws of men and the laws of God. Once God is on your side, most people are less inclined to challenge your leadership.

We tend to view church and state as being some kind of polar opposites, but historically the more those two things are aligned, the more effectively they can be used to squelch dissent. Put aside any ideological objections to religious establishments and view it in purely pragmatic terms. Two sources of authority are better than one for shaping public opinion, and nothing is better than if those two sources happen to speak with one voice. For the purely power hungry, there is no better method of silencing dissent.

Thus, it should not really be a surprise to see in our supposedly enlightened times the resurgence of calls for religious states where governmental and religious functions are commingled. Religion and the state speak with one voice to coerce compliance, control the expression of opinions, suppress dissent, and discourage challenges to those in power. Sure, you have to abandon all sense of traditional morality as well as any reliance on established legal principles, and adopt a purely cynical view of society. But if your goal is world domination, it's an obvious choice.

However, if despotic totalitarianism isn't your thing, then it might be advantageous to examine a framework of authority adopted by a God who recognizes the difference between *power* and *authority*. Someone like the God of the Bible and nature, who allows for freedom of expression, open dissent, and holding people in positions of power accountable. A God who treats all people as equal under the law. And especially, a God who holds that the authority men possess is limited, those limits can be known, and should be enforced.

A God Of Authority

The God referred to in the phrase, *the laws of nature and nature's God*, is the Creator who made not only the physical universe, but also all of the governing powers and authorities of the universe. His name is *Jehovah*, aka the God Most High.

> And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth." (Gen. 14:19).
>
> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Col. 1:16).

There is no one greater than this God. There is no hierarchy of deities - no pecking order, no big or little gods, no demigods or semi-gods, and no man-made gods. There is only one God, and He has chosen to manifest Himself on the earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

> What is the immeasurable greatness of [God's] power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet. (Eph. 1:19-22).
>
> You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (Col. 2:10).

There is no realistic way to fight this God. We are creatures of God, and are merely part of the larger creation in which all powers and authorities are a part. There is nowhere anyone can go to escape God's laws, and there are no limits to His jurisdiction. Our consent and approval are completely irrelevant to the question of whether we are captives to this system. Practically speaking, as I see it, once you know what the system is, just figure out how to work within it and make the best of it. But if you would rather beat your head against the wall for absolutely no possible benefit, don't let me stop you. Just realize it will get you nowhere, in the long run.

I will cover this subject in much greater detail below.

Authority Is Important To God

In the Beginning

From the beginning, authority issues have defined the human condition, but you've probably never heard things explained that way. And when I say *beginning*, I mean right from the very start of man's creation, way back in the Garden of Eden. Think about it - and for a moment forget all that stuff about pride, desire, wanting to be like God, faith, and belief vs. unbelief. All those things figure in at some point, but they are *downstream* from the authority issues - so don't let them interfere with your understanding of what is really going on.

Let's break it down. On the sixth day of creation, the first people are standing before God and what is the first thing He says to them? "Hi, I'm God. How are you feeling? What do you want to do today?" Not quite. Or perhaps He said, "Now that we're all here, show me your love and respect and bow down to Me." Nope - not even close.

God said, in essence, "Reproduce and fill the earth. Take charge over the earth and the entire animal kingdom." He also added, "You may eat any plant yielding seed (*i.e.*, flowering plants), and every tree fruit with seeds." (Gen. 1:28-29). Stop. Analyze. What are these statements? *Grants of authority, each and every one of them*.

God doesn't start off with, "Now it's your job to love Me and also love each other." It's not about trust or faith or belief. It's all about authority. *You are authorized to have children. You are authorized to take dominion. You are authorized to eat these foods.* The first thing, and the only thing, God tells His new creation is what they are authorized to do.

Now comes the *proviso* - an exception, if you will. "Don't eat the fruit of this one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (Gen. 2:16-17). Stop. Analyze. What is that? A restriction or a limitation on the authority to eat plants originally granted. See? It's not that complicated. *Here are the things you can do, and here is the one thing you must not do.* Again, it's not about love or trust or faith or belief. *Here is the limit of your authority - don't exceed it.*

In fact, everything about God's early encounters with mankind relates to authority, even after the first conversation. *Tend the garden. Name the animals. Choose a helper.* (Gen. 2:15-23). Each of these is a task, carried out pursuant to some granted authority. Love's got nothing to do with it.

What does this tell us? We may reasonably assume that whatever things God addressed first are the most essential for survival. So, if the very first concern God had for the welfare of the human race was to establish certain rules of authority, then that must be what was most important to Him. And if that is what was most important to our Creator, then it should be the most important concern to us, as well. See? Not that complicated.

Then, in Gen. 3, God deals with the consequences of what? - hate, mistrust, unbelief, lack of faith? No, with the consequences of *disobedience* (or, exceeding the limits of authority). And we're still dealing with those consequences today. Yes, I'm saying that the Fall of mankind was at root an authority issue. God said, "Don't." People said, "We can if we want to." And then punishment followed. Just think about the enormity of the consequences of the Fall, and then ask yourself whether authority issues are important to God.

The Mark of Cain

The very next encounter between God and people is equally instructive regarding authority. In Gen. 4, Cain murders his brother Abel. Yes, I actually mean to say *murder*, and not just *kill* - for Cain was not authorized to take his brother's life. It was an unauthorized killing. We can talk about what made it unauthorized some other time - a lack of express authority to take a life, an implied prohibition flowing from the laws of nature, or whatever. For now, let's skip to the end and focus on God's response. Clearly, God regarded Cain's actions as improper - unlawful - unauthorized.

What we have in Gen. 4:10-15 is the first ever bench trial, with Cain as defendant, Abel's blood cried out from the ground as a witness for the prosecution, and God was judge. The initial sentence

of judgment was one of forced vagrancy. Cain would be a fugitive and wanderer on the earth. Upon hearing the sentence, Cain objected that it was more than he can bear. (Note that Cain did not say, "But you never told me I couldn't!" or "I didn't know it was wrong." Why? Because those were never in question.)

Cain had one further objection. "Whoever finds me will kill me." To which God responded, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him *sevenfold*." And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. (Gen. 4:15). Which begs the question - Why would God protect a murderer?

People often have the wrong idea about *the mark of Cain*. The mark was not an additional punishment or an identification of evil, but a form of *protection*. Cain's mark was God's way of preventing a revenge killing. If you are inclined to look for an analogy in prophecy, the mark of Cain was more like the protective seal of God on the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1), than the mark of the Beast (Rev. 13:16-18). Don't assume the mark of Cain was an indication of evil, just because that's the way it is portrayed in popular culture.

At that point in time God had not authorized anyone to punish murder. Such authority would not be granted until more than 1,600 years later, after the great flood. (Gen. 9:6). However, it's not as though a revenge killing would be just as bad as what Cain did - it would be *seven times* as bad. Yes, that's what *sevenfold* means. Which, if nothing else, shows how seriously God takes the whole issue of authority. Questions of authority are not merely a passing concern with God. Authority questions cut to the very core of what we can and cannot do in life. *So we had better pay attention*.

Gen. 4 exemplifies what I call the two ***Supreme Rules of Authority***.

- *First*, God's laws determine what is right and wrong, and man's laws must conform to God's.
- *Second*, it is never enough to know right from wrong. One must also determine to whom, and to what extent, God has granted enforcement authority.

Unfortunately, no one ever asks the second question. However, the second question is more important to God than the first - arguably seven times more important.

In other words, authority is a big deal to God. In fact, the whole question of defining what *sin* is, is an authority question. At root, sin is any violation of God's law, the function of which is to tell us what things are right and what things are wrong. But ultimately, all questions of right and wrong are just authority issues - what things does God authorize us to do (right), and what has He prohibited us from doing (wrong)?

A Fixed Order of Authority

Authority doesn't just happen by accident, nor is it a product of the survival of the fittest. God's framework of authority has *structure* and *organization*. He actually has *rules* of authority, by which we can test whether someone's claim to authority is justified. God is a God of *order*, and He has made the universe to reflect this fact.

> "Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the ***fixed order*** of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the Lord of hosts is his name." (Jer. 31:35). "Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun. You have ***fixed*** all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter." (Ps. 74:16-17).

Just as the physical universe is regarded by the Lord as a *fixed order*, so the jurisdiction of every person (or the right to make, declare or enforce the laws of God) is determined by a *fixed order*. Nothing is left to chance, nor is it random. And He has not left us in the dark as to what these rules of authority are.

> Man, considered as a creature, must necessarily be subject to the laws of his creator, for he is entirely a dependent being. . . . And consequently as man depends absolutely upon his maker for every thing, it is necessary that he should in all points conform to his maker's will. This will of his maker is called the law of nature. These are the eternal, immutable laws of good and evil, to which the creator himself in all his dispensations conforms; and which he has enabled human reason to discover, so far as they are necessary for the conduct of human actions. (W. Blackstone, 1 *Commentaries on the Laws of England* *39-40 (1765).)

> The law of nature, by the obligations of which individuals and states are bound, is identical with the will of God, and that will is ascertained . . . either by consulting Divine revelation, where that is declaratory, or by the application of human reason, where revelation is silent. (James Kent, *Commentaries on American Law* 2-4 (1827).)

God is not only a God of authority, but He has prescribed a whole set of rules which constitute a fixed order of authority. He has revealed these laws of authority both in creation itself, which we can discover by observation and the use of reason (the law of nature), and in the scriptures of the Bible (the law of nature's God). He has so plainly revealed these laws that if we claim to be ignorant of them, we have no excuse. And His laws are absolutely supreme - our laws, of whatever kind or description, need to conform absolutely to His laws.

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So ***they are without excuse***. (Rom. 1:18-20).

Now, let us see what, specifically, God's general laws of authority are - not for ancient Israel, but for all people, everywhere, at all times.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF AUTHORITY

As I mentioned earlier, ownership is authority, and ownership comes from being the creator of something. So if God created the world, then He owns it completely, and that gives Him ultimate authority over it. All authority we possess must be given to us, either directly or indirectly, by Him. The process of giving authority is referred to as *delegation*. It is now our job to trace the nature and instances of these delegations, their limitations, and how they are distributed among men. We need to ask the question: *Where does authority really come from?*

The Delegation Principle

The Delegation Principle of authority is that **all human authority is delegated, not inherent**. I break this main principle into three corollaries.

