

Head and Shoulders Government.

Government is a big issue with God. (Isaiah 9:7) The first thing said about the Son is that government will be upon His shoulders.

Government and peace go together. Pray for it to increase! Seek it first! (Matt.6:33)

The Analogy of a Bar, Crystal and Molecule of Copper.

A large bar of copper

A crystal of copper

A molecule of copper

At every level, if it is pure copper, it will have exactly the same chemical and physical properties. That's how we know it is pure copper regardless of it's size.

Whatever the size, if a sample doesn't have the properties of pure copper it isn't pure copper, whatever the label may say on the outside.

In the same way, all levels of God's kingdom from the Church Universal to the individual family will have certain common properties that will determine it's nature and it's purity.

These include :-

- a) Righteousness
- b) Love
- c) Government
- d) Headship
- e) Fatherhood
- f) Peace
- g) Joy
- h) Faith
- i) Order not chaos
- j) Humility- i.e. denial of self
- k) Purity
- l) Kindness
- m) Gentleness
- n) Meekness
- o) Hatred of Iniquity

If it doesn't have the properties of the kingdom, it isn't the kingdom, whatever the label may say on the outside.

Government in the kingdom is by Father/Servant/Headship.

You cannot govern what you will not father. You cannot lead what you will not pastor.

In the Kingdom of God at any level from the one Universal Church right down to the single unit of a natural family we should have the same form of government - God's government.

I have come to call it "Head and Shoulders" government. Essentially it is plurality of government but with a clear executive but consultative head.

In scripture, apostles and elders are always mentioned in plurality. But plurality does not mean equality. Claiming illegal equality is a particular temptation for leaders and was the sin of Korah (Num.16:1-4), and of Satan (Isa.14:14). The nearer you are to the head the easier it is to think you are equal or could even do it better as Absalom did.

Government by committee or by an autocratic head are both easier to administer but they are both wrong and will eventually lead to death.

Pss 133 - speaks of brothers dwelling together in unity *but not in equality*. The next verse immediately introduces headship. Recognizing headship is a condition for the anointing to flow.

*the anointing comes because of the order, not because of the head,

*though it flows from the head. Both head and body are dependent on the order.

*the anointing begins at the head, flows down onto the beard, then the shoulders and then right on to the very fringe of the body.

Isaiah 9:7 - speaks of the government being on His shoulders.

*the shoulders support the head.

*they are the burden bearing part of the body and carry the load.

*they also lift up the head.

*they free the head to look and seek direction

This is also what spiritual shoulders are supposed to do.

*they are part of the government but are not the head.

*they constantly lift up the head and support it.

*they share the burden of leadership and carry the load

*so the head is free to concentrate on looking, hearing and leading the body in the right direction.

The shoulders do not in any way

*challenge the head, (though respectful confrontation or correction may be necessary).

*fight with it,

*tear it down

*or dishonor it.

If there is a right honor and appreciation between head and shoulders, then the shoulders are able to turn the head smoothly and without pain. The head is able to respond to suggestion and correction from the shoulders. The shoulders will also do this with proper respect.

But if there is a dislocation between head and shoulders, then plurality of government literally becomes a pain in the neck!

In the Universal Church, Jesus, of course, is the father/head and the shoulders are the apostles with the prophets (Eph.2:20; Eph.3:3-5).

In the family, the husband is the father/head and the wife is the shoulders. Together they are the government of the family.

*God made them joint heirs together of the grace of life (1Pet.3:7)

*and joint rulers together over all creation (Gen.1:26,27).

*but the man has the headship.

In the local church the head is the "set man" "senior pastor" "leading elder" etc. He is the head with the elders forming the shoulders of government.

In a fully formed City Church with a plurality of apostles, one of them will have the headship just as James did in Jerusalem (Acts 15:19). There is always a head.

The rest of the apostles form the shoulders with other ministries added when appropriate. In certain areas of decision making concerning the lives of the people, the City Elders join them (Acts 15:6.). In other situations, the prophets are part of the decision making procedure particularly when they are seeking God for clarity of vision and direction (Eph.3:3-5,10).

The anointing remains as long as the body remains in proper order. An individual member may feel that the anointing is upon him personally and he may be tempted into self-sufficiency, break off and go and do his own thing, out of the will of God. If he does so, whether he is the head, the shoulders or one of the extremities of the body, he will lose his anointing because he went out of the proper order.

Where Does the Final Authority Lie?

