

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

HARRY BOWERS EDITOR

7844 GRIMBSY CIRCLE HARRISBURG N.C. 28075

MARCH 2022

WHO 'S IN CHARGE HERE?

In the forward of Gary DeMar's book *Ruler of Nations* Dr. John Whitehead wrote: There are "three types of government established by God---the family, the church, and the civil government, each given its own specific and *limited* jurisdiction. These three governments were intended to work cooperatively with one another under the ultimate authority of God. Unfortunately, that relationship of cooperation has been replaced by one of competition. The state, having severed itself from all accountabilities to God, has increasingly seized control of areas that rightfully belong to the family or the church. But equally damaging is the way in which the church and family have relinquished many of their responsibilities to the government bureaucracy."

Our question is "Who's in charge of these three establishments?" or who's the Authority in each of them? It is with trepidation that we use the word "authority" but authority is to be viewed in the light of the fact that God is creator of all things and is the judge who has given Jesus "all authority to execute Judgment, because he is the son of man" (John 5:27), and the words of Jesus when he made the statement: "All authority has been given to me both in heaven and earth" (Matt 28:18). Therefore these three institutions are under the authority of Jesus Christ who establishes, through the Apostles, the conduct of the family (Eph. 5:20-6:4; Col. 3:18-21) and upholds and applies Old Testament regulations concerning the family (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:4; Mark 10:6-16). He is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23) and "head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:22, 23). He is "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev.1:5).

Marriage was created by God, thus making it a sacred institution: "The Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth...she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (Mal. 2:14). This means the family is not absolute nor is the center of society as many Christian writers believe. For example some say the family is the most important institute in society. God is the center of society, and the proper role of the family is covenant under God. He is the final authority in the family. Paganism can make the family the center of society and leave God out, but this makes the family a god. That God is to be the central authority in the family is seen in the first family created by God (Gen. 2:18-25). Jesus applies this scripture when answering the Pharisees on the question of divorce: "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'" (Matt. 19:4, 5). God, then, is the final authority in the family, but His authority is delegated. The Apostle Paul wrote: "I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (I Cor. 11:3). Discipline which is to reside in the home is exercised by the father: "Fathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring

them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (EPH. 5:4). Deuteronomy 6:2-7 is the classic example of the father teaching his children. However, the mother's influence is seen in the family as well: "For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice...from a child you have known the sacred scriptures which are able to give you wisdom that leads to salvation" (II Tim. 1:5; 3:15). All this says the basis of our children's education is the word of God, taught by the parents, under the authority of God. A well-established fact is the family is under attack today. The late Charles Colson stated it verily plainly in *Kingdoms in Conflict*. He stated: "In the West relativism has encouraged the belief that the family is a matter of convention. The traditional family has all but disintegrated in the inner city, where more than 50 percent of the children are born out of wedlock. And in the nation as a whole more than half the children are raised in one parent families. Some school textbooks even describe the family as any voluntary grouping of people living together. This attitude is reflected in our laws and court decisions, our public mores and in our crime rates." The Late Carl Henry wrote in *The Modern Flight of the Family* that the loss of the God-ordained role of the family leads to the "deterioration of the society then eventually the collapse of the nation." Modern society has invented and advocated all sorts of means: TV shows, books, conferences, tapes, marriage encounters and special family counseling and the like, to answer problems the family is facing. The last verse in the Old Testament gives the answer: "And I will restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers" (Mal. 4:5). Jesus fulfilled this prophesy.

God is Lord of the family, and He is also Lord of the Church, with Christ as the head and the church as his body. When he is not recognized as "head" this opens the church to attacks by demonic powers which become "Lord" and the church is unaware this is taking place. The church is created by God and Christ is the head of the church, therefore it is a "spiritual" entity not some ecclesiastical social organization. The Lord builds the church not with modern merchandising and marketing techniques to sell the church program to the masses, nor by construction of attractive edifices in a location near a growing suburb targeting an affluent clientele, nor by presenting a non-offensive, upbeat, tingling, and entertaining gospel that makes everyone feel good about themselves, but with the power of the gospel and the strength of the Word of God. The church is his body; it does not belong to its members. However, the church has been given the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:19) and this is manifested in the preaching of the word, and the disciplined lives of the members. Jesus condemns the lawyers for taking away the "key of knowledge" and hindering people from entering the kingdom (Luke 11:52). The church, then, possesses the key of knowledge of the kingdom which is the essential message of the church. However, this is a message we hear little about in the average church today.

