

# GOD AND GOVERNMENT: THE MYSTERY OF THE ECCLESIA



## SOME OF GOD'S STATEMENTS ON GOVERNMENT

And the Government shall be upon His shoulders (Is.9:6)

I will build my ecclesia and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt.16:18)

There is nothing more disputed in human experience than government. Some people just do not seem to be able to survive without needing to dominate others. Weber identified three ways this can be done. (1) **traditional domination** - this is the way we do things, if you want to be part of us then you must do it our way; (2) **charismatic domination** - follow me and your life will be blessed; and (3) **legal rational domination** - life under rules and ordinances, but who makes the rules?.

The Paraclete Institute affirms that legal-rational government is God's

preferred system of human government, PROVIDING that it embraces pluralistic representation, i.e. every household and member of the community has the right and opportunity to participate in the development of the rules. For practical reasons, most communities opt for a representative kind of democracy. This works well when the whole community is able to participate in debates and decision making but, sadly, this seldom happens. The Australian constitution provides the opportunity for a theistic referencing, representative participatory democracy. It should be the goal of Christian believers to promote that form of government and see it operating across the nation.

## HUMAN GOVERNANCE & GOVERNANCE IN THE ECCLESIA

There are essentially two kinds of human government: Ecclesiastical (Democratic) Governance and Feudal Lordship:

### FEUDAL LORDSHIP – Domination



A human OVERLORD driven by an AMORITE ('BAAL') SPIRIT (Joshua 10) rules any meeting; the general community is disempowered

### ECCLESIASTICAL GOVERNMENT - Affirmation



The HOLY SPIRIT is the Government; household leaders chair the meeting in rotation. The whole community is empowered to contribute to the discussion; decisions are made on consensus based on the prophetic Word of the Lord.

Ecclesiastical government was first set up by Shem immediately after the Flood in consultation with the Most High God (c.2350 BC). The essential features of this kind of government are:

- Each household is held to be sovereign under God.
- Community affairs are determined at general community assemblies - meetings which the Greeks called an *ecclesia*.
- All adult persons have access to all assemblies.

Democratic Government continued amongst S(h)emitic peoples from S(h)emerian times to the appointment of King Saul (c.1030 BC). But Feudal Lordship began much earlier amongst Hamitic peoples, when Cush and Semiramis installed their son Ninus (Nimrod) as the first King of Assyria (d.1987 BC approx.). The opportunity to set up this style of government came because many people felt inadequate in facing up to possible enemies and seeking the will of God for themselves; they gladly submitted to a person who gave promise of protection and/or a priest who claimed that (s)he had special access to God. Sadly, the same problem is evident in church congregations today.

Europe was civilised by Feudal Overlords and some benevolent dictators did well for their people. But problems develop when the 'lord' becomes self-interested rather than people interested, when servant leadership is replaced by a 'lording-over (Baal) spirit'. Then the people suffer, as with places like Zimbabwe today. Regrettably, the same lording-over spirit can be found in denominational sects of the Christian church. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Jesus is an Over-Lord with a different Spirit. He died that his sheep might live. We are happy to submit to Him!

There have been two major returns to democratic government in human history prior to modern times:

- (1) The Athenian *ecclesia*, 510 BC; and
- (2) The Senate & People of Rome - SPQR, 509 BC

When Jesus referred to his *ecclesia* (Matt. 16:18) He was referring to the Athenian structure which was well known amongst the wider First Century AD community. From this reference, the Lord's instructions to Shem (above), and his regret that the people wanted Saul over them instead of Himself, we may argue that the democratic style of government is Jesus choice for the government of His people, providing His opinion on matters is valued. The democratic characteristic is confirmed in the New Covenant statement which affirms that each person in Christ, from the least to the greatest, shall KNOW HIM (Heb.8:10-12). There is to be NO HUMAN LORDING-OVER in the family of God. Christ is the Head of ALL THINGS and He is NOT A LORDING-OVER GOD!

How then should we act as members of the body of Christ? When we all come together in one place to consider the needs of the wider body we are expected to bring the Word of the Lord in prophetic words of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, tongues and interpretation - not human wisdom (I Cor. 14:26-40). By grace, anyone can be chosen to speak out God's thought - speaking by the Holy. These *pneumatikon* (spiritual communications) are given to EVERY MAN AS THE HOLY SPIRIT CHOOSES (1 Cor. 12:7-11), not to special people who have been to Bible School or who have proved themselves in business. A LITTLE CHILD MAY LEAD THEM if God so chooses. In the *ecclesia* we recognise that worldly wisdom counts for nothing. It is the Holy Ghost who is appointed to lead us in our understanding and decision-making.

If this, then, is how Jesus wants His people to act in community, each member of the body is called to take on the responsibility to contribute to the WORD OF GOD amongst us. In this way we are all edified and the agenda and works of God are established (see Acts Chapters 4, 6 and 15). Let's do it!

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*This tract was written by John S Potter in August 2003*

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