1. ***All authority ultimately belongs to God.*** In scripture, the relationship between the Creator and the creation is likened to a potter working with clay. God is the potter, people and nations are like clay to Him, and He can do anything He wants with that clay. He can make us into anything that pleases Him, even to the extent of reforming or destroying any nation or individual.

> "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it." (Jer. 18:6-10).

God's authority even includes the right to destroy the creation which he made.

> Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. . . . And behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish." (Gen. 6:13,17).

God's authority is not limited to material things, nor are His laws or His governing authority limited to physical laws (physics, chemistry, mechanics, etc.). As we have already seen, His authority extends to all thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities. Which means that God not only has the right to declare all rules of right and wrong behavior, but also who has what authority (if any) to administer those behavioral rules. In other words, God has the right to tell all thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities what they can and cannot do when ruling over people.

2. ***Some authority has been delegated to men***. Since God is the only uncreated being in the

universe, He is the only one whose authority is *inherent*. Everyone else takes by delegation. Even Jesus said, "I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me." (Jn. 8:28b). This may be understood to be a form of delegation. But it's easy to confuse what authority Christ was given by reason of His divinity, and what He obtained as a man. Has God, in fact, delegated authority to regular people? Yes, He has.

Primarily, these delegations have been made through the various covenants between God and men. Historically, in America, this collection of authorizations has been referred to as *the laws of nature's God*. Thus, the very first conversation between God and people when He authorized them to have children, exercise dominion, and to eat certain plants, is often referred to as the Adamic covenant. In a later delegation of authority following the great flood, often called the Noahic covenant, God told people to eat meat and to institute capital punishment for the crime of murder.

> Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ... And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. (Gen. 9:3, 5-6).

For convenience, I'll continue to look at the Adamic and Noahic covenants as a way to flesh out the basic principles of God's laws of authority.

3. ***God reserves for Himself all authority which has not been delegated***. We already know that God reserves the right to judge all the nations throughout history, even to the point of again destroying the entire creation as a means of enforcing His word and His law.

> . . . by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2 Pet. 3:5-7).

It is only logical, if authority vests in the creator of something, and we are merely creatures made by God, that people can never have the full scope of authority which God has. Whatever authority God delegates to men, there must always be some aspects of authority which He keeps for Himself, and which it is impossible for people to exercise, because to exercise it would require us to be gods. Thus, people can never truly destroy the earth, or even be really capable of it, because God alone has the authority to do so. It is an authority which is *reserved*.

(This fact alone should make you reconsider all those Hollywood films depicting the end of the earth, whether by the actions of mankind, asteroids or by alien attack. What sheer and utter nonsense. God is simply not going to *allow* anyone or anything to usurp his position and authority as the creator and destroyer of the world. This is *His* world, baby. It also puts into perspective all the political hoopla over our supposed moral duty to *save the planet*. What moral duty? On the basis of what morality? What stupidity. No one can, or will, save this planet except for God.)

This is a bedrock principle having many ramifications. For example, God alone can read our minds and judge our hearts. This is both a statement of authority and capability. Nothing good can come from human attempts to penetrate the mind of others via science. Similarly, using the organs of law and government to judge a person's thoughts or intentions, to ascertain a guilty conscience, to punish opinions, or to force a person's education or re-education is inherently ill-conceived. Yet, whole industries of people are constantly engaged in attempting to do these very things. What does that say about us, except that we desire to be gods?

There is also the question of who picks up the slack, as it were, whenever God has failed to (or decided not to) give a particular authority to anyone specifically. To whom, for example, has God given the authority to explore outer space? If the answer is *no one specifically*, does that authority stay with God in the heavens, or is it picked up by, say for example (I'm just being totally random here), civil government? The logical consequence of which is, if civil government is the lord of the heavens (outer space), then civil government must be God. And the corollary which follows is, if that is true, our authority must all ultimately come from civil government (*i.e.*, men), and there is no God. So ask yourself - Who is the Lord of the Heavens - God or men/government?

The Limitation Principle

The Limitation Principle of authority is that **all human authority is limited, not absolute**.

1. ***Human authority extends only to that which God gives him***. We already know that no person's authority originates with themselves. Everything we have authority to do must be given to us by the Creator. The logical extension of this line of reasoning is that unless a specific authority has been delegated to us, we don't have it. This is the *universal principle of enumerated powers*.

You may be familiar with this idea as a principle of constitutional interpretation. The constitutional principle holds that the federal government only has those specific powers which are expressly enumerated, or expressly stated, in the text of the Constitution. *Powers not delegated are reserved* to the people or the states. (See, Tenth Amend.) In other words, there are no implied (or unexpressed) powers. ***If a power isn't expressly delegated, it does not exist***.

However, the law of enumerated powers (broadly speaking) is not only a constitutional principle, nor is it merely a school of thought among scholars. It is the way the universe works, because that is the way God made it.

We have already seen that no one could punish Cain for murdering Abel because God had not authorized anyone to exercise jurisdiction over the law of murder. Until the authority to punish murder had been *expressly* delegated after the great flood, no one could rightfully claim it had been granted. That is what the law of enumerated powers is: anything not expressly delegated is necessarily withheld.

There are numerous examples of this in the scriptures. No one could eat meat until God said they could. God wasn't simply ratifying or acknowledging what people were already doing in Gen. 9:3.

Until He spoke the words of authorization (an express delegation or enumeration), that authority had been withheld.

Other examples abound. Saul lost his kingdom because he took it upon himself to offer a sacrifice that he had not been authorized to make. (1 Sam. 13:8-13). Athaliah was put to death because she took it upon herself to seize the throne of Israel by force, knowing full well that only male heirs of the king were authorized to sit on the throne. (1 Ki. 11:1-16). Uzzah lost his life when he reached out to stabilize the ark of the covenant, because no one was authorized to touch it except indirectly with poles. (1 Chr. 13:9-10).

In none of these cases was a perceived *necessity* sufficient to overcome the lack of an express delegation. It didn't matter that Saul felt it necessary to offer the sacrifice in order to prevent the army from scattering. That necessity did not function as a justification for him to go beyond the limits of his authority. Same for Uzzah, who thought it was necessary for him to prevent the ark of the covenant from falling. Mere necessity is neither an express delegation, nor a justification of authority. *Necessity alone grants neither rights nor powers*.

Accordingly, my earlier statement can be modified as follows: no person's authority originates with themselves *or from mere circumstances*. For that is what necessity really is: a mere circumstance, which is not a delegation. A delegation requires *words granting authority*.

2. ***Human authority is limited by the terms of the delegation***. Human nature being what it is, we all tend to abhor the idea that our authority is strictly limited to expressly enumerated powers. So we play word games, implying and inferring things that are in fact unsaid. But the implications only ever go in one direction - that of *expanding* our authority, never shrinking it. When in doubt, assume more. *Better to ask forgiveness than permission*, etc.

We see this all the time in the political sphere. The federal government today exercises all sorts of powers that were never actually granted by the Constitution. Things such as federal police power (the FBI, etc.) which was left exclusively to the states, courts that operate in secret (FISA Court), federal agencies independent of the three branches of government, federal regulation of land use, health care, and communications, and a whole host of other things. One of my favorites is the supposed oversight power of Congress - but there is no oversight clause in the Constitution. All of which federal powers were never expressly granted, but have only been unlawfully *implied* (and not by the framers, but by later generations).

However, God has not given us a world where authority may be continually expanded as a result of implication, perceived necessity, or longstanding custom. In God's universe, it is better to ask permission, than to commit the sin of presumption.

For example, the Dominion Mandate (Gen. 1:28) gave people authority over the earth, the fish, the birds, and every living *thing* on the earth. However, people are never referred to as "things" in the Bible, but as "beings." Thus, the Dominion Mandate confers no authority - express or implied - for people to rule over each other, because the Mandate confers no jurisdiction over *beings*. Dominion

authority is limited to animals, plants and the ground. The jurisdiction to rule over people must be derived from somewhere else (that is, from some other express delegation), such as *the consent of the governed*.

This does not mean we ought to read God's word woodenly. The Dominion Mandate grants families the right to bear children (to be fruitful and multiply). Do we read this to mean that parents may reproduce, but may *not* provide for, educate, or discipline their children? No - other scriptures make it clear parents are not only authorized, but have a natural duty, to do these things. But while we infer that families are to provide for each other, and even parents in their later years, we *do not* infer that children may discipline their parents, or that husbands may discipline their wives. Our reading and understanding of God's delegations of authority must be consistent with *the whole counsel of God*.

The task we have is to continually be aware of what God has actually said, and to test any power or authority we might want to exercise against the totality of scripture. It's all laid out for us right there, if we would only consult it. There is no excuse for remaining blissfully ignorant of the divine limitations on our authority, and just acting as if God will approve whatever we do if it's done with a good motive. Motivation is important, but it doesn't eliminate the need to adhere to God's actual words. Good intentions do not excuse ignorance. The road to hell is paved with ... you know.

3. ***No one defines his own authority***. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master." (Mat. 10:24). "Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him." (Jn 13:16). A fundamental principle of the law of nature is that any recipient of a delegated authority - such as a servant, or a messenger - is not free to define the scope of his own authority. What that *delegee* is authorized to do is limited by whatever the *delegator* has decided. The recipient is not greater than the grantor.

If we start with the premise that all human authority does not originate with ourselves, but comes from someone else (ultimately tracing back to God), then this limitation becomes an inviolate rule. We *never* get to set the limits of out own authority. The scope of any authority we exercise in our human existence is always defined not by us, but by the one who gives us authority. When we attempt to define our own authority, we essentially claim that we are the source of our own authority, which is tantamount to claiming to be God.

I stress that this is an inviolate rule because popular culture today is rife with the motif that things created can and will rise up against their creators. We see this motif in numerous variations, whether monsters created by men which destroy their creators, in the rise of machines and/or artificial intelligence against humanity, or in the rebellion of demonic forces attempting to overthrow the one true God. All such cultural motifs are ultimately an allegory for the desire of mankind to rise up and not only be like gods, but to throw down all challengers to our own divinity, including the Author of our being.

Practically speaking, all such overthrows are doomed to fail. Another fundamental principle of the law of nature is that no creature can ever be greater than its creator. Mankind will never create

anything which will ultimately destroy humanity. The machines will never rise up. Satan and his demon hordes will wage war against the Almighty, but lose. People will never become gods. Sorry to burst your bubble. Why fantasize about, and allow yourself to be entertained by, a scenario that simply isn't possible and will never happen? Isn't that the definition of folly?