The church, being a spiritual entity, there must be the presence of authority. The authority is mediated authority recognizing all authority is In Christ as the head of the church. These delegated authorities active in the early church are seen in that “he gave to some Apostles, and some evangelists and pastor-teachers” (Eph. 4:11). The purpose of these gifts was for “the equipping of the saints to do the work of the ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). The word “apostle” means one sent out, and to fulfill the apostolic office one had to have a part of the ministry of Christ (Acts 1:21, 22) or to have seen the Lord (I Cor. 9:1). When the last of the New Testament apostles passed away so did the gift pass away. The prophet was one who had a direct revelation from God to be spoken at a particular time and for a particular purpose. With the completion of the Word there was no further need for the prophetic office. This leaves the Evangelist (a proclaimer of the word) and the Pastor-teacher. The word Elder, Shepherd, and Bishop is used interchangeably with the word Pastor. The final authority and well-being of the church is the Elders (Heb. 13:7) who have the responsibility of guarding and shepherding the church (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:1-3). Having failed to recognize and accept the fact that the church is a covenant under God, the modern church has taken the authority from the Elder and given it to CEO’s, Senior Ministers, Church Planters, Youth Minister’s, and boards made up of both Elders and Deacons plus Deaconesses.

Being a part of the church is serious and not to be taken lightly. The church having the keys of the kingdom has as its first responsibility making disciples by the proclamation of the Word (Matt. 28:19, 20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47), and by being ambassadors of Christ who stand before the world representing Christ (II Cor. 5:20). This will not be done with the same latest initiatives found in Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Church*. Instead, it will be found in the sincere and accurate preaching of the Word. The other responsibility of the church is to care for the poor and needy (Gal. 2:10; James 1:27, II Cor. 9:8-12). These are the two Biblical statements concerning the work of the church. What the church does or doesn’t do directly affects the course of civilization and determines the flow of historical events. Having the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:19, 18:18). The church has authority over the gates of hades and full and free access to the throne of God (Heb. 10;22).

A little known and unrecognized fact is that the state (the civil authority) is an institution under God and will be held accountable to Him whether an elected official or a dictatorial tyrant. “Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God...it is a minster of God to you for good...rulers are servants of God” (Rom. 13:1-6). As G.B Caird wrote in *Principalities and Powers*: “The state has been created for a single specific purpose, to maintain order and to suppress crime. As long as the state continues to perform its God-given task, even if in other respects it shares in the general corruption of the present world order, it still posses’ divine authority which the Christian must obey, not merely from the fear of consequences but also for conscience sake.” The family (parents) have authority over children but not over an erring

brother. That is the authority of the church. The church can discipline a member but not use the sword as punishment, a lesson John Calvin never learned. The state has the authority to yield the sword as punishment but cannot influence the inner workings of family or church unless there is a crime committed. When the state steps over its authority and begins to legislate in cases of family and church it is violating its right and obligation. Herbert Schlossberg wrote in his book *Idols for Destruction*: “The state that acts as a wise parent instead of a vindictive judge has been an attractive image to many people. Looking to the state for sustenance is a cultic act; we rightly learn to expect food from parents, and when we regard the state as the source of physical provision, we render to it obeisance of idolatry.” If our family is not based upon Scripture and we are not a part of the church, then the only thing left is the state. God gave the keys of the kingdom to the church, not the state, neither did it give the sword to the church, the Crusades notwithstanding. The family, of course, cannot Provide the technical and sophisticated education that our children need in this age, but it is the obligation of the family and especially the father, to rear their children “in the discipline of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4), preparing them to face the atheistic and materialistic system imposed upon them in the state educational system.

The massive welfare entitlement which the government has instituted is an infringement upon both the family and the church and has destroyed the church and family authority to fulfill their responsibility. Paul told Timothy to “honor widows who are widows indeed” and James gives us the essence of Christian living in these words: “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and keep yourself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). However there is a limitation on the church’s responsibility to aid widows. They must be “widows indeed” who are without family, too old to remarry, and thus unable to receive support from relatives, and they must meet certain qualifications (I Tim. 5:-16). Jesus taught that children should provide for their aged parents (Matt. 15:4-6). Biblical support of the needy, both from family and church, is never subsidize responsibility: “If anyone will not work, neither let him eat” (II Thess. 3:10). Today the massive welfare programs have assumed the responsibility given to the family and the church.

The state is not to exercise authority God has granted to the family and the church, and the church is not to seek authority in political matters. To quote Charles Colson again in *Kingdoms in Conflict*: “Governments with rare exception seek to expand their power beyond the mandate to restrain evil, preserve order, and promote justice. Mostly they do this by venturing into religious or moral areas. The reason is twofold: the state needs religious legitimization for its policies and an independent church is the one structure that rivals the state’s claim for ultimate allegiance.” This is illustrated in the governments mandate that legalizes the killing of 1.37 million babies per year, averaging 2,363 murders per day in the United States. World-wide number is 73 million babies per year and 125,000 per day. The Center for Disease Control reports there have been 63,459,781 abortions in the United States since 1973 when they were legalized by the government. Sad commentary!