In the frustration and tension of working out these relationships this is a question that is often asked. Usually it is the wrong question to be asking at that time. It is often being asked out of frustration when a collision of authority has occurred. The very question is an admission of failure and we are lost once we start trying to "pull rank".

The ultimate authority over all things in the church is the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph.1:22). The next level of authority is His Word, the Scriptures.

The New Testament also recognizes four other authorities to be at work in His Kingdom namely:-

- a) Apostolic authority (Eph.4:11; 1Cor.12:28; Cor.10:8; 2 Cor.13:10).
- b) Headship authority (Act.15:13,19; 1 Cor.11:3; Eph.5:22,23 etc.).
- c) Elder authority (Act.20:28; Heb.13:7,17 etc.).

d) Congregational authority (Matt.18:17).

There is a definite order to these authorities but they are intended to compliment, safeguard, reinforce and strengthen one another. They were never intended to be in competition.

You see all four working together in Acts 15 as the church judges the issue of whether the gentiles are to keep the law of Moses. All the different parties in the church are free to have their say (Act.15:4,5) The Apostles and the Elders sit in council to consider the matter (Act.15:6). James (the head) finally brings a judgement (Act.15:13,19). This judgement is good to the Apostles, the Elders and to the Whole Church (Act.15:22).

The primary motivation for exercising or receiving any spiritual authority must be a mutual submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord (Eph.5:21). Only then do the various specified submissions which follow on through Ephesians chapters 5 and 6 really work.

For any of these authorities to function biblically they must be exercised in the Spirit and not in the flesh. If any of these authorities becomes fleshy or carnal they also become devilish (James 3:13-16). The devil quickly finds opportunity to bring strife, lies, deception and the demonic into the situation (1Cor.3:1-3).

(Gal 5:24-26 NKJV) And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. {25} If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. {26} Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (6:1) Brethren, if a man is overtaken in **any** trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. {2} Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. {3} For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

These authorities must also function in the "wisdom which comes down from above".

(James 3:13-18 NKJV) Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. {14} But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. {15} This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. {16} For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. {17} But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. {18} Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

What Happens When Things Go Wrong?

The two models given to us most frequently in scripture and sometimes even in the same passage are Christ as the Head of the Universal Church and the husband as head of the wife (e.g. Eph.5:22-33). From these we can often extrapolate as to what we should do in any crisis at any other level in the kingdom such as the local church, a regional center or a para-church

organization.

When we have no clear guidelines from scripture, as is often the case, we need to ask two basic questions.

- 1) How would we handle this scripturally if this was a crisis between a husband and his wife or a father and his family, and then extrapolate up
- 2) How do the scriptures deal with this in terms of Christ and the Universal Church, and then extrapolate down.

This often brings clarity as to how we should proceed when there is a breakdown of God's order.

Trouble in the Local Church

Unfortunately it is frequently in the local church where trouble occurs. Some of the common problems can be summarized as follows:-

Problems with the Pastor

- 1) The overall leader (i.e. Pastor or Set Man), instead of being a father /servant /head begins to exercise oppressive authority with manipulation and control.
- 2) There are legitimate questions raised over the overall leader's wisdom and/or integrity in handling the finances of the church.
- 3) There is a breakdown in the overall leader's marriage.
- 4) There is a moral failure on the part of the overall leader.
- 5) There is some other breakdown on the part of the overall leader in terms of integrity or truthfulness which destroys his credibility as a leader.
- 6) The overall leader is suffering from physical or mental breakdown or from burn out and is no longer able to lead effectively.

In all these cases the Eldership should be involved at an early stage and should be in touch with the apostolic authority to which the leader and the church relates. Where sin or carnality are involved, depending on it's seriousness, there must be rebuke and discipline leading hopefully to genuine and thorough repentance.

This may involve the leader stepping down for a period of time for the process of repentance and recovery to be worked through. But the purpose must always be to gain our brother not destroy him (Matt.18:15). The purpose, according to Gal.6:1, is to restore our brother in a spirit of

humility and not judgmental dismissal, recognizing that apart from the grace of God, we could easily be in the same position.

The Apostle and the Elders would work together and the church would need to be kept informed without revealing confidential details. The Elders need to recognize and receive the particular authority that God gives to His apostles in this kind of situation. It cannot be seen simply as advice or an internal church matter. Neither the Elders nor the church congregation have the authority to decide these things alone.