We know, of course, since human nature is corrupted, that whenever anyone makes an effort to define their own authority (especially when it comes to ruling over other people), they will tend invariably to excess. And all excess authority I claim for myself ultimately robs someone else who has that authority lawfully. Now it may be another person or institution I deprive by my usurpation, or it may be God's reserved jurisdiction that I rob, but all such excesses step in someone else's jurisdiction and work an evil. That is why, in God's authority framework, defining our own authority is something we simply must not do.

The legally defined offense of contempt can be understood in this light. Contempt is the unauthorized assumption of jurisdiction to declare one's own authority. In effect, a contemptuous litigant declares that he has authority to judge his own case, and that his authority is superior to the jurisdiction of the judge. By the Mosaic law, a person guilty of judicial contempt was to be executed. "And the man who acts presumptuously by not listening to . . . the judge, that man shall die." (Deut. 17:12). Although contempt isn't a capital offense among Gentile nations today, the unauthorized assertion of jurisdiction is still a serious offense in God's eyes.

The Diffusion Principle

The Diffusion Principle of authority is that **human authority is diffuse, not concentrated**.

1. ***God distributes authority to many people at a time, not just a few***. The means God has chosen to use to delegate authority to people is the covenant. We have already briefly mentioned the first two of these, the Adamic covenant and Noahic covenant. Both of these illustrate the Diffusion Principle beautifully, because both covenants apply to all people living today. (You can't get any more diffuse than that.)

The Adamic covenant, though given initially only to two people, is nonetheless applicable to all the *descendants* of those first people. Humanity would have been short-lived if, in fact, only the first two people had been authorized to procreate and have children, but their children were not likewise authorized to procreate. For the human race to survive, the authorization to procreate must be a continuing authorization for all people. And since all people ever born subsequently are descendants of those first two people, all people alive today are authorized to procreate after the manner of Adam and Eve.

However, the Adamic covenant, taken as a whole, is a package deal. The authorizations to have (and raise) children, to take dominion over the animal kingdom and to subdue the earth, and to eat plants for food, were all spoken to the same people in the same context at the same time, in the same sentence. Thus, they rise or fall together as a unit - the provisions cannot be separated from each other. If the authority to procreate attaches to every person alive today, then so does the authority

to rule over the animal kingdom, to subdue the earth, and to eat plants.

The same is true for the Noahic covenant, which by its terms is expressly made applicable to all the descendants of the people it was first given to. (Gen. 9:9.) If we assume the biblical account is accurate (*i.e.*, that literally everyone alive at the time was killed in the flood except for the eight survivors to whom the covenant was spoken), then everyone alive today is a descendant of Noah as well as Adam. Meaning, the authorities granted in the Noahic covenant apply to all people today.

Again, this is a necessary consequence, if the authorizations and promises of the Noahic covenant are to have any real significance. I refer, of course, to the sign of the rainbow and God's promise not to flood the world again. Can anyone possibly suggest, if this sign and promise are to have any covenantal meaning at all, that they apply to only *some* of the people on the earth, but not all? No, of necessity, either this promise applies to everyone alive today, or it is meaningless.

But then we have that whole *package deal* thing going on again. The authorizations to repopulate the earth, eat meat, and implement capital punishment for murder, were all given to the same people (and their descendants) in the same context, at the same time, and in the same speech, as the promise not to flood the earth again. Which leads to a similar conclusion, namely, that everyone alive today has the benefit of these promises and authorizations, as much as the promise of the rainbow.

2. ***God hasn't given any person total authority***. As the preceding discussion shows, God didn't just give dominion to some people, and not to others. He gave dominion (procreation, dominion and food) to everyone, diffusely. There are no concentrations of dominion authority among men. I don't have to go through you, or get your permission, to exercise dominion authority, nor you through me. I don't have the right to hold you accountable for your exercise of dominion authority, nor do you to hold me accountable. Why? Because we each received that authority directly from God, and He alone can hold each of us accountable. Dominion authority is *diffuse* - no one has more than anyone else, and there is no pecking order with respect to dominion.

Similarly with respect to the Noahic covenant - the authority granted is diffuse. There are no concentrations of power or authority to repopulate the earth, to control the meat supply, or to exercise capital punishment. Yes, that's exactly what I said, and exactly what I mean. Unless, of course, your Bible explicitly says that the authority to exercise capital punishment was given to civil government and/or civil rulers. It doesn't? Neither does mine.

In fact, if you just think about it honestly, when the Noahic covenant was made, *there were no civil governments or civil rulers*. There weren't even any nations in existence at that time - there were only eight people, all in the same family. So how could the authority to exercise capital punishment belong exclusively to civil governments? When and by what mechanism was that authority transferred on behalf of all persons living today?

There is absolutely nothing in the language or context of either the Adamic or Noahic covenants to suggest that among the recipients of God's authorizations, some people received more authority than others. No one received supervisory authority over others, and no one at all was ever put "in

charge" of how the terms of the covenant were to be carried out. In fact, the opposite is true: equality is the rule among the beneficiaries of God's covenants.

What is true for the Adamic and Noahic covenants holds true for the later covenants, as well. Even though the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants pertain primarily to the nation of Israel (rather than the whole of humanity), yet the same principle of diffusion applies. Certainly no one under either the Abrahamic or Mosaic covenants has more authority than anyone else, which is to say that equality is the rule among all the Jewish people. God never put anyone in charge of the Promised Land under the Abrahamic covenant (which perhaps helps explain why so many people are claiming that authority for themselves even today).

Also, the national government implemented under the Mosaic government was perhaps the most decentralized national government ever on the face of the earth. Just keep in mind the statement of Jdg. 21:25, and think of it not as a value judgment, but merely as a fact. Namely, everyone did what was right in their own eyes. No one was king. What does that say? *Authority and power were diffuse. No one was in charge*. No one supervised anyone else.

Granted, the Davidic covenant has become a special case. Instead of diffusion, there is now a concentration. Originally granting authority over the throne of Israel to the male descendants of David (but no one in particular), it has now become vested exclusively in one individual, Christ. So there is one significant covenantal exception to the diffusion principle. But that exception applies solely to Jesus as the God-Man, not to any mere man.

But when the church covenant came on the scene, what was the rule? Authority to become a member of the body of Christ and to take the gospel to the world was not limited to the people who initially heard the Great Commission. Nor was the authority granted to merely the descendants or designees of those people. Rather, the authority of the Church was granted to all who believe, equally with respect to each other. No person or group was granted more or special spiritual authority compared to others.

Further, no one was given supervisory authority, and most importantly, *no one on earth was put in charge of the Church*. What? Did you think God was going to change His whole *modus operandi* of dishing out covenant authority just because the Church was involved? Not a chance.

3. ***The diffusion of powers is the rule***. God has spread His delegations of authority around so that everyone has some God-given authority, but no one has it all, nor even a preponderance of the available authority. Everyone is in charge of themselves for some purposes, and responsible to others for other purposes. But no one is ultimately higher than others, or the 'top dog' in society. Equality is the rule, and there absolutely are no exceptions. None.

In God's framework, all individuals have the same authority compared to each other, all families have the same authority as each other, all nations have the same authority as each other, and all churches have the same authority as each other. So what has been the historic and universal human response to this? Why, to concentrate power among certain individuals, certain families, certain

nations, and certain churches, of course. But that is never what God intended. In fact, I would characterize all such attempts as *inherently evil*.

THE SOCIAL ORDER

Now that we have laid out the basic principles of God's laws of authority, let's explore them further. Specifically, exactly what authority has been given to people by God?

Institutions vs. Associations

The first great distinction to be made in understanding the social order is between the things which God has created, and the things which people create. The things God has made I refer to as *institutions* - and when I say *things*, what I really mean is *social relationships*. The things (*i.e.*, social relationships) which people make are voluntary *associations*.

Obviously, people are intrinsically involved in the formation of all social relationships, whether of institutions or associations. I am not suggesting that God forces people to make any specific relationships, nor that He predetermines who will become a Christian, etc. Nothing I'm saying here has any bearing on the matter of individual *free will*.

The distinction I'm drawing relates to origins and definitions, namely, that there are certain types of social relationships (institutions) which are formed the moment we are born. These relationships are fundamentally different from those which are formed later on in life, precisely because the relationships themselves pre-date our own existence. In point of fact, the institutions were never invented or originally defined by people at all.

> *Institutions* are those social relationships which: 1) are created by God; 2) are a condition into which a person is born (or born subject to); 3) are governed by a pre-existing covenant; and 4) have a pre-defined legal relationship. The biblical record indicates that only four such institutions exist, and no others.
>
> *Associations* are those social relationships which are: 1) created by people; 2) governed by common assent; 3) have a self-defined legal relationship; and 4) a relationship which a person voluntarily joins. Associations include all social relationships other than the legal institutions, such as schools, clubs, employment, businesses, charities, unions, political parties, etc.

Associations may assist the legal institutions in carrying out their purposes, but associations may not usurp, or exercise authority over, the jurisdiction of any institution. The reason is simple. Since all human authority is derived from God (and not the reverse), the legal authority of human creations is always subservient to the authority of God's creations. *Institutions always (without exception) have a superior authority compared to associations.*

I will not dwell on associations in this essay except to draw a contrast between them and the social institutions God has made. Keep in mind the core question to be considered in this section: *Exactly*

*what authority has been given to people **by God**?* And the answer is, with respect to all human associations, ***none***. God only gives authority to the social relationships He has made. All man-made relationships derive their authority solely from people. ***(Spoiler Alert: this includes both civil governments and churches, as explained below.)***

So in discussing the extent of authority God has delegated to people, the first thing we need to do is make a carve-out for all voluntary associations. Schools, businesses, nonprofit groups, clubs, business leagues, political parties and every other type of association other than the four institutions created by God have no direct authority from Him. Consequently, in this essay, we will largely ignore them. They do not fit into God's legal framework except by the principle of consent of the governed, and the laws of property and contract, etc. Our concern here is to focus on the God-made institutions, as they form the core of the social order for humanity that God has instituted.

It is fashionable in popular culture to denigrate the social institutions as the legacy of a dead hand. Either they are portrayed as the arbitrary, artificial and outmoded hand-me-downs of generations long past, or they are seen as a series of constraints imposed by a God we no longer want - to be thrown off and left in the ash heap of history. To be sure, the social institutions do impose a form of constraint, but it is a constraint that was (and is) designed to provide a beneficial context and framework for society. Ultimately, the goal of each of the social institutions is to promote the greatest amount of liberty and happiness for both individuals and society as a whole.

The institutions do not weigh us down with burdens, so much as they free us up to be true to our natures. True liberty is the freedom to perform our duties to God as He directs us, that is, the freedom to be all that God created us to be. A knowledge of the institutions gives us God's perspective on how to maximize the fruit of liberty, namely, freedom, prosperity and happiness. God's constraints are beneficial, not harmful. Rebelling against these constraints is ultimately counter-productive - it will only produce misery. It is no accident that one of the purposes of the Gospel (or *Good News*) is to proclaim liberty. *See*, Lk 4:18.

The Four Institutions

I noted above that there are only four social institutions, and they are: 1) individuals; 2) families; 3) nations; and 4) the body of Christ (the universal Church). Each of these has a corresponding type of governmental structure associated with it, namely, self-government, family government, civil government, and church government.

However, I can't assume that all of us are necessarily on the same page. Let me now walk you through the institutions so you can see how each of them meets the criteria I laid out earlier, and no other relationships do. I also want to briefly survey the governmental nature of each institution.

Individuals

• *Creation* - Every individual person is a creation of God. People can *procreate*, but no one except God can create life.

- *Birth* - Every person since Adam and Eve has entered this world the same way - by being born.
- *Covenant* - The Adamic and Noahic covenants apply to every individual born since the flood, because everyone born since then is a descendant of both Adam and Noah.
- *Relationship* - With respect to God, every person is not only individually morally responsible, but is also born into sin, that is, separated from God and with a nature pre-disposed to rebel.

It is fairly common for people to talk about the basic units of society as consisting of the family, the Church, and civil government. There are two fundamental errors in that belief: the first is the mistaken identification of civil government as an institution created by God (a matter which I will address below). The second is the omission of the individual as an institution. Usually, the family is identified as being the *most fundamental* unit of society. This is both unfortunate and short-sighted. Without the institution of the individual, none of the others would exist.

You may think I'm speaking in merely physical terms, but actually I'm talking *governmentally*. Without the underlying foundation of individual *self-government*, then family government, national (or civil) government, and church government would not be possible.

As families bear children and exercise dominion, who is making sure the members of the family love, respect and honor each other, and function together as a unit for the benefit of everyone? Ultimately, if the members of the family do not govern themselves rightly, no outside force in heaven or on earth can force them to act for the mutual benefit of the family unit. If self-government is absent among the family members, then family government will fail. The main reason families are faltering today is because husbands are unwilling to act as husbands, wives are unwilling to act as wives, and parents and children are unwilling to behave as parents and children should. All of which are failures of individual self-government.

The same argument obviously applies to church government and civil government as well. Why do churches have member discipline issues and staff behavioral issues? Because the individuals in churches aren't governing themselves properly. Why do nations and states have crime problems and criminal populations that only seem to get worse? Because individual members of society aren't governing themselves properly. Everything starts with the individual - and ends with the individual, too. Leave a consideration of self-government out of the picture, and you've missed the whole thing.

Admittedly, families, the Church and nations all have multiple members, so in that sense the individual is unlike the rest. However, individual self-government concerns the most fundamental of all interpersonal relationships - that between every person and God. Yes, God is a *person*, not an impersonal *force*.

If you think I am here referring to the matter of redemption, or personal salvation, you would be wrong. I am still speaking *governmentally*, *i.e.*, how each person relates to God's laws. How does each individual regulate himself or herself in the light of the laws of nature and nature's God? *That is the question*. Answer that question correctly, and everything else falls into place. Answer it wrongly, and nothing else much matters. Yes, my friend - the individual is a social institution.

Families

• *Creation* - The family is not an invention of people to serve a useful or convenient purpose, but a relation imposed by God as part of His design for human society in the beginning.
• *Birth* - Every person is born into a parent-child relationship which is peculiar to the family institution. No one gets to choose their parents or other relatives.
• *Covenant* - Both the Adamic and Noahic covenants command people to *be fruitful and multiply*, that is, to reproduce through the bearing of children. This is to be lawfully done exclusively within the context of the family.
• *Relationship* - God has determined the parameters of authority each person may exercise in the family, not leaving these to individual determination (*i.e.*, husband-wife, parent-child, etc.).

To some extent, all of the basic institutions have been under definitional attack in recent years. In the individual context, we are seeing this played out with respect to gender identity and trans-gender issues. What it means to be an individual is also being tested in the fields of artificial intelligence and the attempts to create life via cloning, etc.

Similarly, our nation is being barraged by voices attempting to remake the Constitution and redefine what it means to be a nation of the people, by the people and for the people. As for the Church, it was once viewed as being exclusionary (Jesus is the only way, etc.). Now it is being thrown open to all comers, so much so that conduct which was once universally prohibited is now openly practiced by church leaders. The Narrow Gate has been replaced by the Big Tent.

Yet, perhaps none of the basic institutions has been under attack more than the family. The early attacks started by assaulting marriage with the imposition of no-fault divorce, followed by the recognition of domestic contracts. Both of these diminished marriage as a relationship governed by a pre-existing (divinely constructed) covenant. Then followed a wide acceptance of cohabitation, domestic partnerships and civil unions as valid substitutes for marriage - all the while discarding the pre-defined relationships between family members specified by God. It was only a matter of time until same-sex marriages would appear on the scene, which they did, cementing themselves into the social fabric with the sanction of positive law. Too bad the laws of nature and nature's God were disregarded in the process.

The parent-child relationship has not escaped these same kinds of attacks. It started out with the best of intentions (paving the road to hell) in allowing for child emancipation. It then moved to preferring mothers over fathers in granting child custody after divorce. This effectively made all such children orphans according to the law of nature (which defines an orphan as a *fatherless* child). Gradually, corporal punishment (spanking) was frowned upon, and then effectively banned under the guise of child cruelty. Inevitably, single women demanded (and received) the right to be impregnated via a sperm bank rather than a husband. And both single adults and homosexual couples were allowed to adopt children (which previously had been restricted to heterosexual married couples).

Then there's the whole revolution in so-called *reproductive rights*, a/k/a abortion. By definition,

no woman can physically, all on her own, make herself pregnant. So how is it that when a woman becomes pregnant - by whatever means (that is, husband, lover or sperm bank) - she alone, and *no one else*, has the right to decide whether to prematurely terminate that pregnancy by death? If it takes *two* to get pregnant, why does it only take *one* to end that pregnancy? From where did such a right arise? Do you really think God is just going to let these things slide?

Nations

It is easy to think of individuals and families as being instituted by God because they have been with the human race from the beginning. There has never been a time when people existed without individuals or families. But what about nations? There were no nations in the beginning. In fact, the biblical record indicates a minimum of 1,750 years of human history before the first nations appeared. Surely nations were invented by people at that point? Not really.

- *Creation* - Following the Tower of Babel, God scattered the people of the earth by confusing their languages, forming the first nations. This separation was not founded on the directives of any human leader, the consent of any committee, or the result of a natural evolutionary process. It was entirely God's idea - imposed on people without their consent as a divine judgment.
- *Birth* - Ever since Babel, every person has been born into a *nationality* (*i.e.*, an ethnic group), and is born subject to the capital punishment requirement of the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:6).
- *Covenant* - If one is also born into a *political* nation, he or she is also born subject to whatever national covenant (*i.e.*, constitution) governs that nation.
- *Relationship* - In this way, the rights of each citizen with respect to civil government are pre-defined. When you are born into a nation, no one asks you to consent to its laws - you are automatically subject to them.

When describing the difference between institutions and associations, and applying that to the national context, we must be careful to note that a nation and its civil government are not the same thing. One is an institution, the other is an association. Simply put, **God creates nations, people make civil governments**. This is what is meant by the phrase in the *Declaration of Independence* that "governments are instituted among men." Don't let the word *instituted* throw you - in that context it means *formed by human consent* (as an association), not *imposed by divine will*.

Think of it as a division of labor between God and people. God grants and defines the nature of civil power, and the laws which constrain all civil governments. He also forms the nations, as noted above. [Note: In this essay, when I refer to nations that God made, I am referring to nations in an *ethnic* sense. I regard *political* nations as civil governments.]

People, not God, determine the form of civil government, what documents will establish that government, what powers may be exercised in what ways, and the manner of succession. God never interferes with man's discretion in such matters. God does His part, and He leaves government formation to the people. Whether they choose wisely or poorly is on their own heads.

Even the theocracy of ancient Israel was formed by the people. God proposed to make Israel a holy

nation, but before He could do that, the people first had to consent. Exo. 19:5-8. Then, after the Ten Commandments had been delivered, the people had to give their consent again, to make it effective. Exo. 24:7-8. In spite of ancient Israel being a theocracy, it was very decentralized and self directed by the people. Even the system of judges utilized by Israel came about at the suggestion of Moses' father-in-law, not from God. Exo. 18:21-22.

Changes in the form of government are also left to people. When Israel changed from a judgeship to a monarchy, it was the will of the people, not God's idea. 1 Sam. 8. God told Samuel (the last judge) to listen to the people. God neither forced a monarchy upon them, nor did He veto a change in the form of government the people wanted. He merely warned them what it would look like, and let them decide. True, God did anoint the kings over Israel. *But this made none of them actually king*. Saul did not become king until the people consented. Similarly, David did not become king until the people consented, and this was in two separate steps. If merely anointing David had actually made him king (while Saul was still alive), then Israel would have had two kings at once.

When Israel's form of government changed, it had no impact on the nature of the nation, *i.e.*, either God's purposes for Israel, or the nature of the theocracy. Since the change in the form of Israel's government did not change the nature of the nation, it proves that ***a nation and its form of government are not the same***. This pattern was repeated in the United States which, like Israel, changed its form of government. That is, the U.S. went from the *Articles of Confederation* to a constitutional system. However, this change in the form of national government had no impact on the nature or identity of the nation formed by *Declaration of Independence*.

Therefore, abolishing the form of government does not destroy a nation *per se*. One might even say, the people have a *right to abolish* their form of government. We have no right to destroy the creations of God (nations), but man's creations are, in a real sense, disposable. That's why the *Declaration* could say, "But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, *it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government*, and to provide new Guards for their future security." Gosh, it almost sounds like the signers of the *Declaration* knew what they were talking about.