The marriage covenant between a man and a woman is unique and there is no other relationship that is quite the same and there is no other covenant that binds one so unconditionally. However without pressing the analogy too far, there are a number of similarities in the way an apostle deals with the fallen father of a church and the way a Pastor deals with the fallen father of a family. The goal would never be divorce but restoration of the father, the marriage relationship and the family.

In both situations the problem is not only the issue of sin and its forgiveness but even more the issue of betrayed trust and its re-establishment. In the family, the wife and the children wonder if they can ever really trust the husband /father again. In the local church, the Elders and the congregation often feel the same way and would rather the fallen leader moved on to some other situation while they find someone else. They wish him well, but not here! Maybe only after years of proving himself again can that trust be restored. Wherever possible, the ideal solution is that the leader is restored back to the church which he formerly lead. But it is rarely achieved in practise because of the hardness of men's hearts.

Sometimes, although the sin can be forgiven, the consequences cannot be removed and it may be necessary for the leader to begin again elsewhere, not because God requires it but because of the irretrievable situation or the hardness of the hearts of the Elders and/or the people. No leader can lead people who will not follow him anymore.

If there is denial on the part of the leader and there is no real and obvious repentance, although the case is proved, finally the church has to be told and then, according to scripture, he must be put out of the fellowship of the body until he learns to truly repent (Matt.18:17). But even then, when there is a real turning there is immediate mercy and restoration with God [eg. Mannaseh (2 Kings 21:16; 2 Chron. 33:10-20)and the man committing incest (1 Cor.5:1-5; 2Cor.2:3-11)].

Only an apostle has the authority and the wisdom to handle this kind of situation. According to scripture a charge against an Elder (and this would include the Pastor) should only be received at the mouth of two or three *witnesses*. This is the wisdom of God to protect leaders from the malice of false accusations. If there is only one witness the charge cannot even be received.

Trouble When an Individual Elder Rises up, Challenges or Seeks to Take over from the Head

The overall leader or Pastor along with the rest of the Eldership need to confront the person and

discipline him. If he responds, well and good. The apostolic oversight needs to be informed but does not need to get involved unless the rebellion continues, in which case the Elder would have to resign or be dismissed. Once again the purpose of confrontation is concillitory without fudging the issues and always to gain our brother not push him into deeper rebellion.

Trouble When the Whole Eldership Rises up and Seeks to Control, Discipline or Dismiss the Head

The apostolic oversight needs to be brought in to judge the matter. He may feel it necessary to call on others to help him. All parties should submit to this apostolic judgment and seek reconciliation. If the Elders continue to rebel and resist that authority then it gets very messy! Usually there is a "Korah" stirring the whole thing up. He possibly can be isolated and removed. If not the church should be informed and depending on where the heart of the people is either the Pastor or the Elders should walk away from the situation as David did with Absalom (2 Sam.15:13). They should always seek to harm the body as little as possible.

Trouble When the Congregation Rises up and Seeks to Control, Discipline or Dismiss the Head and /or the Eldership.

This should never happen but unfortunately it does, especially in Baptist and Congregational circles where congregational authority can sometimes go way beyond it's brief. Usually there is a "Korah" family or one or two strong controlling families stirring the whole thing up. It all depends on where the majority of the hearts of the people are.

Moses only had one weapon in these situations which was to get on his face and pray. It may be better to walk away or stay and fight, but never in the flesh. You just have to remain meek and in the Spirit and hear from God. A good shepherd does not run away when he sees the wolf coming. The goal is always to do what is best for the sheep. But if they really are united and unrepentant concerning their attitude to control or get rid of "their Pastor" then it is only possible to walk away and leave it to God to bring right judgment.

Trouble When an Apostle Begins to Abuse His Authority and Lord it over the Church.

This ought never to happen but unfortunately it does. This often occurs with self-styled apostles whom the Lord Jesus never appointed.

But even the genuine can sometimes get deceived and go wrong. That's one important reason why apostles themselves must be in plurality and in accountable relationships.

When a Pastor and a church receives an apostle to have input and oversight and to be a father to them, then it is necessary for them to know to whom they can appeal in the event of difficulties coming in the relationship.

Before resorting to this step, every effort should be made first to resolve the matter privately between them. If an appeal is made and upon investigation by apostolic peers the case is proven,

then the apostle needs to be disciplined and corrected by his brothers. If he mends his ways and the relationship is healed, well and good. If the relationship is irreparably damaged then it needs to be terminated for it will not work unless there is faith, life and joy in it.

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