The Church

- *Creation* - The universal Church, or body of Christ, was not invented by any man. It was ordained by God to serve the purposes of its head, Jesus Christ, to advance His mission in the world.
- *Birth* - People often think of the Church as something you join, but scripture clearly speaks of becoming a Christian as a birth experience. Unlike the physical birth which characterizes the other legal institutions, birth into the universal Church is spiritual in nature, and is often referred to as being "born again."
- *Covenant* - By His death and resurrection, Christ Jesus inaugurated a new covenant for all those who believe in Him. Becoming a member of the body of Christ and becoming subject to the Church covenant are the same thing - you cannot do one without the other.
- *Relationship* - Previously alienated from God and born separated from Him, each Christian becomes legally adopted as a son of God and is recognized as a fellow heir with Christ.

Here I have to make the same basic caveat for the Church as I did for nations. Namely, that ***all visible churches are associations created by people, not institutions created by God***. When I say that the Church was created by God, I mean only the invisible Church (*i.e.*, the body of Christ), purely as a spiritual entity. Whether a person is a member of the spiritual Church only goes to the question of whether that person is a Christian or not - and it is a question that God alone can answer. Whether a person is Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox, or a Baptist, Presbyterian or Methodist, etc. is entirely a separate issue. There are no denominations in the spiritual (or heavenly) Church. All such identifications are entirely man-made, not God instituted.

The invisible Church is governed exclusively by Christ as its head. Eph. 4:15; 5:23. This is evident from the lack of any priestly class in the Church, in the equality all believers share with respect to access to God, and the lack of any authority structure described in scripture. Which is to say, God simply has not delegated any discernable authority to anyone to rule over others with respect to *things which are merely spiritual*. Thus, the invisible Church has no governmental structure, as far as people are concerned. Spiritual things fall under God's exclusive jurisdiction. As a spiritual entity, the universal Church has no jurisdiction except to carry out the terms of the Great Commission, and to extend love or charity to others. And none of these constitute *ruling over others*. To the extent men have any authority to rule, it is confined to the visible church.

That the visible church is a mere association should be obvious, though admittedly many churches go to great lengths to hide this fact. Every visible church organization in the world was formed not by God, but by specific people, at some specific time and place, under the auspices of some civil authority. There is no visible church yet that sprang up from the ground by divine action. Also, if you are a member of a local church, I can guarantee that didn't happen because you were born into it - at some point you joined it. Even if you were confirmed as a child, or baptized as an infant, that action was taken as a result of the *choice* of your parents, not as an inherent attribute of your physical birth.

So, every local church is created by people, not God, and is something you join, not born into. Do the members of your church ever vote? If so, there's consent of the body. If not, were you ever accepted into membership? Again - consent of the body. And your church's governing documents - bylaws, Book of Order, Constitution, whatever - where did they come from? Divine decree? Nope - somewhere, sometime, there was a committee of people who wrote those documents. In other words, everything about your local church screams that it is an association (man-made), not an institution (God-made).

So what is the obvious lesson here? That all visible churches are ruled by the consent of the governed. Not top-down, by the edicts or decrees of leaders who impose their will on the people. But bottom-up, by the consent of the people, who are the ones with ultimate governing authority. In the visible church, the people are in charge, and *the leaders serve them*. In the language of agency, the members of the Church are the principals, and church leaders are their agents or servants.

Logically then, all ecclesiastical authority is derivative and delegated, not original or inherent. All

such authority is derived from and through the consent of church members in voluntary association with each other, not directly from any divine source. In other words, *no church leader rules by divine authority*. ***God didn't put anyone in a leadership role or a position of authority in your local church.*** Which is exactly what you're being told from the pulpit, right? Right?

So much for describing the four institutions created by God. Now let's move to the next logical step - What things has God authorized each of the basic institutions to do?

The Four Great Commands

Crucial to understanding the authority delegated to each of the social institutions are the scriptures I refer to as the *Four Great Commands* - one set of commands for each of the institutions. These are the bedrock scriptures which either establish or summarize the fundamental authority of each institution. These delegations were made, in each case, in one of two ways: either by divine covenant, or by the law of nature (being the will of God impressed in the creation). Further, each delegation contains a pair of *fixed fundamental purposes*.

The Greatest Commandments

You may already be familiar with Jesus' response to the question, "Which is the great commandment in the law?"

> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Mat. 22:37-40).

Jesus was speaking about people *as individuals*. The duties to love God and our neighbor are *individual* duties. And those duties apply to every person ***if*** they arose either by the law of nature, or a universal divine law. To be sure, Jesus simply quoted Dt. 6:5 and Lev. 19:8. But are those verses part of the eternal moral law, the law of nature? They are if they are rooted in, or trace back to, the creation. And I contend that they do.

The duty to love God logically flows from the fact that people are created in God's image, and each of us is made a morally responsible person. These concepts clearly trace back to the creation account of Gen. 1&2. The duty to love our neighbor as ourselves is, at root, based on the inherent equality between individuals. If every person is made in God's image, then every person is worthy of equal respect and dignity. No one is to be looked down upon as less worthy, or as having any less authority than we claim for ourselves. Thus, I trace this duty to the creation account, as well.

Practically, the duty to love God gives to each person the freedom of religion and the freedom of conscience. Freedom of *religion*, because as moral beings, each person is accountable to God (and to no one else) for knowing God's will, obeying His laws, and being in a right relationship with Him. Freedom of *conscience*, since every person must be convinced of these things in their own

mind, as no one is subject to (or ruled by) the conscience of another. In sum, the duty to love God compels each of us to stand in a right relation with respect to our Creator.

The duty to love our neighbor includes a whole range of topics on human interactions and the ways in which we treat each other. Not only are we to show others forbearance, love, and charity, but we are to refrain from doing them harm, or doing wrong by them. Here, I am speaking of all manner of wrongs and disputes, including torts and crimes. Thus, the duty to love our neighbor includes not bringing harm to their person, family, reputation, business, or property. In sum, the duty to love our neighbor is to recognize the equal dignity and standing each person has before God.

In the end, the Greatest Commandments answer the question of what God expects each individual to do while on earth. That answer is this: God made each of us, ultimately, to conduct ourselves with a due regard for the Creator, and a due regard for others who are our equals. Each of us has been given individual authority to enable us to serve this purpose. In other words, God gave every person the authority to exercise *self-government under the rule of God, or self-government in conformity with God's laws*. This is the very essence of our authority as individuals.

The Dominion Mandate

The jurisdiction of families (family government) is encapsulated in the Dominion Mandate, which is the core of the Adamic covenant, the first divine covenant between God and men:

> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food." (Gen. 1:28-29).

Although not a part of the law of nature (which is non-verbal only), the Dominion Mandate does trace all the way back to the creation account of Gen. 1&2. It was given to people beginning with the very first family. And since all people alive today are descendants of that first family, it is just as universal as the law of nature.

We speak of the Dominion Mandate as given primarily to families because of the clear guidelines given later in scripture that being fruitful and multiplying requires the formation of a lawful family unit. However, that doesn't mean individuals, as such, lack the authority from God to carry out regular dominion activities. The scripture text never *limits* dominion to family units, *per se*. You might think of childbearing as the right of individuals, *so long as* they gather into lawful family units first. From a natural rights perspective, ultimately all God-given rights are *individual rights*.

I prefer to think of the Dominion Mandate as the province of the *private sector*, meaning individuals, families and the voluntary associations they form. That's because no nations or civil governments existed when the Dominion Mandate was given. Therefore, there is no biblical basis for inferring that earthly dominion was ever given to public officials or civil rulers in that capacity. Dominion

is the right of all people *before God*, regardless of what their civil rulers may say.

Take, for example, the right to reproduce and propagate. You probably think of the right to reproduce as a natural right, but technically, it springs from the words of the Adamic covenant. Therefore, it is the *words* which create the right, not the mere creation. If God had not *spoken* these words, the right would not exist. God created us differently from the animals (we bear His image, they do not), so *He authorizes us differently*.

This fact alone destroys the ability of evolution (as a merely natural process) to authorize humanity to take dominion. Which explains why evolutionists believe that whatever species likely inhabited the earth earlier than man, has a prior and superior claim to dominate the earth. If you take away not only God, but the authorizing *words He spoke*, you destroy mankind's dominion over the animal kingdom. Which makes God's words all that much more important to preserve.

Apart from childbearing, the Dominion Mandate commands us to subdue the earth, and to rule over the entire animal kingdom (fish, birds and land creatures). This comprehends almost everything we normally think of as belonging to the private sector - property, commerce, industry, occupation, labor, education, etc. From a legal perspective, dominion necessarily includes all the legal rights needed to accomplish these things, such as economic rights and liberties, private property, freedom of contract and association, etc.

I daresay the Dominion Mandate is the most comprehensive grant of authority ever given to humanity. It contains every conceivable authority the human race needs to sustain itself and prosper indefinitely. The most important aspect of which is the preservation of the family unit. In other words, the purpose of the Dominion Mandate is to maintain the integrity of God's design for the family unit as the best possible means of ensuring the continuation, prosperity and happiness of the human race. If people had never fallen morally, and the ground had never been cursed, the Dominion Mandate is all people ever would have needed to survive and thrive on the earth forever.

National (or Civil) Authority

Prior to the Noahic covenant, there was no civil power, or the authority to punish crimes, given to anyone. I mentioned earlier that when Cain killed Abel, God specifically said no one had the authority to punish Cain as a murderer. We can thus infer that civil power was not granted as part of the law of nature. First, because no one had it early on. Second, because God would not need to expressly delegate it after the great flood if He had already done so earlier.

The great flood of Noah's time demonstrated the need for the existence of nations. I won't call it an experiment, because God already knew the outcome, but the centuries before the flood showed what would happen when people were left on their own to govern themselves. They *should* have been able to govern themselves, and they had all the tools and authority they needed to get the job done. But their fallen natures prevented them from succeeding. The result? People were corrupt and the earth was filled with violence. (Gen. 6:11). Something had to be done *as a means of restraining (but not eliminating) evil*. God's answer was the formation of nations.

However, there were no nations, or civil governments, when civil power was first granted. Nations first arose after the Tower of Babel, more than a century after the Noahic covenant. The first civil governments (small municipal monarchies) arose some time later as people began to spread out over the earth. Therefore, at its root, civil power was granted by God to people as individuals, or at most, to family groups, as the original beneficiaries of the grant were Noah and his immediate family.

When *nations* were formed, people presumably delegated civil power to their respective forms of civil government. I say *presumably* for two reasons, the first being that most nations today exercise civil power under either an express or implied grant from the people. Second, I know of no other way for that power to end up in the hands of civil governments, because *God never gave it to them directly*. So nations (or their governments) either received civil authority from a delegation by the people, or else it was forcibly (and illegally) conscripted from them without their consent. Those are the only choices.

Although we typically employ the legal fiction that all nations acquired their power properly, that is both impossible to prove, and too incredible to believe. However, no matter how any particular nation's civil government was derived, the nature and limitations of national authority is plainly spelled out in scripture.

> Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him *to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good*. (1 Pet. 2:13-14). *See also*, Rom. 13:3-4. Civil government is "an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."

The mission of civil government is therefore two-fold: a) to punish wrongdoers; and b) to commend what is right (in the American tradition, to secure individual rights). As to punishing wrongdoers, this includes not only punishing criminals, but also providing a means of redress for private litigants who have disputes over breaches of contract, property claims, injuries to persons, or other damages, etc. These are essentially the same means used for protecting individual rights. To "commend what is right" does *not* mean to do good things, to dole out special favors, or to enforce any alleged rights of the government against the people.

In sum, civil power was not granted to accomplish anything new, better, or grander. It was granted to protect people from malefactors so the purposes of individual and family authority could be carried on without interference. That is, *to restrain evil for the benefit of the private sector*. Thus, nations were created, and civil power was granted, to provide a stable society for the safety, prosperity and happiness of the people in their private capacities. God did not create nations because individuals inherently need to be ruled, nor to superintend families, nor to exercise a superior dominion over the earth. Nations and civil government are, in the larger picture, merely *facilitators* for the private sector, not its *replacement*.

The Great Commission

The fourth basic social institution created by God is the universal (or spiritual) Church. It has its

own unique delegation of divine authority known as the Great Commission.

> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Mat. 28:18-20).

The authority granted here is not to be confused with religious liberty. Religious liberty is the right of every individual, regardless of their religious beliefs. As mentioned earlier, religious liberty flows from being made in the image of God, and that is not what is in view in the Great Commission.

As part of the new covenant in Christ, the Commission applies to people not on the basis of physical ancestry, but solely on the basis of individual faith. Therefore, it is *not* a universal law for all people. It only applies to individuals who voluntarily believe. For that reason, the authority it grants is primarily a *spiritual authority*. First, it grants to believers the right to preach the Gospel of Christ and to make converts to Christianity. Since the Gospel is a message of faith, only those who profess the faith of the Gospel are tasked with spreading it. It would make no sense whatever to authorize people who are not believers to spread the message of that belief.

The other half of the authority granted is to teach the commands of Christ. As I explain in my essay *The Great Commission And God's Law*, this means teaching the universal laws of God. Since the Commission is expressly directed to *all nations*, logically only those laws of God which apply to all people are comprehended within the meaning of the Commission. I do not say that only believers are capable or authorized to teach God's laws, but they are certainly better positioned than anyone else to carry out that task. Therefore, we can assume God will require a certain accountability from the Church to teach His laws which goes beyond His expectation for unbelievers.

I have already observed that the universal Church is a spiritual entity created by God, whereas visible church groups and associations are formed by people. Visible churches are certainly authorized to carry out the Great Commission. However, it is not any *church organizations*, or any *religious persons*, as such, that have this authority. Rather, it is the individual members of any visible church who, as believers, have the right to carry out the Commission in a voluntary group effort. The visible church merely piggybacks on the authority of its individual members. *All church authority is bottom-up, not top-down*.

Why did God create the Church, in the context of all of human history? Part of the answer is that nations and civil governments have only the power to restrain evil, not to provide for anyone's redemption. So the mission of the Church is to preach, and provide a spiritual means of, *personal redemption*. In other words, to do that which individuals, families and nations cannot do on their own. *But that is still only part of its mission*.

By teaching people God's universal laws, the Church makes people aware of the need for personal redemption, yes. But more than that, it can, and should, help individuals be better at self-

government, enable families to preserve the family unit and carry out dominion, and instruct civil rulers as to what wrongs need remedying, and what rights need protecting. In other words, properly understood, the Great Commission puts the Church in the position of teaching people everything they need to know to function vertically (with respect to God) and horizontally in the rest of society according to God's design.

WHAT MAN HAS WROUGHT

> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. (Gen. 1:31).

We know that God is the originator and creator of individuals, families, nations and the universal Church. Which makes Him the author and designer of the entire structure of society. Since God Himself is altogether good, righteous and perfect, therefore everything He has made is altogether good, righteous and perfect, including the social structure He has made. So there is absolutely nothing wrong with the way God has made the social structure. It needs no correction or fixing; it does not need to be altered or remolded. It is *very good*.

So what have people done, exactly, with this *very good* social structure God has made? How good of a job have we done, as stewards of God's creation, to preserve and protect the social structure? We have set about destroying it, of course. And the destruction is very nearly complete.

Societal Disintegration

> From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, "How shall we return?" (Mal. 3:7).

I already mentioned some pages earlier about recent efforts to redefine the family unit, with respect to the marriage relationship, parent-child relations, and reproductive rights. All of these innovations have been postured as creating more options for the changing needs of people, as though having the ability to choose things outside the scope of God's design is a good thing. But what each new option inherently implies, is that God's design wasn't good enough. Implicitly, each deviation from God's family order is crafted to be an improvement. God's design was OK for people *back then*, but our modern changes have made the family much more perfect - supposedly.

And it's not as though all the recent changes to the societal definition of a family have been completely random. All the changes have only gone in one direction - to loosen or to break free of the social constraints of the past. That is, to allow people to live together, have children, and to exercise reproductive autonomy in ways that for millennia were forbidden. The clear result - so far - is that a family unit has become whatever each person decides he or she wants it to be. Families today are merely a loose collection of individuals for living purposes who do so with a modicum of consent. Whenever anyone wants out, they just leave and go live with someone else.

A similarly destructive process has happened at the individual level. If the righteous goal of

individual authority is self-government under God's rule, then the opposite of that is the pursuit of self over and above all else. The key element of godly self-government is *self-restraint*. To serve and worship God, to refrain from setting God aside, and to resist trying to be like God, or worshiping oneself as a god. However, that restraint is increasingly being cast aside.

Contemporary wisdom looks down on the idolatry of past generations, in part because people were looking at something outside of themselves, as ultimately being greater than themselves. How primitive! - we observe. How much grander, how much more evolved are we (in our estimation), who look no further than ourselves for that which is greatest. Finally, after thousands of years, we have clawed our way up from idol worship to self-worship. *That's real progress*.

To the extent there are any laws of the universe, they are ours to manipulate, control and bend to our will. Our evolutionary progress is measured by the extent to which prior social norms, behavioral rules, and civil laws can be thrown off, much like the butterfly sheds its cocoon. Worshiping God is viewed as naïve. Taking dominion over the animals and the earth is viewed as arrogant - even while we arrogantly proclaim there is no one over us. God said he made mankind *male and female* (binary), while contemporary wisdom regards gender as being on a spectrum of numerous possibilities.

Of course, what this means in the real world is that people are everywhere attempting to free themselves from the laws of God, which are viewed as chains to be thrown off. This rejection of God's laws has one main object: that each man should become his own god, the ultimate power in the universe. It is the complete abandonment of all self-restraint. Self-government has become whatever I can do, and seemingly get away with.

Politically, this societal breakdown and loss of self-restraint will show up in the rise of *anarchy*, and the eradication of law and order. Whether it is the *Days of Rage* of the Arab Spring, race riots in America ("Defund the Police"), or violent mass protests around the world, anarchy is increasingly rearing its ugly head. Self-glorification can only ever have one result - the dehumanization of everyone other than *self*. Oh, how easily people are led into participating in, and glorifying, a riot. It's almost as if people are like sheep - no, I take that back - like lemmings. Rushing headlong over a cliff, without knowing why. But hey - *everyone else is doing it*.

However, anarchy is inherently unstable, and is therefore always very temporary. Consequently, anarchy is only ever a means to an end - a means of transitioning from one political reality to another. But the political result is nearly always the same - making way for a strongman to come on the scene and establish order. Except the order he will bring will not be lawful, securing liberty and freedom. Rather, it will be a new order based on tyranny and fear.

And if I was at all a skeptical person, I might even say that the increasing distress and social unrest of recent times was being carefully manipulated to create a favorable environment for a new world order. *Naw* - that's just too conspiratorial. I mean, the rise in anarchy has to be purely accidental, right? It's not like there are any actual organized groups whipping up the masses, or anything ...

Remolding Society

One of the strongest invectives against any nation in scripture is the criticism of the ancient Chaldeans,

> "They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. ... At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!" (Hab. 1:7, 10-11).

In other words, they were the source of their own authority. For this, God held them in contempt. "Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own ... Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you." (Hab 2:6, 8).

This is in sharp contrast to the claims of Christ.

- "For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak." (Jn. 12:49).
- "The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works." (Jn. 14:10).

Unlike the Chaldeans, who had no regard for God's *fixed order of authority*, Christ deferred to that fixed order completely. He regarded God's social structure as altogether *very good*. (Mat. 19:4-6). But people today are generally more like the ancient Chaldeans than like Christ.

God's social order is designed to primarily benefit the private sector (individuals, families, the Church and voluntary associations). Nations were created and empowered to provide a stable society for the safety, prosperity and happiness of the people *in their private capacities*. The Dominion Mandate and all that it implies (the economy, the means of production, and economic control in society) was given by God to individuals and families, *not* to nations or governments.

Modern society, on the other hand, has turned God's social order on its head, making the civil state the highest of all human achievements, and the private sector as a mere provider for the state's needs. The very opposite of God's design for society is the belief that the economy, the means of production, and economic control in society are all primarily the domain of the civil state. This belief is known as *statism*, which is merely a form of *collectivism*. And collectivism is the mantra of the modern age.

Our communities have kept getting larger. One family/couple was enough to populate the world and take dominion in the beginning. After the flood, four families (couples) were enough to repopulate the world and take dominion. But now, a family isn't adequate, apparently. It takes a village to raise a child, or so we are told. The family, as an institution, is dead. The fact is, everything in society is being pushed further out into the wider population. Mass protests, mass media, mass surveillance.

Every government policy issue has become a national matter, and therefore a federal matter. Federalism, as a legal and constitutional principle, is dead. A black man is killed by a white police officer in middle America, and there are marches and riots in major cities on both coasts. The result? Individual opinions contrary to the new mainstream view are not tolerated. Dissent is not an option. Those who voice a contrary opinion are fired from their jobs, smeared by the media, hounded by mobs, ostracized from society, and treated as criminals by the government. The forces that be not only demand, but are now able to enforce, a national uniformity of ideology.

Freedom of thought and freedom of speech are both dead. The individual, as a creative ideological force, is dead. But as a cog in a soulless machine, individuals are doing great.

Like the ancient Chaldeans, modern society is the source of its own authority. But don't think for a minute that applies to each individual in society - any more than each ancient Chaldean was an independent thinker. No - societal authority only inheres in the collective elite, keepers of the hive mind.

It is the ultimate rejection of the Diffusion Principle on a societal level. When God created all individuals equal, all families equal, and all nations equal, He purposely made it so that everyone is endowed with equal authority. But in modern society, everyone is absolutely equal primarily in that they have no authority. What little authority we are allowed to exercise is by the permission of the civil government. And all autonomy of local and regional officials is being brought into conformity with a national policy.

In other words, everything God designed to be governed from the bottom-up, is now being governed from the top-down. It is merely the latest step in the historical and unrelenting move towards collectivism, the goal of which is the total concentration of all power and authority.

Yet, even the move towards nationalizing every legal issue in America is passé. Make no mistake, a world without borders is already on the horizon, bidding us welcome. Nations, as a legal concept, are fast becoming obsolete. Soon, nations will also be dead. The goal? Absolute global tyranny.

The Church Response

> Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them. ... Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves. (Neh. 9:34, 36).

How has the Church responded to these societal changes? It is tasked, via the Great Commission, with the job of teaching all nations (and therefore all people) the laws of God, *i.e.*, the things Christ has commanded throughout history. The things commanded by Christ necessarily include a hearty respect for God's laws of authority and the societal structure God has made. In the face of the increasing lawlessness of society, when people are most seeking the peace, prosperity and freedom that society enjoyed in the past, the Church holds the very key of knowledge to bring that all about.

Armed with this wealth of knowledge, the people of God surely must be blanketing the earth with a knowledge of God's laws and His authority structure. *Not exactly.*

Instead, churches everywhere are preaching a doctrine of unlimited submission to the authority of men (particularly public officials). Instead of raising up a people who will stand up for God's laws and His authority, churches are raising a generation of slaves. Don't get me wrong - they preach a qualified resistance to preserve religious organizations from government interference. But that's as far as it goes. Ministry leaders decry the deterioration of families, self absorption, and public uncivility, but ultimately all those things are for government to decide and manage. Leave us alone inside the four walls of the church, and we'll leave 'politics' (*i.e.*, social issues) out of the pulpit.

This is most manifest, obviously, in any and every hierarchical church - any church with multiple layers of clergy (an ecclesiastical hierarchy) and/or any church whose clergy are not also members of the congregations where they serve. (All Catholic, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopalian and many other Protestant churches.) All hierarchical churches, by definition, are organized top-down, rather than bottom-up. All hierarchical churches, by definition, reject the Diffusion Principle of God's laws of authority, and concentrate power which God has declared should be diffuse.

However, many non-hierarchical churches are just as problematic. They are often run by a sole pastor or senior pastor whose word is law, and the church is his little kingdom. They may not have an ecclesiastical hierarchy, but they have an internal hierarchy which treats no one as being equal with the pastor, or the pastor's family. The pastor has no interest in spreading power around, but keeps it very tightly clustered around himself.

You see, in both of these types of churches, the people who attend them are continually conditioned - by the very fact of their attendance - to accept concentrations of power within an organization as being perfectly normal and acceptable. When they leave the four walls of their church and go into the rest of society, they carry that attitude with them. They carry with themselves the attitude that if it is OK with God for them to be nothing more than a peon at church, it must be OK with God for them to be a mere peon in society. And thus, the overwhelming majority of churches teach their people by example, and teach them very well, that they are slaves. *Praise God!*

Allow me to simplify. If you continually beat into people's heads that they are *sheep* in the church, they will continually think of themselves as sheep in society. And what do sheep need, more than anything else? A shepherd. Poor things - they just can't think for themselves.

And so, in the larger scheme of things, there is absolutely no practical reason for the societal powers to eliminate religion in their march towards a grand, unified state. In reality, churches are very useful idiots. Churches have been, and will continue to be, very great allies of the elitists in making people subservient, submissive, and eventually, *willing* slaves. They will continue to teach the tried and true message to respect and obey the man-made authorities (civil government and visible church institutions) as though God made them and put them there. Submit not to God, but to other men in the name of God. *And get used to it.*

In short, churches have abdicated their God given duty to teach God's laws to the people of all nations. I call that deplorable. God calls it *rebellion*.

A WAYWARD PEOPLE

Rebellion Against God's Authority

I noted earlier that escaping or avoiding God's laws is not possible. In the short run, we may deceive ourselves into thinking we can be free of God's rules and His laws of authority. But in the long run, our failure to adhere to them will result in judgment of the most severe kind. It is clear from scripture what God's expectation is concerning our regard for His authority.

> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and ***those who resist will incur judgment***. (Rom. 13:1-2).

This scripture is not a command to obey all purported authorities that people have created (such as religious institutions or civil governments) - it only applies to authorities *instituted by God*. And there is no presumption that merely because some form of human government exists, it was made (or put there) by God. It is the *laws of God*, which define and restrict all institutions of human authority, that people are to obey and respect. The failure to obey and respect these divine laws of authority incurs His severe judgment.

> [T]he Lord knows how to ... keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and ***despise authority***. (2 Pet. 2:9-10).

> And the angels who did not stay within their own ***position of authority***, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day .... Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, ***reject authority***, and blaspheme the glorious ones. ... But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! (Jude 6, 8, 10-11a).

However, God's judgment for the sin of rebellion is not limited to a future day of judgment. He also punishes in the here and now. Consider some examples. When Israel first had the opportunity to enter the Promised Land after leaving Egypt, they refused because they were afraid of the people already living in the land. This refusal is often attributed to a mere lack of faith, based mainly on Heb. 3:19, "they were unable to enter because of unbelief." But taking a verse out of context like this misses the larger point.

Yes, certainly, Israel lacked faith. But from God's perspective, this was no mere shortcoming or lack of maturity - it was *rebellion*. Israel's refusal is called *rebellion* three times in the prior twelve

verses (*i.e.*, Heb. 3:7-18).

> "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in ***the rebellion***, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years." (Heb 3:7b-9, quoting Ps. 95:7-10).

Forty years, of course, refers to Israel's wandering in the wilderness before being allowed to enter the Promised Land. And although Hebrews refers to those people as not being allowed to *enter God's rest*, in practical terms, God killed off the entire adult population of the nation during that time. So that rebellion was punished in the here and now. And if you're asking yourself what rebellion has to do with authority, consider this:

> **re•bel•lion** (ri-belʹyən), ***n***. 1. an act or state of armed, open resistance to authority, government, etc. 2. a defiance of or opposition to any control. (Webster's New World Dictionary).

There are plenty of other examples in scripture to show how seriously God takes any defiance of authority He has instituted.

- Korah and 250 followers rebelled against the leadership of Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. God had the earth open up and swallow alive all 250 men, plus their entire households and all their possessions. (Num. 16:1-35).
- Saul had his kingdom torn from him when he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, contrary to God's command. (1 Sam. 15:17-28).
- Athaliah killed the proper heirs of the throne of Israel and set herself up as queen, all in defiance of God's covenant with David to limit the throne to his male descendants. For this she was executed. (2 Chr. 22:10-12; 23:12-15).

There are many other examples I will not describe here. The point is this: rebellion against any authority God has instituted will incur a severe judgment, sooner or later. And God has an extremely long memory.

The Ultimate Goal of Rebellion

The societal disintegration, remolding of society, and the poor response of churches I described above, are all forms of rebellion against God and His laws of authority. When people start acting based on a core belief that *Self = God*, it is hard to see how things could turn out any differently.

However, don't think the changes sweeping our society right now are merely random, because in fact they are being orchestrated. For what purpose? Globalization. The gradual reduction and then elimination of national borders. First by the creation of regional governments and authorities (United Nations, World Court, European Union, North American Union, Muslim Caliphate, etc.). Then by the unification of these regional authorities into a one world system. Driven by, and closely aligned with, a global economy and the merging of national currencies.

And thus we see everything coming in full circle. Just as self-government is ultimately the bedrock foundation upon which the proper functioning of all of God's institutions ultimately rests, so the abandonment of righteous self-government is the bedrock foundation upon which the global unification of mankind rests. Once again, we are pursuing the age old temptation to "be like God." (Gen. 3:5). Only this time, it is collectively, on behalf of all individuals.

You may think that all of this is very new, but in fact it is very old. Let me take you back to the *Prelude of the Postlude*, namely, the Tower of Babel.

> Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ... Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth. (Gen. 11:1-9).

One of the wonderful lessons we can learn from the Tower of Babel experience is that human nature has never really changed. Here people were, some 4,200 years ago or more, congregating all in one place, engaged in a single task to do what, really? To build a monument to their own greatness. And God sees that since they are *one people* having a common purpose, "this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them."

So here we are, some 4,200 years or so later, doing what? Trying to unify the world by obliterating borders and forming a one-world economic system of co-dependency. Global markets, global communications, global transportation, and global surveillance. Getting ready, like an episode of *Star Trek*, to present ourselves as *one people* eager and willing to make First Contact with an alien race, to finally figure out we are not alone in the universe. Meanwhile, to keep the momentum going, we are rushing headlong down the path of forming a global government, as a monument to our own greatness.

Nothing has really changed - our vision has just gotten larger. Our ego is more puffed up, and our authority is more supreme. Our technology is vastly superior. *We have evolved*. See how wonderful we are. What on earth do we need God for?

Meanwhile, churches will continue preaching self-actualization and self-empowerment, in order to become part of a global spiritual body. Do you see how, with kernels of truth, the Gospel message can be turned into the message of a global brotherhood of man? *God made us all, and He loves us all.* A message which prepares people for the triumphant unification of humanity. Except, of

course, it will be an evil empire. No matter - as long as you feel good about yourself ...

Yes, what the people at Babel accomplished, compared to what people have done since, is positively puny. Our modern accomplishments are so much more magnificent. *But our natures have not changed.* The people at Babel were every bit as ambitious as people today - they simply lacked the skills and the resources we have. But those were the very people who determined, notwithstanding being later scattered across the earth, that they would persist in their ambitions until they had the skills and resources they needed to pull them off. *They were us, and we are them*. The technology we have is the fruit of *their* ambition, applied over time. We are their children, after all.

God knew this all along. He knew people would eventually get to exactly where we are right now. But He didn't want that to happen millennia ago, so He built into the world's population a delay mechanism which held back cooperative efforts and discoveries to slow our progress. This delay mechanism - differing languages - has now been overcome, thanks to computers and the internet. So all the original ambitions are now free to be pursued uninhibited. Nothing can stop us.

And in a certain sense, this new one world government to come is merely a return to the historical method of combining church and state, or at least, religion and government. The goal of which is - as always - to exact and extract the maximum amount of submission from the people. That is, to use the purported authority of God, and the collective authority of mankind, to speak with one voice, thereby quashing all dissent or opposition. The old sins are the best sins, after all.

Except, of course, God did not allow man's ambitions to be pursued unchecked the first time. And He is of no mood to allow them to go unchecked a second time. We are fast approaching the time when God will say, "Enough!" Because, ultimately, *we are not in charge* of this earth, the cosmos, or even ourselves. God is in charge, and He will reign us in, along with our false claims of authority. After all, no one can ever become greater than their creator - and that goes for each of us. This little rebellion of ours will itself be quashed.

DEVASTATION AND RESTORATION

God's Response

How will God respond to all this rebellion? God will reward us - as He did in Noah's time and with ancient Israel - with almost total destruction. Only a few - a remnant - will ultimately be spared. (Isa. 24:1-6). God alone will have the last laugh.

> Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. (Ps. 2:1-4).

The scripture from Ps. 2 is often interpreted as referring to the events preceding the crucifixion of Christ, but I think it has a broader meaning. Namely, that the phrase to *burst their bonds apart and*

cast away their cords is a direct reference to God's laws. In other words, the people in power in society (not just 2,000 years ago, but *right now*) see God's laws as an unreasonable and unwanted restraint on their actions. By design, God's laws limit the authority of men in specific ways. Their greatest desire is to be free from God's constraints, telling them what they must, and must not, do.

God's response is to laugh in derision. Why? Because whatever obligations and limits the universal laws of God impose, they are *inescapable*. There is no freedom from God's laws. There is only compliance, or punishment - there is no middle ground. There is no reasoning with God to get Him to "go easy" in enforcing His laws. He will not change His laws. Nor is partial compliance with God's laws ever good enough. God's laws are absolute, and He demands full obedience.

God can laugh in derision about this because He knows, ultimately, there is no alternative. It is His way, with no highway option. But people are stubborn and rebellious by nature. And in our stubbornness, we will not yield. So to the extent God is unyielding in His laws, His authority, and His laws of authority, people are determined to be just as unyielding in their defiance of God. This can only eventually lead to an all out global war. But this time, it will not be nations against nations, but humanity against God and His sovereignty.

> "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed." (1 Sam. 2:10).

There is only one possible outcome of this future global war. And that is in the direction of God re-asserting His authority over all the earth, and necessarily, all people. When all things are put right, when God will reign supreme over the entire earth and everyone in it. But there is a process - a very painful transition - that people and the earth are going to go through first. What I mean to say is, this global society will be destroyed.

Our Authority Will Be Crushed

> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Eph. 6:12).
>
> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ... And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation. (Rev. 13:5, 7).

Part of what makes people different from animals, and what makes us partake of the image of God, is that people are vested with *authority*. But just because we have authority, and animals do not, does ***not*** mean we are the only ones having authority on the earth.

There is such a thing as forces of darkness - beings and entities which have been aligned against God from the very beginning. These forces have been manifested in various world empires throughout

history: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and others. Essentially, each of these empires is a chapter in the evolution of an evil empire, the goal of which is world domination. Ultimately, these forces will coalesce around a powerful leader, who will eventually gather the nations of the world into a global government under his rule. The purpose of this world government? To overthrow the kingdom of God, His laws, and His authority.

I said earlier that the movement towards globalization is being *orchestrated*. The people working tirelessly and earnestly for globalization may seem to be pulling the strings of power, but in reality they are *being played*. Yes, they manipulate other people, but they are also being manipulated. They are merely instruments controlled by the forces of darkness. Deny this reality, and you will never truly understand what is going on.

Bringing about the destruction of national borders, national sovereignties, and national currencies is being promoted as a means of eliminating wars, injustice, and world hunger. But actually, it is the means for ushering in the most horrible tyranny the world has ever seen. Instead of peace, murderous persecutions. Instead of equal justice, enslavement. And instead of prosperity for all, forced deprivations.

All this will be done for one purpose: to throw off entirely the laws of God, the cords and bonds which hold society together. In the process, this will mean (temporarily) the destruction of the family unit, nations, and any outward expression of religions designated as "false," including Judaism and Christianity. And to the extent possible, as a necessity, the destruction of any real or significant self-government, especially individual rights and liberties.

Which means that all of our pretensions to raise ourselves up by forming a one world government will eventually be used against us, to put us down. The power brokers will go along with this process under the inducement of being safely elevated above the fray. They will find out (too late) that they also have been deceived. The authority used to justify unifying will be yanked from everyone and usurped by the world leader at our expense. Instead of being gloriously liberated, humanity will be ignominiously subjugated, from the greatest to the least.

However, all is not lost. This too, will last only a short time - just a few years. Because just as this evil world empire reaches its zenith, the wrath and judgment of God will fall.

Our World Will Be Shaken

> I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless. ... Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger. (Isa. 13:11, 13).
>
> "I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the

> sword of his brother." (Hag 2:21-22).
>
> At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken - that is, things that have been made - in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. (Heb. 12:26-27).

It should be quite clear from scripture that there's going to be *a whole lot of shaking going on*. *See also*, Isa. 24:19; Eze. 38:19-20; Rev. 6:12-14; 16:18-20. At some point, God is going to be fed up with all of the false assertions of authority going on in His world, and He's going to put a stop to it all at once. The false authority of people and the forces of darkness alike, will all be brought to an end. The arrogant and the ruthless will not only be brought low, but for the most part, eliminated.

> "The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for *destroying the destroyers of the earth*." (Rev. 11:18).

At that point, everything people have built - whether physical structures, institutions, or governments - will all be knocked down. And this to the point that nothing will be left, except for what God has built. These are the things that cannot be shaken, and which will remain. Now, I don't want you to get the idea that only evil things will be destroyed. Rather, all the works of mankind will be broken down. Every building, and every wall. Every business, school, and church. Even mountains and islands. Everything.

In other words, God is going to wipe the slate clean (*i.e.*, the whole earth), and basically start over from scratch. As He did in Noah's time, He will preserve some few people (and a special remnant of Israel) to repopulate the earth. All of man's achievements, and every tangible expression of his false authority, will be destroyed. What was left of civilization when the flood waters in Noah's time dried up, eventually? Nothing. When Noah and his family left the ark, they had nothing except what they carried with them. And yet they survived, and thrived, because God cared for them afterwards. We can expect the same type of thing in the future.

God's Supremacy Will Be Restored

> Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, "What is ... the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. (Heb. 2:5-8).
>
> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (1 Cor. 15:24).

I started out this essay noting that God, as Creator, has all ultimate authority over us, because He alone has made us. Similarly, He has all ultimate authority over the earth because He also made it. As part of the creation of people in His image, God delegated certain authority to us, including a limited dominion over the earth God has made. God has made additional delegations of authority at various times in history, which we have looked at. And, I suppose it is correct to say that even the forces of darkness have a certain authority to wreak havoc on the earth and among people, especially with regard to nations and governments.

In all of this, we have been altogether pretty poor stewards. God established a social order, a fixed order of authority, and rules governing our behavior. His expectation - and our opportunity - was that we would use our authority to accomplish God's purposes and do His will. The unfortunate reality is that people used every opportunity to seek our own agenda, thwart His will, and undermine His authority. Instead of compliance, rebellion. Instead of building a kingdom of God, building a kingdom raised against Him. Instead of acknowledging His supreme authority, proclaiming our own authority to be supreme.

God's intention from the beginning was to let us exercise our authority until it reached its logical conclusion. All available evidence (biblical, as well as experiential) is that we will squander our authority and use it for the exact opposite purpose of what was intended. Consequently, it is inevitable at some point that God will bring this to a halt, when we have basically become as totally committed to evil as we possibly can, as a race.

This is when the great shaking will occur - the giant reset. What will come after is a worldwide regime change. A new king will appear, above all other kings, and He will strike down the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron. Rev. 19:11-16. The forces of darkness will be captured and locked away in prison, and their minions destroyed. Rev. 19:20-20:3. Our God-given authority will remain intact, but no longer superintended with a lenient hand, and no longer subject to outside influence.

Unlike the years following the Tower of Babel, people will not be left to regroup and pass our bold ungodly ambition down to our descendants. A new worldwide regime will begin, where the promises of true peace, justice and prosperity will be actually realized. Instead of oppression and tyranny, unparalleled liberty and freedom. All of God's institutions - individuals, families, nations and churches - will function as intended. The supremacy of God's laws will be restored and maintained with a firm hand ("a rod of iron"). The turmoil of the history of mankind will become a distant memory.

And so, in the end, we will see the grand unification of *authority* and *power*, both wielded in the same hands - *but not ours*. However, neither will we be powerless. We will merely be greatly encouraged - both by example and by official government laws - to exercise self-government under the rule of God. It will be better, much better, than now.

Also, in the end, we will see the grand unification of *church* and *state*, united by the One who will be both Priest and King of the world. Except that He will not share our sinful human nature, or suffer from any human limitations. He will rule us as God would directly, for the benefit of all.

But for now, all we can do is anticipate what is to come. And conduct ourselves in a manner which will lead to reward, rather than wrath. In other words, acting in obedience, rather than rebellion. God's laws of authority will be restored and fully implemented worldwide, one day. It's not optional. It is inescapable. You might as well get with the program. *Right*?

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